

YENCHING SERIES 燕京大學叢書

英文物理學原理及其應用  
PRINCIPLES OF PHYSICS AND  
THEIR MODERN APPLICATIONS

BY

CHARLES H. CORBETT  
YENCHING UNIVERSITY, PEKING

AND

YÜ-MING HSIEH

THE COMMERCIAL PRESS, LIMITED  
SHANGHAI, CHINA

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## FOREWORD

I have examined with interest and appreciation the "Principles of Physics and Their Modern Applications" by Professors Corbett and Hsieh. The book in my judgment marks a notable advance in the presentation of the subject of physical science. It is educationally sound and advanced. Instead of beginning with abstract principles and remote facts which leave the student with the impression that natural science deals with technical matters significant only in the laboratory, it begins with operations and facts which are already familiar in a practical way at least to students. Then it enables them to understand these facts and their laws and to use them intelligently. It follows an experimental method and the method of personal observation and discovery. The observations and experiments relate to life and the student's own social environment instead of to far-away matters. I believe the method which the authors have so successfully employed in their text would, if it were generally adopted, bring about *in any country* a much higher order of general intelligence, and closer connection between learning, knowledge and life. It seems to be peculiarly adapted to the intellectual and social needs of China at the present time. I congratulate the authors and the educational public on this admirable achievement.

JOHN DEWEY.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,  
NEW YORK CITY.

## PREFACE

This book has been written especially for Chinese students. It has therefore a Chinese background and introduces many illustrations of physical facts from Chinese life. In addition it explains many of the newer inventions which are now coming into use in China, or which could advantageously be introduced. It aims thus to help the student to understand his environment and at the same time to feel at home in the modern world.

The order of topics is different from that which is customary in physics books. Instead of dividing the subject rigidly into mechanics, heat, sound, light, and electricity, a *social approach* to the subject is made and the work falls into five divisions as follows: (1) *Transportation and Communication*, (2) *Water Supply and Water Power*, (3) *Adapting Ourselves to the Weather*, (4) *Aids to the Eye*, (5) *Music and Games*. In this way it is possible to make use of the natural interests of the student more easily. It is not essential that the teacher follow the order in which the book is printed. If he finds it suits the interest of the student better to begin with Part II, or Part III, or Part IV, he can do so without difficulty.

The method followed in the book is first to try to interest the student in a problem in his environment and then to give him the physical laws necessary to explain this problem. All the aspects in which the student is likely to be interested, are taken up in the same chapter, whereas if the customary order of topics were followed it would be necessary to divide up the subject and postpone some aspects till a later time, thus losing much of the interest. In this book the attempt is made to use the laws of physics to explain the conditions of human life, rather than to use life to explain physics.

The practical questions and problems which follow each chapter have been carefully chosen and many which involve the use of Chinese weights and measures are used. The metric and English systems are also used so that students who are going on to scientific work or engineering, will not be at a disadvantage through unfamiliarity with the units employed in their professional work. Each group of problems

has a distinct unity because it deals with a single subject under various aspects, and this makes it easier to get the student's attention. It is hoped that the summaries will be found useful for reviews.

This course has been worked out in China in connection with classes of Chinese students and embodies the experience of a number of years of teaching. The authors are aware, however, that the work is far from perfect and they will cordially welcome corrections of mistakes and suggestions for improvement. They gratefully acknowledge suggestions already received from Professor John Dewey, of Columbia University; Professor George R. Twiss, of Ohio State University; Mr. R. E. McFalls, of the Baldwin Locomotive Works; and Mr. John Earl Baker, adviser to the Chinese Ministry of Communications.

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YENCHING UNIVERSITY,  
PEKING, June, 1925.

# CONTENTS

## PART I. TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

SECTION		PAGE
CHAPTER I. ADVANTAGES OF RAPID TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION		
1.	Introduction . . . . .	I
2.	Changes Effected by Improved Transportation and Communication . . . . .	I
3.	Travel and Patriotism . . . . .	2
4.	Unity of Language . . . . .	2
5.	Uniform Currency . . . . .	2
6.	Uniform Weights and Measures . . . . .	4
7.	Origin of the Metric System . . . . .	4
8.	Essentials of the Metric Systems . . . . .	5
9.	Two Meanings of the Word "Weight" . . . . .	6
10.	The Meaning of the Word "Mass" . . . . .	6
11.	Mass and Inertia . . . . .	7
12.	Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	8
	Summary . . . . .	9

## CHAPTER II. VEHICLES AND ROADS

13.	Carrying. Moment of a Force . . . . .	9
14.	Sleds . . . . .	12
15.	Wheeled Vehicles . . . . .	12
16.	Tires and Springs . . . . .	12
17.	Poor Roads a Hindrance to the Use of Wheels . . . . .	13
18.	Essentials of a Good Road . . . . .	13
19.	Proper Location of Roads . . . . .	13
20.	Draining Roads . . . . .	13
21.	The Road Surface . . . . .	14
22.	Bridges and Culverts . . . . .	15
23.	Repairing of Roads . . . . .	15
24.	Laws of Friction . . . . .	16
25.	Coefficients of Friction . . . . .	16
26.	Overturning a Cart ; Center of Gravity . . . . .	17
27.	Righting a Cart ; Levers . . . . .	18

SECTION	PAGE
28. Hills; Inclined Planes . . . . .	19
29. Graphical Representation of Forces on Inclined Plane . . .	20
30. Work; Units of Work; Efficiency . . . . .	21
31. Horse Power; Watt . . . . .	22
32. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	22
Summary . . . . .	23

### CHAPTER III. BRIDGES

33. Girder Bridges . . . . .	25
34. Depth of a Beam More Important than Breadth . . . . .	26
35. Elasticity. Factor of Safety . . . . .	26
36. Hooke's Law. Young's Modulus . . . . .	28
37. Bridge Trusses . . . . .	29
38. Stresses in Bridge Trusses . . . . .	30
39. Parallelogram of Forces . . . . .	31
40. Shearing Stresses . . . . .	32
41. Cantilever Bridges . . . . .	32
42. Suspension Bridges . . . . .	33
43. Arched Bridges . . . . .	35
44. Early Use of the Arch in Chinese Bridges . . . . .	36
45. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	37
Summary . . . . .	38

### CHAPTER IV. THE BICYCLE AND THE JINRIKISHA

46. The Parts of a Bicycle . . . . .	39
47. Propulsion of a Bicycle; Crank and Axle . . . . .	40
48. The Gear of a Bicycle . . . . .	41
49. Free Wheel; Coaster Brake . . . . .	42
50. Ball Bearings . . . . .	43
51. The Bicycle Frame; Strength of Tubes . . . . .	43
52. Keeping a Bicycle Erect; Inertia . . . . .	43
53. Newton's First Law of Motion. The Law of Inertia . . . . .	45
54. Rounding a Corner; Centripetal Force . . . . .	46
55. Momentum . . . . .	47
56. Newton's Second Law of Motion . . . . .	48
57. Newton's Third Law of Motion . . . . .	48
58. Pneumatic Tires . . . . .	48
59. The Bicycle Pump. Boyle's Law . . . . .	49
60. The Jinrikisha . . . . .	49

SECTION	PAGE
61. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	50
Summary . . . . .	51

## CHAPTER V. STEAM RAILWAYS

62. Railways . . . . .	53
63. Steam Locomotives . . . . .	53
64. Driving Wheels; Valve Gears . . . . .	56
65. Kinetic Theory of Heat . . . . .	57
66. Superheaters . . . . .	58
67. Compound Cylinders . . . . .	59
68. Air Brakes . . . . .	60
69. Locomotive Accessories and Labor-Saving Devices . . . . .	61
70. Tractive Force, Hauling Capacity, and Train Resistance . . . . .	61
71. Horse Power and Efficiency of Locomotives . . . . .	63
72. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	64
Summary . . . . .	65

## CHAPTER VI. ELECTRIC RAILWAYS

73. History of Electric Railways . . . . .	66
74. Essentials of an Electric Street Railway . . . . .	67
75. What Is an Electric Current? . . . . .	67
76. The Relation Between Electricity and Magnetism . . . . .	68
77. Electromagnetic Induction . . . . .	70
78. The Direction of the Induced Current . . . . .	71
79. The Electric Generator . . . . .	73
80. Direct and Alternating Currents . . . . .	73
81. Field Magnets and Armature Core . . . . .	76
82. Field Excitation . . . . .	78
83. Armature Windings . . . . .	79
84. The Electric Motor . . . . .	80
85. Motors for Electric Railways . . . . .	81
86. Electrical Units . . . . .	83
87. Advantages of Electric over Steam Locomotives . . . . .	83
88. High Voltage Necessary for Long-Distance Transmission of Electricity . . . . .	85
89. The Transformer . . . . .	87
90. The Starting Box . . . . .	88
91. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	88
Summary . . . . .	89



## CHAPTER VII. TELEGRAPHS AND TELEPHONES

92.	History of the Telegraph . . . . .	91
93.	Essentials of the Electric Telegraph . . . . .	92
94.	The Sounder . . . . .	93
95.	The Relay . . . . .	94
96.	The Telegraph Key . . . . .	95
97.	The Voltaic Cell . . . . .	96
98.	How a Voltaic Cell Produces an Electric Current . . . . .	97
99.	How to Keep a Voltaic Cell from Polarizing . . . . .	98
100.	The Electric Telephone . . . . .	99
101.	The Microphone Transmitter . . . . .	100
102.	Local Battery Telephone System . . . . .	101
103.	Common Battery Telephone System . . . . .	102
104.	The Telephone Call Bell . . . . .	103
105.	The Telephone Condenser . . . . .	104
106.	Wireless Telegraphy . . . . .	105
107.	Electromagnetic Waves . . . . .	105
108.	How Wireless Waves Are Started . . . . .	107
109.	How a Spark Is Formed . . . . .	108
110.	Electric Oscillations . . . . .	108
111.	Receiving a Wireless Wave . . . . .	112
112.	The Crystal Detector . . . . .	113
113.	The Vacuum Tube Detector . . . . .	115
114.	The Wireless Telephone . . . . .	117
115.	Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	118
	Summary . . . . .	119

## CHAPTER VIII. THE MOTOR CAR

116.	Types of Motor Cars . . . . .	120
117.	The Internal Combustion Engine . . . . .	120
118.	The Four-Stroke Cycle . . . . .	121
119.	The Carburetor . . . . .	121
120.	Operation of the Valves . . . . .	123
121.	Ignition . . . . .	125
122.	Cooling Systems . . . . .	126
123.	The Transmission System . . . . .	128
124.	Electric Motor Cars and Storage Batteries . . . . .	129
125.	Conservation of Energy. Mechanical Equivalent of Heat . . . . .	130
126.	Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	131
	Summary . . . . .	131

## SECTION

## PAGE

## CHAPTER IX. SHIPS

127.	Transportation by Water . . . . .	132
128.	Why a Body Floats. Archimedes' Principle . . . . .	132
129.	Pressure in a Fluid . . . . .	133
130.	Stability . . . . .	134
131.	The Shape of a Ship . . . . .	135
132.	Wind-Propelled Ships . . . . .	136
133.	Ropes and Pulleys . . . . .	139
134.	Side-wheel Steamers . . . . .	140
135.	The Screw Propeller . . . . .	141
136.	Steam Turbines . . . . .	141
137.	Oil-Burning Steamers . . . . .	142
138.	Diesel Engines . . . . .	142
139.	China's Contributions to Navigation . . . . .	143
140.	Steel Ships . . . . .	145
141.	Submarines . . . . .	145
142.	Canal Locks . . . . .	146
143.	Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	146
	Summary . . . . .	147

## CHAPTER X. AIRPLANES AND AIRSHIPS

144.	Distinction Between Airplanes and Airships . . . . .	149
145.	How the Airplane Is Sustained . . . . .	149
146.	How the Airplane Is Propelled . . . . .	150
147.	An Airplane Has Six Degrees of Freedom . . . . .	151
148.	Stabilizers and Controls . . . . .	152
149.	Airplane Instruments . . . . .	154
150.	Balloons . . . . .	155
151.	Dirigible Balloons or Airships . . . . .	156
152.	Kite Balloons and Parachutes . . . . .	156
153.	Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	156
	Summary . . . . .	157

## PART II. WATER SUPPLY AND WATER POWER

## CHAPTER XI. WATER SUPPLY

154.	The Need for Water . . . . .	159
155.	Water Springs . . . . .	159

SECTION	PAGE
156. Wells . . . . .	159
157. Windlasses, Foot Pumps, and Irrigation Wheels . . . . .	162
158. The Suction Pump . . . . .	163
159. The Force Pump . . . . .	164
160. Centrifugal Pumps . . . . .	165
161. Lifting Water by Its Own Kinetic Energy. Hydraulic Rams . . . . .	165
162. Windmills . . . . .	167
163. Dry Farming; Capillarity . . . . .	168
164. Importance of Capillarity in Farming . . . . .	170
165. How Forests Conserve the Water Supply . . . . .	171
166. Laws of Capillarity . . . . .	171
167. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	171
Summary . . . . .	172

## CHAPTER XII. WATER WORKS AND FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS

168. Running Water on the Farm . . . . .	173
169. City Water Systems . . . . .	174
170. Friction in Water Pipes . . . . .	174
171. Purifying Water . . . . .	176
172. Disposal of Water . . . . .	177
173. The Principle of the Siphon . . . . .	178
174. Fighting Fires . . . . .	178
175. Chemical Fire Engines and Fire Extinguishers . . . . .	179
176. Automatic Sprinklers . . . . .	180
177. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	181
Summary . . . . .	182

## CHAPTER XIII. WATER POWER

178. Water Power a Great Natural Resource . . . . .	182
179. Potential and Kinetic Energy . . . . .	183
180. Undershot Water Wheels . . . . .	183
181. Overshot Water Wheels . . . . .	184
182. Barker's Mill. Action and Reaction . . . . .	184
183. Chinese Water Wheels . . . . .	185
184. The Pelton Wheel . . . . .	185
185. The Water Turbine . . . . .	186
186. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	187
Summary . . . . .	188

## SECTION

## PAGE

## PART III. ADAPTING OURSELVES TO THE WEATHER

CHAPTER XIV. KEEPING WARM IN WINTER  
AND COOL IN SUMMER

187.	Man a Warm-Blooded Animal . . . . .	190
188.	The Temperature Sense . . . . .	190
189.	Thermometers . . . . .	191
190.	Centigrade and Fahrenheit Scales . . . . .	191
191.	How the Temperature of the Body Is Regulated . . . . .	192
192.	Clothing: Conduction . . . . .	192
193.	Stoves: Convection and Radiation . . . . .	193
194.	Heating by Hot Air . . . . .	194
195.	Heating by Hot Water . . . . .	195
196.	Heating by Steam . . . . .	196
197.	Heating by Electricity . . . . .	196
198.	Thermostats . . . . .	196
199.	Refrigerators . . . . .	197
200.	Cold Storage and Ice Manufacture . . . . .	198
201.	Vacuum Bottles . . . . .	199
202.	Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	199
	Summary . . . . .	199

## CHAPTER XV. OBSERVING AND PREDICTING THE WEATHER

203.	How the Storm Signal Service in China Began . . . . .	200
204.	Measuring the Pressure of the Air by the Barometer . . . . .	201
205.	The Aneroid Barometer . . . . .	202
206.	Temperature and Humidity . . . . .	204
207.	Other Observations . . . . .	205
208.	Winter Weather in Eastern Asia—the Winter Monsoon . . . . .	206
209.	Summer Weather in Eastern Asia—the Summer Monsoon . . . . .	207
210.	Land Storms—Cyclones . . . . .	207
211.	Sea Storms—Typhoons . . . . .	209
212.	Rainfall . . . . .	210
213.	How the Weather Bureaus May Benefit China Still Further . . . . .	211
214.	Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	211
	Summary . . . . .	212

PART IV. EXTENDING HUMAN VISION

CHAPTER XVI. SUPPLEMENTING DAYLIGHT

215.	Advantages of Good Lighting . . . . .	214
216.	Candles and Lamps . . . . .	214
217.	Incandescent Electric Lights . . . . .	215
218.	Arrangement of Electric Lights . . . . .	215
219.	The Arc Light . . . . .	216
220.	Acetylene Lamps . . . . .	217
221.	Lighthouses . . . . .	218
222.	Automatic Lighthouses . . . . .	219
223.	Light Standards . . . . .	220
224.	Intensity of Illumination Varies Inversely as the Square of the Distance from the Source . . . . .	220
225.	Photometers . . . . .	221
226.	Electric Light Charges . . . . .	222
227.	Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	222
	Summary . . . . .	223

CHAPTER XVII. AIDS TO THE EYE

228.	What Science Has Done to Extend Human Vision . . . . .	224
229.	Mirrors . . . . .	224
230.	Spherical Mirrors . . . . .	226
231.	Formulas for Spherical Mirrors . . . . .	228
232.	Glasses . . . . .	228
233.	Images Formed by Lenses . . . . .	229
234.	Why Lenses Form Images. Refraction . . . . .	231
235.	Index of Refraction . . . . .	232
236.	Lens Formulas . . . . .	233
237.	Locating Images Graphically . . . . .	234
238.	The Eye . . . . .	234
239.	Defects of the Eye and How to Remedy Them . . . . .	235
240.	Magnifying Glass or Simple Microscope . . . . .	236
241.	Field Glasses or Binoculars . . . . .	236
242.	Astronomical and Terrestrial Telescopes . . . . .	237
243.	The Compound Microscope . . . . .	239
244.	Dispersion . . . . .	240
245.	The Spectroscope . . . . .	241
246.	Diffraction and the Wave Theory of Light . . . . .	242

SECTION	PAGE
247. The X-Ray Tube . . . . .	244
248. The Nature of X Rays . . . . .	245
249. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	245
Summary . . . . .	246

## CHAPTER XVIII. PICTURES

250. Types of Pictures . . . . .	247
251. The Photographic Camera . . . . .	248
252. How Photographs Are Made . . . . .	249
253. The Pinhole Camera . . . . .	250
254. Photo-engraving . . . . .	250
255. The Stereoscope . . . . .	251
256. The Projecting Lantern or Stereopticon . . . . .	251
257. Moving Pictures . . . . .	253
258. Scientific Uses of Moving Pictures . . . . .	253
259. Paintings . . . . .	254
260. Complementary Colors . . . . .	255
261. Three-Color Printing . . . . .	256
262. Color Blindness . . . . .	257
263. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	257
Summary . . . . .	258

## PART V. MUSIC AND GAMES

## CHAPTER XIX. MUSIC

264. Three Elements in Music . . . . .	260
265. Sound Due to Wave Motion . . . . .	261
266. Musical Scales . . . . .	264
267. Vibration Ratios in Musical Scales . . . . .	266
268. Stringed Instruments . . . . .	267
269. Intensity of Sound . . . . .	268
270. Flutes and Whistles . . . . .	268
271. Reed Instruments . . . . .	269
272. Bugles and Cornets . . . . .	269
273. Overtones . . . . .	269
274. Quality of Musical Sounds . . . . .	270
275. Harmony . . . . .	270
276. Discord . . . . .	271
277. The Phonograph . . . . .	271

SECTION	PAGE
278. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	272
Summary . . . . .	273

CHAPTER XX. GAMES AND SPORTS

279. Kites . . . . .	274
280. Scientific Uses of Kites . . . . .	275
281. Swings and Trapezes . . . . .	277
282. Center of Percussion of a Bat . . . . .	278
283. Throwing a Ball . . . . .	279
284. Formulas for Accelerated Motion . . . . .	283
285. Curved Pitching . . . . .	284
286. Swimming . . . . .	285
287. Skating; Regelation . . . . .	286
288. Spinning Tops . . . . .	287
289. Practical Questions and Problems . . . . .	289
Summary . . . . .	290

APPENDICES

A. Tables for Reference . . . . .	291
B. Formulas . . . . .	293
INDEX . . . . .	297

# THE PRINCIPLES OF PHYSICS AND THEIR MODERN APPLICATIONS

## PART I. TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

### CHAPTER I

#### ADVANTAGES OF RAPID TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION

**1. Introduction.** We shall begin our studies with transportation and communication because here are some modern applications of physics which are of great importance to China to-day in promoting national unity and strength. In ancient times empires were built up and maintained with no swifter methods of travel than horses on land and ships propelled by sails or oars at sea, and with no more rapid means of communication than beacons lighted on the tops of mountains to announce the approach of an enemy. But methods which were sufficient for an empire where the parts were held together by the power of the ruler, are quite inadequate for a great republic where the people govern themselves and decide their own affairs. For, when communication is slow, unity of action in a large country becomes difficult if not impossible, and the nation is weakened by sectional differences. The republics of ancient times were comparatively small, because large republics could not exist. The great, strong, and unified modern republics are made possible by the modern methods of rapid transportation and communication.

**2. Changes Effectuated by Improved Transportation and Communication.** Modern methods of transportation and communication have only recently been introduced into China but already they are effecting great changes. Telegraphs now form a network all over China, and if an earthquake or a typhoon occurs in one province, the fact is at once telegraphed to all the other provinces, and printed in the newspapers, and the railroads and steamships are soon bringing relief. Formerly one part of the country might be suffering from famine while other parts had an abundant harvest, yet transportation was so slow that grain could not be moved



quickly enough to save the starving people. Now the railroads have changed these conditions and famines are no longer as serious as they used to be. The people of the different provinces take much more interest in each other than they used to do, and there is a growing sense of national unity, and a developing public opinion.

**3. Travel and Patriotism.** China is a country of broad plains, stately rivers, lofty mountains, extensive plateaus, magnificent gorges, beautiful lakes, and many other notable natural features of great scenic value. There are also many splendid relics of the past such as the Great Wall, the tombs of the sages, the palaces of the emperors, and countless temples, pagodas, and arches which possess great historic interest. In the past the number of persons who could visit and enjoy these scenes was comparatively small, but as travel increases, these will be more and more appreciated. They will be visited more frequently, and will be pictured and described till every school child knows about them and feels that they are part of his national heritage. Travel will thus become a means of developing patriotism, and of helping people to appreciate the greatness of their country.

**4. Unity of Language.** When travelers were few, it did not matter much that the people of the south and those of the north could not understand each other when they talked, but now that travel is more convenient and rapid, many people are passing to and fro, and they are finding these differences of dialect intolerable. So efforts are being made to get a common language that will be understood in every part of the republic, and this will still further help to develop national unity and strength.

**5. Uniform Currency.** The reform of the currency is another change which has been made necessary by improved means of transportation. Formerly when a man started out to travel in China he took his money with him in the form of silver ingots which had to be cut in pieces and weighed when a purchase was made. This was very inconvenient, especially because each place had a different standard of weight. With the increase of the volume of travel, silver dollars came into use in China and these were much more convenient than silver ingots, but travelers still suffered a great deal of annoyance because there were so many different kinds of dollars and those which were preferred in one province were not wanted in another. Hence there arose a demand for a uniform currency that would be accepted anywhere in the republic, and that demand is being met by the new silver coinage.