

## On the issue of Einstein's sceptics

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Responding to Milena Wazeck's article "Einstein's sceptics: Who were the relativity deniers?" in New Scientist.

Milena Wazeck [1] deals with the early opposition to Einstein's relativity in the 1920s and then connects it with the ongoing opposition today on the internet, and says: "The controversy over relativity represents a scientific dispute that is crucially shaped by the participants' world views and draws heavily on metaphysical conceptions of reality. Like those who oppose Darwin's theory of evolution, Einstein's opponents back in the 1920s were impervious to reasoned criticism, just as his critics today are. Physicists do sometimes try to discuss relativity theory with their opponents and point out their misunderstandings, just as physicists did 90 years ago. But this will not resolve the controversy. The opponents' understanding of the very nature of science differs so fundamentally from the academic consensus that it may be impossible to find common ground."

I will go through her points:

Yes – it seems impossible for supporters of Einstein's relativity to find common ground with its opponents.

As to the claim that opponents are "impervious to reasoned criticism", from the point-of-view of the opponents it is the supporters that seem "impervious to reasoned criticism", hence why there is no common ground.

As for "misunderstandings" it is the opponents point-of-view that the supporters have the "misunderstandings".

Milena Wazeck also says: "The debate about relativity lingers on today. Though the new generation of Einstein's opponents have mostly moved their protests online, they share some fundamental characteristics with their predecessors. These perhaps show up best on the conservative website Conservapedia, which uses wiki technology to allow people to document counterexamples to relativity. Conservapedia claims that relativity is "heavily promoted by liberals" and lists 32 reasons why the theory is wrong. Einstein's critics continue to perceive relativity as a threat to their world view, and often invoke conspiracy theories to explain their marginalised position."

Einstein's relativity is "heavily promoted" by those best described as "liberals", and since these "liberals" suppress alternative viewpoints to their own beliefs, how else can it be described other than a "conspiracy" (?) It is sad that those who doing the suppressing and then get called engaging in a "conspiracy" then mock those who says it's a "conspiracy" as deluded.

Milena Wazeck talks of early critics such as Gehrcke, who by the way has impressive standing in physics, wiki says [2] : “**Ernst J. L. Gehrcke** (1 July 1878 in Berlin – 25 January 1960 in Hohen-Neuendorf) was a German experimental physicist. He was director of the optical department at the Reich Physical and Technical Institute. Concurrently, he was a professor at the University of Berlin. He developed the Lummer-Gehrcke method in interferometry, he discovered anode rays, and he developed the multiplex interferometric spectroscope for precision resolution of spectral-line structures.”

He was followed by others with impressive standing in physics such as Louis Essen, wiki says [3]: “**Louis Essen** FRS, O.B.E (6 September 1908 – 24 August 1997) was an English physicist whose most notable achievements were in the precise measurement of time and the determination of the speed of light. He was a critic of Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity, particularly as it related to time dilation.”

i.e. there are those with impressive standing in physics (not just laypersons) who criticise Einstein’s relativity from its very beginnings (and have carried on since) that just get ignored.

From the point-of-view of the opponents: the supporters of Einstein’s relativity just create stawmen – falsely representing things such as what experiments show and what opponents say about relativity etc; thus, it is really them in denial.

## References

[1] Einstein's sceptics: Who were the relativity deniers? Milena Wazeck, New Scientist issue 2786, 13 November 2010 <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20827862-500-einsteins-sceptics-who-were-the-relativity-deniers/#ixzz6Q5DjFMAY>

[2] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst\\_Gehrcke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Gehrcke) at 22 June 2020

[3] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis\\_Essen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Essen) at 22 June 2020

## Appendix

For opponents versus supporters, it’s still arguing over the same main issues in relativity: bring back absolute time and bring back aether (issues I have argued about in other articles) and which Milena Wazeck notes that Gehrcke was arguing for: “Gehrcke was an experimental physicist at the Imperial Technical Institute in Berlin. Like many experimentalists of that era, he felt uncomfortable with the rise of a theory that demanded a reformulation of the fundamental concepts of space and time. Relativity messes with these to the extent that events which one observer deems simultaneous are no longer simultaneous as viewed by observers moving in different frames of reference. Gehrcke could not imagine such a scenario. In 1921 he argued that giving up the idea of absolute time threatened to confuse the basis of cause and effect in natural phenomena. What’s more, the theory of relativity abandoned one of the most important concepts of 19th-century physics: that light waves and electric and magnetic forces were carried in a medium called the ether. For a classical physicist like Gehrcke, giving up this notion was akin to someone today claiming that sound waves travel in a vacuum.”