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Found in Translation: Collection of Original Articles on Single-Particle Reconstruction and the Structural Basis of Protein Synthesis, by Bruno P. Klaholz



Dear Abbe

Dear Abbe,

I suspect my middle-aged TEM is gaining weight and having, ah, “performance” issues. Is there a way to know the optimal weight and dimensions for the scope? More importantly, I would like to restore some of the vitality of its youth. Disappointed in Detroit

Dear Disappointed,

Mein Gott! I am afraid you are suffering from an optical delusion. It is not the TEM gaining weight; unfortunately it is you who is delusional about your instrument’s performance issues. A TEM is just a lump of metal (although it can be more frustrating than a spouse). The only way it can gain weight is if you allow engineers near it, adding on their supposed “must have” accessories and modifications—it makes me shudder. High-performance TEMs have grown in size (like my ego), and some of them have quite long and thick columns now. You are clearly lusting for a larger instrument with additional functions. You need to quit fantasizing! If you can’t control yourself, then by all means look into a new scope—or therapy.

The other issue is that you may be having trouble affording a new, sexy instrument. Try novel fund-raising methods like crowd sourcing. I suggest setting up your TEM on a busy street corner and begging the crowd for funds. A nice cardboard sign with “Will image for money” scribbled hastily. The scorn from passers-by can’t be any more humiliating than the comments from funding agency reviewers.

Dear Abbe,

Our scopes in the Vet Med Diagnostic lab are suspected of being contaminated with various zoonoses. We can’t afford new scopes. How can we disinfect them thoroughly? Anguished in Athens

Dear Angst,

Quit your whining! When we first started looking at diseases, we didn’t even know they were diseases. We’d smear a bit with a finger on a slide and run off to lunch while it dried. Heinrich “Bob” Koch enlisted us to develop his postulates and pustules. Once we realized the need to keep others from developing the superpowers we had from exposure, we began working with Monsieur Pasteur to develop a “Pasteur Microscope.” Herr Koch determined that our microscopes would become sick as well, so we developed a way to Pasteurize them. This particular technique is now a trade secret held by a shady organization in Uzbekistan, and I lost my notes after drinking too many Biers. You can still avoid plagues by autoclaving some hardy scopes, or immerse them in large vats of 70% ethanol. All of these solutions have their inherent problems, but after enough of the last solution, one no longer cares.

Can’t get that alluring new gadget out of your head? Maybe you need advice to avoid unpleasant queries? Herr Abbe can provide a solution! All it takes is a short note to his capable administrative associate at jpsshield@uga.edu.