

The Ether and Ockham's Razor

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A century after the foundations of modern relativity theory were laid by Lorentz, Poincaré, Einstein and others, controversy continues over the need for an ether or substratum of space as a carrier of electromagnetic and other causal influences. The argument centres on the **necessity** for such a carrier, it being widely accepted that its existence would be a **sufficient** basis for relativistic phenomena. However, an ether is usually considered to be unnecessary (“superfluous”) and in spite of Einstein’s remarks on the consistency of the concept with General Relativity, the main stream of science continues to ridicule it. The history and arguments surrounding the ether concept in the 20th Century are reviewed, with reference to the works of Builder, Prokhovnik and others.