

Abstract Submitted
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Back to the old questions: physics as culture LEONARDO COLLETTI, Dipartimento di Fisica and INFN, Università di Trento, 38123 Povo (TN), Italy — My thesis is that, when communicating physics to a large public, more effort should be put into presenting it as an invaluable cultural resource. In fact, by insisting only, as it often happens, on its strategic role as technology booster, one would rather understate physics' very core values. People do certainly appreciate new devices which make their life easier, but they also love thinking about general questions, such as “What is the Universe?” and “How do we know something about it?”, which make life truly worth living. I am convinced that not introducing properly the large public to the intellectual beauty of physics' ideas, would represent a waste of knowledge which may result in a society that is even poorer than that resulting from scarce investment in innovation. I will propose a variety of approaches that can be used to highlight the conceptual richness of physics at the aesthetic and inspiring level. Not unlike art and literature, physics can be offered in a way that shows its transformative power of our vision of the universe and its capability of matching human desire for understanding.

Leonardo Colletti
Dipartimento di Fisica and INFN,
Università di Trento, 38123 Povo (TN), Italy

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