

17 - 19 SEPTEMBER

Interactions of Electrons, Phonons and Magnons with Crystal Surfaces

Lille, France

Dr. Leman, Laboratoire de Physique des Solides, 3 rue François Baès, 59 Lille

18 - 24 SEPTEMBER

Condensation and Ice Nuclei

Prague, Czechoslovakia and Vienna, Austria

J. Podzinak, Praha-Sporilov, Czechoslovakia

22 - 23 SEPTEMBER

International Conference on the Use of Cyclotrons in Chemistry

Oxford, UK

F.K. Pyne, AERE Harwell, Didcot, Berks., UK

22 - 24 SEPTEMBER

Symposium on Diffusion Processes

Glasgow, UK

Secretary, Thomas Graham Memorial Symposium, Dept. of Pure and Applied Chemistry, U. of Strathclyde, Glasgow C1, Scotland

23 - 25 SEPTEMBER

2nd European Conference on Hard Magnetic Materials

Milan, Italy

Conference Secretariat at the Federation of Scientific and Technical Associations, Piazzale Rodolfo Morandi, 2-20121 Milan

29 SEPTEMBER - 3 OCTOBER

10th European Congress on Molecular Spectroscopy

Liège, Belgium

B. Rosen, 10th European Congress on Molecular Spectroscopy, Institut d'Astrophysique, Cointe-Sclessin, Belgium

1 - 4 OCTOBER

Europhysics Conference on Acousto-Electric Phenomena in Semiconductors

Aviemore, Scotland

Dr. E.G.S. Paige, Royal Radar Establishment, Great Malvern, Worcestershire, UK

6 - 11 OCTOBER

Congress of Radiology

Tokyo, Japan

Tadashi Adachi, 12 Int. Congress of Radiology, C.P.O. Box 1910, Tokyo

4 - 6 NOVEMBER

Radioprotection in Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy

Saclay, France

D. Blanc, 81, rue Gabriel Péri, 93 Montrouge, France

5 - 7 NOVEMBER

2nd International Conference on Accelerator Dosimetry and Experience

Stanford, USA

R.H. Thomas, Health Physics Department, 67 Encina Hall, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305

10 - 12 DECEMBER

Reliability in Electronics

London, UK

Conference Department, IEE, Savoy Place, London WC 2

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

I would like to endorse the proposition put forward by Dr. Ascher for the study of the relationships between physics and society (Europhysics News, March 1969, p. 6). I do not think such a study need be regarded as an immodest activity on the part of physicists. The discoveries and innovations of physicists have resulted in a radical changing of the world in which we live and it seems to me wholly reasonable to endeavour to establish facts and record opinions on the nature of the interaction between physics and society. The application of such knowledge in formulating policy for the education and training of physicists and in relating their activities to the needs of society could be of immense benefit to both.

One of the points made in Dr. Ascher's letter could form the basis of an important topic of study. Is it true that the product of one's productivity in science (Ps) and one's proficiency in general considerations (Pg) is a constant (s)? We have an indication of the meaning of Ps and Pg but could they be defined more precisely and can they be measured? Does s signify personal satisfaction, professional status, value to society or some other quantity? Is the constancy of s dependent on environment?

Another interesting topic is the nature of the foundation provided by the education and training of physicists for broader fields such as administration, business management and politics. It is convenient to think of the polarization of physics education into two distinct approaches. Physics can be absorbed by the student as a set of laws qualified by well-defined conditions. Let us call this the Pm approach. A mechanistic view of natural phenomena is imparted which in general makes a physicist unsuited for the broader fields. For example, the need to make decisions without full information or to take account of human factors are alien processes.

At the other end of the scale, the laws of physics can be acquired

against the background of the procedures, setbacks, rivalries and triumphs of the physicists who contributed to their prediction and verification. An ethos which includes human factors is thereby imparted and not simply the laws. This philosophical content or approach (Pp) can be manifested in other ways. The duality of particles and waves is a salutary lesson that the same problem may be looked at in two different ways. The experimental method is one which may be applied to a variety of situations while the inevitable combination of random and predictable events exemplified in noise phenomena is a valuable pointer to the nature of the forces exerted by society made up of human beings and not just machines.

Where between the Pm and Pp approaches is physics education aimed? Does it vary from one educational establishment to another or from one country to another? Where should it be aimed?

These are the kinds of question which a branch of the European Physical Society could endeavour to answer. Probably the most appropriate type of physicist for carrying out enquiries of this sort are those who are both Pg and Pp dominant. There are too few of such men available and it would therefore seem most appropriate that a body with the combined membership of several national physical societies should undertake the task. I do not think the same case could be made out for Science Management activities. Here, the societies in member countries would probably have a sufficient number of interested members to sustain separate activities, especially in view of the emphasis in most countries on greater economic viability. The European Physical Society would, however, be most valuable here as a means of exchanging information between member countries.

H. V. Beck (Harpenden).

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