

The Sokal Hoax: The Sham That Shook the Academy



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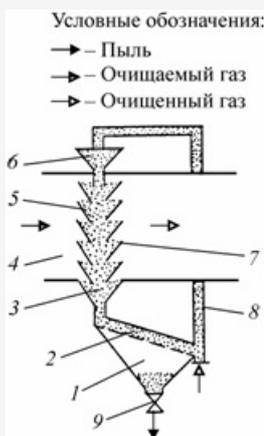
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More seriously, it adds depth to Sokal's collaboration with physicist Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense*, and other books about the hoax and its implications, which continue to excite discussion. Home Groups Talk Zeitgeist. I Agree This site uses cookies to deliver our services, improve performance, for analytics, and if not signed in for advertising. Your use of the site and services is subject to these policies and terms. Members Reviews Popularity Average rating Conversations 2 , 4.

Add to Your books. No current Talk conversations about this book. An excellent collection of essays covering the little professor who said that the Postmodernist emperor had no clothes.

The Sokal Hoax

The original paper is included in full, and is hilarious. Some of the replies and responses are unintentionally funny, as well. In May, Alan Sokal had published in *Social Text* an extraordinary article that, inter alia, suggested that physicists were questioning existence not to mention gravity. This is the story of the hoax, why it was perpetuated and what some of the outcomes were.



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The Sokal affair, also called the Sokal hoax, was a scholarly publishing sting perpetrated by .. The Sokal Hoax: The Sham That Shook the Academy. University of. The Sokal Hoax: The Sham That Shook the Academy [The editors of *Lingua Franca*] on srv103574.hoster-test.ru *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. In May

May 18, 1996, was not a slow news day. The front page of the New York Times featured the suicide of the highest-ranking officer in the navy, claims that Bob Dole resigned from the Senate under political siege, and a photograph of President Clinton signing a law against child molesters.

And yet the editors of the Times also found room that day for a front-page item about an obscure NYU physics professor who had published an article in an academic journal.

Sokal affair - Wikipedia

What made this a top story? Alan Sokal - manuscript. Science, Philosophy and Culture. Alan Sokal - - Oxford University Press. Steven Weinberg - unknown. At Whom Are We Laughing? Mara Beller - unknown. Fear of Scandalous Knowledge: Jerold Touger - unknown. Alan Sokal's "Transgression" By. Stanley Aronowitz - unknown. Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont. A Mathematician Reads Social Text. Risking Connection Across Difference: Reply to Sokal and Smith.

Litteraires et scientifiques trivaliser n'est PAS sans danger'. Alan Sokal, Beyond the Hoax: When Sokal followed up with an article in *Lingua Franca* revealing that the article was a joke, he achieved his unstated goal of embarrassing social scientists who were treading on scientists' turf with their critiques of scientific certainty.

The ensuing controversy played out as much in the popular as the academe press, and this collection of texts relating to the hoax reflects that. The hoax has seemed to fade away, and its ultimate effects on the academy have yet to be seen. In any case, this handy record of the case should be in every academic library. Most people interested in matters academic, intellectual, and philosophical, let alone in postmodernism, the relativity of scientific knowledge, and cultural studies, have heard of Alan Sokal's tongue-in-cheek essay purporting to show the flimsy foundations on which the scientific world-picture rests; and the responses--applauding, embarrassed, and angry--that followed when Sokal himself revealed that his deceptively profound and erudite paper was in fact a hoax to show the world how silly and superficial, not to say ignorant, most of the theses and authors of postmodernistic science studies really were.

This anthology contains Sokal's original paper as well as its multifaceted responses. More importantly, it is valuable as a historical document of an academic tempest, the result of Sokal's daring experiment on views that most hard-nosed scientists especially physicists have always entertained on what is seen as naive pronouncements of some postmodernists on the nature and significance of scientific truths. Sokal's own effort, even granting its ingenuity in making a point, also betrays a certain lack of understanding of the deeper message underlying the new view: Raman; emeritus, Rochester Institute of Technology.

Thank you for using the catalog. Science -- Social aspects. Choice Review Most people interested in matters academic, intellectual, and philosophical, let alone in postmodernism, the relativity of scientific knowledge, and cultural studies, have heard of Alan Sokal's tongue-in-cheek essay purporting to show the flimsy foundations on which the scientific world-picture rests; and the responses--applauding, embarrassed, and angry--that followed when Sokal himself revealed that his deceptively profound and erudite paper was in fact a hoax to show the world how silly and superficial, not to say ignorant, most of the theses and authors of postmodernistic science studies really were.

Among the most fortified boundaries have been those between the natural sciences and the humanities. Still less are they receptive to the idea that the very foundations of their worldview must be revised or rebuilt in the light of such criticism. Rather, they cling to the dogma imposed by the long post-Enlightenment hegemony over the Western intellectual outlook, which can be summarized briefly as follows: But deep conceptual shifts within twentieth-century science have undermined this Cartesian-Newtonian metaphysics Heisenberg ; Bohr ; revisionist studies in the history and philosophy of science have cast further doubt on its credibility Kuhn ; Feyerabend ; Latour ; Aronowitz b; Bloor ; and, most recently, feminist and poststructuralist critiques have demystified the substantive content of mainstream Western scientific practice, revealing the ideology of domination concealed behind the facade of "objectivity" Merchant ; Keller ; Harding , ; Haraway , ; Best It has thus become increasingly apparent that physical "reality" no less than social "reality" is at bottom a social and linguistic construct; that scientific "knowledge;" far from being objective, reflects and encodes the dominant ideologies and power relations of the culture that produced it; that the truth claims of science are inherently theory-laden and self-referential; and consequently, that the discourse of the scientific community, for all its undeniable value, cannot assert a privileged epistemological status with respect to counterhegemonic narratives emanating from dissident or marginalized communities.

These themes can be traced, despite some differences of emphasis, in Aronowitz's analysis of the cultural fabric that produced quantum mechanics b, esp. Here my aim is to carry these deep analyses one step further, by taking account of recent developments in quantum gravity: In quantum gravity, as we shall see, the space-time manifold ceases to exist as an objective physical reality; geometry becomes relational and contextual; and the foundational conceptual categories of prior science--among them, existence itself--become problematized and relativized.

This conceptual revolution, I will argue, has profound implications for the content of a future postmodern and liberatory science. My approach will be as follows. First, I will review very briefly some of the philosophical and ideological issues raised by quantum mechanics and by classical general relativity. Next, I will sketch the outlines of the emerging theory of quantum gravity and discuss some of the conceptual issues it raises.

Finally, I will comment on the cultural and political implications of these scientific developments. It should be emphasized that this essay is of necessity tentative and preliminary; I do not pretend to answer all the questions that I raise. My aim is, rather, to draw the attention of readers to these important developments in physical science and to sketch as best I can their philosophical and political implications.

I have endeavored here to keep mathematics to a bare minimum; but I have taken care to provide references where interested readers can find all requisite details. Uncertainty, Complementarity, Discontinuity, and Interconnectedness It is not my intention to enter here into the

extensive debate on the conceptual foundations of quantum mechanics. Suffice it to say that anyone who has seriously studied the equations of quantum mechanics will assent to Heisenberg's measured pardon the pun summary of his celebrated uncertainty principle: We can no longer speak of the behaviour of the particle independently of the process of observation.

As a final consequence, the natural laws formulated mathematically in quantum theory no longer deal with the elementary particles themselves but with our knowledge of them. Nor is it any longer possible to ask whether or not these particles exist in space and time objectively. When we speak of the picture of nature in the exact science of our age, we do not mean a picture of nature so much as a picture of our relationships with nature. Science no longer confronts nature as an objective observer, but sees itself as an actor in this interplay between man [sic] and nature.

The scientific method of analysing, explaining and classifying has become conscious of its limitations, which arise out of the fact that by its intervention science alters and refashions the object of investigation. In other words, method and object can no longer be separated. A second important aspect of quantum mechanics is its principle of complementarity, or dialecticism. Is light a particle or a wave? Complementarity "is the realization that particle and wave behavior are mutually exclusive, yet that both are necessary for a complete description of all phenomena" Pais , More generally, notes Heisenberg, the different intuitive pictures which we use to describe atomic systems, although fully adequate for given experiments, are nevertheless mutually exclusive.

Thus, for instance, the Bohr atom can be described as a small-scale planetary system, having a central atomic nucleus about which the external electrons revolve. For other experiments, however, it might be more convenient to imagine that the atomic nucleus is surrounded by a system of stationary waves whose frequency is characteristic of the radiation emanating from the atom. Finally, we can consider the atom chemically. Each picture is legitimate when used in the right place, but the different pictures are contradictory and therefore we call them mutually complementary.

Indeed, strictly speaking, the conscious analysis of any concept stands in a relation of exclusion to its immediate application. The profound connections between complementarity and deconstruction have recently been elucidated by Froula and Honner , and, in great depth, by Plotnitsky. A third aspect of quantum physics is discontinuity, or rupture: Finally, Bell's theorem and its recent generalizations show that an act of observation here and now can affect not only the object being observed--as Heisenberg told us--but also an object arbitrarily far away say, on Andromeda galaxy.

This phenomenon--which Einstein termed "spooky"--imposes a radical reevaluation of the traditional mechanistic concepts of space, object, and causality, and suggests an alternative worldview in which the universe is characterized by interconnectedness and wholism: In Bohr's words, "Planck's discovery of the elementary quantum of action. In Einstein's special theory of relativity , the distinction between space and time dissolves: In Hermann Minkowski's famous words. Nevertheless, the underlying geometry of Minkowskian space-time remains absolute.

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It is in Einstein's general theory of relativity that the radical conceptual break occurs: Prime Book Box for Kids. Add both to Cart Add both to List. These items are shipped from and sold by different sellers. Buy the selected items together This item: Customers who bought this item also bought. Page 1 of 1 Start over Page 1 of 1.

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Categories & Galleries

Retrieved April 3, The Sokal Affair scandal extended from academia to the public press. In its modest way, the collection is an entertainment, serving as an anthology of ivy-covered silliness. Details Customers who bought this item also bought Page 1 of 1 Start over Page 1 of 1 This shopping feature will continue to load items. He has repeatedly claimed that nobody has responded to his challenge to debate this matter.

Please try again later. I didn't expect a book full of essays about postmodernism and academic politics to keep me up late at night. I was therefore amazed to find myself reading until 2: The book starts by printing the hoax article and Sokal's revelation. It then captures some of the immediate response, mostly by Social Text supporters. Then you see some newspaper articles from around the world, and finally some longer essays.

Since each article originally came from a separate publication, each one starts with two paragraphs or so of synopsis, explaining the background of the hoax.

See a Problem?

That gets tedious, but if you read beyond the first couple of paragraphs, each article has something interesting to say. Kudos to the editors of *Lingua Franca* for making such excellent choices. Regardless of whether you think Alan Sokal is a hero or a rogue, a brilliant crusader for intellectual standards or a crass fool who made himself and the "science establishment" look stupid with his prank, you should read this book. In this book, the editors of *Lingua Franca* have assembled all the documents you need to understand what really happened.

You can read the hoax paper in its entirety. You can read the article that revealed it as a hoax. You can read the response by the editors of *Social Text*. You can read what the press had to say, what intellectuals on both sides of the issue have said about the hoax, and what people writing in other countries have made of the whole thing.

Frequently bought together

Lately, the Sokal hoax has been on my mind a lot, and I find that I need to explain it to people who never heard of it, before I can talk about it. This book is the perfect answer to the question "where can I read more about it?" This isn't just a book about a brilliant hoax. It's also an introductory course on pomo AKA postmodernism, poststructuralism, postconstructionism, a collection of heated newspaper and magazine editorials about ethics, philosophy, science, and college curriculum, and an expose of how the Emperor reacts when He is found to have no clothes.

Could he possibly write an article bad enough to be obvious nonsense to any undergraduate physics student, yet good enough to get published in a leading pomo periodical? Unfortunately for the members of the screening committee for "*Social Text*," the answer was "yes." It caters to agendas of pomo authorities rather than relying on logic, drips with unreadable prose, and has mistaken claims about scientific theories. It includes an illogical train of thought but offers lots of apple-polishing to the gurus it parodies.

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Sokal says, "The fundamental silliness in my article lies in the dubiousness of its central thesis and in the 'reasoning' adduced to support it. Basically, I claim that quantum gravity has profound political implications. They were published in different magazines on the same day. Ideally, perhaps "*Social Text*" would have admitted their error, issued a congratulatory statement to Sokal, and notified the public that they were immediately tightening up their article evaluation process. Instead, they whined about being sabotaged and called Sokal "poorly educated, too male, too nerdy, and naughty."

After the publication of the "hoax of the decade," the press had a field day. The book continues with editorials from over 40 United States contributors and 9 from Europe and Brazil. The Scientist community, by and large, roasted "*Social Text*" and postmodernists. Physicist Steven Weinberg wrote a great essay where he discussed in detail each item of erroneous physics served up in Sokal's article.

For a nice read and a chance to see both sides presented on an important issue, I can highly recommend this excellent book. See all 23 reviews. Most recent customer reviews. Published 11 months ago. Published 1 year ago. Published on July 29, Published on July 28,

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