

A paradox too far

I believe that the theory of relativity is self-contradictory and should be abandoned in favour of a better theory. I illustrate my point with the following simple example.

Consider two spaceships S and S', having the same rest length, approaching each other with a relative velocity $v = (\sqrt{3}/2)c$. The captain of spaceship S orders a midshipman to fire a warning shot across the bows of the approaching alien spaceship. The midshipman decides to fire his gun when the front of his vessel is level with the rear of the alien craft as shown in figure 1. Then length contraction will ensure that the shell will pass harmlessly in front of the alien. However, consider the proposed course of action from the rest frame of the alien craft. Now the length contraction is the other way round and it is clear from figure 2 that the shell will hit the alien craft amidships.

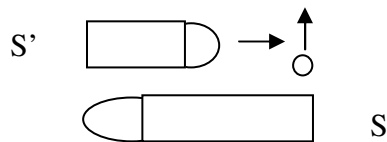


Figure 1. The situation from frame S

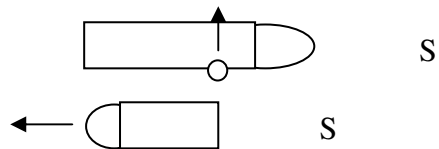


Figure 2. The situation from frame S'

There can be only one outcome to the firing of a gun: a hit or a miss. But I have shown that the theory of relativity cannot supply a unique answer. Therefore the theory is flawed. I have devised a more satisfactory theory which I shall be submitting for publication in the near future.

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