

1.6 The beginnings of physics

So, have we defined physics? Our correct definition is: Physics is the process of considering some physical phenomena, establishing a theory, applying and/or comparing the theory to the relevant physical laws, predicting the consequences, and either confirming or refuting it.

But this definition treats physics only as a process, a verb if you will. Physics is also a body of knowledge, a noun.

So what is physics, the noun? In short, now that we know how physics acquires its content, what are those contents?

This is a process of ordering what we have learned. This is, necessarily, an imperfect activity. As you will see it places artificial boundaries in our study that nature knows nothing about. The advantage is that it allows us to take what we know in small enough packages to allow us to learn them. The disadvantage is the artificial separation of topics. So long as we are aware of this artificiality we should be okay.

Another aspect of this, is that our knowledge is incomplete. We know that we do not have all of the physical theories and physical laws. Worse yet, all of our physical theories are incomplete.