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Open or Closed? Dirac, Heisenberg, and the Relation between Classical and Quantum Mechanics

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Abstract

This paper describes a long-standing, though little-known, debate between Paul Dirac and Werner Heisenberg over the nature of scientific methodology, theory change, and intertheoretic relations. Following Heisenberg's terminology, their disagreements can be summarized as a debate over whether the classical and quantum theories are "open" or "closed." A close examination of this debate sheds new light on the philosophical views of two of the great founders of quantum theory.

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