

A Case of Irrationality?

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Abstract

Were Maxwell and Boltzmann irrational to develop statistical mechanics whereas it was empirically refuted by the specific heats problem? My analysis of this historical episode departs from the current proposals about belief change. I first give a detailed description of Maxwell's and Boltzmann's epistemic states in the years they were working on statistical mechanics and then make some methodological proposals in epistemology that would account for the complexity of this case.

Keywords: formal epistemology applied to history of science, belief change, theory change, description of epistemic states

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