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C. DEWITT / B. DREYFUS / P.G. DE GENNES

low-temperature physics

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low-temperature physics

Conduction Electrons — Superconductivity
Helium — Magnetism — Mössbauer Effect
Defects and Irradiation

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DURING THE 1961 SESSION OF THE
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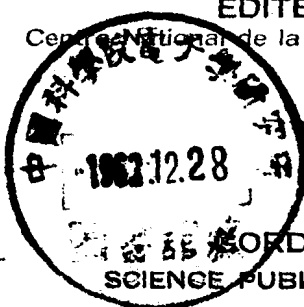
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Cécile DeWitt

Directrice, Ecole d'été de Physique Théorique

Les Houches

TABLE DES MATIERES

CONTENTS

A.B. PIPPARD

THE DYNAMICS OF CONDUCTION ELECTRONS

<i>Introduction: apologia and bibliographical notes.</i>	3
I. <i>Motion of an Electron in One Dimension</i>	4
Kronig—Penney model, two-wave approximation, energy gaps, equations of motion, reduced and periodically extended zone schemes.	
II. <i>Motion of an Electron in Three Dimensions</i>	11
A. The free electron	11
boundary conditions, density of states, electrical conductivity, Lorentz force, energy levels in a magnetic field, magnetoresistance, de Haas—van Alphen effect.	
B. Electrons in a crystal lattice	25
nature of wavefunctions, pseudo-potential approximation, Bloch functions, reciprocal lattice, atomic cells and Brillouin zones, remapping of energy surfaces.	
C. Dynamics of an Electron (No Magnetic Field).	33
particle velocity, equations of motion, effective mass, density of states, specific heat.	
III. <i>The Boltzmann Transport Equation</i>	36
derivation, solution for uniform field and temperature gradient	
Hard Fermi Surface method, electrical and thermal conductivity, thermoelectric effects, Wiedemann—Franz Law, elastic and inelastic collisions.	
IV. <i>Boundaries and Size Effects</i>	46
laws of reflexion and refraction, stacking fault, experiment of Friedman and Koenig, surface reflexion and scattering, conduction in thin wire.	

V. <i>Spatially Varying Electric Field</i>	51
Fourier components of transverse conductivity, average related to area of Fermi surface, violations of Uncertainty Principle, longitudinal conductivity, plasma oscillations, non-local relation between field and current.	
VI. <i>The Anomalous Skin Effect</i>	58
general theory, retardation effects, Holstein limit, field diffusion in "perfect conductor," surface reflexion and scattering, determination of Fermi surfaces.	
VII. <i>Interactions between Electrons</i>	71
plasma modes, screening, excitations, definition of Fermi surface, stability of excitations, model of an excitation, currents caused by screened particles, effective charge, influence of interactions on the anomalous skin effect, susceptibility, and Wiedemann—Franz Law.	
VIII. <i>Dynamics of an Electron in a Magnetic Field</i>	81
orbits in real and k -space, classification of orbits, enumeration of electrons and holes, cyclotron frequency, quantization of orbits.	
IX. <i>Magnetoresistance and Related Galvanomagnetic Effects</i>	90
Kohler's rule, quadratic effects in a cubic metal, magnetoresistance positive, two-band model, high field behaviour, conditions for saturation of transverse magnetoresistance, limit of Hall effect, topological application of magnetoresistance, longitudinal magnetoresistance, thermal resistance, Reghi—Leduc effect.	
X. <i>The de Haas—van Alphen and Associated Effects</i>	101
semi-classical general theory, importance of extremal areas, factors influencing the amplitude, determination of Fermi surfaces, observations on noble metals, effective charge, oscillations of density of states, Schubnikov effect.	
XI. <i>Acoustic Attenuation</i>	110
A. <i>General Principles</i>	110
adiabatic deformations, deformation parameter, relaxation theory of elastic modulus, properties of the parameter D_{ij} , insufficiency of relaxation time assumption, screening in longitudinal and transverse waves, general theory for arbitrary free path, behaviour in the limit of long free path, failure of transverse screening, relation to electron-phonon interactions, thermal conductivity of alloys.	
B. <i>Magneto-acoustic Effects</i>	123
oscillations in transverse field due to closed orbits, application to Fermi surface determination, resonance in transverse field due to periodic open orbits, absorption edges in a longitudinal field, absorption edges in a nearly transverse field.	

XII. <i>Cyclotron Resonance</i>	129
Azbel'—Kaner effect, approximate theory, resonance at limiting point, applications, Galt effect.	

Appendices

1. The Kronig-Penney δ -function model	140
2. The 2-wave approximation	141
3. Momentum in a magnetic field	142
4. Shift of origin in k -space	143
5. Conduction in a thin wire	144
6. Relaxation and elasticity	145

M. TINKHAM

SUPERCONDUCTIVITY

I. <i>Basic Properties of Superconductors</i>	149
A. Perfect conductivity	149
B. Perfect diamagnetism	150
C. Thermodynamic properties	150
II. <i>Early Theories</i>	152
A. Two-fluid model	152
B. Perfect conductivity model	153
C. London theory	154
D. Gorter—Casimir—London theory	156
E. Introduction of the vector potential in superconductivity theory	158
III. <i>More Recent Developments</i>	160
A. Isotope effect	161
B. Pippard's non-local modification of the London theory	161
C. Energy gap in electromagnetic absorption	167
D. Ferrell—Glover sum rule	170
IV. <i>Bardeen—Cooper—Schrieffer Theory — Equilibrium Properties</i> ...	176
A. Introduction	176
B. BCS solution for the ground state	180
C. Excitations from the BCS ground state	184
D. Minimization of free energy	187
V. <i>Alternate Formulations of the BCS Theory</i>	192
A. The Anderson pseudospin formulation	192
B. The Bogoliubov—Valatin transformation	200
C. The Anderson theory of dirty superconductors	202

VI. <i>BCS Theory — Dynamic Properties of Superconductors</i>	204
A. Coherence effects in matrix elements	204
B. Transition probabilities and energy absorption	206
C. Electrodynamic properties	211
D. Persistent currents	216
VII. <i>Ginzburg—Landau—Gor'kov Theory and Related Topics</i>	218
A. Formulation of the theory	218
B. Applications to bulk samples	221
C. Application to thin films and small specimens	223
D. Persistence of superconductivity across intermetallic boundaries	227
<i>References</i>	228
<i>Appendix by C. Kittel</i>	
Quantized Magnetic Flux in Superconductors	228

H. SUHL

MAGNETISM AND SUPERCONDUCTIVITY

<i>Introduction</i>	233
I. <i>The Question of Uniform Spin Polarization in Superconductors</i> ..	234
II. <i>Attempts to Explain the Observed Spin Polarization</i>	238
A. Parallel spin pairing	238
B. Spin-orbit coupling combined with surface scattering	241
C. Extension of the B.C.S. theory to finite density	243
D. Other attempts	244
III. <i>Impurities, Especially Magnetic Impurities, in Superconductors</i> ..	244
A. Procedural questions	246
B. The Hartree—Fock equations generalized to superconductors ..	248
C. "Localized" superconductivity	256
D. Multiple scattering	258
<i>Appendix</i>	
Spin Ordering in Superconductors	258
<i>References</i>	260

J. BEENAKKER

PROPERTIES OF HELIUM 3 AND 4

I. <i>The Similarity between ^3He and ^4He</i>	263
1. The interaction between two atoms	263
2. The law of corresponding states	264
II. <i>Superfluidity in ^4He II</i>	266
1. Some experimental data	266
2. The two-fluid model	267
3. The Landau excitation spectrum	269
4. The Landau argument for superfluidity	271
5. The background of the two-fluid model	272
6. Feynman's arguments for the scarcity of low lying energy states	273
7. The character of the lambda point	274
III. <i>The Flowproperties of Helium II</i>	275
1. The equations of motion	275
2. The flow through capillaries — Introduction	277
3. The flow through capillaries at intermediate velocities	279
4. The flow through capillaries at high velocities	280
IV. <i>Rotation of the Superfluid</i>	281
1. Introduction	281
2. The experimental evidence for the existence of vortices	283
3. Experimental evidence for quantized circulation	284
4. Final conclusions	285
V. <i>The Transport Properties of the Excitation Gas.</i>	285
1. Experimental data	285
2. A qualitative interpretation of the viscosity	285
3. An illustration of the excitation gas model on the viscosity of dilute ^3He — ^4He mixtures	287
VI. <i>The Properties of Liquid ^3He</i>	288
1. Experimental data	288
2. The ideal Fermi—Dirac gas	290
3. Landau's Fermi liquid model	292
VII. <i>Liquid Mixtures of ^3He and ^4He</i>	295
1. The phase diagram	295
2. The thermodynamic data	298
3. Pomeranchuk excitation spectrum for dilute solutions	302
<i>Literature</i>	304

A. HERPIN

MAGNETISME

I. <i>Introduction — Théorie Classique</i>	309
1. La théorie du paramagnétisme de Langevin	309
2. La théorie du ferromagnétisme de Weiss	311
3. Champ moléculaire local	312
4. Le champ moléculaire négatif	314
II. <i>Les Moments Magnetiques</i>	319
1. Théorie classique	319
2. Moments magnétiques atomiques	322
3. Théorèmes de Kramers	324
4. Cas des terres rares et du groupe du fer	325
III. <i>La Théorie de Heisenberg</i>	327
1. La molécule H_2	327
2. Généralisation à un cristal	330
3. La théorie des bandes	332
IV. <i>Le Superechange</i>	334
1. La théorie de Van Vleck	335
2. La théorie d'Anderson	338
V. <i>Anisotropie Magnétique</i>	344
VI. <i>Les Ondes de Spin</i>	351
1. Formalisme de Holstein—Primakoff	352
2. Conséquences des ondes de spin	355
3. Théorie semi-classique des ondes de spin	358
4. Influence du champ extérieur, de l'anisotropie et du couplage dipolaire	360
VII. <i>Antiferromagnétisme</i>	366
1. Les différents types d'antiferromagnétiques	366
2. Les antiferromagnétiques à deux sous-réseaux	373
3. Helimagnétisme	381
4. Les ondes de spin dans les antiferromagnétiques	383
VIII. <i>Structures Magnétiques Particulières</i>	393
1. Le ferromagnétisme faible	393
2. Structures magnétiques des métaux de terre rare	396
IX. <i>Le Ferrimagnétisme</i>	402
1. Les ferrites	404
2. Couplage triangulaire de Yaffet et Kittel	406

L. NEEL

PROPRIÉTÉS DES GRAINS FINS ANTIFERROMAGNÉTIQUES

1. Avant-propos	413
A. Généralités sur l'antiferromagnétisme	413
2. Interactions et champ moléculaire. 3. Cas des températures élevées. 4. Cas des basses températures. 5. Susceptibilité perpendiculaire. 6. Susceptibilité parallèle. 7. L'énergie magnétocristalline et son rôle. 8. Découplage. 9. Hélimagnétisme. 10. Propriétés magnétiques de NiO à l'état massif. 11. Propriétés magnétiques des grains très fins de NiO.	
B. Superparamagnétisme des grains fins antiferromagnétiques	420
12. Structure des grains très fins. 13. Le superparamagnétisme des grains ultra-fins. 14. Blocage de l'orientation des moments. 15. Aimantation thermorémanente. 16. Comparaison avec l'expérience. 17. Origine du blocage des moments magnétiques des grains. 18. L'énergie mag- nétocristalline de surface comme cause de blocage. 19. Arguments expérimentaux en faveur d'un blocage dû à une énergie de surface.	
C. Superantiferromagnétisme de grains fins antiferromagnétiques	429
20. Propriétés magnétiques de grains antiferromagnétiques relativement gros. 21. Équilibre dans un champ magnétique des moments des plans réticulaires actifs d'un grain. 22. La notion de moment d'extrémité. 23. Cas où le champ est de l'ordre de $4n_1 M/n$. 24. Résolution de l'équation différentielle. 25. Résultats numériques. 26. Cas où le moment d'extrémité diffère de $M/2$. 27. Variation du moment magnétique des plans réticulaires actifs en fonction de leur distance à la surface du grain. 28. Moment d'extrémité. 29. Rôle des grains contenant un nombre impair de plans réticulaire actifs. 30. Diminu- tion éventuelle du moment permanent des grains ultra-fins par effet de surface.	

C. KITTEL

MAGNONS

I. Ferromagnetic Magnons	443
A. Holstein—Primakoff transformation	444
B. Spin-wave variables	445
C. Hamiltonian in spin-wave variables	446
D. Magnon exchange interactions	447
E. Magnon heat capacity	448
F. Magnetization reversal	449
II. Antiferromagnetic Magnons	450
A. Zero-point energy	453
B. Zero-point sublattice magnetization	453
C. Heat capacity	454
D. Temperature dependence of sublattice magnetization	454

III. <i>Macroscopic Magnon Theory</i>	455
A. Representation of the exchange energy	459
B. Surface correction	462
C. Classical macroscopic treatment based on the torque equation	462
D. Zero-point amplitude	464
IV. <i>Excitation of Spin Waves in Ferromagnets</i>	464
A. Parallel pumping	465
B. Magnon-phonon coupling	467
C. Elementary theory of magnon exchange interactions	469
D. Magnetostatic modes	471
V. <i>Magnon Relaxation</i>	472
A. Uniform Mode	472
B. Three-magnon dipolar intrinsic relaxation	475

A. ABRAGAM

L'EFFET MÖSSBAUER ET SES APPLICATIONS A L'ETUDE DES CHAMPS INTERNES

I. <i>L'effet Mössbauer</i>	481
1. Introduction	481
2. Section efficace d'excitation par résonance	483
II. <i>Théorie de l'effet Mössbauer</i>	486
1. Introduction	486
2. Formulation mathématique de l'effet Mössbauer	487
3. Règle de somme	488
4. Section efficace d'absorption	489
5. Calcul du coefficient f de Mössbauer	491
6. Expression générale du spectre d'absorption, formule de Lamb	493
7. Approximation des liaisons faibles	494
8. Quelques considérations sur la réduction de l'effet Doppler par le mouvement	495
9. L'approximation du couplage fort	498
III. <i>L'effet des Ultrasons</i>	500
1. Traitement quantique	500
2. Traitement classique	501
3. Lien entre les deux formalismes	502

IV. Application de L'Effet Mössbauer à L'Etude des Structures Hyperfines	502
1. Généralités sur les structures hyperfines	502
A. Déplacement dû au rayon fini du noyau	503
B. L'interaction quadrupolaire	505
C. Les interactions magnétiques	509
V. Bref Rappel de Quelques Propriétés du Rayonnement γ	512
VI. Le Fer ^{57}Fe	515
VII. L'Effet Mössbauer dans L'Etain ^{119}Sn	543
Etude des champs internes dans les métaux et alliages ferromagnétiques	548

J. FRIEDEL

DEFAUTS PONCTUELS ET IRRADIATION

1. Introduction	551
-1.1 Les défauts ponctuels	551
-1.2 Modes de production	552
1.2.1 Défauts stables à basse température; 1.2.2 Irradiation; 1.2.3 Ecrouissage; 1.2.4 Température	
-1.3 Conclusion	560
2. Défauts Ponctuels dans les Métaux	560
-2.1 Structure atomique	561
2.1.1 Modèle élastique simple; 2.1.2 Modèles atomiques;	
-2.2 Structure électronique	564
2.2.1 Seitz et Huntington; 2.2.2 Resistivité; 2.2.3 Energies de formation; 2.2.4 Energies d'interaction chimique	
-2.3 Valeurs expérimentales	571
2.3.1 Hautes températures; 2.3.2 Trempes	
-2.4 Diffusion	574
2.4.1 Loi d'Einstein; 2.4.2 Autodiffusion; 2.4.3 Potentiel chimique. Forces élastiques et électriques; 2.4.4 Potentiel chimique. Loi de Fick; 2.4.5 Diffusion d'impuretés de substitution; 2.4.6 Diffusion superficielle, intergranulaire et le long des dislocations	
3. Défauts Ponctuels dans les Solides Covalents	581
-3.1 Structure atomique	582
-3.2 Structure électronique	583
3.2.1 Modèle de James et Lark Horowitz; 3.2.2 Critiques du modèle; 3.2.3 Analyses théoriques	

4. Solides ioniques	590
-4.1 Structure	591
4.1.1 Lacunes; 4.1.2 Centres colorés associés à des lacunes isolées; 4.1.3 Interstitiels; 4.1.4 Associations	
-4.2 Production thermique	597
4.2.1 Centres optiquement inactifs; 4.2.2 Centres colorés	
5. Irradiations et Trempe	599
-5.1 Processus de déplacements atomiques	599
5.1.1 Effet Wigner classique; 5.1.2 Effets thermiques; 5.1.3 Remplacements. Collisions focalisées. Pointes de déplacement; 5.1.4 Création de défauts ponctuels dans les solides ioniques par irradiation	
-5.2 Processus de revenu	612
5.2.1 Revenus après trempes; 5.2.2 Revenus après irradiations de basses températures	
-5.3 Propriétés plastiques	622
5.3.1 Durcissement de trempe; 5.3.2 Durcissement d'irradiation	
References Générales	627
INDEX (English)	629
(Français)	635

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The Dynamics of Conduction Electrons

INTRODUCTION

The course which follows is not a systematic course in the theory of metals; it is not even a systematic course on transport phenomena in metals. This would involve considerable discussion of mathematical methods and I should not dare to instruct would-be theoreticians in the technical mysteries of their craft. But I hope in the following pages to reveal the physical processes involved in electronic phenomena by the use of only elementary mathematics. Necessarily there are approximations and crudities, but these can be corrected by more sophisticated treatments when the necessity arises. For the most part I think my semi-classical methods are adequate as working tools, and sufficiently close to the experimenter's view of the problem to keep the discussion firmly tied to the brute facts whose elucidation is the ultimate aim. Some of the topics are essentially straightforward and have always been recognized as such. Others, such as spatially varying fields and acoustic attenuation, are not yet part of the standard curriculum. Yet others, particularly the de Haas—van Alphen effect and galvanomagnetic phenomena, have in the past been peculiarly the preserve of professional theorists and reputedly difficult to understand. But the development in recent years of a more geometrical approach to these problems (the approach which sees a surface of constant energy in k -space as a shape in its own right, and not simply the solution of an equation $\epsilon(k) = \text{const.}$) has made it possible to strip the theory of many unnecessary pretensions and to disclose a basic structure which is not too incomprehensible. It is said that Plato wrote above the door of his Academy "Let none ignorant of geometry enter." This I too would choose as my motto. Not that I wish to return to the language of Newton's Principia or ask the student to recollect what he used to know of Projective Geometry; but I wish him to think of shapes and connections, and to picture the trajectories of electrons as lines in space and not as solutions of a differential equation, in short to be a geometer rather than an analyst. It may be that ultimately he will find that he must formulate his problems analytically in order to obtain a complete solution. I cannot help him here; but I hope I can help in the preliminary stages of his work to see what sort of solution he may look for.

I have found sufficient material for a long course of lectures in this special approach to the subject, and am very conscious of the lack of balance which has resulted. I have touched only lightly, and I fear imperfectly, on many topics of fundamental importance, such as the nature of the wave-functions of conduction electrons, and the difficulties of calculating them from first prin-

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