

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
Chapter 1 Introducing Light	1
1.1 The perception of light through the ages	2
1.1.1 The ancient Greeks	2
1.1.2 The Middle Ages	2
1.2 Colours	4
1.2.1 The visible spectrum	4
1.3 Measuring the speed of light	5
1.3.1 The astronomical method	5
1.3.2 Terrestrial measurement	6
1.3.3 The speed of light in context	8
1.4 The process of vision	9
1.4.1 ‘Look and see’	9
1.4.2 The journey of a photon	9
1.4.3 The eye is like a digital camera	11
1.4.4 Reconstructing the object	13
1.4.5 Why is the grass green?	13
1.4.6 Seeing in the dark	14
1.4.7 The branches of optics	15
1.5 The nature of light	16
1.5.1 Contradictory evidence	16
1.5.2 Light as a wave	16
1.5.3 Maxwell’s electromagnetic waves	17

1.5.4	Light as a particle	18
1.5.5	An illustration of duality?	19
1.6	The birth of quantum mechanics	20
1.6.1	Particles have wave properties	20
1.6.2	The Copenhagen interpretation	21
1.6.3	The universal messenger	22
Chapter 2	Geometrical Optics: Reflection	23
2.1	Fermat's law	24
2.1.1	Light takes the quickest route	24
2.1.2	The path in empty space	25
2.1.3	The quickest path via a reflection	25
2.1.4	The law of reflection	26
2.2	Mirrors	27
2.2.1	A plane mirror	27
2.2.2	Reversal from left to right	28
2.2.3	Reflection from a curved and uneven surface	29
2.2.4	A spherical concave mirror	29
2.2.5	Applications of concave mirrors	32
2.2.6	The 'death rays' of Archimedes	33
	A historical interlude: Pierre de Fermat (1601–1665)	35
	Appendix 2.1 The parabolic mirror	37
Chapter 3	Geometrical Optics: Refraction	41
3.1	Refraction	42
3.1.1	The refractive index	42
3.1.2	The lifeguard problem	43
3.1.3	Snell's law	45
3.1.4	Apparent depth	45
3.1.5	The dilemma faced by light trying to leave glass	47
3.1.6	Practical applications of total internal reflection	48

3.1.7 Freedom of choice when a ray meets a boundary	49
3.1.8 The mystery	50
3.1.9 A practical puzzle — two-way mirrors	51
3.2 Lenses	52
3.2.1 The function of a lens	52
3.2.2 Fermat's principle applied to lenses	53
3.3 Objects and images: converging lenses	54
3.3.1 Ray tracing through a thin lens	54
3.3.2 Principal rays (thin lenses)	55
3.3.3 The lens equation	56
3.3.4 Symmetry	56
3.3.5 Breaking the symmetry	57
3.3.6 An intuitive approach — the task of a lens	58
3.4 Objects and images: diverging lenses	60
3.5 Lens combinations	61
3.5.1 A general method	61
3.5.2 Examples — lenses in contact	61
3.5.3 The power of a lens	62
3.6 The eye	63
3.6.1 The structure of the eye	63
3.6.2 Common eye defects	65
3.7 Making visible what the eye cannot see	67
3.7.1 Distant objects	67
3.7.2 Nearer but not clearer	68
3.7.3 Angular magnification	70
3.8 Combinations of lenses	72
3.8.1 Compound microscopes	72
3.8.2 Telescopes	74
3.9 A final note on Fermat's principle	75
Appendix 3.1 The lifeguard problem	76
Appendix 3.2 The lens equation	78
Appendix 3.3 Calculating the power of spectacles	79

Chapter 4	Light from Afar — Astronomy	81
4.1	The earth	82
4.1.1	Is the earth round?	82
4.1.2	Philosophical reasons why the earth should be round	82
4.1.3	Experimental evidence that the earth is round	83
4.2	The Moon	84
4.2.1	The phases of the moon	84
4.2.2	A lunar eclipse	85
4.2.3	A solar eclipse	87
4.3	Sizes and distances	89
4.3.1	Relative sizes of the sun and the moon	89
4.3.2	The shadow of the earth on the moon	90
4.3.3	Shrinking shadows	90
4.3.4	The distance to the moon	92
4.3.5	The distance to the sun	93
4.3.6	A practical problem	94
4.3.7	A summary concerning the earth, moon and sun	96
4.3.8	Astronomical distances	96
4.4	The planets	97
4.4.1	The ‘wanderers’	97
4.4.2	Ptolemy’s geocentric model	97
4.5	The Copernican revolution	99
4.5.1	Frames of reference	99
4.5.2	Copernicus and the heliocentric model	100
4.5.3	Where did the epicycles come from?	103
4.6	After Copernicus	104
4.7	The solar system in perspective	110
	A historical interlude: Galileo Galilei (1564–1642)	112
	Appendix 4.1 Mathematics of the ellipse	118

Chapter 5	Light from the Past — Astrophysics	121
5.1	The birth of astrophysics	121
5.1.1	Isaac Newton and gravitation	122
5.1.2	Falling without getting nearer	123
5.1.3	The mystery of gravitation	125
5.1.4	Newton’s law of gravitation	125
5.1.5	Testing the law	126
5.1.6	Acceleration of the moon towards the earth	129
5.1.7	The period of the moon’s orbit	129
5.1.8	Explanation of Kepler’s laws	130
5.2	The methods of astrophysics	130
5.2.1	The moon and the falling apple	130
5.2.2	Predicting the existence of new planets	131
5.3	Other stars and their ‘solar systems’	133
5.3.1	Planets of other suns	133
5.3.2	Other galaxies	136
5.4	Reconstructing the past	138
5.4.1	The steady state cosmological model	138
5.4.2	The ‘big bang’ theory	139
5.4.3	A blast from the past	140
5.5	The life and death of a star	142
5.5.1	White dwarfs	142
5.5.2	Supernovae	143
5.5.3	Pulsars	145
5.5.4	Black holes	148
5.5.5	Escape velocities	149
5.5.6	How to ‘see’ the invisible	150
5.5.7	A strange event in the Milky Way	151
5.5.8	Time stands still	152
	A historical interlude: Isaac Newton (1642–1727)	152

Appendix 5.1	Kepler's third law, derived from Newton's law of universal gravitation	158
Appendix 5.2	Escape velocity	159
Chapter 6	Introducing Waves	161
6.1	Waves — the basic means of communication	161
6.1.1	Mechanical waves in a medium	163
6.1.2	Transverse waves	164
6.1.3	Longitudinal waves	165
6.2	The mathematics of a travelling wave	168
6.2.1	The making of a wave	168
6.2.2	From the sine of an angle to the picture of a wave	168
6.2.3	An expression for a sine wave in motion	170
6.2.4	Wave parameters	171
6.3	The superposition of waves	172
6.3.1	The superposition principle	172
6.4	Applying the superposition principle	173
6.4.1	The superposition of two waves travelling in the same direction	173
6.4.2	Path difference and phase difference	173
6.4.3	When two waves travelling in opposite directions meet	174
6.4.4	A string fixed at both ends	176
6.4.5	Standing waves	178
6.5	Forced oscillations and resonance	179
6.5.1	Forced oscillations	179
6.5.2	Natural frequencies of vibration and resonance	180
6.6	Resonance — a part of life	180
6.6.1	The Tacoma Narrows bridge disaster	181
6.6.2	The Mexico City earthquake	182

6.7	Diffraction — waves can bend around corners	183
6.8	The magic of sine and the simplicity of nature	183
6.8.1	The sum of a number of sine waves	184
A historical interlude: Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier (1768–1830)		185
Appendix 6.1	The speed of transverse waves on a string	188
Appendix 6.2	Dimensional analysis	190
Appendix 6.3	Calculation of the natural frequencies of a string fixed at both ends	191
 Chapter 7 Sound Waves		 193
7.1	Sound and hearing	193
7.1.1	Sound as a pressure wave	193
7.1.2	The speed of sound	194
7.1.3	Ultrasound and infrasound	195
7.2	Sound as a tool	196
7.3	Superposition of sound waves	205
7.3.1	Standing waves	206
7.3.2	Beats	208
7.4	Sound intensity	208
7.4.1	Real and perceived differences in the intensity of sound	210
7.4.2	Quantifying perception	211
7.4.3	Intensity level (loudness)	213
7.4.4	The ‘annoyance factor’	215
7.5	Other sensations	216
7.5.1	Pitch	216
7.5.2	Tone quality	218
7.5.3	Propagation of sound in open and confined spaces	218
7.6	Strings and pipes in music	221

7.7 The Doppler effect	222
7.7.1 A moving observer	223
7.7.2 A moving source	223
7.7.3 Two Doppler effects?	224
7.7.4 Moving away from a source at almost the speed of sound	225
7.7.5 Shock waves	226
7.7.6 Shock waves and light	227
A historical interlude: The sound barrier	228
Appendix 7.1 Derivation of Doppler frequency changes	233

Chapter 8 Light as a Wave 239

8.1 Light as a wave	240
8.1.1 The mystery of waves in nothing	240
8.2 Wave properties which do not make reference to a medium	241
8.2.1 Superposition	241
8.2.2 Huygens' principle	242
8.2.3 Huygen's principle and refraction	243
8.2.4 Diffraction	245
8.2.5 Huygens' principle and diffraction	246
8.3 Specifically light	247
8.3.1 Diffraction of light	247
8.3.2 The experiment with light	248
8.3.3 Other apertures	249
8.3.4 The curious case of the opaque disc	250
8.4 Is there a limit to what we can distinguish?	251
8.4.1 Images may overlap	251
8.4.2 The Rayleigh criterion	251
8.5 Other electromagnetic waves	253
8.5.1 Message from the stars	254

8.5.2 Other windows on the universe	255
8.6 Light from two sources	255
8.6.1 Young's experiment	256
8.6.2 A pattern within a pattern	259
8.7 Interference as a tool	260
8.7.1 The Michelson interferometer	260
8.8 Thin films	262
8.8.1 Newton's rings	263
8.8.2 Non-reflective coatings	264
8.9 Diffraction gratings	266
8.9.1 Practical diffraction gratings	267
8.9.2 Compact discs	269
8.10 Other 'lights'	269
8.10.1 X-ray diffraction	269
8.10.2 Electron diffraction	273
8.11 Coherence	274
8.11.1 The question of phase	275
8.12 Polarisation	276
8.12.1 Polarisation of electromagnetic waves	276
8.12.2 What happens to light as it passes through a polaroid?	277
8.12.3 Polarisation by reflection	279
A historical interlude: Thomas Young (1773–1829)	280
Appendix 8.1 Single slit diffraction	282
Appendix 8.2 Reflectance of thin films	287

Chapter 9 Making Images 289

9.1 Creating images	289
9.1.1 Photography	289
9.1.2 History of the photograph	291
9.1.3 Nuclear photographic emulsion	296
9.1.4 Interpretation of photographic images	296

9.2 Holography	297
9.2.1 The inventor	297
9.2.2 The principle	298
9.2.3 Making a hologram	299
9.2.4 Why does a holographic image look so real?	301
9.2.5 Applications of holography	301
Chapter 10 There Was Electricity, There Was Magnetism, and Then There Was Light ...	303
10.1 The mystery of ‘action at a distance’	303
10.1.1 The gravitational force	303
10.1.2 The electrostatic force	305
10.1.3 Coulomb’s law	306
10.2 ‘Fields of force’	308
10.2.1 Vector fields	308
10.2.2 A picture to represent a physical law	309
10.2.3 Gauss’s theorem	311
10.2.4 The energy in an electric field	315
10.3 Magnetism	317
10.3.1 Magnetic materials	317
10.4 Electrodynamics	318
10.4.1 Electric currents	318
10.4.2 Ampère’s discovery	319
10.4.3 Definition of electrical units	320
10.4.4 Oersted’s discovery	320
10.4.5 Ampère’s law	323
10.4.6 The effect of a magnetic field on an electric charge	326
10.4.7 Electromagnetism	327
10.4.8 The interaction between moving charges	328

10.5	Getting electric charges to move with the help of magnetism	329
10.5.1	Faraday’s discovery	329
10.5.2	Faraday’s law of electromagnetic induction	332
10.6	Maxwell’s synthesis	332
10.6.1	Putting facts together	332
10.6.2	An important extension to Ampère’s law	333
10.6.3	The four laws	335
10.6.4	As we turn on a current...	336
10.6.5	The propagating magnetic field	337
10.7	Then there was light	341
10.7.1	Cause and effect — A summary	341
10.7.2	Making an electromagnetic pulse	342
10.7.3	Electromagnetic waves	343
10.7.4	Putting theory into practice	343
	A historical interlude: James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879)	346
Appendix 10.1	Energy density of a uniform electric field	350

Chapter 11 ‘Atoms of Light’ — The Birth of Quantum Theory **353**

11.1	Emission of energy by radiation	354
11.1.1	How does matter emit electromagnetic energy?	354
11.1.2	Experimental results	355
11.1.3	The Blackbody radiation spectrum	355
11.1.4	The Stefan–Boltzmann law	356

11.1.5	Wien's displacement law; the spectral distribution	357
11.1.6	Optical pyrometers	359
11.2	Classical theoretical models of the blackbody radiation spectrum	359
11.2.1	Cavity radiation	359
11.2.2	Thermodynamics of the cavity model	361
11.2.3	Wien's displacement law	361
11.2.4	What is the function $f(\lambda T)$? First try — a mathematical fit to the data	363
11.2.5	Second try — a model which incorporates the wave nature of light	363
11.2.6	How can the theoretical models be 'half right'?	364
11.3	Max Planck enters the scene	365
11.3.1	A guess to start	365
11.3.2	Showing that Planck's 'lucky guess' formula works at all wavelengths	366
11.3.3	Trying to crack the code	367
11.3.4	Nature's secret	367
11.3.5	The cause of the 'ultraviolet catastrophe'	368
11.4	Planck's 'act of despair'	368
11.4.1	The quantum hypothesis	368
11.4.2	Quantum discrimination	369
11.4.3	A summary of Planck's hypotheses	370
11.4.4	What does the quantum do after it is emitted?	370
11.4.5	How does the quantum hypothesis solve the 'ultraviolet catastrophe'?	371

11.5 From an idea to a formula — the mathematical journey	373
11.5.1 The classical law of energy distribution	373
11.5.2 The average energy	373
11.5.3 Classical theory	374
11.5.4 Quantum theory	374
11.5.5 A reactionary hypothesis	377
A historical interlude: Max Planck (1858–1947)	377
Appendix 11.1 Deriving the Stefan–Boltzmann law from Planck’s radiation formula and calculating the value of Stefan’s constant	381

Chapter 12 The Development of Quantum Mechanics **383**

12.1 The development of quantum mechanics	384
12.1.1 From oscillators to photons to other things	384
12.1.2 The planetary model of the atom	385
12.1.3 The quantum enters the picture	385
12.1.4 Quantum jumps — light comes out of the atom	386
12.1.5 The lowest orbit	387
12.1.6 The demise of determinism	387
12.1.7 A new way of thinking	388
12.1.8 The Copenhagen interpretation	389
12.2 Matrix mechanics	389
12.2.1 Heisenberg’s approach	389
12.2.2 Light from the hydrogen atom	390
12.2.3 A matrix for everything	390
12.2.4 Rules of the game	391

12.2.5	The laws of nature	392
12.2.6	An example of the Heisenberg method	392
12.2.7	Matrices do not commute!	393
12.2.8	Laws of nature must be built into the matrices	394
12.3	Order does matter	395
12.3.1	One measurement disturbs the other	395
12.3.2	A ‘table top’ experiment with polaroids	395
12.3.3	Experimenting with a series of polaroids	397
12.3.4	The uncertainty principle	400
12.4	Wave mechanics	402
12.4.1	The Schrödinger approach	402
12.4.2	De Broglie’s original idea	402
12.4.3	Adapting de Broglie waves	405
12.4.4	Uncertainty from another aspect	406
12.5	Generalised quantum mechanics	407
12.5.1	A wider view	407
12.5.2	Relativity and quantum mechanics	408
12.5.3	Triumph out of difficulty	409
12.5.4	Antimatter	410
12.5.5	Positron emission tomography	410
12.5.6	Antiprotons and antihydrogen	412
12.6	Quantum reality	413
12.6.1	Critics of the Copenhagen interpretation	413
12.6.2	Bell’s theorem	414
12.6.3	A precursor of quantum reality	415
	A historical interlude: Niels Bohr (1885–1963)	416
Appendix 12.1	Calculating the radius of atomic orbits for hydrogen	421

Chapter 13 Atoms of Light Acting as Particles	423
13.1 The photoelectric effect	424
13.1.1 Evidence for the particle nature of light	424
13.1.2 Short sharp shocks	424
13.1.3 An accidental discovery	425
13.1.4 How long would we expect to wait? An order-of-magnitude calculation	426
13.1.5 The ‘lucky’ electron	427
13.1.6 Einstein’s photoelectric equation	428
13.1.7 Millikan’s Experiment	429
13.1.8 Current flowing uphill	431
13.1.9 The photoelectric work function	433
13.1.10 Practical applications	434
13.2 The Compton effect — more evidence for the particle nature of light	436
13.2.1 Real bullets have momentum	436
13.2.2 The Compton effect	437
13.2.3 Collision dynamics revisited	437
13.2.4 Collision of X-ray photons	438
13.2.5 The photon loses energy but does not slow down	438
13.2.6 Experimental verification	440
A historical interlude: Robert A. Millikan (1868–1953)	441
Appendix 13.1 Mathematics of the Compton effect	446
Chapter 14 Atoms of Light Behaving as Waves	451
14.1 Photons one at a time	452
14.1.1 The human eye	452
14.1.2 Detecting a single photon	452
14.1.3 The long thin line	454

14.1.4	Single slit diffraction	454
14.1.5	Double slit diffraction and interference	455
14.1.6	Measuring ‘clicks’ as photons arrive one by one	456
14.1.7	Separating the possible paths	459
14.1.8	‘Delayed choice’	461
14.2	Feynman’s ‘strange theory of the photon’	461
14.2.1	Partial reflection	461
14.2.2	The strange theory of the photon	464
14.2.3	A ‘sum over histories’	465
14.2.4	The rotating amplitude vector	465
14.2.5	How can we believe all this?	468
14.2.6	It all comes together	469
14.2.7	Quantum electrodynamics	470
	A historical interlude: Richard Feynman (1918–1988)	472

Chapter 15 Relativity Part 1: How It Began **479**

15.1	Space and time	480
15.1.1	Space and the ancient philosophers	480
15.1.2	Space — the intuitive view	482
15.1.3	Space and time — according to Isaac Newton	482
15.2	‘Dogmatic rigidity’	483
15.2.1	Starting with a clean slate	483
15.2.2	Frames of reference — defining a point of view	484
15.2.3	Specifying the prejudices	486
15.3	Looking for the ether	488
15.3.1	The Michelson–Morley experiment	488

15.3.2	Timing the ferry	489
15.3.3	Details of the experiment	491
15.3.4	A powerful conclusion	492
15.4	Symmetry	493
15.4.1	Space is uniform	493
15.4.2	The new model	493
15.4.3	Postulates of special relativity	494
15.5	The first postulate	494
15.5.1	Nature does not discriminate	494
15.5.2	Galileo had the right idea!	496
15.5.3	The Galilean transformation	497
15.5.4	The speed of a bullet	498
15.6	The second postulate	500
15.6.1	The courage of one's convictions	500
15.6.2	An imaginary experiment with light	500
15.6.3	A paradox?	501
15.6.4	'The impossible' in mathematical form	502
15.6.5	The Lorentz transformation	504
15.6.6	The gamma factor	506
15.6.7	Addition of velocities — a classical example	507
15.6.8	Addition of velocities when the speeds are relativistic	508
15.6.9	Playing with the formula	509
15.7	The fourth dimension	510
15.7.1	Definition of an 'event'	511
15.7.2	The invariant interval	512
15.7.3	Pythagoras revisited	512
15.7.4	Time as a fourth dimension	514
15.7.5	The smoking astronaut	515
15.8	A philosophical interlude	516
A historical interlude: Hendrik A. Lorentz (1852–1928)		517

Chapter 16 Relativity Part 2: Verifiable Predictions 525

16.1	Time dilation	526
16.1.1	Time dilation in action	526
16.1.2	Living on borrowed time?	527
16.2	$E = mc^2$, the most famous result of all	528
16.2.1	Bringing energy into the picture	528
16.2.2	Conservation of momentum — a thought experiment with snooker balls	529
16.2.3	Interacting with another time frame	531
16.2.4	Momentum from another frame of reference	532
16.2.5	A new look at the concept of mass	533
16.2.6	The relativistic formula for momentum	534
16.2.7	Energy in different frames of reference	536
16.2.8	High energy particle accelerators	537
16.2.9	Nuclear structure	542
16.2.10	Nuclear fusion — nature's way of powering the sun	543
16.2.11	Nuclear fission	544
16.3	The steps from symmetry to nuclear energy	545
16.4	Working with relativity	545
16.4.1	The 'recoiling gun' revisited	545
16.4.2	Radioactive decay	547
	A historical interlude: Albert Einstein (1879–1955)	549

Appendix 16.1 Deriving the relativistic formula for kinetic energy $T = mc^2 - m_0c^2$	554
Appendix 16.2 Dimensions and units of energy	556
Appendix 16.3 Relativistic analysis of the beta decay of bismuth 210	558
 Chapter 17 Epilogue	 561
17.1 Making matter out of energy	562
17.1.1 Collisions make particles	562
17.1.2 Prediction and discovery of the π meson	563
17.1.3 The forces between the particles	565
17.1.4 The laws of the world of fundamental particles	567
17.1.5 Quarks	569
17.1.6 Charm	571
17.1.7 The return of photographic emulsion	573
17.1.8 More quarks	576
17.1.9 The innermost shell of the nuclear onion	577
17.2 A unified theory of weak and electromagnetic forces	577
17.2.1 The role of light as the carrier of the electromagnetic force	577
17.2.2 Unification — the long hard road	578
17.2.3 The heavy photon	579
17.2.4 The full circle	582
 Index	 585