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Encyclopedia of Mathematical Physics (Volume 5)



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国外优秀数学著作
原版系列

数学物理大百科全书 (第5卷)

Francoise, J. P. (弗朗索瓦斯) Naber, G. L. (纳伯) Tsou Sheung Tsun (孙圣周) 著



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Jean-Pierre Francoise, Gregory L. Naber, and Tsou Sheung Tsun

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FOREWORD

In bygone centuries, our physical world appeared to be filled to the brim with mysteries. Divine powers could provide for genuine miracles; water and sunlight could turn arid land into fertile pastures, but the same powers could lead to miseries and disasters. The force of life, the *vis vitalis*, was assumed to be the special agent responsible for all living things. The heavens, whatever they were for, contained stars and other heavenly bodies that were the exclusive domain of the Gods.

Mathematics did exist, of course. Indeed, there was one aspect of our physical world that was recognised to be controlled by precise, mathematical logic: the geometric structure of space, elaborated to become a genuine form of art by the ancient Greeks. From my perspective, the Greeks were the first practitioners of ‘mathematical physics’, when they discovered that all geometric features of space could be reduced to a small number of axioms. Today, these would be called ‘fundamental laws of physics’. The fact that the flow of *time* could be addressed with similar exactitude, and that it could be handled geometrically together with space, was only recognised much later. And, yes, there were a few crazy people who were interested in the magic of numbers, but the real world around us seemed to contain so much more that was way beyond our capacities of analysis.

Gradually, all this changed. The Moon and the planets appeared to follow geometrical laws. Galilei and Newton managed to identify their logical rules of motion, and by noting that the concept of mass could be applied to things in the sky just like apples and cannon balls on Earth, they made the sky a little bit more accessible to us. Electricity, magnetism, light and sound were also found to behave in complete accordance with mathematical equations.

Yet all of this was just a beginning. The real changes came with the twentieth century. A completely new way of thinking, by emphasizing mathematical, logical analysis rather than empirical evidence, was pioneered by Albert Einstein. Applying advanced mathematical concepts, only known to a few pure mathematicians, to notions as mundane as space and time, was new to the physicists of his time. Einstein himself had a hard time struggling through the logic of connections and curvatures, notions that were totally new to him, but are only too familiar to students of mathematical physics today. Indeed, there is no better testimony of Einstein’s deep insights at that time, than the fact that we now teach these things regularly in our university classrooms.

Special and general relativity are only small corners of the realm of modern physics that is presently being studied using advanced mathematical methods. We have notoriously complex subjects such as phase transitions in condensed matter physics, superconductivity, Bose–Einstein condensation, the quantum Hall effect, particularly the fractional quantum Hall effect, and numerous topics from elementary particle physics, ranging from fibre bundles and renormalization groups to supergravity, algebraic topology, superstring theory, Calabi–Yau spaces and what not, all of which require the utmost of our mental skills to comprehend them.

The most bewildering observation that we make today is that it seems that our *entire* physical world appears to be controlled by mathematical equations, and these are not just sloppy and debatable models, but precisely documented properties of materials, of systems, and of phenomena in all echelons of our universe.

Does this really apply to our entire world, or only to parts of it? Do features, notions, entities exist that are emphatically *not* mathematical? What about intuition, or dreams, and what about consciousness? What about religion? Here, most of us would say, one should not even try to apply mathematical analysis, although even here, some brave social scientists are making attempts at coordinating rational approaches.

No, there are clear and important differences between the physical world and the mathematical world. Where the physical world stands out is the fact that it refers to ‘reality’, whatever ‘reality’ is. Mathematics is the world of pure logic and pure reasoning. In physics, it is the experimental evidence that ultimately decides whether a theory is acceptable or not. Also, the methodology in physics is different.

A beautiful example is the serendipitous discovery of superconductivity. In 1911, the Dutch physicist Heike Kamerlingh Onnes was the first to achieve the liquefaction of helium, for which a temperature below 4.25 K had to be realized. Heike decided to measure the specific conductivity of mercury, a metal that is frozen solid at such low temperatures. But something appeared to go wrong during the measurements, since the volt meter did not show any voltage at all. All experienced physicists in the team assumed that they were dealing with a malfunction. It would not have been the first time for a short circuit to occur in the electrical equipment, but, this time, in spite of several efforts, they failed to locate it. One of the assistants was responsible for keeping the temperature of the sample well within that of liquid helium, a dull job, requiring nothing else than continuously watching some dials. During one of the many tests, however, he dozed off. The temperature rose, and suddenly the measurements showed the normal values again. It then occurred to the investigators that the effect and its temperature dependence were completely reproducible. Below 4.19 degrees Kelvin the conductivity of mercury appeared to be strictly infinite. Above that temperature, it is finite, and the transition is a very sudden one. Superconductivity was discovered (D. van Delft, “Heike Kamerling Onnes”, Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, Amsterdam, 2005 (in Dutch)).

This is not the way mathematical discoveries are made. Theorems are not produced by assistants falling asleep, even if examples do exist of incidents involving some miraculous fortune.

The hybrid science of mathematical physics is a very curious one. Some of the topics in this Encyclopedia are undoubtedly physical. High T_c superconductivity, breaking water waves, and magneto-hydrodynamics, are definitely topics of physics where experimental data are considered more decisive than any high-brow theory. Cohomology theory, Donaldson–Witten theory, and AdS/CFT correspondence, however, are examples of purely mathematical exercises, even if these subjects, like all of the others in this compilation, are strongly inspired by, and related to, questions posed in physics.

It is inevitable, in a compilation of a large number of short articles with many different authors, to see quite a bit of variation in style and level. In this Encyclopedia, theoretical physicists as well as mathematicians together made a huge effort to present in a concise and understandable manner their vision on numerous important issues in advanced mathematical physics. All include references for further reading. We hope and expect that these efforts will serve a good purpose.

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PREFACE

Mathematical Physics as a distinct discipline is relatively new. The International Association of Mathematical Physics was founded only in 1976. The interaction between physics and mathematics has, of course, existed since ancient times, but the recent decades, perhaps partly because we are living through them, appear to have witnessed tremendous progress, yielding new results and insights at a dizzying pace, so much so that an encyclopedia seems now needed to collate the gathered knowledge.

Mathematical Physics brings together the two great disciplines of Mathematics and Physics to the benefit of both, the relationship between them being symbiotic. On the one hand, it uses mathematics as a tool to organize physical ideas of increasing precision and complexity, and on the other it draws on the questions that physicists pose as a source of inspiration to mathematicians. A classical example of this relationship exists in Einstein's theory of relativity, where differential geometry played an essential role in the formulation of the physical theory while the problems raised by the ensuing physics have in turn boosted the development of differential geometry. It is indeed a happy coincidence that we are writing now a preface to an encyclopedia of mathematical physics in the centenary of Einstein's *annus mirabilis*.

The project of putting together an encyclopedia of mathematical physics looked, and still looks, to us a formidable enterprise. We would never have had the courage to undertake such a task if we did not believe, first, that it is worthwhile and of benefit to the community, and second, that we would get the much-needed support from our colleagues. And this support we did get, in the form of advice, encouragement, and practical help too, from members of our Editorial Advisory Board, from our authors, and from others as well, who have given unstintingly so much of their time to help us shape this Encyclopedia.

Mathematical Physics being a relatively new subject, it is not yet clearly delineated and could mean different things to different people. In our choice of topics, we were guided in part by the programs of recent International Congresses on Mathematical Physics, but mainly by the advice from our Editorial Advisory Board and from our authors. The limitations of space and time, as well as our own limitations, necessitated the omission of certain topics, but we have tried to include all that we believe to be core subjects and to cover as much as possible the most active areas.

Our subject being interdisciplinary, we think it appropriate that the Encyclopedia should have certain special features. Applications of the same mathematical theory, for instance, to different problems in physics will have different emphasis and treatment. By the same token, the same problem in physics can draw upon resources from different mathematical fields. This is why we divide the Encyclopedia into two broad sections: physics subjects and related mathematical subjects. Articles in either section are deliberately allowed a fair amount of overlap with one another and many articles will appear under more than one heading, but all are linked together by elaborate cross referencing. We think this gives a better picture of the subject as a whole and will serve better a community of researchers from widely scattered yet related fields.

The Encyclopedia is intended primarily for experienced researchers but should be of use also to beginning graduate students. For the latter category of readers, we have included eight elementary introductory articles for easy reference, with those on mathematics aimed at physics graduates and those on physics aimed at mathematics graduates, so that these articles can serve as their first port of call to enable them to embark on any of the main articles without the need to consult other material beforehand. In fact, we think these articles may even form the

foundation of advanced undergraduate courses, as we know that some authors have already made such use of them.

In addition to the printed version, an on-line version of the Encyclopedia is planned, which will allow both the contents and the articles themselves to be updated if and when the occasion arises. This is probably a necessary provision in such a rapidly advancing field.

This project was some four years in the making. Our foremost thanks at its completion go to the members of our Editorial Advisory Board, who have advised, helped and encouraged us all along, and to all our authors who have so generously devoted so much of their time to writing these articles and given us much useful advice as well. We ourselves have learnt a lot from these colleagues, and made some wonderful contacts with some among them. Special thanks are due also to Arthur Greenspoon whose technical expertise was indispensable.

The project was started with Academic Press, which was later taken over by Elsevier. We thank warmly members of their staff who have made this transition admirably seamless and gone on to assist us greatly in our task: both Carey Chapman and Anne Guillaume, who were in charge of the whole project and have been with us since the beginning, and Edward Taylor responsible for the copy-editing. And Martin Ruck, who manages to keep an overwhelming amount of details constantly at his fingertips, and who is never known to have lost a single email, deserves a very special mention.

As a postscript, we would like to express our gratitude to the very large number of authors who generously agreed to donate their honorariums to support the Committee for Developing Countries of the European Mathematical Society in their work to help our less fortunate colleagues in the developing world.

Jean-Pierre Franoise
Gregory L. Naber
Tsou Sheung Tsun

GUIDE TO USE OF THE ENCYCLOPEDIA

Structure of the Encyclopedia

The material in this Encyclopedia is organised into two sections. At the start of Volume 1 are eight **Introductory Articles**. The introductory articles on mathematics are aimed at physics graduates; those on physics are aimed at mathematics graduates. It is intended that these articles should serve as the first port of call for graduate students, to enable them to embark on any of the main entries without the need to consult other material beforehand.

Following the Introductory Articles, the main body of the Encyclopedia is arranged as a series of entries in alphabetical order. These entries fill the remainder of Volume 1 and all of the subsequent volumes (2–5).

To help you realize the full potential of the material in the Encyclopedia we have provided four features to help you find the topic of your choice: a contents list by subject, an alphabetical contents list, cross-references, and a full subject index.

1. Contents List by Subject

Your first point of reference will probably be the contents list by subject. This list appears at the front of each volume, and groups the entries under subject headings describing the broad themes of mathematical physics. This will enable the reader to make quick connections between entries and to locate the entry of interest. The contents list by subject is divided into two main sections: *Physics Subjects* and *Related Mathematics Subjects*. Under each main section heading, you will find several subject areas (such as GENERAL RELATIVITY in Physics Subjects or NONCOMMUTATIVE GEOMETRY in Related Mathematics Subjects). Under each subject area is a list of those entries that cover aspects of that subject, together with the volume and page numbers on which these entries may be found.

Because mathematical physics is so highly interconnected, individual entries may appear under more than one subject area. For example, the entry GAUGE THEORY: MATHEMATICAL APPLICATIONS is listed under the Physics Subject GAUGE THEORY as well as in a broad range of Related Mathematics Subjects.

2. Alphabetical Contents List

The alphabetical contents list, which also appears at the front of each volume, lists the entries in the order in which they appear in the Encyclopedia. This list provides both the volume number and the page number of the entry.

You will find “dummy entries” where obvious synonyms exist for entries or where we have grouped together related topics. Dummy entries appear in both the contents list and the body of the text.

Example

If you were attempting to locate material on path integral methods via the alphabetical contents list:

PATH INTEGRAL METHODS *see* Functional Integration in Quantum Physics; Feynman Path Integrals

The dummy entry directs you to two other entries in which path integral methods are covered. At the appropriate locations in the contents list, the volume and page numbers for these entries are given.

If you were trying to locate the material by browsing through the text and you had looked up Path Integral Methods, then the following information would be provided in the dummy entry:

Path Integral Methods <i>see</i> Functional Integration in Quantum Physics; Feynman Path Integrals

3. Cross-References

All of the articles in the Encyclopedia have been extensively cross-referenced. The cross-references, which appear at the end of an entry, serve three different functions:

- i. To indicate if a topic is discussed in greater detail elsewhere.
- ii. To draw the reader's attention to parallel discussions in other entries.
- iii. To indicate material that broadens the discussion.

Example

The following list of cross-references appears at the end of the entry STOCHASTIC HYDRODYNAMICS

See also: Cauchy Problem for Burgers-Type Equations; Hamiltonian Fluid Dynamics; Incompressible Euler Equations: Mathematical Theory; Malliavin Calculus; Non-Newtonian Fluids; Partial Differential Equations: Some Examples; Stochastic Differential Equations; Turbulence Theories; Viscous Incompressible Fluids: Mathematical Theory; Vortex Dynamics

Here you will find examples of all three functions of the cross-reference list: a topic discussed in greater detail elsewhere (e.g. Incompressible Euler Equations: Mathematical Theory), parallel discussion in other entries (e.g. Stochastic Differential Equations) and reference to entries that broaden the discussion (e.g. Turbulence Theories).

The eight Introductory Articles are not cross-referenced from any of the main entries, as it is expected that introductory articles will be of general interest. As mentioned above, the Introductory Articles may be found at the start of Volume 1.

4. Index

The index will provide you with the volume and page number where the material is located. The index entries differentiate between material that is a whole entry, is part of an entry, or is data presented in a figure or table. Detailed notes are provided on the opening page of the index.

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