

# CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF BOXES</b>	xvii
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xx
<b>FOREWORD TO THE 2017 EDITION</b>	xxiii
<b>PREFACE TO THE 2017 EDITION</b>	xxxiii
<b>PREFACE</b>	xlvi
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	li

---

## **Part I SPACETIME PHYSICS 1**

<b>1. Geometrodynamics in Brief</b>	<b>3</b>
1. The Parable of the Apple	3
2. Spacetime With and Without Coordinates	5
3. Weightlessness	13
4. Local Lorentz Geometry, With and Without Coordinates	19
5. Time	23
6. Curvature	29
7. Effect of Matter on Geometry	37

---

## **Part II PHYSICS IN FLAT SPACETIME 45**

<b>2. Foundations of Special Relativity</b>	<b>47</b>
1. Overview	47
2. Geometric Objects	48
3. Vectors	49
4. The Metric Tensor	51
5. Differential Forms	53
6. Gradients and Directional Derivatives	59
7. Coordinate Representation of Geometric Objects	60
8. The Centrifuge and the Photon	63
9. Lorentz Transformations	66
10. Collisions	69

<b>3. The Electromagnetic Field</b>	<b>71</b>
1. The Lorentz Force and the Electromagnetic Field Tensor	71
2. Tensors in All Generality	74
3. Three-Plus-One View Versus Geometric View	78
4. Maxwell's Equations	79
5. Working with Tensors	81
<b>4. Electromagnetism and Differential Forms</b>	<b>90</b>
1. Exterior Calculus	90
2. Electromagnetic 2-Form and Lorentz Force	99
3. Forms Illuminate Electromagnetism and Electromagnetism Illuminates Forms	105
4. Radiation Fields	110
5. Maxwell's Equations	112
6. Exterior Derivative and Closed Forms	114
7. Distant Action from Local Law	120
<b>5. Stress-Energy Tensor and Conservation Laws</b>	<b>130</b>
1. Track-1 Overview	130
2. Three-Dimensional Volumes and Definition of the Stress-Energy Tensor	130
3. Components of Stress-Energy Tensor	137
4. Stress-Energy Tensor for a Swarm of Particles	138
5. Stress-Energy Tensor for a Perfect Fluid	139
6. Electromagnetic Stress-Energy	140
7. Symmetry of the Stress-Energy Tensor	141
8. Conservation of 4-Momentum: Integral Formulation	142
9. Conservation of 4-Momentum: Differential Formulation	146
10. Sample Application of $\nabla \cdot \mathbf{T} = 0$	152
11. Angular Momentum	156
<b>6. Accelerated Observers</b>	<b>163</b>
1. Accelerated Observers Can Be Analyzed Using Special Relativity	163
2. Hyperbolic Motion	166
3. Constraints on Size of an Accelerated Frame	168
4. The Tetrad Carried by a Uniformly Accelerated Observer	169
5. The Tetrad Fermi-Walker Transported by an Observer with Arbitrary Acceleration	170
6. The Local Coordinate System of an Accelerated Observer	172
<b>7. Incompatibility of Gravity and Special Relativity</b>	<b>177</b>
1. Attempts to Incorporate Gravity into Special Relativity	177
2. Gravitational Redshift Derived from Energy Conservation	187
3. Gravitational Redshift Implies Spacetime Is Curved	187
4. Gravitational Redshift as Evidence for the Principle of Equivalence	189
5. Local Flatness, Global Curvature	190

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## Part III THE MATHEMATICS OF CURVED SPACETIME 193

<b>8. Differential Geometry: An Overview</b>	<b>195</b>
1. An Overview of Part III	195
2. Track 1 Versus Track 2: Difference in Outlook and Power	197
3. Three Aspects of Geometry: Pictorial, Abstract, Component	198
4. Tensor Algebra in Curved Spacetime	201
5. Parallel Transport, Covariant Derivative, Connection Coefficients, Geodesics	207
6. Local Lorentz Frames: Mathematical Discussion	217
7. Geodesic Deviation and the Riemann Curvature Tensor	218



<b>9. Differential Topology</b>	<b>225</b>
1. Geometric Objects in Metric-Free, Geodesic-Free Spacetime	225
2. “Vector” and “Directional Derivative” Refined into Tangent Vector	226
3. Bases, Components, and Transformation Laws for Vectors	230
4. 1-Forms	231
5. Tensors	233
6. Commutators and Pictorial Techniques	235
7. Manifolds and Differential Topology	240
<b>10. Affine Geometry: Geodesics, Parallel Transport and Covariant Derivative</b>	<b>244</b>
1. Geodesics and the Equivalence Principle	244
2. Parallel Transport and Covariant Derivative: Pictorial Approach	245
3. Parallel Transport and Covariant Derivative: Abstract Approach	247
4. Parallel Transport and Covariant Derivative: Component Approach	258
5. Geodesic Equation	262
<b>11. Geodesic Deviation and Spacetime Curvature</b>	<b>265</b>
1. Curvature, At Last!	265
2. The Relative Acceleration of Neighboring Geodesics	265
3. Tidal Gravitational Forces and Riemann Curvature Tensor	270
4. Parallel Transport Around a Closed Curve	277
5. Flatness is Equivalent to Zero Riemann Curvature	283
6. Riemann Normal Coordinates	285
<b>12. Newtonian Gravity in the Language of Curved Spacetime</b>	<b>289</b>
1. Newtonian Gravity in Brief	289
2. Stratification of Newtonian Spacetime	291
3. Galilean Coordinate Systems	292
4. Geometric, Coordinate-Free Formulation of Newtonian Gravity	298
5. The Geometric View of Physics: A Critique	302
<b>13. Riemannian Geometry: Metric as Foundation of All</b>	<b>304</b>
1. New Features Imposed on Geometry by Local Validity of Special Relativity	304
2. Metric	305
3. Concord Between Geodesics of Curved Spacetime Geometry and Straight Lines of Local Lorentz Geometry	312
4. Geodesics as World Lines of Extremal Proper Time	315
5. Metric-Induced Properties of <i>Riemann</i>	324
6. The Proper Reference Frame of an Accelerated Observer	327
<b>14. Calculation of Curvature</b>	<b>333</b>
1. Curvature as a Tool for Understanding Physics	333
2. Forming the Einstein Tensor	343
3. More Efficient Computation	344
4. The Geodesic Lagrangian Method	344
5. Curvature 2-Forms	348
6. Computation of Curvature Using Exterior Differential Forms	354
<b>15. Bianchi Identities and the Boundary of a Boundary</b>	<b>364</b>
1. Bianchi Identities in Brief	364
2. Bianchi Identity $d\Omega = 0$ as a Manifestation of “Boundary of Boundary = 0”	372
3. Moment of Rotation: Key to Contracted Bianchi Identity	373
4. Calculation of the Moment of Rotation	375
5. Conservation of Moment of Rotation Seen from “Boundary of a Boundary is Zero”	377
6. Conservation of Moment of Rotation Expressed in Differential Form	378
7. From Conservation of Moment of Rotation to Einstein’s Geometrodynamics: A Preview	379

## Part IV EINSTEIN'S GEOMETRIC THEORY OF GRAVITY 383

16. **Equivalence Principle and Measurement of the "Gravitational Field"** 385
  1. Overview 385
  2. The Laws of Physics in Curved Spacetime 385
  3. Factor-Ordering Problems in the Equivalence Principle 388
  4. The Rods and Clocks Used to Measure Space and Time Intervals 393
  5. The Measurement of the Gravitational Field 399
17. **How Mass-Energy Generates Curvature** 404
  1. Automatic Conservation of the Source as the Central Idea in the Formulation of the Field Equation 404
  2. Automatic Conservation of the Source: A Dynamic Necessity 408
  3. Cosmological Constant 409
  4. The Newtonian Limit 412
  5. Axiomatize Einstein's Theory? 416
  6. "No Prior Geometry": A Feature Distinguishing Einstein's Theory from Other Theories of Gravity 429
  7. A Taste of the History of Einstein's Equation 431
18. **Weak Gravitational Fields** 435
  1. The Linearized Theory of Gravity 435
  2. Gravitational Waves 442
  3. Effect of Gravity on Matter 442
  4. Nearly Newtonian Gravitational Fields 445
19. **Mass and Angular Momentum of a Gravitating System** 448
  1. External Field of a Weakly Gravitating Source 448
  2. Measurement of the Mass and Angular Momentum 450
  3. Mass and Angular Momentum of Fully Relativistic Sources 451
  4. Mass and Angular Momentum of a Closed Universe 457
20. **Conservation Laws for 4-Momentum and Angular Momentum** 460
  1. Overview 460
  2. Gaussian Flux Integrals for 4-Momentum and Angular Momentum 461
  3. Volume Integrals for 4-Momentum and Angular Momentum 464
  4. Why the Energy of the Gravitational Field Cannot be Localized 466
  5. Conservation Laws for Total 4-Momentum and Angular Momentum 468
  6. Equation of Motion Derived from the Field Equation 471
21. **Variational Principle and Initial-Value Data** 484
  1. Dynamics Requires Initial-Value Data 484
  2. The Hilbert Action Principle and the Palatini Method of Variation 491
  3. Matter Lagrangian and Stress-Energy Tensor 504
  4. Splitting Spacetime into Space and Time 505
  5. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Curvature 509
  6. The Hilbert Action Principle and the Arnowitt-Deser-Misner Modification Thereof in the Space-plus-Time Split 519
  7. The Arnowitt-Deser-Misner Formulation of the Dynamics of Geometry 520
  8. Integrating Forward in Time 526
  9. The Initial-Value Problem in the Thin-Sandwich Formulation 528
  10. The Time-Symmetric and Time-Antisymmetric Initial-Value Problem 535
  11. York's "Handles" to Specify a 4-Geometry 539
  12. Mach's Principle and the Origin of Inertia 543
  13. Junction Conditions 551

**22. Thermodynamics, Hydrodynamics, Electrodynamics, Geometric Optics, and Kinetic Theory 557**

1. The Why of this Chapter 557
2. Thermodynamics in Curved Spacetime 557
3. Hydrodynamics in Curved Spacetime 562
4. Electrodynamics in Curved Spacetime 568
5. Geometric Optics in Curved Spacetime 570
6. Kinetic Theory in Curved Spacetime 583

**Part V RELATIVISTIC STARS 591**

**23. Spherical Stars 593**

1. Prolog 593
2. Coordinates and Metric for a Static, Spherical System 594
3. Physical Interpretation of Schwarzschild coordinates 595
4. Description of the Matter Inside a Star 597
5. Equations of Structure 600
6. External Gravitational Field 607
7. How to Construct a Stellar Model 608
8. The Spacetime Geometry for a Static Star 612

**24. Pulsars and Neutron Stars; Quasars and Supermassive Stars 618**

1. Overview 618
2. The Endpoint of Stellar Evolution 621
3. Pulsars 627
4. Supermassive Stars and Stellar Instabilities 630
5. Quasars and Explosions In Galactic Nuclei 634
6. Relativistic Star Clusters 634

**25. The “Pit in the Potential” as the Central New Feature of Motion in Schwarzschild Geometry 636**

1. From Kepler’s Laws to the Effective Potential for Motion in Schwarzschild Geometry 636
2. Symmetries and Conservation Laws 650
3. Conserved Quantities for Motion in Schwarzschild Geometry 655
4. Gravitational Redshift 659
5. Orbits of Particles 659
6. Orbit of a Photon, Neutrino, or Graviton in Schwarzschild Geometry 672
7. Spherical Star Clusters 679

**26. Stellar Pulsations 688**

1. Motivation 688
2. Setting Up the Problem 689
3. Eulerian versus Lagrangian Perturbations 690
4. Initial-Value Equations 691
5. Dynamic Equation and Boundary Conditions 693
6. Summary of Results 694

**Part VI THE UNIVERSE 701**

**27. Idealized Cosmologies 703**

1. The Homogeneity and Isotropy of the Universe 703
2. Stress-Energy Content of the Universe—the Fluid Idealization 711
3. Geometric Implications of Homogeneity and Isotropy 713

4. Comoving, Synchronous Coordinate Systems for the Universe 715
  5. The Expansion Factor 718
  6. Possible 3-Geometries for a Hypersurface of Homogeneity 720
  7. Equations of Motion for the Fluid 726
  8. The Einstein Field Equations 728
  9. Time Parameters and the Hubble Constant 730
  10. The Elementary Friedmann Cosmology of a Closed Universe 733
  11. Homogeneous Isotropic Model Universes that Violate Einstein's Conception of Cosmology 742
- 28. Evolution of the Universe into Its Present State 763**
1. The "Standard Model" of the Universe 763
  2. Standard Model Modified for Primordial Chaos 769
  3. What "Preceded" the Initial Singularity? 769
  4. Other Cosmological Theories 770
- 29. Present State and Future Evolution of the Universe 771**
1. Parameters that Determine the Fate of the Universe 771
  2. Cosmological Redshift 772
  3. The Distance-Redshift Relation: Measurement of the Hubble Constant 780
  4. The Magnitude-Redshift Relation: Measurement of the Deceleration Parameter 782
  5. Search for "Lens Effect" of the Universe 795
  6. Density of the Universe Today 796
  7. Summary of Present Knowledge About Cosmological Parameters 797
- 30. Anisotropic and Inhomogeneous Cosmologies 800**
1. Why Is the Universe So Homogeneous and Isotropic? 800
  2. The Kasner Model for an Anisotropic Universe 801
  3. Adiabatic Cooling of Anisotropy 802
  4. Viscous Dissipation of Anisotropy 802
  5. Particle Creation in an Anisotropic Universe 803
  6. Inhomogeneous Cosmologies 804
  7. The Mixmaster Universe 805
  8. Horizons and the Isotropy of the Microwave Background 815

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## **Part VII GRAVITATIONAL COLLAPSE AND BLACK HOLES 817**

- 31. Schwarzschild Geometry 819**
1. Inevitability of Collapse for Massive Stars 819
  2. The Nonsingularity of the Gravitational Radius 820
  3. Behavior of Schwarzschild Coordinates at  $r = 2M$  823
  4. Several Well-Behaved Coordinate Systems 826
  5. Relationship Between Kruskal-Szekeres Coordinates and Schwarzschild Coordinates 833
  6. Dynamics of the Schwarzschild Geometry 836
- 32. Gravitational Collapse 842**
1. Relevance of Schwarzschild Geometry 842
  2. Birkhoff's Theorem 843
  3. Exterior Geometry of a Collapsing Star 846
  4. Collapse of a Star with Uniform Density and Zero Pressure 851
  5. Spherically Symmetric Collapse with Internal Pressure Forces 857
  6. The Fate of a Man Who Falls into the Singularity at  $r = 0$  860
  7. Realistic Gravitational Collapse—An Overview 862

### **33. Black Holes 872**

1. Why "Black Hole"? 872
2. The Gravitational and Electromagnetic Fields of a Black Hole 875
3. Mass, Angular Momentum, Charge, and Magnetic Moment 891
4. Symmetries and Frame Dragging 892
5. Equations of Motion for Test Particles 897
6. Principal Null Congruences 901
7. Storage and Removal of Energy from Black Holes 904
8. Reversible and Irreversible Transformations 907

### **34. Global Techniques, Horizons, and Singularity Theorems 916**

1. Global Techniques Versus Local Techniques 916
2. "Infinity" in Asymptotically Flat Spacetime 917
3. Causality and Horizons 922
4. Global Structure of Horizons 924
5. Proof of Second Law of Black-Hole Dynamics 931
6. Singularity Theorems and the "Issue of the Final State" 934

## **Part VIII GRAVITATIONAL WAVES 941**

### **35. Propagation of Gravitational Waves 943**

1. Viewpoints 943
2. Review of "Linearized Theory" in Vacuum 944
3. Plane-Wave Solutions in Linearized Theory 945
4. The Transverse Traceless (TT) Gauge 946
5. Geodesic Deviation in a Linearized Gravitational Wave 950
6. Polarization of a Plane Wave 952
7. The Stress-Energy Carried by a Gravitational Wave 955
8. Gravitational Waves in the Full Theory of General Relativity 956
9. An Exact Plane-Wave Solution 957
10. Physical Properties of the Exact Plane Wave 960
11. Comparison of an Exact Electromagnetic Plane Wave with the Gravitational Plane Wave 961
12. A New Viewpoint on the Exact Plane Wave 962
13. The Shortwave Approximation 964
14. Effect of Background Curvature on Wave Propagation 967
15. Stress-Energy Tensor for Gravitational Waves 969

### **36. Generation of Gravitational Waves 974**

1. The Quadrupole Nature of Gravitational Waves 974
2. Power Radiated in Terms of Internal Power Flow 978
3. Laboratory Generators of Gravitational Waves 979
4. Astrophysical Sources of Gravitational Waves: General Discussion 980
5. Gravitational Collapse, Black Holes, Supernovae, and Pulsars as Sources 981
6. Binary Stars as Sources 986
7. Formulas for Radiation from Nearly Newtonian Slow-Motion Sources 989
8. Radiation Reaction in Slow-Motion Sources 993
9. Foundations for Derivation of Radiation Formulas 995
10. Evaluation of the Radiation Field in the Slow-Motion Approximation 996
11. Derivation of the Radiation-Reaction Potential 1001

### **37. Detection of Gravitational Waves 1004**

1. Coordinate Systems and Impinging Waves 1004
2. Accelerations in Mechanical Detectors 1006
3. Types of Mechanical Detectors 1012

4. Vibrating, Mechanical Detectors: Introductory Remarks 1019
5. Idealized Wave-Dominated Detector, Excited by Steady Flux of Monochromatic Waves 1022
6. Idealized, Wave-Dominated Detector, Excited by Arbitrary Flux of Radiation 1026
7. General Wave-Dominated Detector, Excited by Arbitrary Flux of Radiation 1028
8. Noisy Detectors 1036
9. Nonmechanical Detectors 1040
10. Looking Toward the Future 1040

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## **Part IX. EXPERIMENTAL TESTS OF GENERAL RELATIVITY 1045**

### **38. Testing the Foundations of Relativity 1047**

1. Testing is Easier in the Solar System than in Remote Space 1047
2. Theoretical Frameworks for Analyzing Tests of General Relativity 1048
3. Tests of the Principle of the Uniqueness of Free Fall: Eötvös-Dicke Experiment 1050
4. Tests for the Existence of a Metric Governing Length and Time Measurements 1054
5. Tests of Geodesic Motion: Gravitational Redshift Experiments 1055
6. Tests of the Equivalence Principle 1060
7. Tests for the Existence of Unknown Long-Range Fields 1063

### **39. Other Theories of Gravity and the Post-Newtonian Approximation 1066**

1. Other Theories 1066
2. Metric Theories of Gravity 1067
3. Post-Newtonian Limit and PPN Formalism 1068
4. PPN Coordinate System 1073
5. Description of the Matter in the Solar System 1074
6. Nature of the Post-Newtonian Expansion 1075
7. Newtonian Approximation 1077
8. PPN Metric Coefficients 1080
9. Velocity of PPN Coordinates Relative to "Universal Rest Frame" 1083
10. PPN Stress-Energy Tensor 1086
11. PPN Equations of Motion 1087
12. Relation of PPN Coordinates to Surrounding Universe 1091
13. Summary of PPN Formalism 1091

### **40. Solar-System Experiments 1096**

1. Many Experiments Open to Distinguish General Relativity from Proposed Metric Theories of Gravity 1096
2. The Use of Light Rays and Radio Waves to Test Gravity 1099
3. "Light" Deflection 1101
4. Time-Delay in Radar Propagation 1103
5. Perihelion Shift and Periodic Perturbations in Geodesic Orbits 1110
6. Three-Body Effects in the Lunar Orbit 1116
7. The Dragging of Inertial Frames 1117
8. Is the Gravitational Constant Constant? 1121
9. Do Planets and the Sun Move on Geodesics? 1126
10. Summary of Experimental Tests of General Relativity 1131

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## **Part X. FRONTIERS 1133**

### **41. Spinors 1135**

1. Reflections, Rotations, and the Combination of Rotations 1135
2. Infinitesimal Rotations 1140



3. Lorentz Transformation via Spinor Algebra 1142
4. Thomas Precession via Spinor Algebra 1145
5. Spinors 1148
6. Correspondence Between Vectors and Spinors 1150
7. Spinor Algebra 1151
8. Spin Space and Its Basis Spinors 1156
9. Spinor Viewed as Flagpole Plus Flag Plus Orientation-Entanglement Relation 1157
10. Appearance of the Night Sky: An Application of Spinors 1160
11. Spinors as a Powerful Tool in Gravitation Theory 1164
- 42. Regge Calculus 1166**
  1. Why the Regge Calculus? 1166
  2. Regge Calculus in Brief 1166
  3. Simplexes and Deficit Angles 1167
  4. Skeleton Form of Field Equations 1169
  5. The Choice of Lattice Structure 1173
  6. The Choice of Edge Lengths 1177
  7. Past Applications of Regge Calculus 1178
  8. The Future of Regge Calculus 1179
- 43. Superspace: Arena for the Dynamics of Geometry 1180**
  1. Space, Superspace, and Spacetime Distinguished 1180
  2. The Dynamics of Geometry Described in the Language of the Superspace of the <sup>(3)</sup>g's 1184
  3. The Einstein-Hamilton-Jacobi Equation 1185
  4. Fluctuations in Geometry 1190
- 44. Beyond the End of Time 1196**
  1. Gravitational Collapse as the Greatest Crisis in Physics of All Time 1196
  2. Assessment of the Theory that Predicts Collapse 1198
  3. Vacuum Fluctuations: Their Prevalence and Final Dominance 1202
  4. Not Geometry, but Pregeometry, as the Magic Building Material 1203
  5. Pregeometry as the Calculus of Propositions 1208
  6. The Black Box: The Reprocessing of the Universe 1209

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**Bibliography and Index of Names 1221**

**Subject Index 1255**

## CHAPTER 1

# GEOMETRODYNAMICS IN BRIEF

### §1.1. THE PARABLE OF THE APPLE

*One day in the year 1666 Newton had gone to the country, and seeing the fall of an apple, as his niece told me, let himself be led into a deep meditation on the cause which thus draws every object along a line whose extension would pass almost through the center of the Earth.*

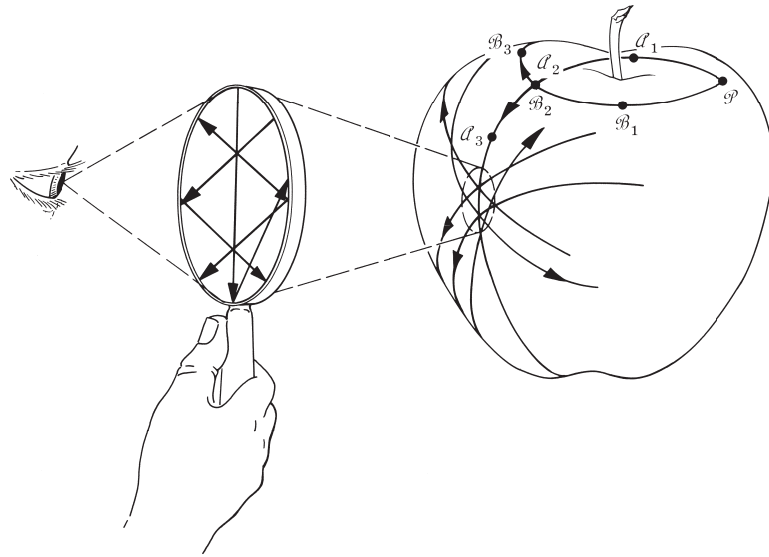
VOLTAIRE (1738)

Once upon a time a student lay in a garden under an apple tree reflecting on the difference between Einstein's and Newton's views about gravity. He was startled by the fall of an apple nearby. As he looked at the apple, he noticed ants beginning to run along its surface (Figure 1.1). His curiosity aroused, he thought to investigate the principles of navigation followed by an ant. With his magnifying glass, he noted one track carefully, and, taking his knife, made a cut in the apple skin one mm above the track and another cut one mm below it. He peeled off the resulting little highway of skin and laid it out on the face of his book. The track ran as straight as a laser beam along this highway. No more economical path could the ant have found to cover the ten cm from start to end of that strip of skin. Any zigs and zags or even any smooth bend in the path on its way along the apple peel from starting point to end point would have increased its length.

"What a beautiful geodesic," the student commented.

His eye fell on two ants starting off from a common point  $P$  in slightly different directions. Their routes happened to carry them through the region of the dimple at the top of the apple, one on each side of it. Each ant conscientiously pursued





**Figure 1.1.**

The Riemannian geometry of the spacetime of general relativity is here symbolized by the two-dimensional geometry of the surface of an apple. The geodesic tracks followed by the ants on the apple's surface symbolize the world line followed through spacetime by a free particle. In any sufficiently localized region of spacetime, the geometry can be idealized as flat, as symbolized on the apple's two-dimensional surface by the straight-line course of the tracks viewed in the magnifying glass ("local Lorentz character" of geometry of spacetime). In a region of greater extension, the curvature of the manifold (four-dimensional spacetime in the case of the real physical world; curved two-dimensional geometry in the case of the apple) makes itself felt. Two tracks  $\mathcal{A}$  and  $\mathcal{B}$ , originally diverging from a common point  $\mathcal{P}$ , later approach, cross, and go off in very different directions. In Newtonian theory this effect is ascribed to gravitation acting at a distance from a center of attraction, symbolized here by the stem of the apple. According to Einstein a particle gets its moving orders locally, from the geometry of spacetime right where it is. Its instructions are simple: to follow the straightest possible track (geodesic). Physics is as simple as it could be locally. Only because spacetime is curved in the large do the tracks cross. Geometrodynamics, in brief, is a double story of the effect of geometry on matter (causing originally divergent geodesics to cross) and the effect of matter on geometry (bending of spacetime initiated by concentration of mass, symbolized by effect of stem on nearby surface of apple).

his geodesic. Each went as straight on his strip of appleskin as he possibly could. Yet because of the curvature of the dimple itself, the two tracks not only crossed but emerged in very different directions.

"What happier illustration of Einstein's geometric theory of gravity could one possibly ask?" murmured the student. "The ants move as if they were attracted by the apple stem. One might have believed in a Newtonian force at a distance. Yet from nowhere does an ant get his moving orders except from the local geometry along his track. This is surely Einstein's concept that all physics takes place by 'local action.' What a difference from Newton's 'action at a distance' view of physics! Now I understand better what this book means."

And so saying, he opened his book and read, "Don't try to describe motion relative to faraway objects. *Physics is simple only when analyzed locally.* And locally

Einstein's local view of physics contrasted with Newton's "action at a distance"

Physics is simple only when analyzed locally

the world line that a satellite follows [in spacetime, around the Earth] is already as straight as any world line can be. Forget all this talk about ‘deflection’ and ‘force of gravitation.’ I’m inside a spaceship. Or I’m floating outside and near it. Do I feel any ‘force of gravitation’? Not at all. Does the spaceship ‘feel’ such a force? No. Then why talk about it? Recognize that the spaceship and I traverse a region of spacetime free of all force. Acknowledge that the motion through that region is already ideally straight.”

The dinner bell was ringing, but still the student sat, musing to himself. “Let me see if I can summarize Einstein’s geometric theory of gravity in three ideas: (1) locally, geodesics appear straight; (2) over more extended regions of space and time, geodesics originally receding from each other begin to approach at a rate governed by the curvature of spacetime, and this effect of geometry on matter is what we mean today by that old word ‘gravitation’; (3) matter in turn warps geometry. The dimple arises in the apple because the stem is there. I think I see how to put the whole story even more briefly: *Space acts on matter, telling it how to move. In turn, matter reacts back on space, telling it how to curve.* In other words, matter here,” he said, rising and picking up the apple by its stem, “curves space here. To produce a curvature in space here is to force a curvature in space there,” he went on, as he watched a lingering ant busily following its geodesic a finger’s breadth away from the apple’s stem. “Thus matter here influences matter there. That is Einstein’s explanation for ‘gravitation.’”

Then the dinner bell was quiet, and he was gone, with book, magnifying glass—and apple.

Space tells matter how to move

Matter tells space how to curve

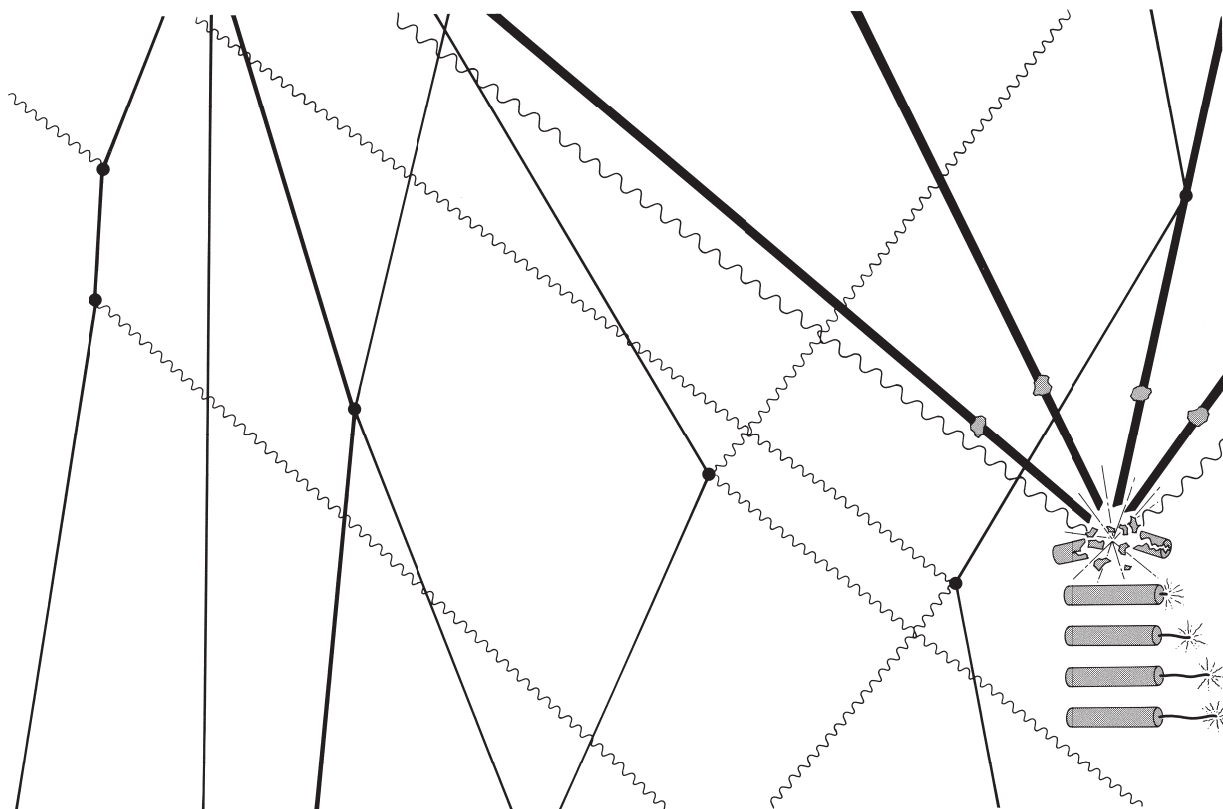
## §1.2. SPACETIME WITH AND WITHOUT COORDINATES

*Now it came to me: . . . the independence of the gravitational acceleration from the nature of the falling substance, may be expressed as follows: In a gravitational field (of small spatial extension) things behave as they do in a space free of gravitation. . . . This happened in 1908. Why were another seven years required for the construction of the general theory of relativity? The main reason lies in the fact that it is not so easy to free oneself from the idea that coordinates must have an immediate metrical meaning.*

ALBERT EINSTEIN [in Schilpp (1949), pp. 65–67.]

Nothing is more distressing on first contact with the idea of “curved spacetime” than the fear that every simple means of measurement has lost its power in this unfamiliar context. One thinks of oneself as confronted with the task of measuring the shape of a gigantic and fantastically sculptured iceberg as one stands with a meter stick in a tossing rowboat on the surface of a heaving ocean. Were it the rowboat itself whose shape were to be measured, the procedure would be simple enough. One would draw it up on shore, turn it upside down, and drive tacks in lightly at strategic points here and there on the surface. The measurement of distances from tack to

Problem: how to measure in curved spacetime

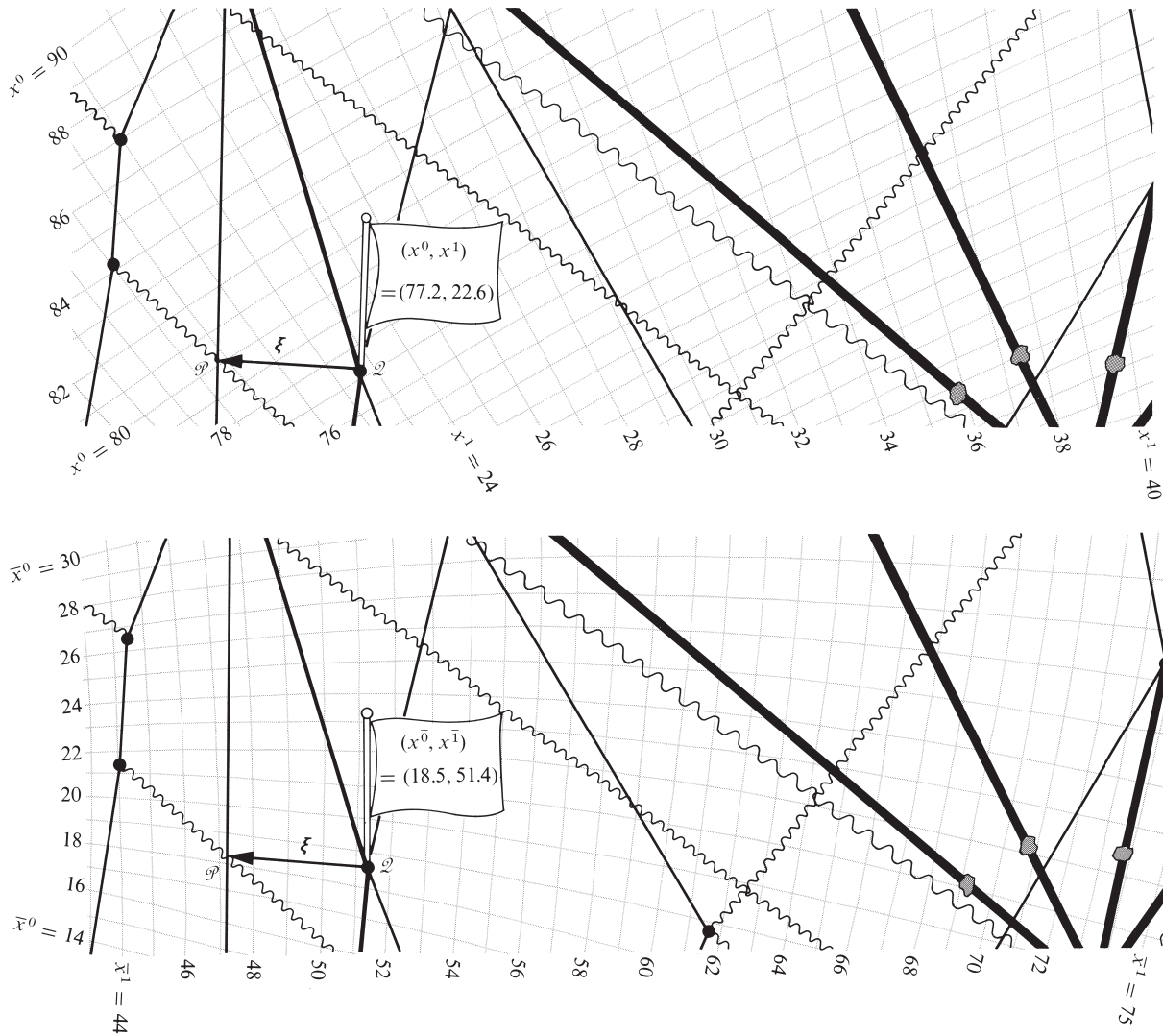


**Figure 1.2.**

The crossing of straws in a barn full of hay is a symbol for the world lines that fill up spacetime. By their crossings and bends, these world lines mark events with a uniqueness beyond all need of coordinate systems or coordinates. Typical events symbolized in the diagram, from left to right (black dots), are: absorption of a photon; reemission of a photon; collision between a particle and a particle; collision between a photon and a particle; another collision between a photon and a particle; explosion of a firecracker; and collision of a particle from outside with one of the fragments of that firecracker.

Resolution: characterize events by what happens there

tack would record and reveal the shape of the surface. The precision could be made arbitrarily great by making the number of tacks arbitrarily large. It takes more daring to think of driving several score pitons into the towering iceberg. But with all the daring in the world, how is one to drive a nail into spacetime to mark a point? Happily, nature provides its own way to localize a point in spacetime, as Einstein was the first to emphasize. Characterize the point by what happens there! Give a point in spacetime the name “event.” Where the event lies is defined as clearly and sharply as where two straws cross each other in a barn full of hay (Figure 1.2). To say that the event marks a collision of such and such a photon with such and such a particle is identification enough. The world lines of that photon and that particle are rooted in the past and stretch out into the future. They have a rich texture of connections with nearby world lines. These nearby world lines in turn are linked in a hundred ways with world lines more remote. How then does one tell the location of an event? Tell first what world lines participate in the event. Next follow each



**Figure 1.3.**

Above: Assigning “telephone numbers” to events by way of a system of coordinates. To say that the coordinate system is “smooth” is to say that events which are almost in the same place have almost the same coordinates. Below: Putting the same set of events into equally good order by way of a different system of coordinates. Picked out specially here are two neighboring events: an event named “ $\mathcal{Q}$ ” with coordinates  $(x^0, x^1) = (77.2, 22.6)$  and  $(\bar{x}^0, \bar{x}^1) = (18.5, 51.4)$ ; and an event named “ $\mathcal{P}$ ” with coordinates  $(x^0, x^1) = (79.9, 20.1)$  and  $(\bar{x}^0, \bar{x}^1) = (18.4, 47.1)$ . Events  $\mathcal{Q}$  and  $\mathcal{P}$  are connected by the separation “vector”  $\xi$ . (Precise definition of a vector in a curved spacetime demands going to the mathematical limit in which the two points have an indefinitely small separation [ $N$ -fold reduction of the separation  $\mathcal{P} - \mathcal{Q}$ ], and, in the resultant locally flat space, multiplying the separation up again by the factor  $N$  [ $\lim N \rightarrow \infty$ ; “tangent space”; “tangent vector”]. Forego here that proper way of stating matters, and forego complete accuracy; hence the quote around the word “vector”.) In each coordinate system the separation vector  $\xi$  is characterized by “components” (differences in coordinate values between  $\mathcal{P}$  and  $\mathcal{Q}$ ):

$$\begin{aligned}(\xi^0, \xi^1) &= (79.9 - 77.2, 20.1 - 22.6) = (2.7, -2.5), \\(\xi^{\bar{0}}, \xi^{\bar{1}}) &= (18.4 - 18.5, 47.1 - 51.4) = (-0.1, -4.3).\end{aligned}$$

See Box 1.1 for further discussion of events, coordinates, and vectors.



of these world lines. Name the additional events that they encounter. These events pick out further world lines. Eventually the whole barn of hay is catalogued. Each event is named. One can find one's way as surely to a given intersection as the city dweller can pick his path to the meeting of St. James Street and Piccadilly. No numbers. No coordinate system. No coordinates.

The name of an event can even be arbitrary

That most streets in Japan have no names, and most houses no numbers, illustrates one's ability to do without coordinates. One can abandon the names of two world lines as a means to identify the event where they intersect. Just as one could name a Japanese house after its senior occupant, so one can and often does attach arbitrary names to specific events in spacetime, as in Box 1.1.

Coordinates provide a convenient naming system

Coordinates, however, are convenient. How else from the great thick catalog of events, randomly listed, can one easily discover that along a certain world line one will first encounter event Trinity, then Baker, then Mike, then Argus—but not the same events in some permuted order?

To order events, introduce coordinates! (See Figure 1.3.) Coordinates are four indexed numbers per event in spacetime; on a sheet of paper, only two. Trinity acquires coordinates

$$(x^0, x^1, x^2, x^3) = (77, 23, 64, 11).$$

Coordinates generally do not measure length

In christening events with coordinates, one demands smoothness but foregoes every thought of mensuration. The four numbers for an event are nothing but an elaborate kind of telephone number. Compare their “telephone” numbers to discover whether two events are neighbors. But do not expect to learn how many meters separate them from the difference in their telephone numbers!

Several coordinate systems can be used at once

Nothing prevents a subscriber from being served by competing telephone systems, nor an event from being catalogued by alternative coordinate systems (Figure 1.3). Box 1.1 illustrates the relationships between one coordinate system and another, as well as the notation used to denote coordinates and their transformations.

Vectors

Choose two events, known to be neighbors by the nearness of their coordinate values in a smooth coordinate system. Draw a little arrow from one event to the other. Such an arrow is called a *vector*. (It is a well-defined concept in flat spacetime, or in curved spacetime in the limit of vanishingly small length; for finite lengths in curved spacetime, it must be refined and made precise, under the new name “tangent vector,” on which see Chapter 9.) This vector, like events, can be given a name. But whether named “John” or “Charles” or “Kip,” it is a unique, well-defined geometrical object. The name is a convenience, but the vector exists even without it.

Just as a quadruple of coordinates

$$(x^0, x^1, x^2, x^3) = (77, 23, 64, 11)$$

is a particularly useful name for the event “Trinity” (it can be used to identify what other events are nearby), so a quadruple of “components”

$$(\xi^0, \xi^1, \xi^2, \xi^3) = (1.2, -0.9, 0, 2.1)$$

## Box 1.1 MATHEMATICAL NOTATION FOR EVENTS, COORDINATES, AND VECTORS

**Events** are denoted by capital script, one-letter Latin names such as  
Sometimes subscripts are used:

$$\mathcal{P}, \mathcal{Q}, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{B}, \\ \mathcal{P}_0, \mathcal{P}_1, \mathcal{B}_6.$$

**Coordinates of an event**  $\mathcal{P}$  are denoted by  
or by

$$t(\mathcal{P}), x(\mathcal{P}), y(\mathcal{P}), z(\mathcal{P}), \\ x^0(\mathcal{P}), x^1(\mathcal{P}), x^2(\mathcal{P}), \\ x^3(\mathcal{P}), \\ x^\mu(\mathcal{P}) \text{ or } x^\alpha(\mathcal{P}),$$

or more abstractly by  
where it is understood that Greek indices can take on any value 0, 1, 2, or 3.

**Time coordinate** (when one of the four is picked to play this role)

$$x^0(\mathcal{P}).$$

**Space coordinates** are

and are sometimes denoted by

$$x^1(\mathcal{P}), x^2(\mathcal{P}), x^3(\mathcal{P}) \\ x^i(\mathcal{P}) \text{ or } x^k(\mathcal{P}) \text{ or } \dots$$

It is to be understood that Latin indices take on values 1, 2, or 3.

**Shorthand notation:** One soon tires of writing explicitly the functional dependence of the coordinates,  $x^\beta(\mathcal{P})$ ; so one adopts the shorthand notation for the coordinates of the event  $\mathcal{P}$ , and for the space coordinates. One even begins to think of  $x^\beta$  as representing the event  $\mathcal{P}$  itself, but must remind oneself that the values of  $x^0, x^1, x^2, x^3$  depend not only on the choice of  $\mathcal{P}$  but also on the *arbitrary* choice of coordinates!

$$x^\beta \\ x^j$$

**Other coordinates** for the same event  $\mathcal{P}$  may be denoted

$$x^{\bar{\alpha}}(\mathcal{P}) \text{ or just } x^{\bar{\alpha}}, \\ x^{\alpha'}(\mathcal{P}) \text{ or just } x^{\alpha'}, \\ x^{\hat{\alpha}}(\mathcal{P}) \text{ or just } x^{\hat{\alpha}}.$$

EXAMPLE: In Figure 1.3  $(x^0, x^1) = (77.2, 22.6)$  and  $(x^{\bar{0}}, x^{\bar{1}}) = (18.5, 51.4)$  refer to the *same* event. The bars, primes, and hats distinguish one coordinate system from another; by putting them on the indices rather than on the  $x$ 's, we simplify later notation.

**Transformation** from one coordinate system to another is achieved by the four functions

$$x^{\bar{0}}(x^0, x^1, x^2, x^3), \\ x^{\bar{1}}(x^0, x^1, x^2, x^3), \\ x^{\bar{2}}(x^0, x^1, x^2, x^3), \\ x^{\bar{3}}(x^0, x^1, x^2, x^3), \\ x^{\bar{\alpha}}(x^\beta).$$

which are denoted more succinctly

**Separation vector**\* (little arrow) reaching from one event  $\mathcal{Q}$  to neighboring event  $\mathcal{P}$  can be denoted abstractly by

$$\mathbf{u} \text{ or } \mathbf{v} \text{ or } \boldsymbol{\xi}, \text{ or } \mathcal{P} - \mathcal{Q}.$$

It can also be characterized by the coordinate-value differences† between  $\mathcal{P}$  and  $\mathcal{Q}$  (called “components” of the vector)

$$\xi^\alpha \equiv x^\alpha(\mathcal{P}) - x^\alpha(\mathcal{Q}), \\ \xi^{\bar{\alpha}} \equiv x^{\bar{\alpha}}(\mathcal{P}) - x^{\bar{\alpha}}(\mathcal{Q}).$$

**Transformation of components** of a vector from one coordinate system to another is achieved by partial derivatives of transformation equations

$$\xi^{\bar{\alpha}} = \frac{\partial x^{\bar{\alpha}}}{\partial x^\beta} \xi^\beta,$$

since  $\xi^{\bar{\alpha}} = x^{\bar{\alpha}}(\mathcal{P}) - x^{\bar{\alpha}}(\mathcal{Q}) = (\partial x^{\bar{\alpha}} / \partial x^\beta)[x^\beta(\mathcal{P}) - x^\beta(\mathcal{Q})]$ .†

**Einstein summation convention** is used here:

any index that is repeated in a product is automatically summed on

$$\frac{\partial x^{\bar{\alpha}}}{\partial x^\beta} \xi^\beta \equiv \sum_{\beta=0}^3 \frac{\partial x^{\bar{\alpha}}}{\partial x^\beta} \xi^\beta.$$

\*This definition of a vector is valid only in flat spacetime. The refined definition (“tangent vector”) in curved spacetime is not spelled out here (see Chapter 9), but flat-geometry ideas apply with good approximation even in a curved geometry, when the two points are sufficiently close.

†These formulas are precisely accurate only when the region of spacetime under consideration is flat and when in addition the coordinates are Lorentzian. Otherwise they are approximate—though they become arbitrarily good when the separation between points and the length of the vector become arbitrarily small.

is a convenient name for the vector “John” that reaches from

$$(x^0, x^1, x^2, x^3) = (77, 23, 64, 11)$$

to

$$(x^0, x^1, x^2, x^3) = (78.2, 22.1, 64.0, 13.1).$$

How to work with the components of a vector is explored in Box 1.1.

Coordinate singularities  
normally unavoidable

There are many ways in which a coordinate system can be imperfect. Figure 1.4 illustrates a coordinate singularity. For another example of a coordinate singularity, run the eye over the surface of a globe to the North Pole. Note the many meridians that meet there (“collapse of cells of egg crates to zero content”). Can’t one do better? Find a single coordinate system that will cover the globe without singularity? A theorem says no. Two is the minimum number of “coordinate patches” required to cover the two-sphere without singularity (Figure 1.5). This circumstance emphasizes anew that points and events are primary, whereas coordinates are a mere bookkeeping device.

Continuity of spacetime

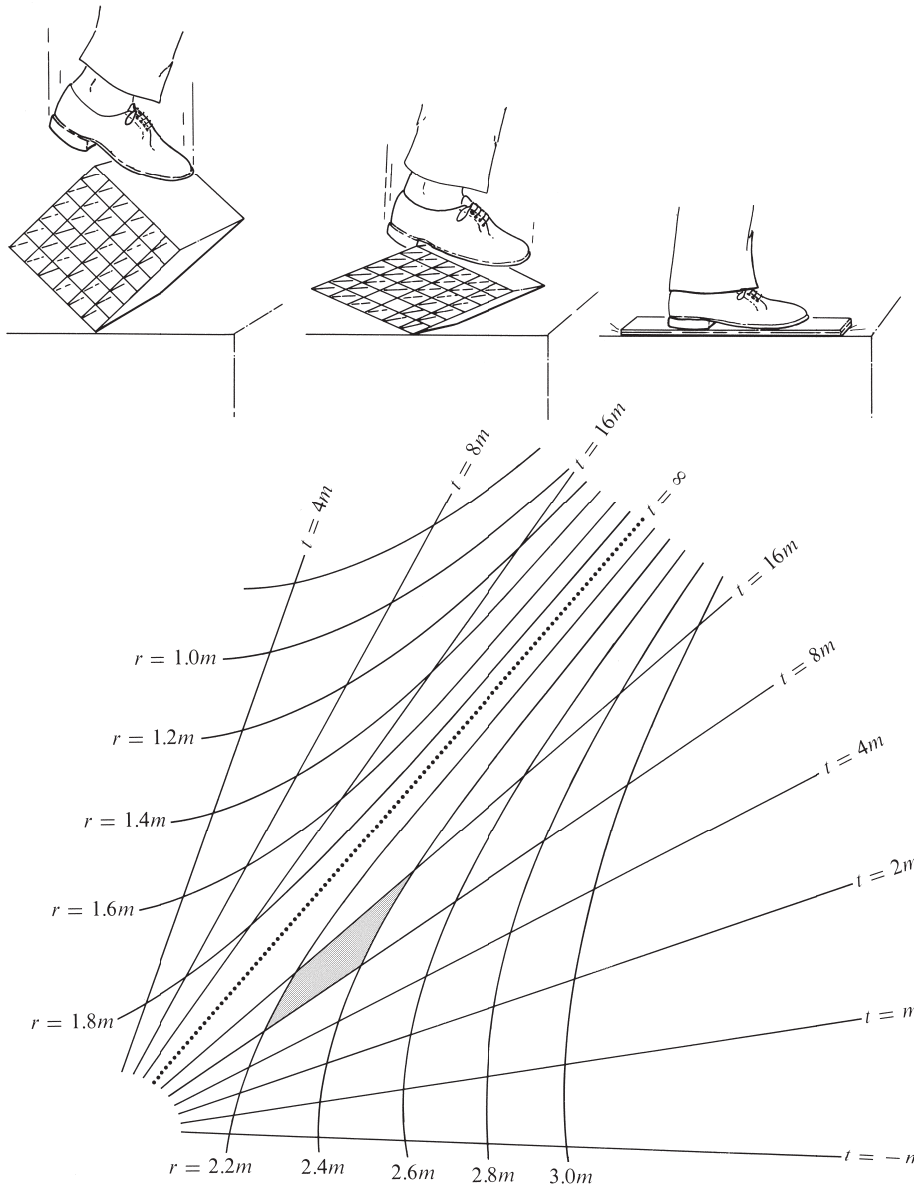
Figures 1.2 and 1.3 show only a few world lines and events. A more detailed diagram would show a maze of world lines and of light rays and the intersections between them. From such a picture, one can in imagination step to the idealized limit: an infinitely dense collection of light rays and of world lines of infinitesimal test particles. With this idealized physical limit, the mathematical concept of a continuous four-dimensional “manifold” (four-dimensional space with certain smoothness properties) has a one-to-one correspondence; and in this limit continuous, differentiable (i.e., smooth) coordinate systems operate. The mathematics then supplies a tool to reason about the physics.

The mathematics of  
manifolds applied to the  
physics of spacetime

Dimensionality of spacetime

A simple countdown reveals the dimensionality of the manifold. Take a point  $\mathcal{P}$  in an  $n$ -dimensional manifold. Its neighborhood is an  $n$ -dimensional ball (i.e., the interior of a sphere whose surface has  $n - 1$  dimensions). Choose this ball so that its boundary is a smooth manifold. The dimensionality of this manifold is  $(n - 1)$ . In this  $(n - 1)$ -dimensional manifold, pick a point  $\mathcal{Q}$ . Its neighborhood is an  $(n - 1)$ -dimensional ball. Choose this ball so that . . . , and so on. Eventually one comes by this construction to a manifold that is two-dimensional but is not yet known to be two-dimensional (two-sphere). In this two-dimensional manifold, pick a point  $\mathcal{R}$ . Its neighborhood is a two-dimensional ball (“disc”). Choose this disc so that its boundary is a smooth manifold (circle). In this manifold, pick a point  $\mathcal{S}$ . Its neighborhood is a one-dimensional ball, but is not yet known to be one-dimensional (“line segment”). The boundaries of this object are two points. This circumstance tells that the intervening manifold is one-dimensional; therefore the previous manifold was two-dimensional; and so on. The dimensionality of the original manifold is equal to the number of points employed in the construction. For spacetime, the dimensionality is 4.

This kind of mathematical reasoning about dimensionality makes good sense at the everyday scale of distances, at atomic distances ( $10^{-8}$  cm), at nuclear dimensions ( $10^{-13}$  cm), and even at lengths smaller by several powers of ten, if one judges by the concord between prediction and observation in quantum electrodynamics at high



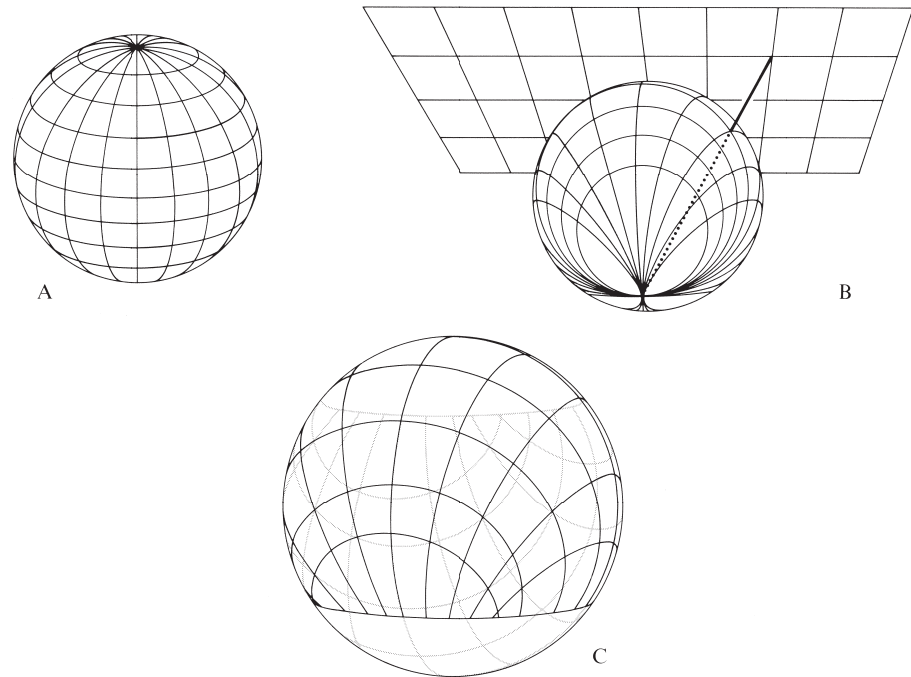
**Figure 1.4.**

How a mere coordinate singularity arises. Above: A coordinate system becomes *singular* when the “cells in the egg crate” are squashed to zero volume. Below: An example showing such a singularity in the Schwarzschild coordinates  $r$ ,  $t$  often used to describe the geometry around a black hole (Chapter 31). For simplicity the angular coordinates  $\theta$ ,  $\phi$  have been suppressed. The singularity shows itself in two ways. First, all the points along the dotted line, while quite distinct one from another, are designated by the same pair of  $(r, t)$  values; namely,  $r = 2m$ ,  $t = \infty$ . The coordinates provide no way to distinguish these points. Second, the “cells in the egg crate,” of which one is shown grey in the diagram, collapse to zero content at the dotted line. In summary, there is nothing strange about the geometry at the dotted line; all the singularity lies in the coordinate system (“poor system of telephone numbers”). No confusion should be permitted to arise from the accidental circumstance that the  $t$  coordinate attains an infinite value on the dotted line. No such infinity would occur if  $t$  were replaced by the new coordinate  $\bar{t}$ , defined by

$$(t/2m) = \tan(\bar{t}/2m).$$

When  $t = \infty$ , the new coordinate  $\bar{t}$  is  $\bar{t} = \pi m$ . The  $r$ ,  $\bar{t}$  coordinates still provide no way to distinguish the points along the dotted line. They still give “cells in the egg crate” collapsed to zero content along the dotted line.





**Figure 1.5.**

Singularities in familiar coordinates on the two-sphere can be eliminated by covering the sphere with two overlapping coordinate patches. A. Spherical polar coordinates, singular at the North and South Poles, and discontinuous at the international date line. B. Projection of the Euclidean coordinates of the Euclidean two-plane, tangent at the North Pole, onto the sphere via a line running to the South Pole; coordinate singularity at the South Pole. C. Coverage of two-sphere by two overlapping coordinate patches. One, constructed as in B, covers without singularity the northern hemisphere and also the southern tropics down to the Tropic of Capricorn. The other (grey) also covers without singularity all of the tropics and the southern hemisphere besides.

Breakdown in smoothness of  
spacetime at Planck length

energies (corresponding de Broglie wavelength  $10^{-16}$  cm). Moreover, classical general relativity thinks of the spacetime manifold as a deterministic structure, completely well-defined down to arbitrarily small distances. Not so quantum general relativity or “quantum geometrodynamics.” It predicts violent fluctuations in the geometry at distances on the order of the Planck length,

$$\begin{aligned}
 L^* &= (\hbar G/c^3)^{1/2} \\
 &= [(1.054 \times 10^{-27} \text{ g cm}^2/\text{sec})(6.670 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}^3/\text{g sec}^2)]^{1/2} \times \\
 &\quad \times (2.998 \times 10^{10} \text{ cm/sec})^{-3/2} \quad (1.1) \\
 &= 1.616 \times 10^{-33} \text{ cm}.
 \end{aligned}$$

No one has found any way to escape this prediction. As nearly as one can estimate, these fluctuations give space at small distances a “multiply connected” or “foamlike” character. This lack of smoothness may well deprive even the concept of dimensionality itself of any meaning at the Planck scale of distances. The further exploration of this issue takes one to the frontiers of Einstein’s theory (Chapter 44).

If spacetime at small distances is far from the mathematical model of a continuous manifold, is there not also at larger distances a wide gap between the mathematical

idealization and the physical reality? The infinitely dense collection of light rays and of world lines of infinitesimal test particles that are to define all the points of the manifold: they surely are beyond practical realization. Nobody has ever found a particle that moves on timelike world lines (finite rest mass) lighter than an electron. A collection of electrons, even if endowed with zero density of charge ( $e^+$  and  $e^-$  world lines present in equal numbers) will have a density of mass. This density will curve the very manifold under study. Investigation in infinite detail means unlimited density, and unlimited disturbance of the geometry.

However, to demand investigatability in infinite detail in the sense just described is as out of place in general relativity as it would be in electrodynamics or gas dynamics. Electrodynamics speaks of the strength of the electric and magnetic field at each point in space and at each moment of time. To measure those fields, it is willing to contemplate infinitesimal test particles scattered everywhere as densely as one pleases. However, the test particles do not have to be there at all to give the field reality. The field has everywhere a clear-cut value and goes about its deterministic dynamic evolution willy-nilly and continuously, infinitesimal test particles or no infinitesimal test particles. Similarly with the geometry of space.

In conclusion, when one deals with spacetime in the context of classical physics, one accepts (1) the notion of “infinitesimal test particle” and (2) the idealization that the totality of identifiable events forms a four-dimensional continuous manifold. Only at the end of this book will a look be taken at some of the limitations placed by the quantum principle on one’s way of speaking about and analyzing spacetime.

Difficulty in defining geometry even at classical distances?

No; one must accept geometry at classical distances as meaningful

### §1.3. WEIGHTLESSNESS

“Gravity is a great mystery. Drop a stone. See it fall. Hear it hit. No one understands why.” What a misleading statement! Mystery about fall? What else should the stone do except fall? To fall is normal. The abnormality is an object standing in the way of the stone. If one wishes to pursue a “mystery,” do not follow the track of the falling stone. Look instead at the impact, and ask what was the force that pushed the stone away from its natural “world line,” (i.e., its natural track through spacetime). That could lead to an interesting issue of solid-state physics, but that is not the topic of concern here. Fall is. Free fall is synonymous with weightlessness: absence of any force to drive the object away from its normal track through spacetime. Travel aboard a freely falling elevator to experience weightlessness. Or travel aboard a spaceship also falling straight toward the Earth. Or, more happily, travel aboard a spaceship in that state of steady fall toward the Earth that marks a circular orbit. In each case one is following a natural track through spacetime.

Free fall is the natural state of motion

The traveler has one chemical composition, the spaceship another; yet they travel together, the traveler weightless in his moving home. Objects of such different nuclear constitution as aluminum and gold fall with accelerations that agree to better than one part in  $10^{11}$ , according to Roll, Krotkov, and Dicke (1964), one of the most important null experiments in all physics (see Figure 1.6). Individual molecules fall in step, too, with macroscopic objects [Estermann, Simpson, and Stern (1938)]; and so do individual neutrons [Dabbs, Harvey, Paya, and Horstmann (1965)], individual

All objects fall with the same acceleration

(continued on page 16)

**Figure 1.6.**

Principle of the Roll-Krotkov-Dicke experiment, which showed that the gravitational accelerations of gold and aluminum are equal to 1 part in  $10^{11}$  or better (Princeton, 1964). In the upper lefthand corner, equal masses of gold and aluminum hang from a supporting bar. This bar in turn is supported at its midpoint. If both objects fall toward the sun with the same acceleration of  $g = 0.59 \text{ cm/sec}^2$ , the bar does not turn. If the Au mass receives a higher acceleration,  $g + \delta g$ , then the gold end of the bar starts to turn toward the sun in the Earth-fixed frame. Twelve hours later the sun is on the other side, pulling the other way. The alternating torque lends itself to recognition against a background of noise because of its precise 24-hour period. Unhappily, any substantial mass nearby, such as an experimenter, located at  $M$ , will produce a torque that swamps the effect sought. Therefore the actual arrangement was as shown in the body of the figure. One gold weight and two aluminum weights were supported at the three corners of a horizontal equilateral triangle, 6 cm on a side (three-fold axis of symmetry, giving zero response to all the simplest nonuniformities in the gravitational field). Also, the observers performed all operations remotely to eliminate their own gravitational effects\*. To detect a rotation of the torsion balance as small as  $\sim 10^{-9}$  rad without disturbing the balance, Roll, Krotkov, and Dicke reflected a very weak light beam from the optically flat back face of the quartz triangle. The image of the source slit fell on a wire of about the same size as the slit image. The light transmitted past the wire fell on a photomultiplier. A separate oscillator circuit drove the wire back and forth across the image at 3,000 hertz. When the image was centered perfectly, only even harmonics of the oscillation frequency appeared in the light intensity. However, when the image was displaced slightly to one side, the fundamental frequency appeared in the light intensity. The electrical output of the photomultiplier then contained a 3,000-hertz component. The magnitude and sign of this component were determined automatically. Equally automatically a proportional d.c. voltage was applied to the electrodes shown in the diagram. It restored the torsion balance to its zero position. The d.c. voltage required to restore the balance to its zero position was recorded as a measure of the torque acting on the pendulum. This torque was Fourier-analyzed over a period of many days. The magnitude of the Fourier component of 24-hour period indicated a ratio  $\delta g/g = (0.96 \pm 1.04) \times 10^{-11}$ . Aluminum and gold thus fall with the same acceleration, despite their important differences summarized in the table.

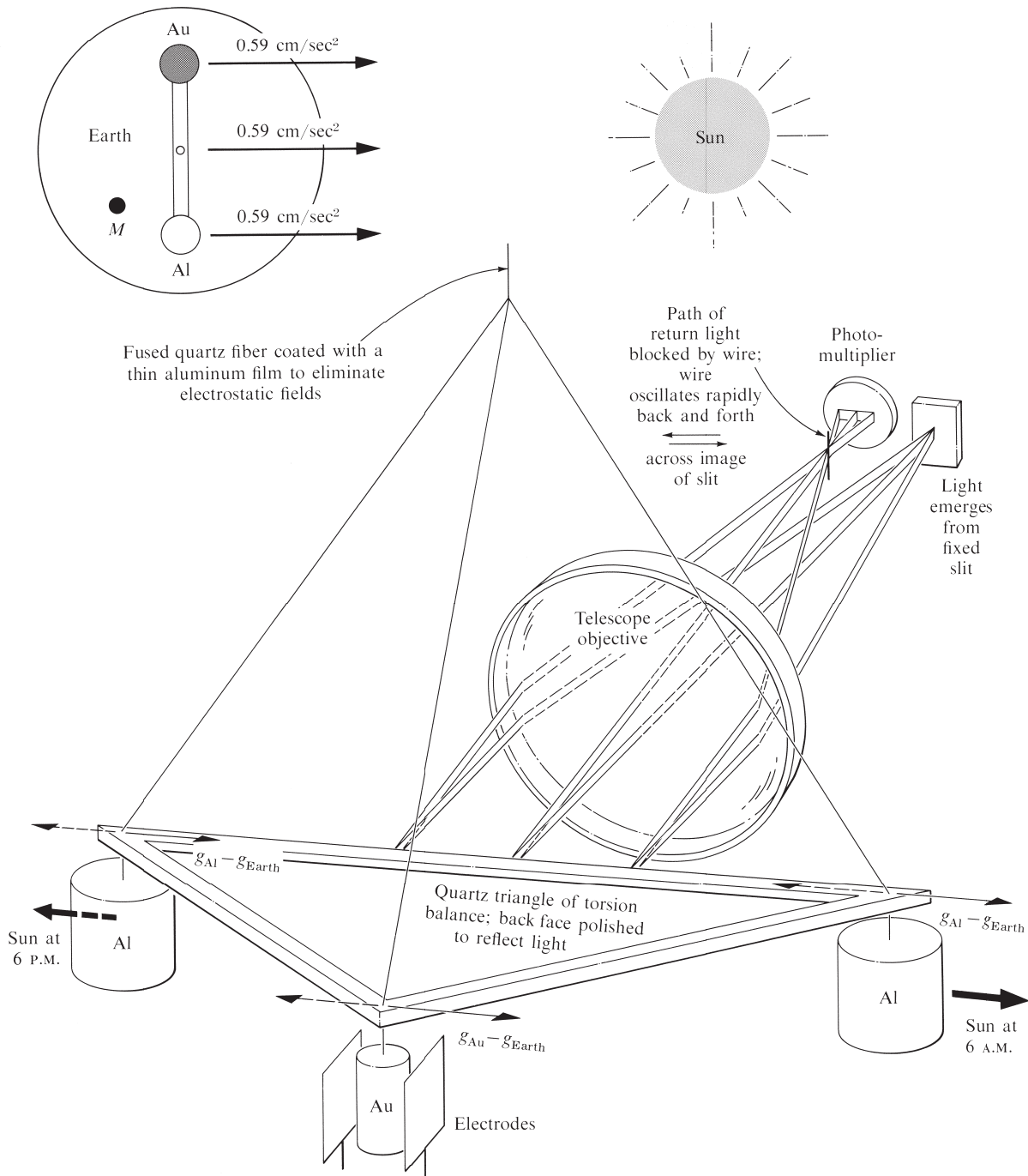
<i>Ratios</i>	<i>Al</i>	<i>Au</i>
<u>Number of neutrons</u> <u>Number of protons</u>	1.08	1.5
<u>Mass of kinetic energy of K-electron</u> <u>Rest mass of electron</u>	0.005	0.16
<u>Electrostatic mass-energy of nucleus</u> <u>Mass of atom</u>	0.001	0.004

*The theoretical implications* of this experiment will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 16 and 38.

Braginsky and Panov (1971) at Moscow University performed an experiment identical in principle to that of Dicke-Roll-Krotkov, but with a modified experimental set-up. Comparing the accelerations of platinum and aluminum rather than of gold and aluminum, they say that

$$\delta g/g \leq 1 \times 10^{-12}.$$

\*Other perturbations had to be, and were, guarded against. (1) A bit of iron on the torsion balance as big as  $10^{-3}$  cm on a side would have contributed, in the Earth's magnetic field, a torque a hundred times greater than the measured torque. (2) The unequal pressure of radiation on the two sides of a mass would have produced an unacceptably large perturbation if the temperature difference between these two sides had exceeded  $10^{-4}$  °K. (3) Gas evolution from one side of a mass would have propelled it like a rocket. If the rate of evolution were as great as  $10^{-8}$  g/day, the calculated force would have been  $\sim 10^{-7}$  g cm/sec<sup>2</sup>, enough to affect the measurements. (4) The rotation was measured with respect to the pier that supported the equipment. As a guarantee that this pier did not itself rotate, it was anchored to bed rock. (5) Electrostatic forces were eliminated; otherwise they would have perturbed the balance.





electrons [Witteborn and Fairbank (1967)] and individual mu mesons [Beall (1970)]. What is more, not one of these objects has to see out into space to know how to move.

Contemplate the interior of a spaceship, and a key, penny, nut, and pea by accident or design set free inside. Shielded from all view of the world outside by the walls of the vessel, each object stays at rest relative to the vessel. Or it moves through the room in a straight line with uniform velocity. That is the lesson which experience shouts out.

Forego talk of acceleration! That, paradoxically, is the lesson of the circumstance that “all objects fall with the same acceleration.” Whose fault were those accelerations, after all? They came from allowing a groundbased observer into the act. The

### Box 1.2 MATERIALS OF THE MOST DIVERSE COMPOSITION FALL WITH THE SAME ACCELERATION (“STANDARD WORLD LINE”)

**Aristotle:** “the downward movement of a mass of gold or lead, or of any other body endowed with weight, is quicker in proportion to its size.”

**Pre-Galilean literature:** metal and wood weights fall at the same rate.

**Galileo:** (1) “the variation of speed in air between balls of gold, lead, copper, porphyry, and other heavy materials is so slight that in a fall of 100 cubits [about 46 meters] a ball of gold would surely not outstrip one of copper by as much as four fingers. Having observed this, I came to the conclusion that in a medium totally void of resistance all bodies would fall with the same speed.” (2) later experiments of greater precision “diluting gravity” and finding same time of descent for different objects along an inclined plane.

**Newton:** inclined plane replaced by arc of pendulum bob; “time of fall” for bodies of different composition determined by comparing time of oscillation of pendulum bobs of the two materials. Ultimate limit of precision in such experiments limited by problem of determining effective length of each pendulum:  $(\text{acceleration}) = (2\pi/\text{period})^2(\text{length})$ .

**Lorand von Eötvös,** Budapest, 1889 and 1922: compared on the rotating earth the vertical defined by a plumb bob of one material with the vertical defined by a plumb bob of other material. The two hanging masses, by the two unbroken threads that support them, were drawn along identical world lines through spacetime (middle of the laboratory of Eötvös!). If cut free, would they also follow identical tracks through spacetime (“normal world line of test mass”)? If so, the acceleration that draws the actual world line from the normal free-fall world line will have a standard value,  $a$ . The experiment of Eötvös did not try to test agreement on the magnitude of  $a$  between the two masses. Doing so would have required (1) cutting the threads and (2) following the fall of the two masses. Eötvös renounced this approach in favor of a static observation that he could make with greater precision, comparing the *direction* of  $a$  for the two masses. The direction of the supporting thread, so his argument ran, reveals the direction in which the mass is being dragged away from its normal world line of “free fall” or “weightlessness.” This acceleration is the vectorial resultant of (1) an acceleration of magnitude  $g$ , directed outward against so-called gravity, and (2) an acceleration directed toward the axis of rotation of the earth, of magnitude  $\omega^2 R \sin \theta$  ( $\omega$ , angular ve-

push of the ground under his feet was driving him away from a natural world line. Through that flaw in his arrangements, he became responsible for all those accelerations. Put him in space and strap rockets to his legs. No difference!\* Again the responsibility for what he sees is his. Once more he notes that “all objects fall with

\*“No difference” spelled out amounts to Einstein’s (1911) principle of the local equivalence between a “gravitational field” and an acceleration: “We arrive at a very satisfactory interpretation of this law of experience, if we assume that the systems  $K$  and  $K'$  are physically exactly equivalent, that is, if we assume that we may just as well regard the system  $K$  as being in a space free from gravitational fields, if we then regard  $K$  as uniformly accelerated. This assumption of exact physical equivalence makes it impossible for us to speak of the absolute acceleration of the system of reference, just as the usual theory of relativity forbids us to talk of the absolute velocity of a system; and it makes the equal falling of all bodies in a gravitational field seem a matter of course.”

locity;  $R$ , radius of earth;  $\theta$ , polar angle measured from North Pole to location of experiment). This centripetal acceleration has a vertical component  $-\omega^2 R \sin^2 \theta$  too small to come into discussion. The important component is  $\omega^2 R \sin \theta \cos \theta$ , directed northward and parallel to the surface of the earth. It deflects the thread by the angle

$\frac{\text{horizontal acceleration}}{\text{vertical acceleration}}$

$$\begin{aligned} &= \frac{\omega^2 R \sin \theta \cos \theta}{g} \\ &= \frac{3.4 \text{ cm/sec}^2}{980 \text{ cm/sec}^2} \sin \theta \cos \theta \\ &= 1.7 \times 10^{-3} \text{ radian at } \theta = 45^\circ \end{aligned}$$

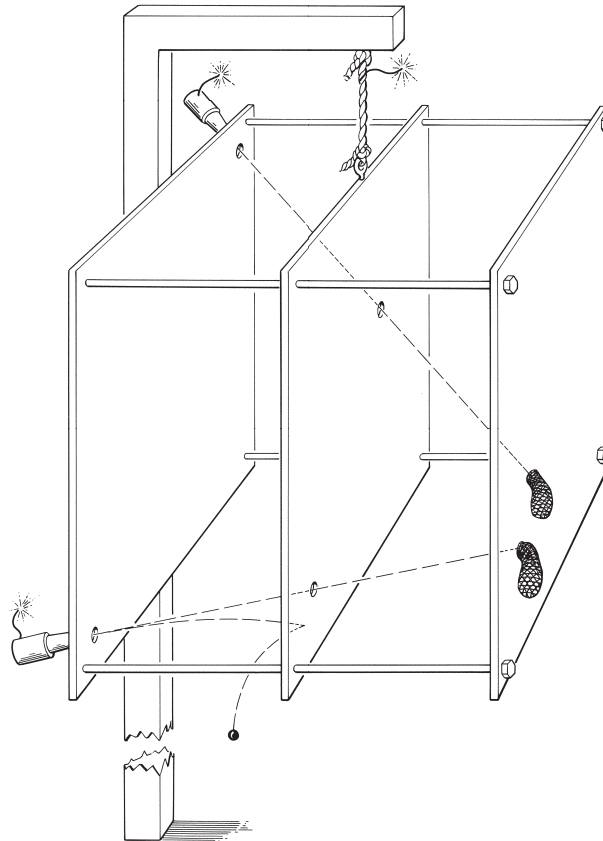
from the straight line connecting the center of the earth to the point of support. A difference,  $\delta g$ , of one part in  $10^8$  between  $g$  for the two hanging substances would produce a difference in angle of hang of plumb bobs equal to  $1.7 \times 10^{-11}$  radian at Budapest ( $\theta = 42.5^\circ$ ). Eötvös reported  $\delta g/g$  less than a few parts in  $10^9$ .

**Roll, Krotkov, and Dicke**, Princeton, 1964: employed as fiducial acceleration, not the  $1.7 \text{ cm/sec}^2$  steady horizontal acceleration, produced by the earth’s rotation at  $\theta = 45^\circ$ , but the daily alternat-

ing  $0.59 \text{ cm/sec}^2$  produced by the sun’s attraction. Reported  $|g(\text{Au}) - g(\text{Al})|/g$  less than  $1 \times 10^{-11}$ . See Figure 1.6.

**Braginsky and Panov**, Moscow, 1971: like Roll, Krotkov, and Dicke, employed Sun’s attraction as fiducial acceleration. Reported  $|g(\text{Pt}) - g(\text{Al})|/g$  less than  $1 \times 10^{-12}$ .

**Beall**, 1970: particles that are deflected less by the Earth’s or the sun’s gravitational field than a photon would be, effectively travel faster than light. If they are charged or have other electromagnetic structure, they would then emit Čerenkov radiation, and reduce their velocity below threshold in less than a micron of travel. The threshold is at energies around  $10^3 \text{ mc}^2$ . Ultrarelativistic particles in cosmic-ray showers are not easily identified, but observations of  $10^{13} \text{ eV}$  muons show that muons are not “too light” by as much as  $5 \times 10^{-5}$ . Conversely, a particle  $P$  bound more strongly than photons by gravity will transfer the momentum needed to make pair production  $\gamma \rightarrow P + \bar{P}$  occur within a submicron decay length. The existence of photons with energies above  $10^{13} \text{ eV}$  shows that  $e^\pm$  are not “too heavy” by 5 parts in  $10^9$ ,  $\mu^\pm$  not by 2 in  $10^4$ ,  $\Lambda$ ,  $\Xi^-$ ,  $\Omega^-$  not by a few per cent.



**Figure 1.7.**

“Weightlessness” as test for a local inertial frame of reference (“Lorentz frame”). Each spring-driven cannon succeeds in driving its projectile, a steel ball bearing, through the aligned holes in the sheets of lucite, and into the woven-mesh pocket, when the frame of reference is free of rotation and in free fall (“normal world line through spacetime”). A cannon would fail (curved and ricocheting trajectory at bottom of drawing) if the frame were hanging as indicated when the cannon went off (“frame drawn away by pull of rope from its normal world line through spacetime”). Harold Waage at Princeton has constructed such a model for an inertial reference frame with lucite sheets about 1 m square. The “fuses” symbolizing time delay were replaced by electric relays. Penetration fails if the frame (1) rotates, (2) accelerates, or (3) does any combination of the two. It is difficult to cite any easily realizable device that more fully illustrates the meaning of the term “local Lorentz frame.”

Eliminate the acceleration by use of a local inertial frame

the same acceleration.” Physics looks as complicated to the jet-driven observer as it does to the man on the ground. Rule out both observers to make physics look simple. Instead, travel aboard the freely moving spaceship. Nothing could be more natural than what one sees: every free object moves in a straight line with uniform velocity. This is the way to do physics! Work in a very special coordinate system: a coordinate frame in which one is weightless; a *local inertial frame of reference*. Or calculate how things look in such a frame. Or—if one is constrained to a ground-based frame of reference—use a particle moving so fast, and a path length so limited, that the ideal, freely falling frame of reference and the actual ground-based frame get out of alignment by an amount negligible on the scale of the experiment. [Given a 1,500-m linear accelerator, and a 1 GeV electron, time of flight  $\simeq (1.5 \times 10^5 \text{ cm})/$

$(3 \times 10^{10} \text{ cm/sec}) = 0.5 \times 10^{-5} \text{ sec}$ ; fall in this time  $\sim \frac{1}{2}gt^2 = (490 \text{ cm/sec}^2)(0.5 \times 10^{-5} \text{ sec})^2 \simeq 10^{-8} \text{ cm}$ .]

In analyzing physics in a local inertial frame of reference, or following an ant on his little section of apple skin, one wins simplicity by foregoing every reference to what is far away. Physics is simple only when viewed locally: that is Einstein's great lesson.

Newton spoke differently: "Absolute space, in its own nature, without relation to anything external, remains always similar and immovable." But how does one give meaning to Newton's absolute space, find its cornerstones, mark out its straight lines? In the real world of gravitation, no particle ever follows one of Newton's straight lines. His ideal geometry is beyond observation. "A comet going past the sun is deviated from an ideal straight line." No. There is no pavement on which to mark out that line. The "ideal straight line" is a myth. It never happened, and it never will.

Newton's absolute space is unobservable, nonexistent

"It required a severe struggle [for Newton] to arrive at the concept of independent and absolute space, indispensable for the development of theory. . . . Newton's decision was, in the contemporary state of science, the only possible one, and particularly the only fruitful one. But the subsequent development of the problems, proceeding in a roundabout way which no one could then possibly foresee, has shown that the resistance of Leibniz and Huygens, intuitively well-founded but supported by inadequate arguments, was actually justified. . . . It has required no less strenuous exertions subsequently to overcome this concept [of absolute space]"

[A. EINSTEIN (1954)].

What is direct and simple and meaningful, according to Einstein, is the geometry in every local inertial reference frame. There every particle moves in a straight line with uniform velocity. *Define* the local inertial frame so that this simplicity occurs for the first few particles (Figure 1.7). In the frame thus defined, every other free particle is observed also to move in a straight line with uniform velocity. Collision and disintegration processes follow the laws of conservation of momentum and energy of special relativity. That all these miracles come about, as attested by tens of thousands of observations in elementary particle physics, is witness to the inner workings of the machinery of the world. The message is easy to summarize: (1) physics is always and everywhere locally Lorentzian; i.e., locally the laws of special relativity are valid; (2) this simplicity shows most clearly in a local Lorentz frame of reference ("inertial frame of reference"; Figure 1.7); and (3) to test for a local Lorentz frame, test for weightlessness!

But Einstein's local inertial frames exist, are simple

In local inertial frames, physics is Lorentzian

#### §1.4. LOCAL LORENTZ GEOMETRY, WITH AND WITHOUT COORDINATES

On the surface of an apple within the space of a thumbprint, the geometry is Euclidean (Figure 1.1; the view in the magnifying glass). In spacetime, within a limited region, the geometry is Lorentzian. On the apple the distances between point and point accord with the theorems of Euclid. In spacetime the intervals ("proper distance," "proper time") between event and event satisfy the corresponding theorems of Lorentz-Minkowski geometry (Box 1.3). These theorems lend themselves

Local Lorentz geometry is the spacetime analog of local Euclidean geometry.

(continued on page 23)



### Box 1.3 LOCAL LORENTZ GEOMETRY AND LOCAL EUCLIDEAN GEOMETRY: WITH AND WITHOUT COORDINATES

#### I. Local Euclidean Geometry

What does it mean to say that the geometry of a tiny thumbprint on the apple is Euclidean?

- A. *Coordinate-free language* (Euclid):  
Given a line  $\mathcal{AC}$ . Extend it by an equal distance  $\mathcal{CZ}$ . Let  $\mathcal{B}$  be a point not on  $\mathcal{AZ}$  but equidistant from  $\mathcal{A}$  and  $\mathcal{Z}$ . Then

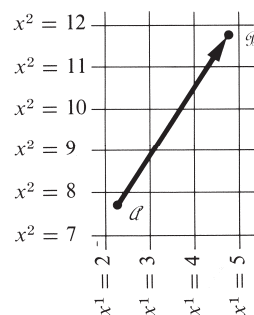
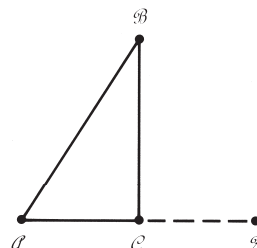
$$s_{\mathcal{AB}}^2 = s_{\mathcal{AC}}^2 + s_{\mathcal{BZ}}^2.$$

(Theorem of Pythagoras; also other theorems of Euclidean geometry.)

- B. *Language of coordinates* (Descartes):  
From any point  $\mathcal{A}$  to any other point  $\mathcal{B}$  there is a distance  $s$  given in suitable (Euclidean) coordinates by

$$s_{\mathcal{AB}}^2 = [x^1(\mathcal{B}) - x^1(\mathcal{A})]^2 + [x^2(\mathcal{B}) - x^2(\mathcal{A})]^2.$$

If one succeeds in finding any coordinate system where this is true for all points  $\mathcal{A}$  and  $\mathcal{B}$  in the thumbprint, then one is guaranteed that (i) this coordinate system is locally Euclidean, and (ii) the geometry of the apple's surface is locally Euclidean.

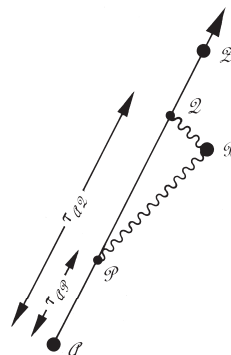


#### II. Local Lorentz Geometry

What does it mean to say that the geometry of a sufficiently limited region of spacetime in the real physical world is Lorentzian?

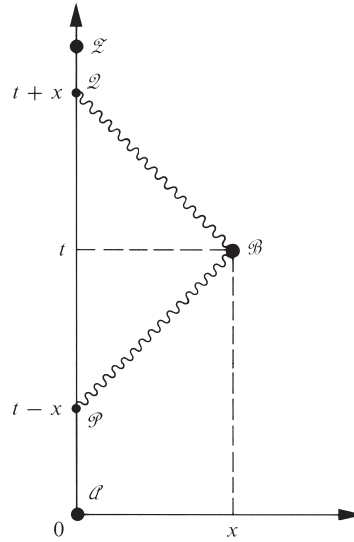
- A. *Coordinate-free language* (Robb 1936):  
Let  $\mathcal{AZ}$  be the world line of a free particle. Let  $\mathcal{B}$  be an event not on this world line. Let a light ray from  $\mathcal{B}$  strike  $\mathcal{AZ}$  at the event  $\mathcal{Q}$ . Let a light ray take off from such an earlier event  $\mathcal{P}$  along  $\mathcal{AZ}$  that it reaches  $\mathcal{B}$ . Then the proper distance  $s_{\mathcal{AB}}$  (spacelike separation) or proper time  $\tau_{\mathcal{AP}}$  (timelike separation) is given by

$$s_{\mathcal{AB}}^2 \equiv -\tau_{\mathcal{AQ}}^2 = -\tau_{\mathcal{AP}}^2.$$



Proof of above criterion for local Lorentz geometry, using coordinate methods in the local Lorentz frame where particle remains at rest:

$$\begin{aligned}\tau_{\mathcal{A}\mathcal{B}}^2 &= t^2 - x^2 = (t - x)(t + x) \\ &= \tau_{\mathcal{A}\mathcal{P}}\tau_{\mathcal{Q}\mathcal{B}}.\end{aligned}$$

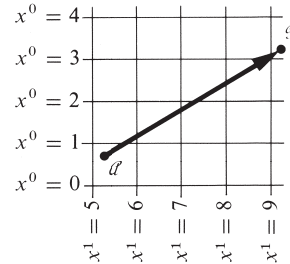


B. *Language of coordinates* (Lorentz, Poincaré, Minkowski, Einstein):

From any event  $\mathcal{A}$  to any other nearby event  $\mathcal{B}$ , there is a proper distance  $s_{\mathcal{A}\mathcal{B}}$  or proper time  $\tau_{\mathcal{A}\mathcal{B}}$  given in suitable (local Lorentz) coordinates by

$$\begin{aligned}s_{\mathcal{A}\mathcal{B}}^2 &= -\tau_{\mathcal{A}\mathcal{B}}^2 = -[x^0(\mathcal{B}) - x^0(\mathcal{A})]^2 \\ &\quad + [x^1(\mathcal{B}) - x^1(\mathcal{A})]^2 \\ &\quad + [x^2(\mathcal{B}) - x^2(\mathcal{A})]^2 \\ &\quad + [x^3(\mathcal{B}) - x^3(\mathcal{A})]^2.\end{aligned}$$

If one succeeds in finding any coordinate system where this is locally true for all neighboring events  $\mathcal{A}$  and  $\mathcal{B}$ , then one is guaranteed that (i) this coordinate system is locally Lorentzian, and (ii) the geometry of spacetime is locally Lorentzian.



### III. Statements of Fact

The geometry of an apple's surface is locally Euclidean everywhere. The geometry of spacetime is locally Lorentzian everywhere.

Box 1.3 (continued)

# IV. Local Geometry in the Language of Modern Mathematics

## A. The metric for any manifold:

At each point on the apple, at each event of spacetime, indeed, at each point of any “Riemannian manifold,” there exists a geometrical object called the *metric tensor*  $g$ . It is a machine with two input slots for the insertion of two vectors:

$$g\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{slot 1} \\ \downarrow \\ \end{array}, \begin{array}{c} \text{slot 2} \\ \downarrow \\ \end{array}\right).$$

If one inserts the same vector  $u$  into both slots, one gets out the square of the length of  $u$ :

$$g(u, u) = u^2.$$

If one inserts two different vectors,  $u$  and  $v$  (it matters not in which order!), one gets out a number called the “scalar product of  $u$  on  $v$ ” and denoted  $u \cdot v$ :

$$g(u, v) = g(v, u) = u \cdot v = v \cdot u.$$

The metric is a linear machine:

$$\begin{aligned} g(2u + 3w, v) &= 2g(u, v) + 3g(w, v), \\ g(u, av + bw) &= ag(u, v) + bg(u, w). \end{aligned}$$

Consequently, in a given (arbitrary) coordinate system, its operation on two vectors can be written in terms of their components as a bilinear expression:

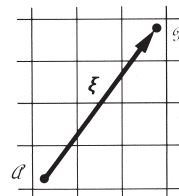
$$\begin{aligned} g(u, v) &= g_{\alpha\beta} u^\alpha v^\beta \\ &\quad (\text{implied summation on } \alpha, \beta) \\ &= g_{11} u^1 v^1 + g_{12} u^1 v^2 + g_{21} u^2 v^1 + \dots \end{aligned}$$

The quantities  $g_{\alpha\beta} = g_{\beta\alpha}$  ( $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  running from 0 to 3 in spacetime, from 1 to 2 on the apple) are called the “components of  $g$  in the given coordinate system.”

## B. Components of the metric in local Lorentz and local Euclidean frames:

To connect the metric with our previous descriptions of the local geometry, introduce

local Euclidean coordinates (on apple) or local Lorentz coordinates (in spacetime).



Let  $\xi$  be the separation vector reaching from  $\mathcal{A}$  to  $\mathcal{B}$ . Its components in the local Euclidean (Lorentz) coordinates are

$$\xi^\alpha = x^\alpha(\mathcal{B}) - x^\alpha(\mathcal{A})$$

(cf. Box 1.1). Then the squared length of  $u_{\mathcal{A}\mathcal{B}}$ , which is the same as the squared distance from  $\mathcal{A}$  to  $\mathcal{B}$ , must be (cf. I.B. and II.B. above)

$$\begin{aligned} \xi \cdot \xi &= g(\xi, \xi) = g_{\alpha\beta} \xi^\alpha \xi^\beta \\ &= s_{\mathcal{A}\mathcal{B}}^2 = (\xi^1)^2 + (\xi^2)^2 \text{ on apple} \\ &= -(\xi^0)^2 + (\xi^1)^2 + (\xi^2)^2 + (\xi^3)^2 \\ &\quad \text{in spacetime.} \end{aligned}$$

Consequently, the components of the metric are

$$\begin{aligned} g_{11} &= g_{22} = 1, \quad g_{12} = g_{21} = 0; \\ \text{i.e., } g_{\alpha\beta} &= \delta_{\alpha\beta} && \text{on apple, in} \\ &&& \text{local Euclidean} \\ &&& \text{coordinates;} \\ g_{00} &= -1, \quad g_{0k} = 0, \quad g_{jk} = \delta_{jk} \\ &&& \text{in spacetime, in} \\ &&& \text{local Lorentz} \\ &&& \text{coordinates.} \end{aligned}$$

These special components of the metric in local Lorentz coordinates are written here and hereafter as  $g_{\hat{\alpha}\hat{\beta}}$  or  $\eta_{\alpha\beta}$ , by analogy with the Kronecker delta  $\delta_{\alpha\beta}$ . In matrix notation:

$$\|g_{\hat{\alpha}\hat{\beta}}\| = \|\eta_{\alpha\beta}\| = \begin{array}{c} \downarrow \alpha \\ \begin{array}{c} \left\| \begin{array}{c} 0 \\ 1 \\ 2 \\ 3 \end{array} \right\| \end{array} \end{array} \begin{array}{c} \xrightarrow{\beta} \\ \begin{array}{cccc} 0 & 1 & 2 & 3 \end{array} \end{array} \left\| \begin{array}{cccc} -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{array} \right\| \end{array}$$

to empirical test in the appropriate, very special coordinate systems: Euclidean coordinates in Euclidean geometry; the natural generalization of Euclidean coordinates (local Lorentz coordinates; local inertial frame) in the local Lorentz geometry of physics. However, the theorems rise above all coordinate systems in their content. They refer to intervals or distances. Those distances no more call on coordinates for their definition in our day than they did in the time of Euclid. Points in the great pile of hay that is spacetime; and distances between these points: that is geometry! State them in the coordinate-free language or in the language of coordinates: they are the same (Box 1.3).

## § 1.5. TIME

Time is defined so that motion looks simple.

*Time is awake when all things sleep.  
Time stands straight when all things fall.  
Time shuts in all and will not be shut.  
Is, was, and shall be are Time's children.  
O Reasoning, be witness, be stable.*

VYASA, the *Mahabharata* (ca. A.D. 400)

Relative to a local Lorentz frame, a free particle “moves in a straight line with uniform velocity.” What “straight” means is clear enough in the model inertial reference frame illustrated in Figure 1.7. But where does the “uniform velocity” come in? Or where does “velocity” show itself? There is not even one clock in the drawing!

A more fully developed model of a Lorentz reference frame will have not only holes, as in Fig. 1.7, but also clock-activated shutters over each hole. The projectile can reach its target only if it (1) travels through the correct region in space and (2) gets through that hole in the correct interval of time (“window in time”). How then is time defined? Time is defined so that motion looks simple!

No standard of time is more widely used than the day, the time from one high noon to the next. Take that as standard, however, and one will find every good clock or watch clashing with it, for a simple reason. The Earth spins on its axis and also revolves in orbit about the sun. The motion of the sun across the sky arises from neither effect alone, but from the two in combination, different in magnitude though they are. The fast angular velocity of the Earth on its axis (roughly 366.25 complete turns per year) is wonderfully uniform. Not so the apparent angular velocity of the sun about the center of the Earth (one turn per year). It is greater than average by 2 per cent when the Earth in its orbit (eccentricity 0.017) has come 1 per cent closer than average to the sun (Kepler’s law) and lower by 2 per cent when the Earth is 1 per cent further than average from the sun. In the first case, the momentary rate of rotation of the sun across the sky, expressed in turns per year, is approximately

$$366.25 - (1 + 0.02);$$

The time coordinate of a local Lorentz frame is so defined that motion looks simple

in the other,

$$366.25 - (1 - 0.02).$$

Taking the “mean solar day” to contain  $24 \times 3,600 = 86,400$  standard seconds, one sees that, when the Earth is 1 per cent closer to (or further from) the sun than average, then the number of standard seconds from one high noon to the next is greater (or less) than normal by

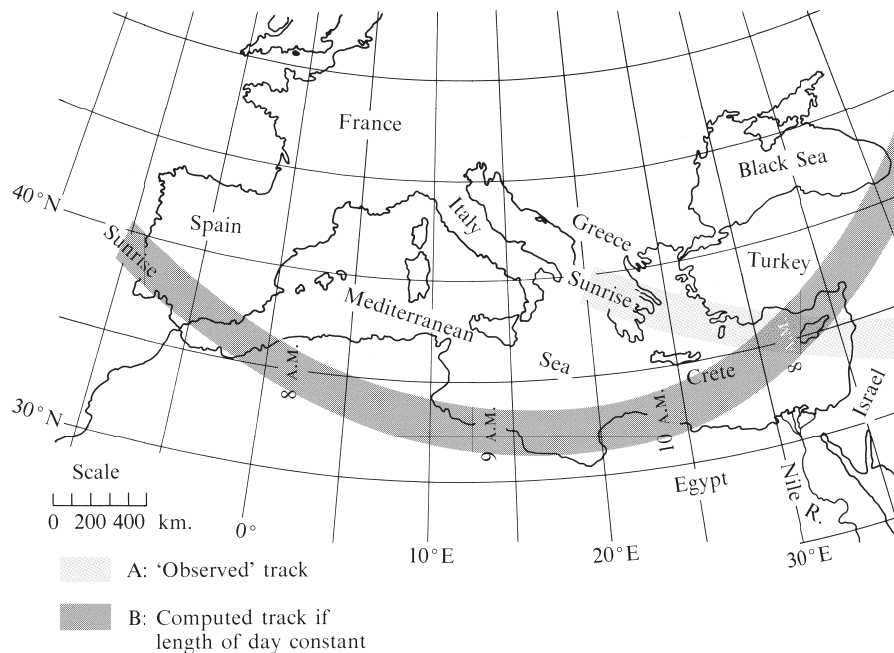
$$\frac{0.02 \text{ (drop in turns per year)}}{365.25 \text{ (turns per year on average)}} 86,400 \text{ sec} \sim 4.7 \text{ sec.}$$

This is the bookkeeping on time from noon to noon. No standard of time that varies so much from one month to another is acceptable. If adopted, it would make the speed of light vary from month to month!

This lack of uniformity, once recognized (and it was already recognized by the ancients), forces one to abandon the solar day as the standard of time; that day does not make motion look simple. Turn to a new standard that eliminates the motion of the Earth around the sun and concentrates on the spin of the Earth about its axis: the sidereal day, the time between one arrival of a star at the zenith and the next arrival of that star at the zenith. Good! Or good, so long as one’s precision of measurement does not allow one to see changes in the intrinsic angular velocity of the Earth. What clock was so bold as first to challenge the spin of the Earth for accuracy? The machinery of the heavens.

Halley (1693) and later others, including Kant (1754), suspected something was amiss from apparent discrepancies between the paths of totality in eclipses of the sun, as predicted by Newtonian gravitation theory using the standard of time then current, and the location of the sites where ancient Greeks and Romans actually recorded an eclipse on the day in question. The moon casts a moving shadow in space. On the day of a solar eclipse, that shadow paints onto the disk of the spinning Earth a black brush stroke, often thousands of kilometers in length, but of width generally much less than a hundred kilometers. He who spins the globe upon the table and wants to make the shadow fall rightly on it must calculate back meticulously to determine two key items: (1) where the moon is relative to Earth and sun at each moment on the ancient day in question; and (2) how much angle the Earth has turned through from then until now. Take the eclipse of Jan. 14, A.D. 484, as an example (Figure 1.8), and assume the same angular velocity for the Earth in the intervening fifteen centuries as the Earth had in 1900 (astronomical reference point). One comes out wrong. The Earth has to be set back by  $30^\circ$  (or the moon moved from its computed position, or some combination of the two effects) to make the Athens observer fall under the black brush. To catch up those  $30^\circ$  (or less, if part of the effect is due to a slow change in the angular momentum of the moon), the Earth had to turn faster in the past than it does today. Assigning most of the discrepancy to terrestrial spin-down (rate of spin-down compatible with modern atomic-clock evidence), and assuming a uniform rate of slowing from then to now





**Figure 1.8.**

Calculated path of totality for the eclipse of January 14, A.D. 484 (left; calculation based on no spin-down of Earth relative to its 1900 angular velocity) contrasted with the same path as set ahead enough to put the center of totality (at sunrise) at Athens [displacement very close to  $30^\circ$ ; actual figure of deceleration adopted in calculations,  $32.75 \text{ arc sec}/(\text{century})^2$ ]. This is “undoubtedly the most reliable of all ancient European eclipses,” according to Dr. F. R. Stephenson, of the Department of Geophysics and Planetary Physics of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, who most kindly prepared this diagram especially for this book. He has also sent a passage from the original Greek biography of Proclus of Athens (died at Athens A.D. 485) by Marinus of Naples, reading, “Nor were there portents wanting in the year which preceded his death; for example, such a great eclipse of the Sun that night seemed to fall by day. For a profound darkness arose so that stars even appeared in the sky. This happened in the eastern sky when the Sun dwelt in Capricorn” [from Westermann and Boissonade (1878)].

Does this  $30^\circ$  for this eclipse, together with corresponding amounts for other eclipses, represent the “right” correction? “Right” is no easy word. From one total eclipse of the sun in the Mediterranean area to another is normally many years. The various provinces of the Greek and Roman worlds were far from having a uniform level of peace and settled life, and even farther from having a uniform standard of what it is to observe an eclipse and put it down for posterity. If the scores of records of the past are unhappily fragmentary, even more unhappy has been the willingness of a few uncritical “investigators” in recent times to rush in and identify this and that historical event with this and that calculated eclipse. Fortunately, by now a great literature is available on the secular deceleration of the Earth’s rotation, in the highest tradition of critical scholarship, both astronomical and historical. In addition to the books of O. Neugebauer (1959) and Munk and MacDonald (1960), the paper of Curott (1966), and items cited by these workers, the following are key items. (For direction to them, we thank Professor Otto Neugebauer—no relation to the other Neugebauer cited below!) For the ancient records, and for calculations of the tracks of ancient eclipses, F. K. Ginzel (1882, 1883, 1884); for an atlas of calculated eclipse tracks, Oppolzer (1887) and Ginzel (1899); and for a critical analysis of the evidence, P. V. Neugebauer (1927, 1929, and 1930). This particular eclipse was chosen rather than any other because of the great reliability of the historical record of it.

(angular velocity correction proportional to first power of elapsed time: angle correction itself proportional to square of elapsed time), one estimates from a correction of

30° or 2 hours      1,500 years ago

the following corrections for intermediate times:

30°/10<sup>2</sup>, or 1.2 min      150 years ago,

30°/10<sup>4</sup>, or 0.8 sec      15 years ago.

Thus one sees the downfall of the Earth as a standard of time and its replacement by the orbital motions of the heavenly bodies as a better standard: a standard that does more to “make motion look simple.” Astronomical time is itself in turn today being supplanted by atomic time as a standard of reference (see Box 1.4, “Time Today”).

Good clocks make spacetime trajectories of free particles look straight

Look at a bad clock for a good view of how time is defined. Let  $t$  be time on a “good” clock (time coordinate of a local inertial frame); it makes the tracks of free particles through the local region of spacetime look straight. Let  $T(t)$  be the reading of the “bad” clock; it makes the world lines of free particles through the local region of spacetime look curved (Figure 1.9). The old value of the acceleration, translated into the new (“bad”) time, becomes

$$0 = \frac{d^2x}{dt^2} = \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{dT}{dt} \frac{dx}{dT} \right) = \frac{d^2T}{dt^2} \frac{dx}{dT} + \left( \frac{dT}{dt} \right)^2 \frac{d^2x}{dT^2}.$$

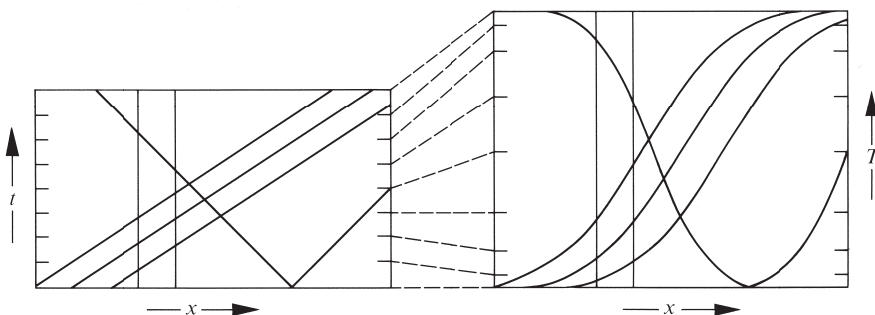
To explain the apparent accelerations of the particles, the user of the new time introduces a force that one knows to be fictitious:

$$F_x = m \frac{d^2x}{dT^2} = -m \frac{\left( \frac{dx}{dT} \right) \left( \frac{d^2T}{dT^2} \right)}{\left( \frac{dT}{dT} \right)^2}. \quad (1.2)$$

It is clear from this example of a “bad” time that Newton thought of a “good” time when he set up the principle that “Time flows uniformly” ( $d^2T/dt^2 = 0$ ). Time is defined to make motion look simple!

The principle of uniformity, taken by itself, leaves free the scale of the time variable. The quantity  $T = at + b$  satisfies the requirement as well as  $t$  itself. The history of timekeeping discloses many choices of the unit and origin of time. Each one required some human action to give it sanction, from the fiat of a Pharaoh to the communique of a committee. In this book the amount of time it takes light to travel one centimeter is decreed to be the unit of time. Spacelike intervals and timelike intervals are measured in terms of one and the same geometric unit: the centimeter. Any other decision would complicate in analysis what is simple in nature. No other choice would live up to Minkowski’s words, “Henceforth space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality.”

Our choice of unit for measuring time: *the geometrodynamical centimeter*.



**Figure 1.9.**

Good clock (left) vs. bad clock (right) as seen in the maps they give of the same free particles moving through the same region of spacetime. The world lines as depicted at the right give the impression that a force is at work. The good definition of time eliminates such fictitious forces. The dashed lines connect corresponding instants on the two time scales.

One can measure time more accurately today than distance. Is that an argument against taking the elementary unit to be the centimeter? No, provided that this definition of the centimeter is accepted: *the geometrodynamic standard centimeter is the fraction*

$$1/(9.460546 \times 10^{17}) \quad (1.3)$$

*of the interval between the two “effective equinoxes” that bound the tropical year 1900.0.* The tropical year 1900.0 has already been recognized internationally as the fiducial interval by reason of its definiteness and the precision with which it is known. Standards committees have *defined the ephemeris second* so that 31,556,925.974 sec make up that standard interval. Were the speed of light known with perfect precision, the standards committees could have given in the same breath the number of centimeters in the standard interval. But it isn’t; it is known to only six decimals. Moreover, the *international centimeter* is defined in terms of the orange-red wavelength of Kr<sup>86</sup> to only nine decimals (16,507.6373 wavelengths). Yet the standard second is given to 11 decimals. We match the standard second by arbitrarily defining the geometrodynamic standard centimeter so that

$$9.4605460000 \times 10^{17}$$

such centimeters are contained in the standard tropical year 1900.0. The speed of light then becomes exactly

$$\frac{9.4605460000 \times 10^{17}}{31,556,925.974} \text{ geometrodynamic cm/sec.} \quad (1.4)$$

This is compatible with the speed of light, as known in 1967, in units of “international cm/sec”:

$$29,979,300,000 \pm 30,000 \text{ international cm/sec.}$$



#### Box 1.4 TIME TODAY

Prior to 1956 the second was defined as the fraction  $1/86,400$  of the mean solar day.

From 1956 to 1967 the “second” meant the ephemeris second, defined as the fraction  $1/(31,556,925.9747)$  of the tropical year 00h00m00s December 31, 1899.

Since 1967 the standard second has been the SI (Système International) second, defined as 9,192,631,770 periods of the unperturbed microwave transition between the two hyperfine levels of the ground state of  $\text{Cs}^{133}$ .

Like the foregoing evolution of the unit for the time *interval*, the evolution of a time *coordinate* has been marked by several stages.

Universal time, UTO, is based on the count of days as they actually occurred historically; in other words, on the actual spin of the earth on its axis; historically, on mean solar time (solar position as corrected by the “equation of time”; i.e., the faster travel of the earth when near the sun than when far from the sun) as determined at Greenwich Observatory.

UT1, the “navigator’s time scale,” is the same time as corrected for the wobble of the earth on its axis ( $\Delta t \sim 0.05$  sec).

UT2 is UT1 as corrected for the periodic fluctuations of unknown origin with periods of one-half year and one year ( $\Delta t \sim 0.05$  sec; measured to 3 ms in one day).

Ephemeris Time, ET (as defined by the theory of gravitation and by astronomical observations and calculations), is essentially determined by the orbital motion of the earth around the sun. “Measurement uncertainties limit the realization of accurate ephemeris time to about 0.05 sec for a nine-year average.”

Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) is broadcast on stations such as WWV. It was adopted internationally in February 1971 to become effective January 1, 1972. The clock rate is controlled by atomic clocks to be as uniform as possible for one year (atomic time is measured to  $\sim 0.1$  microsec in 1 min, with diffusion rates of 0.1 microsec per day for ensembles of clocks), but is changed by the infrequent addition or deletion of a second—called a “leap second”—so that UTC never differs more than 0.7 sec from the navigator’s time scale, UT1.

### Time suspended for a second

Time will stand still throughout the world for one second at midnight, June 30. All radio time signals will insert a “leap second” to bring Greenwich Mean Time into line with the earth’s loss of three thousandths of a second a day.

The signal from the Royal Greenwich Observatory to Broadcasting House at midnight GMT (1 am BST July 1) will be six short pips marking the seconds 55 to 60 inclusive, followed by a lengthened signal at the following second to mark the new minute.

THE TIMES

Wednesday

June 21 1972

The foregoing account is abstracted from J. A. Barnes (1971). The following is extracted from a table (not official at time of receipt), kindly supplied by the Time and Frequency Division of the U.S. National Bureau of Standards in Boulder, Colorado.

Timekeeping capabilities of some familiar clocks are as follows:

Tuning fork wrist watch (1960),  
1 min/mo.

Quartz crystal clock (1921–1930),  
1  $\mu\text{sec/day}$ ,  
1 sec/yr.

Quartz crystal wrist watch (1971),  
0.2 sec/2 mos.,  
1 sec/yr.

Cesium beam (atomic resonance,  $\text{Cs}^{133}$ ), (1952–1955),  
0.1  $\mu\text{sec/day}$ ,  
0.5  $\mu\text{sec/mo}$ .

Rubidium gas cell ( $\text{Rb}^{87}$  resonance), (1957),  
0.1  $\mu\text{sec/day}$ ,  
1–5  $\mu\text{sec/mo}$ .

Hydrogen maser (1960),  
0.01  $\mu\text{sec/2 hr}$ ,  
0.1  $\mu\text{sec/day}$ .

Methane stabilized laser (1969),  
0.01  $\mu\text{sec/100 sec}$ .

Recent measurements [Evenson *et al.* (1972)] change the details of the foregoing 1967 argument, but not the principles.

## §1.6. CURVATURE

Gravitation seems to have disappeared. Everywhere the geometry of spacetime is locally Lorentzian. And in Lorentz geometry, particles move in a straight line with constant velocity. Where is any gravitational deflection to be seen in that? For answer, turn back to the apple (Figure 1.1). Inspect again the geodesic tracks of the ants on the surface of the apple. Note the reconvergence of two nearby geodesics that originally diverged from a common point. What is the analog in the real world of physics? What analogous concept fits Einstein's injunction that physics is only simple when analyzed locally? Don't look at the distance from the spaceship to the Earth. Look at the distance from the spaceship to a nearby spaceship! Or, to avoid any possible concern about attraction between the two ships, look at two nearby test particles in orbit about the Earth. To avoid distraction by the nonlocal element (the Earth) in the situation, conduct the study in the interior of a spaceship, also in orbit about the Earth. But this region has already been counted as a local inertial frame! What gravitational physics is to be seen there? None. Relative to the spaceship and therefore relative to each other, the two test particles move in a straight line with uniform velocity, to the precision of measurement that is contemplated (see Box 1.5, "Test for Flatness"). Now the key point begins to appear: precision of measurement. Increase it until one begins to discern the gradual acceleration of the test particles away from each other, if they lie along a common radius through the center of the Earth; or toward each other, if their separation lies perpendicular to that line. In Newtonian language, the source of these accelerations is the tide-producing action of the Earth. To the observer in the spaceship, however, no Earth is to be seen. And following Einstein, he knows it is important to analyze motion locally. He represents the separation of the new test particle from the fiducial test particle by the vector  $\xi^k$  ( $k = 1, 2, 3$ ; components measured in a local Lorentz frame). For the acceleration of this separation, one knows from Newtonian physics what he will find: if the Cartesian  $z$ -axis is in the radial direction, then

Gravitation is manifest in relative acceleration of neighboring test particles

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{d^2\xi^x}{dt^2} &= -\frac{Gm_{\text{conv}}}{c^2r^3}\xi^x, \\ \frac{d^2\xi^y}{dt^2} &= -\frac{Gm_{\text{conv}}}{c^2r^3}\xi^y, \\ \frac{d^2\xi^z}{dt^2} &= \frac{2Gm_{\text{conv}}}{c^2r^3}\xi^z.\end{aligned}\tag{1.5}$$

Proof: In Newtonian physics the acceleration of a single particle toward the center of the Earth in conventional units of time is  $Gm_{\text{conv}}/r^2$ , where  $G$  is the Newtonian constant of gravitation,  $6.670 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}^3/\text{g sec}^2$  and  $m_{\text{conv}}$  is the mass of the Earth in conventional units of grams. In geometric units of time (cm of light-travel time),

the acceleration is  $Gm_{\text{conv}}/c^2 r^2$ . When the two particles are separated by a distance  $\xi$  perpendicular to  $r$ , the one downward acceleration vector is out of line with the other by the angle  $\xi/r$ . Consequently one particle accelerates toward the other by the stated amount. When the separation is parallel to  $r$ , the relative acceleration is given by evaluating the Newtonian acceleration at  $r$  and at  $r + \xi$ , and taking the difference ( $\xi$  times  $d/dr$ ) Q.E.D. In conclusion, the “local tide-producing acceleration” of Newtonian gravitation theory provides the local description of gravitation that Einstein bids one to seek.

Relative acceleration is caused by curvature

What has this tide-producing acceleration to do with curvature? (See Box 1.6.) Look again at the apple or, better, at a sphere of radius  $a$  (Figure 1.10). The separation of nearby geodesics satisfies the “equation of geodesic deviation,”

$$d^2\xi/ds^2 + R\xi = 0. \quad (1.6)$$

Here  $R = 1/a^2$  is the so-called Gaussian curvature of the surface. For the surface of the apple, the same equation applies, with the one difference that the curvature  $R$  varies from place to place.

#### Box 1.5 TEST FOR FLATNESS

1. Specify the extension in space  $L$  (cm or m) and extension in time  $T$  (cm or m of light travel time) of the region under study.

2. Specify the precision  $\delta\xi$  with which one can measure the separation of test particles in this region.

3. Follow the motion of test particles moving along initially parallel world lines through this region of spacetime.

4. When the world lines remain parallel to the precision  $\delta\xi$  for all directions of travel, then one says that “in a region so limited and to a precision so specified, spacetime is flat.”

EXAMPLE: Region just above the surface of the earth,  $100 \text{ m} \times 100 \text{ m} \times 100 \text{ m}$  (space extension), followed for  $10^9 \text{ m}$  of light-travel time ( $T_{\text{conv}} \sim 3 \text{ sec}$ ). Mass of Earth,  $m_{\text{conv}} = 5.98 \times 10^{27} \text{ g}$ ,  $m = (0.742 \times 10^{-28} \text{ cm/g}) \times (5.98 \times 10^{27} \text{ g}) = 0.444 \text{ cm}$  [see eq. (1.12)]. Tide-producing acceleration  $R^z_{0z0}$  (relative acceleration in  $z$ -direction of two test particles initially at rest and separated from each other by 1 cm of vertical elevation) is

$$\begin{aligned} (d/dr)(m/r^2) &= -2m/r^3 \\ &= -0.888 \text{ cm}/(6.37 \times 10^8 \text{ cm})^3 \\ &= -3.44 \times 10^{-27} \text{ cm}^{-2} \end{aligned}$$

(“cm of relative displacement per cm of light-travel time per cm of light-travel time per cm of vertical separation”). Two test particles with a vertical separation  $\xi^z = 10^4 \text{ cm}$  acquire in the time  $t = 10^{11} \text{ cm}$  (difference between time and proper time negligible for such slowly moving test particles) a relative displacement

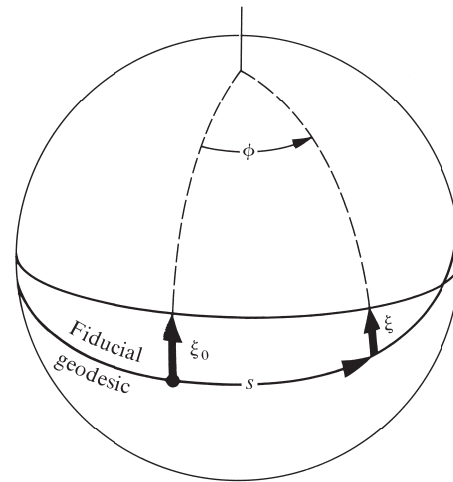
$$\begin{aligned} \delta\xi^z &= -\frac{1}{2}R^z_{0z0}t^2\xi^z \\ &= 1.72 \times 10^{-27} \text{ cm}^{-2}(10^{11} \text{ cm})^2 10^4 \text{ cm} \\ &= 1.72 \text{ mm}. \end{aligned}$$

(Change in relative separation less for other directions of motion). When the minimum uncertainty  $\delta\xi$  attainable in a measurement over a 100 m spacing is “worse” than this figure (exceeds 1.72 mm), then to this level of precision the region of spacetime under consideration can be treated as flat. When the uncertainty in measurement is “better” (less) than 1.72 mm, then one must limit attention to a smaller region of space or a shorter interval of time or both, to find a region of spacetime that can be regarded as flat to that precision.

**Figure 1.10.**

Curvature as manifested in the “acceleration of the separation” of two nearby geodesics. Two geodesics, originally parallel, and separated by the distance (“geodesic deviation”)  $\xi_0$ , are no longer parallel when followed a distance  $s$ . The separation is  $\xi = \xi_0 \cos \phi = \xi_0 \cos (s/a)$ , where  $a$  is the radius of the sphere. The separation follows the equation of simple harmonic motion,  $d^2\xi/ds^2 + (1/a^2) \xi = 0$  (“equation of geodesic deviation”).

The direction of the separation vector,  $\xi$ , is fixed fully by its orthogonality to the fiducial geodesic. Hence, no reference to the direction of  $\xi$  is needed or used in the equation of geodesic deviation; only the magnitude  $\xi$  of  $\xi$  appears there, and only the magnitude, not direction, of the relative acceleration appears.



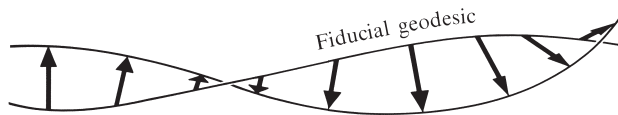
In a space of more than two dimensions, an equation of the same general form applies, with several differences. In two dimensions the *direction* of acceleration of one geodesic relative to a nearby, fiducial geodesic is fixed uniquely by the demand that their separation vector,  $\xi$ , be perpendicular to the fiducial geodesic (see Figure 1.10). Not so in three dimensions or higher. There  $\xi$  can remain perpendicular to the fiducial geodesic but rotate about it (Figure 1.11). Thus, to specify the relative acceleration uniquely, one must give not only its magnitude, but also its direction.

The relative acceleration in three dimensions and higher, then, is a vector. Call it “ $D^2\xi/ds^2$ ,” and call its four components “ $D^2\xi^\alpha/ds^2$ .” Why the capital  $D$ ? Why not “ $d^2\xi^\alpha/ds^2$ ”? Because our coordinate system is completely arbitrary (cf. §1.2). The twisting and turning of the coordinate lines can induce changes from point to point in the components  $\xi^\alpha$  of  $\xi$ , even if the vector  $\xi$  is not changing at all. Consequently, the accelerations of the components  $d^2\xi^\alpha/ds^2$  are generally not equal to the components  $D^2\xi^\alpha/ds^2$  of the acceleration!

How, then, in curved spacetime can one determine the components  $D^2\xi^\alpha/ds^2$  of the relative acceleration? By a more complicated version of the equation of geodesic deviation (1.6). Differential geometry (Part III of this book) provides us with a geometrical object called the *Riemann curvature tensor*, “**Riemann**.” **Riemann** is

Curvature is characterized by Riemann tensor

(continued on page 34)



**Figure 1.11.**

The separation vector  $\xi$  between two geodesics in a curved three-dimensional manifold. Here  $\xi$  can not only change its length from point to point, but also rotate at a varying rate about the fiducial geodesic. Consequently, the relative acceleration of the geodesics must be characterized by a direction as well as a magnitude; it must be a vector,  $D^2\xi/ds^2$ .

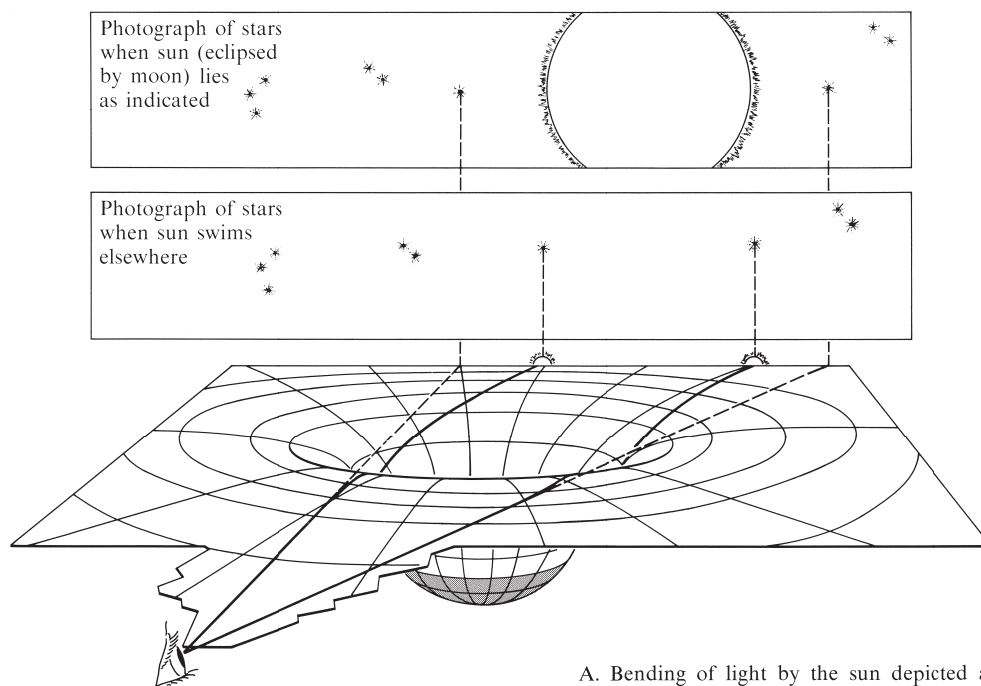


### Box 1.6 CURVATURE OF WHAT?

Nothing seems more attractive at first glance than the idea that gravitation is a manifestation of the curvature of space (A), and nothing more ridiculous at a second glance (B). How can the tracks of a ball and of a bullet be curved so differently if that curvature arises from the geometry of space? No wonder that great Riemann did not give the world a geometric theory of gravity. Yes, at the age of 28 (June 10, 1854) he gave the world the mathematical machinery to define and calculate curvature (metric and Riemannian geometry). Yes, he spent his dying days at 40 working to find a unified account of electricity and gravitation. But if there was one reason more than any other why he failed to make the decisive connection between gravitation and curvature, it was this, that he thought of space and the curvature of space, not

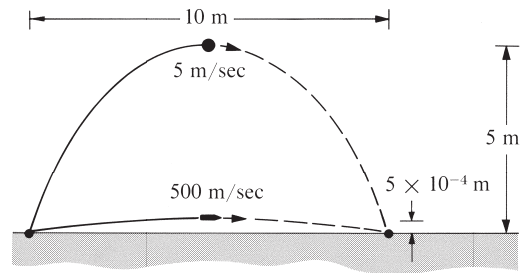
of spacetime and the curvature of spacetime. To make that forward step took the forty years to special relativity (1905: time on the same footing as space) and then another ten years (1915: general relativity). Depicted in spacetime (C), the tracks of ball and bullet appear to have comparable curvature. In fact, however, neither track has any curvature at all. They both look curved in (C) only because one has forgotten that the spacetime they reside in is itself curved—curved precisely enough to make these tracks the straightest lines in existence (“geodesics”).

If it is at first satisfying to see curvature, and curvature of spacetime at that, coming to the fore in so direct a way, then a little more reflection produces a renewed sense of concern. Curvature with respect to what? Not with respect to the labo-

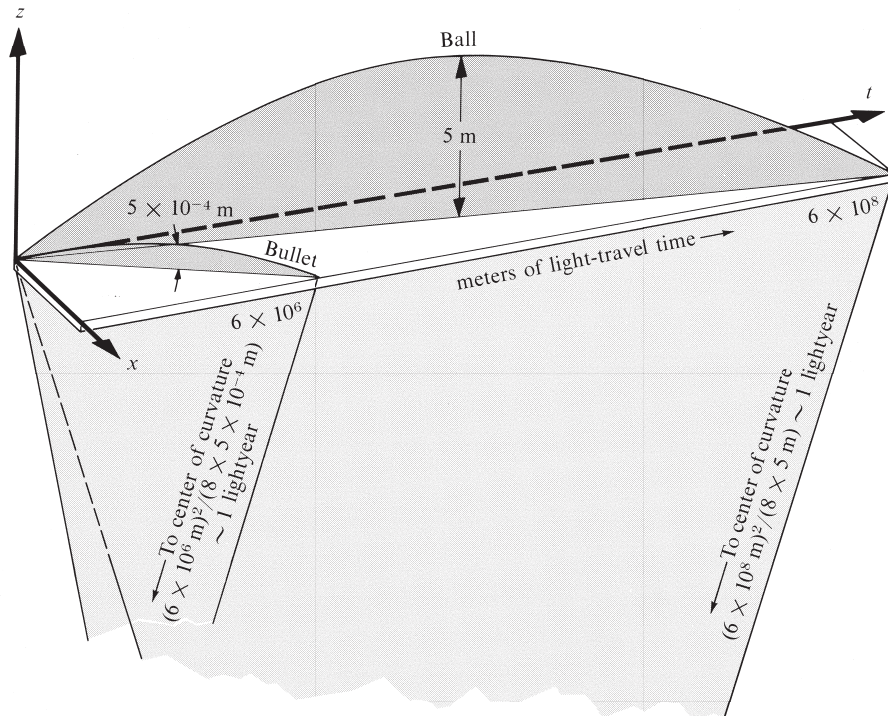


A. Bending of light by the sun depicted as a consequence of the curvature of space near the sun. Ray of light pursues geodesic, but geometry in which it travels is curved (actual travel takes place in spacetime rather than space; correct deflection is twice that given by above elementary picture). Deflection inversely proportional to angular separation between star and center of sun. See Box 40.1 for actual deflections observed at time of an eclipse.

ratory. The earth-bound laboratory has no simple status whatsoever in a proper discussion. First, it is no Lorentz frame. Second, even to mention the earth makes one think of an action-at-a-distance version of gravity (distance from center of earth to ball or bullet). In contrast, it was the whole point of Einstein that physics looks simple only when analyzed locally. To look at local physics, however, means to compare one geodesic of one test particle with geodesics of other test particles traveling (1) nearby with (2) nearly the same directions and (3) nearly the same speeds. Then one can “look at the separations between these nearby test particles and from the second time-rate of change of these separations and the ‘equation of geodesic deviation’ (equation 1.8) read out the curvature of spacetime.”



B. Tracks of ball and bullet through space as seen in laboratory have very different curvatures.



C. Tracks of ball and bullet through spacetime, as recorded in laboratory, have comparable curvatures. Track compared to arc of circle: (radius) = (horizontal distance)<sup>2</sup>/8 (rise).

the higher-dimensional analog of the Gaussian curvature  $R$  of our apple's surface. **Riemann** is the mathematical embodiment of the bends and warps in spacetime. And **Riemann** is the agent by which those bends and warps (curvature of spacetime) produce the relative acceleration of geodesics.

**Riemann**, like the metric tensor  $g$  of Box 1.3, can be thought of as a family of machines, one machine residing at each event in spacetime. Each machine has three slots for the insertion of three vectors:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{slot 1} & \text{slot 2} & \text{slot 3} \\ \downarrow & \downarrow & \downarrow \\ \mathbf{Riemann} & ( & , & , & ) . \end{array}$$

Choose a fiducial geodesic (free-particle world line) passing through an event  $\mathcal{Q}$ , and denote its unit tangent vector (particle 4-velocity) there by

$$\mathbf{u} = d\mathbf{x}/d\tau; \text{ components, } u^\alpha = dx^\alpha/d\tau. \quad (1.7)$$

Choose another, neighboring geodesic, and denote by  $\xi$  its perpendicular separation from the fiducial geodesic. Then insert  $\mathbf{u}$  into the first slot of **Riemann** at  $\mathcal{Q}$ ,  $\xi$  into the second slot, and  $\mathbf{u}$  into the third. **Riemann** will grind for awhile; then out will pop a new vector,

$$\mathbf{Riemann}(\mathbf{u}, \xi, \mathbf{u}).$$

Riemann tensor, through equation of geodesic deviation, produces relative accelerations

The equation of geodesic deviation states that this new vector is the negative of the relative acceleration of the two geodesics:

$$D^2\xi/d\tau^2 + \mathbf{Riemann}(\mathbf{u}, \xi, \mathbf{u}) = 0. \quad (1.8)$$

The Riemann tensor, like the metric tensor (Box 1.3), and like all other tensors, is a linear machine. The vector it puts out is a linear function of each vector inserted into a slot:

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbf{Riemann}(2\mathbf{u}, a\mathbf{w} + b\mathbf{v}, 3\mathbf{r}) \\ &= 2 \times a \times 3 \mathbf{Riemann}(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}, \mathbf{r}) + 2 \times b \times 3 \mathbf{Riemann}(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v}, \mathbf{r}). \end{aligned} \quad (1.9)$$

Consequently, in any coordinate system the components of the vector put out can be written as a “trilinear function” of the components of the vectors put in:

$$\mathbf{r} = \mathbf{Riemann}(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w}) \iff r^\alpha = R^\alpha_{\beta\gamma\delta} u^\beta v^\gamma w^\delta. \quad (1.10)$$

(Here there is an implied summation on the indices  $\beta, \gamma, \delta$ ; cf. Box 1.1.) The  $4 \times 4 \times 4 \times 4 = 256$  numbers  $R^\alpha_{\beta\gamma\delta}$  are called the “components of the Riemann tensor in the given coordinate system.” In terms of components, the equation of geodesic deviation states

$$\frac{D^2\xi^\alpha}{d\tau^2} + R^\alpha_{\beta\gamma\delta} \frac{dx^\beta}{d\tau} \xi^\gamma \frac{dx^\delta}{d\tau} = 0. \quad (1.8')$$



In Einstein’s geometric theory of gravity, this equation of geodesic deviation summarizes the entire effect of geometry on matter. It does for gravitation physics what the Lorentz force equation,

Equation of geodesic deviation is analog of Lorentz force law

$$\frac{D^2x^\alpha}{d\tau^2} - \frac{e}{m} F^\alpha_\beta \frac{dx^\beta}{d\tau} = 0, \tag{1.11}$$

does for electromagnetism. See Box 1.7.

The units of measurement of the curvature are  $\text{cm}^{-2}$  just as well in spacetime as on the surface of the apple. Nothing does so much to make these units stand out clearly as to express mass in “geometrized units”:

Geometrized units

$$\begin{aligned} m(\text{cm}) &= (G/c^2)m_{\text{conv}}(\text{g}) \\ &= (0.742 \times 10^{-28} \text{ cm/g})m_{\text{conv}}(\text{g}). \end{aligned} \tag{1.12}$$

**Box 1.7 EQUATION OF MOTION UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF A GRAVITATIONAL FIELD AND AN ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD, COMPARED AND CONTRASTED**

	<i>Electromagnetism</i> [Lorentz force, equation (1.11)]	<i>Gravitation</i> [Equation of geodesic deviation (1.8’)]
Acceleration is defined for one particle?	Yes	No
Acceleration defined how?	Actual world line compared to world line of uncharged “fiducial” test particle passing through same point with same 4-velocity.	Already an uncharged test particle, which can’t accelerate relative to itself! Acceleration measured relative to a nearby test particle as fiduciary standard.
Acceleration depends on all four components of the 4-velocity of the particle?	Yes	Yes
Universal acceleration for all test particles in same locations with same 4-velocity?	No; is proportional to $e/m$	Yes
Driving field	Electromagnetic field	Riemann curvature tensor
Ostensible number of distinct components of driving field	$4 \times 4 = 16$	$4^4 = 256$
Actual number when allowance is made for symmetries of tensor	6	20
Names for more familiar of these components	3 electric 3 magnetic	6 components of local Newtonian tide-producing acceleration

This conversion from grams to centimeters by means of the ratio

$$G/c^2 = 0.742 \times 10^{-28} \text{ cm/g}$$

is completely analogous to converting from seconds to centimeters by means of the ratio

$$c = \frac{9.4605460000 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}}{31,556,925.974 \text{ sec}}$$

(see end of §1.5). The sun, which in conventional units has  $m_{\text{conv}} = 1.989 \times 10^{33} \text{ g}$ , has in geometrized units a mass  $m = 1.477 \text{ km}$ . Box 1.8 gives further discussion.

Using geometrized units, and using the Newtonian theory of gravity, one can readily evaluate nine of the most interesting components of the Riemann curvature tensor near the Earth or the sun. The method is the gravitational analog of determining the electric field strength by measuring the acceleration of a slowly moving test particle. Consider the separation between the geodesics of two nearby and slowly moving ( $v \ll c$ ) particles at a distance  $r$  from the Earth or sun. In the standard, nearly inertial coordinates of celestial mechanics, all components of the 4-velocity of the

Components of Riemann tensor evaluated from relative accelerations of slowly moving particles

### Box 1.8 GEOMETRIZED UNITS

Throughout this book, we use “geometrized units,” in which the speed of light  $c$ , Newton’s gravitational constant  $G$ , and Boltzman’s constant  $k$  are all equal to unity. The following alternative ways to express the number 1.0 are of great value:

$$1.0 = c = 2.997930 \dots \times 10^{10} \text{ cm/sec}$$

$$1.0 = G/c^2 = 0.7425 \times 10^{-28} \text{ cm/g};$$

$$1.0 = G/c^4 = 0.826 \times 10^{-49} \text{ cm/erg};$$

$$1.0 = Gk/c^4 = 1.140 \times 10^{-65} \text{ cm/K};$$

$$1.0 = c^2/G^{1/2} = 3.48 \times 10^{24} \text{ cm/gauss}^{-1}.$$

One can multiply a factor of unity, expressed in any one of these ways, into any term in any equation without affecting the validity of the equation. Thereby one can convert one’s units of measure

from grams to centimeters to seconds to ergs to . . . . For example:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Mass of sun} &= M_{\odot} = 1.989 \times 10^{33} \text{ g} \\ &= (1.989 \times 10^{33} \text{ g}) \times (G/c^2) \\ &= 1.477 \times 10^5 \text{ cm} \\ &= (1.989 \times 10^{33} \text{ g}) \times (c^2) \\ &= 1.788 \times 10^{54} \text{ ergs.} \end{aligned}$$

The standard unit, in terms of which everything is measured in this book, is centimeters. However, occasionally conventional units are used; in such cases a subscript “conv” is sometimes, but not always, appended to the quantity measured:

$$M_{\odot \text{conv}} = 1.989 \times 10^{33} \text{ g.}$$

fiducial test particle can be neglected except  $dx^0/d\tau = 1$ . The space components of the equation of geodesic deviation read

$$d^2\xi^k/d\tau^2 + R^k_{\phantom{k}0j0}\xi^j = 0. \quad (1.13)$$

Comparing with the conclusions of Newtonian theory, equations (1.5), we arrive at the following information about the curvature of spacetime near a center of mass:

$$\begin{aligned} \begin{vmatrix} R^{\hat{x}}_{\hat{0}\hat{x}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{y}}_{\hat{0}\hat{x}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{z}}_{\hat{0}\hat{x}\hat{0}} \\ R^{\hat{x}}_{\hat{0}\hat{y}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{y}}_{\hat{0}\hat{y}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{z}}_{\hat{0}\hat{y}\hat{0}} \\ R^{\hat{x}}_{\hat{0}\hat{z}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{y}}_{\hat{0}\hat{z}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{z}}_{\hat{0}\hat{z}\hat{0}} \end{vmatrix} &= \begin{vmatrix} m/r^3 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & m/r^3 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -2m/r^3 \end{vmatrix} \end{aligned} \quad (1.14)$$

(units  $\text{cm}^{-2}$ ). Here and henceforth the caret or “hat” is used to indicate the components of a vector or tensor in a local Lorentz frame of reference (“physical components,” as distinguished from components in a general coordinate system). Einstein’s theory will determine the values of the other components of curvature (e.g.,  $R^{\hat{x}}_{\hat{z}\hat{x}\hat{z}} = -m/r^3$ ); but these nine terms are the ones of principal relevance for many applications of gravitation theory. They are analogous to the components of the electric field in the Lorentz equation of motion. Many of the terms not evaluated are analogous to magnetic field components—ordinarily weak unless the source is in rapid motion.

This ends the survey of the effect of geometry on matter (“effect of curvature of apple in causing geodesics to cross”—especially great near the dimple at the top, just as the curvature of spacetime is especially large near a center of gravitational attraction). Now for the effect of matter on geometry (“effect of stem of apple in causing dimple”):

## §1.7. EFFECT OF MATTER ON GEOMETRY

*The weight of any heavy body of known weight at a particular distance from the center of the world varies according to the variation of its distance therefrom; so that as often as it is removed from the center, it becomes heavier, and when brought near to it, is lighter. On this account, the relation of gravity to gravity is as the relation of distance to distance from the center.*

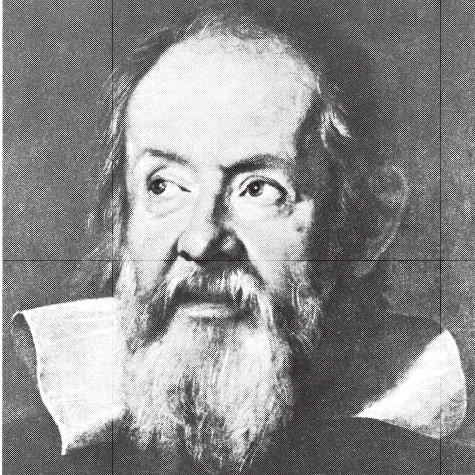
AL KHĀZINĪ (Merv, A.D. 1115), *Book of the Balance of Wisdom*

Figure 1.12 shows a sphere of the same density,  $\rho = 5.52 \text{ g/cm}^3$ , as the average density of the Earth. A hole is bored through this sphere. Two test particles, *A* and *B*, execute simple harmonic motion in this hole, with an 84-minute period. Therefore their geodesic separation  $\xi$ , however it may be oriented, undergoes a simple periodic motion with the same 84-minute period:

$$d^2\xi^j/d\tau^2 = -\left(\frac{4\pi}{3}\rho\right)\xi^j, \quad j = x \text{ or } y \text{ or } z. \quad (1.15)$$

**Box 1.9 GALILEO GALILEI**

Pisa, February 15, 1564—Arcetri, Florence, January 8, 1642



Uffizi Gallery, Florence

*"In questions of science the authority of a thousand is not worth the humble reasoning of a single individual."*

GALILEO GALILEI (1632)

*"The spaces described by a body falling from rest with a uniformly accelerated motion are to each other as the squares of the time intervals employed in traversing these distances."*

GALILEO GALILEI (1638)

*"Everything that has been said before and imagined by other people [about the tides] is in my opinion completely invalid. But among the great men who have philosophised about this marvellous effect of nature the one who surprised me the most is Kepler. More than other people he was a person of independent genius, sharp, and had in his hands the motion of the earth. He later pricked up his ears and became interested in the action of the moon on the water, and in other occult phenomena, and similar childishness."*

GALILEO GALILEI (1632)

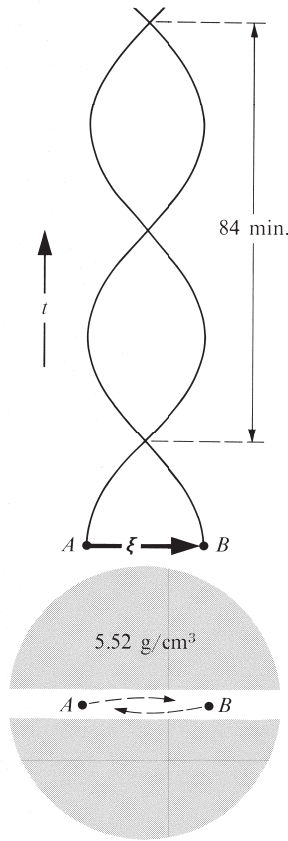
*"It is a most beautiful and delightful sight to behold [with the new telescope] the body of the Moon . . . the Moon certainly does not possess a smooth and polished surface, but one rough and uneven . . . full of vast protuberances, deep chasms and sinuosities . . . stars in myriads, which have never been seen before and which surpass the old, previously known, stars in number more than ten times. I have discovered four planets, neither known nor observed by any one of the astronomers before my time . . . got rid of disputes about the Galaxy or Milky Way, and made its nature clear to the very senses, not to say to the understanding . . . the galaxy is nothing else than a mass of luminous stars planted together in clusters . . . the number of small ones is quite beyond determination—the stars which have been called by every one of the astronomers up to this day nebulous are groups of small stars set thick together in a wonderful way."*

GALILEO GALILEI IN *SIDEREUS NUNCIVS* (1610)

*"So the principles which are set forth in this treatise will, when taken up by thoughtful minds, lead to many another more remarkable result; and it is to be believed that it will be so on account of the nobility of the subject, which is superior to any other in nature."*

GALILEO GALILEI (1638)





**Figure 1.12.**

Test particles  $A$  and  $B$  move up and down a hole bored through the Earth, idealized as of uniform density. At radius  $r$ , a particle feels Newtonian acceleration

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{d^2 r}{d\tau^2} &= \frac{1}{c^2} \frac{d^2 r}{dt_{\text{conv}}^2} \\ &= -\frac{G}{c^2} \frac{(\text{mass inside radius } r)}{r^2} \\ &= -\left(\frac{G}{r^2 c^2}\right) \left(\frac{4\pi}{3} \rho_{\text{conv}} r^3\right) \\ &= -\omega^2 r.\end{aligned}$$

Consequently, each particle oscillates in simple harmonic motion with precisely the same angular frequency as a satellite, grazing the model Earth, traverses its circular orbit:

$$\begin{aligned}\omega^2(\text{cm}^{-2}) &= \frac{4\pi}{3} \rho(\text{cm}^{-2}), \\ \omega_{\text{conv}}^2(\text{sec}^{-2}) &= \frac{4\pi G}{3} \rho_{\text{conv}}(\text{g/cm}^3).\end{aligned}$$

Comparing this actual motion with the equation of geodesic deviation (1.13) for slowly moving particles in a nearly inertial frame, we can read off some of the curvature components for the interior of this model Earth.

The Riemann tensor inside the Earth

$$\begin{vmatrix} R^{\hat{x}}_{\hat{0}\hat{x}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{y}}_{\hat{0}\hat{x}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{z}}_{\hat{0}\hat{x}\hat{0}} \\ R^{\hat{x}}_{\hat{0}\hat{y}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{y}}_{\hat{0}\hat{y}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{z}}_{\hat{0}\hat{y}\hat{0}} \\ R^{\hat{x}}_{\hat{0}\hat{z}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{y}}_{\hat{0}\hat{z}\hat{0}} & R^{\hat{z}}_{\hat{0}\hat{z}\hat{0}} \end{vmatrix} = (4\pi\rho/3) \begin{vmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{vmatrix} \quad (1.16)$$

This example illustrates how the curvature of spacetime is connected to the distribution of matter.

Let a gravitational wave from a supernova pass through the Earth. Idealize the Earth's matter as so nearly incompressible that its density remains practically unchanged. The wave is characterized by ripples in the curvature of spacetime, propagating with the speed of light. The ripples will show up in the components  $R^j_{0k0}$  of the Riemann tensor, and in the relative acceleration of our two test particles. The left side of equation (1.16) will ripple; but the right side will not. Equation (1.16) will break down. No longer will the Riemann curvature be generated directly and solely by the Earth's matter.

Effect of gravitational wave on Riemann tensor

Nevertheless, Einstein tells us, a part of equation (1.16) is undisturbed by the



waves: its trace

$$R_{\hat{0}\hat{0}} \equiv R^{\hat{x}}_{\hat{0}\hat{x}\hat{0}} + R^{\hat{y}}_{\hat{0}\hat{y}\hat{0}} + R^{\hat{z}}_{\hat{0}\hat{z}\hat{0}} = 4\pi\rho. \quad (1.17)$$

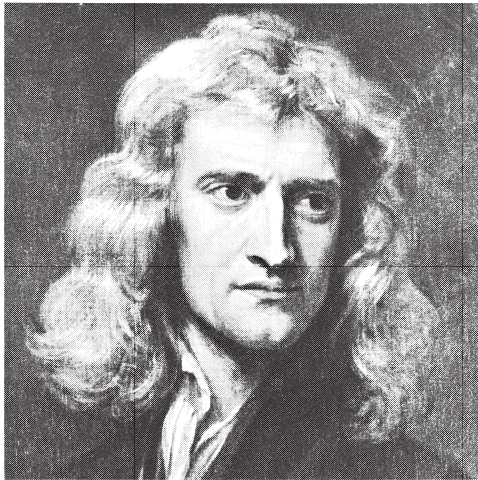
Even in the vacuum outside the Earth this is valid; there both sides vanish [cf. (1.14)].

Einstein tensor introduced

More generally, a certain piece of the Riemann tensor, called the *Einstein tensor* and denoted **Einstein** or **G**, is always generated directly by the local distribution of matter. **Einstein** is the geometric object that generalizes  $R_{\hat{0}\hat{0}}$ , the lefthand side

#### Box 1.10 ISAAC NEWTON

Woolsthorpe, Lincolnshire, England, December 25, 1642—  
Kensington, London, March 20, 1726



*“The description of right lines and circles, upon which geometry is founded, belongs to mechanics. Geometry does not teach us to draw these lines, but requires them to be drawn.”*

[FROM P. 1 OF NEWTON’S PREFACE TO THE FIRST (1687) EDITION OF THE *PRINCIPIA*]

*“Absolute space, in its own nature, without relation to anything external, remains always similar and immovable  
“Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external.”*

[FROM THE SCHOLIUM IN THE *PRINCIPIA*]

*“I have not been able to discover the cause of those properties of gravity from phenomena, and I frame no hypotheses; for whatever is not reduced from the phenomena is to be called an hypothesis; and hypotheses . . . have no place in experimental philosophy. . . . And to us it is enough that gravity does really exist, and act according to the laws which we have explained, and abundantly serves to account for all the motions of the celestial bodies, and of our sea.”*

[FROM THE GENERAL SCHOLIUM ADDED AT THE END OF THE THIRD BOOK OF THE *PRINCIPIA* IN THE SECOND EDITION OF 1713; ESPECIALLY FAMOUS FOR THE PHRASE OFTEN QUOTED FROM NEWTON’S ORIGINAL LATIN, “*HYPOTHESES NON FINGO*.”]

*“And the same year [1665 or 1666] I began to think of gravity extending to the orb of the Moon, and having found out. . . . All this was in the two plague years of 1665 and 1666, for in those days I was in the prime of my age for invention, and minded Mathematicks and Philosophy more than at any time since.”*

[FROM MEMORANDUM IN NEWTON’S HANDWRITING ABOUT HIS DISCOVERIES ON FLUXIONS, THE BINOMIAL THEOREM, OPTICS, DYNAMICS, AND GRAVITY, BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT 1714, AND FOUND BY ADAMS ABOUT 1887 IN THE “PORTSMOUTH COLLECTION” OF NEWTON PAPERS]

of equation (1.17). Like  $R_{00}$ , **Einstein** is a sort of average of **Riemann** over all directions. Generating **Einstein** and generalizing the righthand side of (1.16) is a geometric object called the *stress-energy tensor* of the matter. It is denoted **T**. No coordinates are need to define **Einstein**, and none to define **T**; like the Riemann tensor, **Riemann**, and the metric tensor, **g**, they exist in the complete absence of coordinates. Moreover, in nature they are always equal, aside from a factor of  $8\pi$ :

Stress-energy tensor  
introduced

$$\mathbf{Einstein} \equiv \mathbf{G} = 8\pi \mathbf{T}. \quad (1.18)$$

*“For hypotheses ought . . . to explain the properties of things and not attempt to predetermine them except in so far as they can be an aid to experiments.”*

[FROM LETTER OF NEWTON TO I. M. PARDIES, 1672, AS QUOTED IN THE CAJORI NOTES AT THE END OF NEWTON (1687), P. 673]

*“That one body may act upon another at a distance through a vacuum, without the mediation of any thing else, by and through which their action and force may be conveyed from one to another, is to me so great an absurdity, that I believe no man, who has in philosophical matters a competent faculty of thinking, can ever fall into it.”*

[PASSAGE OFTEN QUOTED BY MICHAEL FARADAY FROM LETTERS OF NEWTON TO RICHARD BENTLY, 1692–1693, AS QUOTED IN THE NOTES OF THE CAJORI EDITION OF NEWTON (1687), P. 643]

*“The attractions of gravity, magnetism, and electricity, reach to very sensible distances, and so have been observed . . . ; and there may be others which reach to so small distances as hitherto escape observation; . . . some force, which in immediate contract is exceeding strong, at small distances performs the chemical operations above-mentioned, and reaches not far from the particles with any sensible effect.”*

[FROM QUERY 31 AT THE END OF NEWTON'S *OPTICKS* (1730)]

*“What is there in places almost empty of matter, and whence is it that the sun and planets gravitate towards one another, without dense matter between them? Whence is it that nature doth nothing in vain; and whence arises all that order and beauty which we see in the world? To what end are comets, and whence is it that planets move all one and the same way in orbs concentrick, while comets move all manner of ways in orbs very excentrick; and what hinders the fixed stars from falling upon one another?”*

[FROM QUERY 28]

*“He is not eternity or infinity, but eternal and infinite; He is not duration or space, but He endures and is present. He endures forever, and is everywhere present; and by existing always and everywhere, He constitutes duration and space. . . . And thus much concerning God; to discourse of whom from the appearances of things, does certainly belong to natural philosophy.”*

[FROM THE *GENERAL SCHOLIUM* AT THE END OF THE *PRINCIPIA* (1687)]



Einstein field equation: how matter generates curvature

This *Einstein field equation*, rewritten in terms of components in an arbitrary coordinate system, reads

$$G_{\alpha\beta} = 8\pi T_{\alpha\beta}. \quad (1.19)$$

The Einstein field equation is elegant and rich. No equation of physics can be written more simply. And none contains such a treasure of applications and consequences.

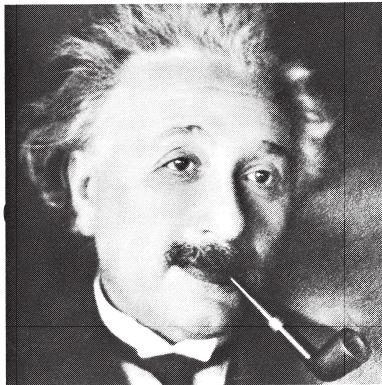
Consequences of Einstein field equation

The field equation shows how the stress-energy of matter generates an average curvature (***Einstein***  $\equiv \mathbf{G}$ ) in its neighborhood. Simultaneously, the field equation is a propagation equation for the remaining, anisotropic part of the curvature: it governs the external spacetime curvature of a static source (Earth); it governs the generation of gravitational waves (ripples in curvature of spacetime) by stress-energy in motion; and it governs the propagation of those waves through the universe. The field equation even contains within itself the equations of motion (“Force =

**Box 1.11**  
**ALBERT EINSTEIN**  
Ulm, Germany,  
March 14, 1879—  
Princeton, New Jersey,  
April 18, 1955



Library of E. T. Hochschule, Zürich



Académie des Sciences, Paris



Archives of California Institute of Technology

SEAL: Courtesy of the Lewis and Rosa Strauss Foundation and Princeton University Press

mass  $\times$  acceleration”) for the matter whose stress-energy generates the curvature.

Those were some consequences of  $\mathbf{G} = 8\pi\mathbf{T}$ . Now for some applications.

The field equation governs the motion of the planets in the solar system; it governs the deflection of light by the sun; it governs the collapse of a star to form a black hole; it determines uniquely the external spacetime geometry of a black hole (“a black hole has no hair”); it governs the evolution of spacetime singularities at the end point of collapse; it governs the expansion and recontraction of the universe. And more; much more.

In order to understand how the simple equation  $\mathbf{G} = 8\pi\mathbf{T}$  can be so all powerful, it is desirable to backtrack, and spend a few chapters rebuilding the entire picture of spacetime, of its curvature, and of its laws, this time with greater care, detail, and mathematics.

Thus ends this survey of the effect of geometry on matter, and the reaction of matter back on geometry, rounding out the parable of the apple.

Applications of Einstein field equation

*“What really interests me is whether God had any choice in the creation of the world”*

EINSTEIN TO AN ASSISTANT, AS QUOTED BY G. HOLTON (1971), P. 20

*“But the years of anxious searching in the dark, with their intense longing, their alternations of confidence and exhaustion, and the final emergence into the light—only those who have experienced it can understand that”*

EINSTEIN, AS QUOTED BY M. KLEIN (1971), P. 1315

*“Of all the communities available to us there is not one I would want to devote myself to, except for the society of the true searchers, which has very few living members at any time. . .”*

EINSTEIN LETTER TO BORN, QUOTED BY BORN (1971), P. 82

*“I am studying your great works and—when I get stuck anywhere—now have the pleasure of seeing your friendly young face before me smiling and explaining”*

EINSTEIN, LETTER OF MAY 2, 1920, AFTER MEETING NIELS BOHR

*“As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality.”*

EINSTEIN (1921), P. 28

*“The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible.”*

EINSTEIN, IN SCHILPP (1949), P. 112

## EXERCISES

### Exercise 1.1. CURVATURE OF A CYLINDER

Show that the Gaussian curvature  $R$  of the surface of a cylinder is zero by showing that geodesics on that surface (unroll!) suffer no geodesic deviation. Give an independent argument for the same conclusion by employing the formula  $R = 1/\rho_1\rho_2$ , where  $\rho_1$  and  $\rho_2$  are the principal radii of curvature at the point in question with respect to the enveloping Euclidean three-dimensional space.

### Exercise 1.2. SPRING TIDE VS. NEAP TIDE

Evaluate (1) in conventional units and (2) in geometrized units the magnitude of the Newtonian tide-producing acceleration  $R_{on0}^m(m, n = 1, 2, 3)$  generated at the Earth by (1) the moon ( $m_{\text{conv}} = 7.35 \times 10^{25}$  g,  $r = 3.84 \times 10^{10}$  cm) and (2) the sun ( $m_{\text{conv}} = 1.989 \times 10^{33}$  g,  $r = 1.496 \times 10^{13}$  cm). By what factor do you expect spring tides to exceed neap tides?

### Exercise 1.3. KEPLER ENCAPSULATED

A small satellite has a circular frequency  $\omega(\text{cm}^{-1})$  in an orbit of radius  $r$  about a central object of mass  $m(\text{cm})$ . From the known value of  $\omega$ , show that it is possible to determine neither  $r$  nor  $m$  individually, but only the effective “Kepler density” of the object as averaged over a sphere of the same radius as the orbit. Give the formula for  $\omega^2$  in terms of this Kepler density.

It is a reminder of the continuity of history that Kepler and Galileo (Box 1.9) wrote back and forth, and that the year that witnessed the death of Galileo saw the birth of Newton (Box 1.10). After Newton the first dramatically new synthesis of the laws of gravitation came from Einstein (Box 1.11).

*And what the dead had no speech for, when living,  
They can tell you, being dead; the communication  
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond  
the language of the living.*

T. S. ELIOT, in *LITTLE GIDDING* (1942)

*I measured the skies  
Now the shadows I measure  
Skybound was the mind  
Earthbound the body rests*

JOHANNES KEPLER, d. November 15, 1630.  
He wrote his epitaph in Latin;  
it is translated by Coleman (1967), p. 109.

*Ubi materia, ibi geometria.*

JOHANNES KEPLER



## SUBJECT INDEX

- A**
- Aberration
    - formulas for, 68
    - in light-deflection experiments, 1101
  - Absolute space of Newtonian theory, 19, 40, 291f
  - Absolute time of Newtonian theory, 291f
  - Abundances of elements, 765
  - Accelerated observer in curved spacetime, 327–332. *See also* Proper reference frame
  - Accelerated observer in flat spacetime, 163–175
    - measuring equipment of, 164–165
    - problems of principle in defining coordinate system of, 168–169
    - constraints on size of frame, 168–169
    - tetrad Fermi-Walker transported with, 169–172
    - local coordinate system of, 172–176
    - with rotating tetrad, 174f
  - Acceleration
    - gravity mocked up by, 163ff
    - equivalent to gravitational field. *See* Equivalence principle
    - special relativity adequate to analyze, 163ff
    - of neutron in nucleus, 163
    - constant in comoving frame, for hyperbolic motion, 166–167
    - 4-acceleration always orthogonal to 4-velocity, 166
    - See also* Fermi-Walker transport
  - Acceleration, “absolute,” and the equivalence principle, 17
  - Acceleration, relative. *See* Geodesic deviation
  - Accretion of gas onto a black hole, 885
  - Action. *See* Dynamical path length
  - Action principle. *See* Variational principle
  - Action at a distance, gravitational, 4
    - Newton’s stricture against, 41
    - derived from local law, 120
  - Active vs. passive transformations, 1140
  - Adiabatic index defined, 692
  - Advanced fields, and radiation reaction, 474
  - Advanced potential, 121
  - After, undefined term in quantum geometrodynamics, 1183
  - Affine connection. *See* Connection, Covariant derivative
  - Affine geometry
    - characterized, 191, 242
    - in extenso*, Chap. 10
    - See also specific concepts, such as* Covariant derivative, Connection coefficients
  - Affine parameter, defined, 211, 244ff
    - of geodesic, 244–246
    - effect of changing, on geodesic deviation, 269
    - variational principle adapted to, 322–323
    - in geometric optics, 575
  - Alternating symbol, in spinor analysis, defined, 1152. *See also* Levi-Civita tensor, Permutation tensor
  - Alternating tensor. *See* Permutation tensor
  - Ampère’s law, from electromagnetic 4-potential, 122
  - Angle-effective distance vs. redshift, 795f
  - Angular integrals, useful formulas, 1001
  - Angular momentum in curved spacetime, for an isolated source
    - defined by way metric approaches flatness
    - in extenso*, chapter 19
    - in linearized theory, 448–451
    - in general, 453ff
  - as geometric object residing in asymptotically flat region, 453
  - no meaning of, for closed universe, 457ff
  - contribution of interbody matter and fields to, 468
  - total unambiguous, despite contribution of pseudotensor to, 470
  - Gaussian flux integral for, 460–464
  - volume integral for, 460–466
  - measured by satellite-orbit precession, 451, 454, 457
  - measured by gyroscope precession, 451, 454, 457
  - measured by frame dragging, 451, 457
  - conservation laws for, 455, 468–471
  - for Kerr-Newman black hole, 891
- Angular momentum in flat spacetime
  - density of, 151, 156f
  - total, 156–159
  - decomposition of total into intrinsic and orbital, 158f
  - conservation of, 156f
  - intrinsic, sets lower limit to size, 162
  - parallel transport of, and Thomas precession, 175–176
- Angular momentum in Newtonian theory, flux integral for, 470
- Angular momentum operators, 240
- Angular momentum, orbital, for test particles
  - in Schwarzschild geometry, 656ff
  - in Kerr-Newman geometry, 898f
- Angular velocity
  - extended to four dimensions, 170f
  - rotating tetrad, vs. Fermi-Walker tetrad, 174f
  - in context of spinor analysis, 1139, 1142
- Angular velocity of orbital motion in Kerr-Newman geometry, 893ff
- Anholonomic basis, 204, 210, 239
- Anisotropy energy, 802, 807
- Antisymmetrization, of tensor, 83

- Asymptotically flat spacetime geometry, 453  
 form of, in linearized theory, 448f  
 form of far from stationary fully relativistic source, 456f  
 key to defining mass and angular momentum, 457f  
 in evaluation of Gaussian flux integral, 462f  
 “I weigh all that’s here,” 475  
 conformal treatment of infinity, 917–921
- Automatic conservation of source, 404, 408f, 417. *See also* Bianchi identities
- B**
- Background geometry  
 defined by limiting procedure, 479–480.  
*See also* Gravitational waves, shortwave formalism of
- Backscatter of waves off curvature, 864f, 869f, 957
- Bar operation  
 in linearized theory, 436f  
 in shortwave formalism, 967
- Baryons  
 number density of, 558  
 mass density of, 1069, 1074  
 conservation law for. *See under* Conservation laws
- Base metric, in time-symmetric initial-value problem, 535
- Basis forms  
 3- and 4-forms for volume integrals, 150  
 2-forms and dual labeling thereof, 151
- Basis 1-forms  
 dual to basis vectors, 60f, 202f, 232, 234  
 as coordinate gradients, 60f  
 transformation laws for, 68, 203  
 connection coefficients for, 209, 215, 258f
- Basis vectors, 50  
*in extenso*, 201–207  
 as differential operators, 229f  
 dual to basis 1-forms, 60f, 232  
 transformation laws for, 68, 201, 203, 230f  
 commutation coefficients for, 204  
 connection coefficients for, 209, 258f  
 coordinate vs. general basis, 201–203  
 coordinate basis, 230f  
*See also* Proper reference frame, tetrad
- Bell bongs, 55f, 60, 99, 202, 231
- Bertotti-Robinson electromagnetic universe, 845
- Betti numbers, characterize connectivity, 221
- Bianchi identities  
 stated, 221f, 224, 325f  
 proved, 287  
 model for, in geodesic identity, 318  
 expressed in terms of curvature 2-form, 362  
 in terms of boundary of a boundary, Chap. 15
- as automatically fulfilled conservation law, 405  
 required because geometrodynamics law must not predict coordinates, 409  
 applied to equations of motion, 473  
 from coordinate-neutrality of Hilbert-Palatini variational principle, 503
- Big Dipper, shape unaffected by velocity of observer, 1160–1164
- Binary star  
 black holes as members of, 886f  
 generation of gravitational waves by, 986, 988f, 995
- Binding energy of orbits around black holes, 885, 911
- Birkhoff’s theorem  
 for Schwarzschild geometry, 843f  
 for Reissner-Nordström geometry, 844f
- Bivector  
 defined, 83  
 in surface of Whittaker’s calumoid, 125
- Black body. *See under* Radiation
- Black hole, 884–887  
*in extenso*, Chap. 33  
 brief summary of properties, 620  
 history of knowledge of, 620, 623  
 why deserve their name, 872–875  
 Kerr-Newman geometry as unique external field, 863, 875–877, *esp.* 876  
 “hair on,” 43, 863, 876  
 baryon number transcended by, 876  
 lepton number transcended by, 640, 876  
 astrophysical aspects of, 883–887  
 mechanisms of formation, 883–884  
 gravitational waves from collapse that forms, 1041  
 dynamical processes, 884f  
 can never bifurcate, 933  
 collision and coalescence of, 886, 924, 939  
 gravitational waves from hole-hole collisions, 886, 939, 982  
 interactions with matter, 885f  
 Cygnus X-1 as an exemplar of, ix  
 gravitational waves from matter falling into, 885, 904, 982f, 986  
 change of parameters of hole due to infall of particles, 904–910, 913  
 extraction of energy from, 906, 908  
 experimental tests of general relativity using, 1047  
*See also* Black-hole dynamics, laws of; Collapse, gravitational; Kerr-Newman geometry; Schwarzschild geometry
- Black-hole dynamics, laws of, 887f. *See also* Second law of black-hole dynamics
- Boost, 67f
- Boundary  
 of a boundary, route to Bianchi identities, Chap. 15  
 of a boundary is zero, 364–370  
 automatically conserve’s Cartan’s moment of rotation, 377–378
- of the boundary of a 4-simplex, 380–381
- Boundary operator, 96
- Boyer-Lindquist coordinates, 877–880
- Brackets, round and square, define symmetry, 126
- Bragg reflection, related to 1-forms, 232
- Brans-Dicke theory of gravity. *See* Gravitation, theories of:  
 Dicke-Brans-Jordan theory
- Brill-Hartle averaging process, 970
- Brownian forces, 1038
- Bubble-time derivative, 497
- Buffer zone, in analysis of departures from geodesic motion, 476–480
- Buoyant force, 606
- C**
- Calumoid, Whittaker’s, related to flux integrals, 125
- Canonical structure, metric and symplectic structure, 126
- Canonical variables, in Hamiltonian mechanics, 125
- Cartan structure equations, 359
- Carter’s fourth constant, 899
- Causal relationships in flat spacetime, 48, 51
- Causal structure of curved spacetime, 922f  
 future horizons, 923–924  
 global structure of horizons, theorems about, 924–925  
 global structure of horizons, analysis of, 926–931  
*See also* Global techniques, Horizons
- Causality, principle of, and the mechanism of radiation, 110
- Caustics, of a horizon, 925
- Cavendish experiment, 1121f
- Cavendish gravitational constant, 1121f  
 dependence on velocity relative to “preferred universal rest frame,” 1123–1124  
 dependence on chemical composition of gravitating bodies, 1125  
 variations in, cause deviations from geodesic motion, 1127–1128
- Center of mass, 161
- Centrifugal forces, 294
- Centrifuge, in idealized redshift experiment, 63f
- Centroid, 161
- Cepheid variable stars  
 pulsation of, 632  
 period-luminosity relation discovered, 758  
 as distance indicators, 786  
 confused with HII regions in Hubble’s work, 709  
 confusion resolved by Baade, 710, 760
- Chain rule  
 abstract, 314–315  
 for covariant derivative, 252, 257f, 260f
- Chandrasekhar limit, 619

- Charge
  - evaluated from flux integral, 98
  - of closed universe, meaningless integral for, 457–458
  - as measured by tubes of force, in 2-form representation, 107
  - as lines of force trapped in the topology of space, 221, 368, 1200f
- Charge conservation. *See* Conservation laws, charge
- Charge density-current
  - 4-vector, Lorentz transformation of, 68
  - dual representations 88, 97f
  - 3-form, 113f, 151
  - Dirac's representation, for particle in arbitrary motion, 120f
- Chemical potential. *See under* Thermodynamics
- Chinese historical records of Crab supernova, ii.
- Classical mechanics, correspondence with quantum mechanics, 413
- Classical theory, conceives of geometry and fields as measurable, 13
- Clock “paradox,” 167
- Clocks
  - bad vs. good, 26–27
  - stability of, 28, 1048
  - ideal
    - defined, 393
    - in Newton-Cartan theory, 301
    - built on geodesics, 396–399
  - specific types of, 28, 393–396
  - influence of acceleration on, 164f, 327, 396
  - influence of tidal forces on, 396
  - as tools in parametrization of geodesics, 246
  - infinite sequence of, needed as one approaches a singularity, 813f
- Closed form, 114. *See also* Forms, differential
- Closure of universe. *See* Cosmological models
- Clusters of galaxies
  - origin of, 766, 769f
  - Virgo as source of gravitational waves, 1042
- Cold, catalyzed matter, 624–626
- Collapse, gravitational
  - in one and two dimensions, 867f
  - of a spherical shell of dust, 555–556
  - of a spherical star
    - analyzed by examining exterior geometry, 846–850, 857
    - redshift of radiation from, 847, 849f, 872
    - decay of luminosity of, 847, 850, 872
    - surface of last influence, 873f
  - Eddington-Finkelstein diagram for, 849, 864, 873
  - Kruskal diagram for, 848, 855
  - embedding diagrams for, 855f
  - comoving coordinates for, 857
  - equations governing adiabatic collapse, 858f
  - models with zero pressure, 859
  - models with zero pressure and uniform density, 851–856, 859
- realistic, 862f, 883f
  - triggering of, in late stages of stellar evolution, 627, 862
- collapse, pursuit, and plunge scenario, 629
  - evolution of small perturbations from spherical symmetry, 864–866
  - Price's theorem, 866
  - gravitational waves emitted during, 1041
  - inevitability of, for massive stars, 819
  - in a dense star cluster, 884
  - creation of Kerr-Newman black hole by, 882–883
  - at three levels: universe, black hole, quantum fluctuations, 1201
  - issue of the final state, 940, 1196f
  - black box model of, 1209, 1213–1217
  - importance of and philosophical implications of, 437, 1196f
- Collapsed star. *See* Neutron star, Black hole
- Collisions of particles in flat spacetime, 19, 69f
- Comma-goes-to-semicolon rule, 387–392. *See also* Equivalence principle
- Commutation, of observables on spacelike hypersurface, 554
- Commutation coefficients of basis vectors, 204, 243, 314
  - calculated by exterior derivative of basis 1-forms, 358f
  - for rotation group, 243
- Commutator
  - of tangent vectors, 204, 206f, 235–240
  - Jacobi identity for, 240
  - as closer of quadrilaterals, 236, 278
  - pictorial representation of, 236–237
  - for rotation group, 332
  - for normal and tangent to spacelike slice, 517
  - of covariant derivatives, 276, 389ff
- Compatibility of metric and covariant derivative, 313ff, 353f
- Complexion, of electromagnetic field, 108, 482
- Component manipulations. *See* Index manipulations
- Component notation, to remove ambiguity of slots, 84
- Components
  - of vectors, introduced, 8–10, 50–51
  - of 1-forms, introduced, 61
  - of tensors, introduced, 75
  - of curvature tensor, introduced, 34, 37, 40, 42
- See also* Index manipulations
- Concepts of physics, defined by theory itself, 71f
- Conduction of heat, 567
- Conformal curvature tensor. *See under* Curvature, formalism of
- Conformal part of 3-geometry, in York's formulation of initial-value problem, 540–541
- Conformal transformation of infinity. *See under* Infinity
- Connection, measured by light signals and free particles, 324
  - See also* Covariant derivative
- Connection coefficients
  - summarized, 223
  - as components of covariant derivative, 208f, 256, 261–262
  - calculated from metric and commutators, 210, 216, 314
  - symmetries of, 213–214
  - transformation law for, 262
  - specialized to a coordinate basis
    - called “Christoffel symbols,” 210
  - contraction of, in terms of metric, 222
  - formula for, from Palatini variational principle, 502
  - unique, to make geodesics agree with straight lines of local Lorentz geometry, 314f
- illustrated by great-circle navigation, 212
- specific cases of
  - for plane, in polar coordinates, 213, 263
  - for flat 3-geometry, polar coordinates, 213
  - for 2-sphere, 341, 345
  - for rotation group, 264
  - for Riemann normal coordinates, 286f
  - for Newton-Cartan spacetime, 291f, 294, 298
  - for proper reference frame of accelerated observer, 330f
- Connectivity
  - at small distances, 221
  - of spacetime, in classical differential geometry, 1204–1205
- charge as trapped lines of force, 221, 368, 1200f
  - See also* Topology
- Conservation laws
  - equivalence of differential and integral formulations of, 146
  - baryon number, 558f, 563f
    - applied to pulsating stars, 691f
    - applied to collapsing stars, 858
    - in PPN formalism, 1088
  - electric charge, 369f
    - differential formulation of, 88, 568, 570
    - integral formulation from differential via Stokes theorem, 98, 156
    - as consequence of  $dd = 0$ , 118
  - energy-momentum ( $\nabla \cdot \mathbf{T} = 0$ )
    - tested in elementary particle physics, 19
    - in flat spacetime, 132, 146, 152–155
    - integral formulation in flat spacetime, 142–146

- Conservation laws (*continued*)
  - transition to curved spacetime, 386f, 390
  - to be interpreted as automatic, via “wiring up” to geometry, 364, 367f, 371, 404–407
  - in terms of generalized exterior derivative, 362f
  - various mathematical representations for, 379
  - total mass-energy and 4-momentum of a gravitating source, 455, 468–471
  - for test-particle motion
    - related to Killing vector field, 651
    - related to Hamilton’s principle, 654
    - in Schwarzschild geometry, 655–658
    - in any spherical, static geometry, 681
    - in Kerr metric and electromagnetic field, 898f
- Constants, fundamental
  - listed, endpapers
  - limits on deviations from constancy, 1061–1063
- Constraint, as signaling reduced number of degrees of freedom, 528f
- Constraints, first and second class, in Dirac’s formulation of geometrodynamics, 486
- Constructive interference
  - as shortest leap from quantum to classical, 1185
  - in particle mechanics and in geometrodynamics, compared, 1186f
  - behind Hamilton-Jacobi formulation of mechanics and geometrodynamics, 423f
- Continuity, equation of, 152ff, 565
- “Continuous creation,” 745, 750, 770
- Contraction of tensor, 82
- Contravariant components, 76, 201–207, 312
- Controlled ignorance, philosophy of, 452f, 996
- Convection, in supermassive stars, 600
- Coordinate patch, concept introduced, 10–12
- Coordinate systems
  - nature of, deducible from metric, 595f
  - of accelerated observers, 172–176
  - asymptotically Minkowskian, 463
  - Boyer-Lindquist, 877–880
  - comoving, for collapsing star, 857
  - comoving, for universe, 715ff
  - curvilinear, in linearized theory, 441
  - Eddington-Finkelstein, 828–831, 849
  - Euclidean, 22f
  - Fermi normal, 332
  - Galilean, 289, 291–298, 414
  - Gaussian normal, 516, 518, 715ff
  - isotropic, for Schwarzschild geometry, 840
  - isotropic, for static, spherical system, 595
  - Kerr, 879f
  - Kerr-Schild, 903
  - Kruskal-Szekeres, 827, 831–836
  - local Lorentz, 207
  - Lorentz, 22f
  - Minkowski, *same as* Lorentz
  - Novikov, 826f
  - of post-Newtonian formalism, 1073f, 1082–1087, 1089, 1091, 1097
  - Regge-Wheeler, *same as* Tortoise
  - Riemann normal, 285ff, 329–332
  - Schwarzschild, for Schwarzschild geometry, 607
  - Schwarzschild, for static, spherical systems, 597
  - Schwarzschild, for pulsating star, 689
  - for any spherical system, 616f
  - Tortoise, for Schwarzschild geometry, 663, 665–666
- Coordinates, 5–10
  - canonical, in context of differential forms and symplectic structure, 125f
  - must not be predicted by geometrodynamics law, 409
  - rotation and translation of, in Newton-Cartan theory, 294f
  - preferred, in Newton, Minkowski, and Einstein spacetime, 296
- Coordinate singularities. *See* Singularities, coordinate
- Coplanarity, test for, 281
- Coriolis forces, 165, 175, 294, 327, 332
- Correspondence, between 1-forms and vectors, 310. *See also* Vectors; Forms, differential
- Correspondence principles, 412f
- Cosmic censorship, 937
- Cosmic gravitational-wave background, 712, 736f, 764f
- Cosmic microwave radiation, 712f, 764ff
  - prediction of by Gamow *et al.*, 760
  - isotropy of, 703
  - existence of, refutes steady-state cosmological model, 770
  - incompatible with “turnaround universe,” 751
- Cosmic neutrino background, 712, 736f, 764f
- Cosmic rays, 757
  - evolution of mean density of, 798
  - observations refute Klein-Alfven cosmological models, 770
- Cosmological constant, 410ff
  - Einstein’s invention and retraction of, 410f, 707, 758
  - influence on evolution of universe, 747, 771, 774
- Cosmological models
  - anisotropic, Chap. 30
  - Brans-Dicke, 770
  - closure of universe
    - related to Mach’s principle, 543, 549
    - as boundary condition, 1181
  - de Sitter, 745, 758
  - Einstein static universe, 746f, 750, 758f
  - flat, closed, static 3-torus model, 284
  - Friedmann
    - discovery of, by Friedmann and Lemaitre, 751, 758
    - assumption of homogeneity and isotropy, 703, 713
    - assumption of perfect-fluid stress-energy tensor, 711f
    - assumed equation of state, 713, 726
    - implications of homogeneity and isotropy, 714f, 720ff
    - isotropy implies homogeneity, 715, 723
    - coordinate system constructed, 715ff
    - expansion factor introduced, 718
    - arbitrariness in expansion factor, 720ff
    - expansion factor renormalized, 721f
    - possible 3-geometries for homogeneous hypersurfaces, 720–725
    - curvature parameter  $K = k/a^2$ , 721
    - line element, various forms for, 721ff, 731, 759
    - embedding diagrams, 723, 725
    - topology not unique, 725
    - first law of thermodynamics for, 726ff
    - assumption that matter and radiation exchange negligible energy, 726ff, 765
    - assumption that pressure of matter can always be neglected, 726, 728
    - density and pressure expressed in terms of expansion factor, 727
    - Einstein tensor for, 728
    - orthonormal frames attached to matter, 728
    - initial-value equation (for  $a_i$ ), 744
    - dynamic equation (for  $a_{,tt}$ ), 729
    - dynamic equation derivable from initial-value equation plus first law of thermodynamics, 729
    - time parameters:  $t, a, \eta$ , 730–732
    - observer’s parameters vs. relativity parameters, 771ff
    - implications of parameter values for future of universe, 747, 771, 773f
    - dynamics of early stage independent of  $k$  (unaffected by closure), 742f
    - critical density for closure of universe if  $\Lambda = 0$ , 782
    - small perturbations of, 800f
    - See also* Hubble constant, Density parameter, Deceleration parameter
  - Friedmann, closed ( $k = +1, \Lambda = 0$ )
    - in extenso*, 733–742
    - track-1 overview, 704–711
    - Einstein’s arguments favoring closure, 704
    - critical density for closure, 710, 782
    - geometry of 3-sphere hypersurfaces, 704, 721, 723f
    - radius of, defined, 704
    - radius of maximum expansion, 705
    - embedding diagram, 723f
    - volume of, 724
    - topology not unique, 725
    - first law of thermodynamics applied to, 705, 726ff



- initial-value equation for, 537, 705f, 729, 733
- effective potential for evolution of, 706
- inevitability of recollapse, 707
- solutions of field equations for, 734f
- radiation-dominated era, 733–737, 740ff
- matter-dominated era, 733ff, 738–742
- coordinate diagram for, 741
- concrete numbers for a typical model, 738
- propagation of signals around universe, 741, 750
- causal isolation of various regions from each other, 740ff
- mocked up by Schwarzschild-lattice universe, 739f
- compared with Newtonian cosmological models, 707f
- Friedmann, flat and open ( $k = 0$ ,  $k = -1$ ;  $\Lambda = 0$ )
  - geometry of homogeneous hypersurfaces, 721, 724f
  - embedding diagram, 724f
  - topology not unique, 725
  - Solutions of field equations for, 742
  - radiation-dominated era, 742f
  - matter-dominated era, 743f
- Friedmann, plus cosmological constant ( $k = 0$ ,  $\pm 1$ ;  $\Lambda \neq 0$ )
  - initial-value equation (for  $a_i^2$ ), 744
  - effective potential for evolution of, 744, 746, 748f
  - dynamical evolution of, 744–747
  - special cases of, 745ff, 750f
- hesitation universe, 750
- hierarchic (island) universe, 748f, 770
- inhomogeneous, Chap. 30
- inhomogeneous Gowdy models, 804
- inhomogeneous but spherical models, 804
- Kasner model, 801, 805ff
- Klein-Alfven model, 748, 770
- mixmaster, 805–814
- Newtonian, 707f, 759
- primordial chaos in big-bang models, 769, 802ff
  - in extenso*, Chap. 30
  - primordial black holes produced by, 884
- See also* Isotropy and homogeneity of universe, possible explanations of
- Schwarzschild lattice universe, 739f
- steady-state universe, 745, 750, 770
- turnaround universe, 750f
- See also* Cosmology: history of universe according to “standard big-bang model”
- Cosmology:
  - expansion of universe
    - prediction of by Friedmann, de Sitter, and Weyl, 758, 776
    - discovery of by Hubble, 759, 792–794
    - removed motive for cosmological term, 410–411
  - was greatest prediction of Einstein’s theory, 411
  - what expands and what does not, 719, 739
  - “Where is the new space added?” 719, 739
  - will Universe recontract? 747, 771, 774
  - See also* Hubble expansion rate
  - history of man’s ideas and knowledge of the universe, 752–762
  - history of the universe according to the “standard big-bang model”
    - in extenso*, Chap. 28
    - initial singularity, 769f
    - what “preceded” initial singularity? 769
    - possible roles of primordial chaos, 769, 803f, 816. *See also* Cosmological models: primordial chaos
  - complete thermal equilibrium at  $t \ll 1$  second, 736, 763f
  - decoupling of gravitational waves and neutrinos, 736, 764
  - recombination of pairs, 736f, 764
  - thermal interaction of matter and radiation during expansion, 765f
  - transition from matter dominance to radiation dominance, 741f, 765f
  - condensation of stars, galaxies, and clusters of galaxies, 766, 769, 800
  - past history not much affected by  $k$  (by geometry of hypersurfaces), 742f, 763
  - expansion forever vs. recontraction, 747, 771, 774
- observational probes of standard model, 780–798
  - summary of, 797f
  - distance-redshift relation, derivation of, 780f
  - distance-redshift relation, observational data, 781, 785–788, 792ff. *See also* Hubble expansion rate
  - magnitude-redshift relation, derivations of, 782–785, 794
  - magnitude-redshift relation, observational data, 788–791
  - angle-effective distance vs. redshift (“lens effect of universe”), 795f
  - source counts (number-flux relation), 798
  - mean mass density of universe, 710ff, 796f
  - comparison of temperature, redshift, and emission times for cosmic background radiations, 737
  - abundances of elements, 765
  - comparison of ages deduced by various methods, 797f
  - evolution of quasar population, 767f, 770
  - experimental tests of general relativity using cosmological observations, 1047
- observed properties of universe
  - homogeneity on large scales, 703, 815
  - isotropy on large scale, 703, 801, 815
  - rotation, observational limits on, 939
  - cosmological expansion, 772, 775f, 785–788, 793f
  - age deduced from expansion rate, 709f, 797
  - ages of oldest stars, 709, 797f
  - ages of rocks and meteorites, 759, 761, 798
  - deceleration parameter, 785, 788–791
  - density parameter, 796f
  - mean density of luminous matter, 710f, 761
  - mean density of cosmic rays, 712, 757, 798
  - mean density of intergalactic matter, 712, 761f, 797
  - mean density in electromagnetic radiation, 712
  - energy and pressure in kinetic motions of galaxies and stars, 711
  - abundances of elements, 765
  - entropy per baryon, 766
  - quasar population, evolution of, 767f, 770
  - “fine-scale” structure, 703
  - See also* Cosmic microwave radiation, Hubble expansion rate
  - speculations about initial and final states of universe, 707, 1209, 1213–1217
- Coulomb field, “pancaking” of, for fast charged particle, 124
- Coulomb force, from electromagnetic 4-potential, 122
- Coupling of fields to matter, direct vs. indirect, 1063f
- Covariance, general. *See* General covariance
- Covariant components of a tensor, 76, 201–207, 312
- Covariant derivative
  - fundamental equations summarized, 223–224
  - defined by parallel transport, 208, 249
  - pictorialized, 209, 212
  - algebra of, 250–261
  - chain rule for, 214, 250, 252, 257f, 260f
  - symmetry of (“no torsion”), 250, 252, 353f
  - additivity of, 252
  - commutes with contraction, 214
  - compatibility with metric, 215f, 313ff, 353f
  - noncommutation of two covariant derivatives, 389ff
  - as a machine with slots, 253ff
  - is not a tensor, 253, 255f
  - connection coefficients as its components, 210, 256, 261f
  - rotation 1-forms constructed from, 349ff, 359f
  - semicolon notation for, introduced, 210



- Covariant derivative (*continued*)  
 component calculations of, 215  
 of tensor densities, 501f  
 in a hypersurface, 510  
 regarded as a gravitational field, 387  
*See also* Connection coefficients; Parallel transport; Rotation coefficients
- Crab nebula, ii, 619f, 760
- Cross section  
 collisional, 69  
 Lorentz transformation of, 70
- Crystallography, related to 1-forms, 232
- Current 4-vector. *See* Charge density-current
- Curvature, constant, 3-geometries of, 720–725
- Curvature, formalism of  
 fundamental equations, summarized, 223–224
- Bel-Robinson (tidal) tensor, 381f
- conformal (Weyl) tensor  
 introduced, 325, 327  
 principal null congruences of, 902  
 Petrov-Pirani algebraic classification of, 1165  
 spinor representation of, 1154f  
 in Nordström-Einstein-Fokker theory of gravity, 429, 431  
 vanishes in 3 dimensions, 550
- Einstein tensor  
 introduced, 222, 325f  
 track-1 equations summarized, 224  
 as trace of double dual of *Riemann*, 325f, 376  
 formula for mixed components in terms of Riemann components, 343f  
 in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic curvature, 515  
 interpreted as moment of rotation, 373–377  
 contracted Bianchi identity (“conservation of *Einstein*”), 325, 377f  
 conservation of, from boundary of a boundary, 377f  
 uniqueness of, 405, 407f
- curvature 2-form, 348–363  
 picture of, for 2-sphere, 337  
 picture of, for pith helmet, 338
- curvature operator  $\mathfrak{R}$   
 introduced, 271  
 regarded as bivector-valued 2-form, 376–380  
 as twice-applied exterior derivative, 351  
 as machine-with-slots, 351f  
 in context of Newton-Cartan theory, 299
- extrinsic curvature of a hypersurface, 511–516  
 contrasted with intrinsic curvature, 336, 421
- operator for, 511
- tensor for, 512
- from Lie derivative of metric, 520
- Gauss-Codazzi relations, 514ff
- Gaussian curvature of a 2-surface, 30, 44, 336f
- intrinsic curvature of a hypersurface, 509f
- invariants of *Riemann*, 491
- Jacobi curvature tensor, 286f
- Jacobi curvature operator, 286  
 in context of Newton-Cartan theory, 299, 301
- principal radii of curvature for a 2-surface, 44, 335f
- Riemann tensor  
 component formulas for, summarized, 224, 266  
 component formula for in non-coordinate basis, 277  
 Riemann, matrix display of components of, 360f  
 elementary introduction to, 31, 34–37, 39  
*in extenso* track-1 treatment (metric present), 218–224  
*in extenso*, in absence of metric, 270–288  
*in extenso*, properties induced by introduction of metric, 324–327  
 defined by parallel transport around closed curve, 277–282  
 proof of tensor character, 276  
 defined by geodesic deviation, 29–37, 218f, 270–277, 287  
 relation to curvature operator, 274ff  
 relation to noncommuting covariant derivatives, 389ff  
 relation to curvature 2-form, 352  
 as machine with slots, 271, 274f  
 symmetries of, 35, 220ff, 286, 324f  
 number of independent components, 326  
 invariants of, 491  
 in 2 and 3 dimensions: deducible from Ricci tensor, 334, 343, 550  
 Bianchi identities, 221f, 224, 325f. *See also* Bianchi identities  
 only tensor from, and linear in, second derivatives of metric, 408  
 wave equation for, 382  
 dynamic components of, 517f  
 spinor representation of, 1154f  
 in Newton-Cartan spacetime, 290, 302  
 in linearized theory, 438
- Riemann tensor, double dual of, 325f, 343, 371, 376
- Ricci tensor, 222, 325f  
 in Newton-Cartan theory, 290, 300
- scalar curvature  
 introduced, 222, 325  
 in terms of area deficit, 516  
 for a 3-surface, 422f  
 Gauss-Bonnet integral of, 309, 381  
 in Hilbert action principle, 418, 491
- Weyl tensor. *See* Conformal tensor
- York’s curvature, 541, 550
- Curvature, methods of calculating  
*in extenso*, Chap. 14  
 analytical, on a computer, 342  
 straightforward method, from connection and its derivative, 340f  
 mixed components of *Einstein* expressed explicitly in terms of *Riemann* components, 343f  
 geodesic Lagrangian method, 344–348  
 via 2-forms, theory, 348–354  
 via 2-forms, method, 354–362  
 ways to display results, 334, 360f
- “Curvature coupling” in equivalence principle, 389–392
- Curvature of spacetime  
 modeled by surface of apple, 4f  
 implied by gravitational red shift, 187ff  
 generation of, by mass-energy, 37–44, Chap. 17  
 measured by geodesic deviation, 29–37, 195f, 270–275  
 procedure-in-principle to measure, 72  
 measured by gravity gradiometer, 400–403  
 coupling to physics in equivalence principle, 389–392  
 coupling to moments of a macroscopic object, 391f, 476–480, 1120f  
 can be great locally even if average is near zero, 220  
*See also* Geodesic deviation, Tidal forces, Spacetime geometry
- “Curvature parameter” of Friedmann cosmologies, 721
- Curvature tensors for specific manifolds  
 gravitational wave, exact, plane, 346f, 444  
 gravitational wave, linearized, 948  
 linearized theory, any metric, 438  
 Friedmann cosmology, 345, 348, 355ff, 537, 728  
 Newton-Cartan spacetime, 290  
 Newtonian sphere of uniform density, 39f  
 Newtonian spherical vacuum field, 37  
 Schwarzschild metric, 821ff  
 spherical, dynamic line element, 361f  
 spherical, static line element in Schwarzschild coordinates, 360f  
 3-hyperboloid, 343, 721  
 3-sphere, 343, 721  
 3-surface of “constant curvature,” 721  
 2-hyperboloid, 334  
 2-sphere, 30, 341  
 2-surface of revolution, 339f  
 world tube of a collapsing star’s surface, 853
- Curvature. *See also* Bianchi identities; Gauss-Weingarten equations; Gauss-Codazzi equations
- Curve, in context of differential topology, 226
- Curves, congruence of, 240
- Cutoff, related to Planck length, 428
- Cycloidal motion

- for radial geodesics in Schwarzschild geometry, 664
- for test particle in field of a Newtonian point mass, 708
- for radius of closed Friedmann cosmology, 708
- for surface of a pressure-free collapsing star, 852
- D**
- “*d*,” three usages of this differential symbol, 95–96
- d’Alembertian operator. *See* Wave operators
- Day, length of, 23–26, 1124f
- de Rham operator. *See* Wave operators
- de Broglie wave, 53, 55–59
- de Sitter universe, 745, 758
- Deceleration parameter of universe
  - defined, 772
  - relationship to other cosmological parameters, 771–773
- determinant of whether universe will recontract, 774
- magnitude-redshift relation for measuring, 782–785, 794
- observational data on, 785, 788–791
- Deficit angles, 309, 1167ff
- Deflection of light, gravitational, pictorial explanation of, 32
  - early Einstein words on, 431
  - calculated in linearized theory, 184f, 446
  - calculated in Schwarzschild coordinates, 679
  - calculated in PPN formalism, 1101ff
  - post-post-Newtonian corrections to, 1069
  - magnitude of, compared with current technology, 1048, 1101
  - experimental results on, 1104f
  - in flat-space theories of gravity, 179, 184f
- Deflection of particles by a central field, 671, 1099f
- Degenerate electron gas. *See* White-dwarf matter
- Degenerate neutron gas. *See* Neutron-star matter
- Degrees of freedom, counting of, for geometrodynamics and electrodynamics, 529–533
- Delta, Kronecker, 22
- Delta function, Dirac, 121
- Democracy of histories, 418–419
- Density of universe. *See under* Cosmology: observed properties of the universe
- “Density parameter” of universe, 772, 796f
- Derivative, covariant. *See* Covariant derivative
- Derivative, directional. *See* Directional derivative
- Derivative, following fluid, 153, 1078
- Detailed balance, principle of, 1028ff, 1033, 1035f
- Determinant
  - derivative of, 160–161
  - and Jacobian, 160–161
- Deviation, geodesic. *See* Geodesic deviation
- DeWitt equation, 1189. *See also* Einstein-Schrödinger equation
- Dicke-Brans-Jordan theory of gravity. *See under* Gravitation, theories of
- Dicke-Eötvös experiment. *See* Eötvös-Dicke experiment
- Dicke’s framework for analyzing experiments, 1049, 1064
- Differentiable manifold. *See* Manifold, differentiable
- Differentiable structure, 242
- Differential conservation law, equivalence to integral conservation law, 146
- Differential forms. *See* Forms, differential
- Differential geometry
  - overview of, 194–198
  - track-1 treatment of, Chap. 8
  - track-2 treatment of, Chaps. 9–11, 13–15
  - texts on, 196
  - three levels of: pictorial, abstract, components, 198–200
  - Cartan’s contributions to, 198
  - applications of, listed, 198
  - See also* Differential topology, Affine geometry, Riemannian geometry, and specific concepts, such as Metric, Connection, Forms
- “Differential,” of differential calculus, rigorous version of, 62
  - interpreted as a 1-form, 63
  - interpreted as *p*-form, 160–161
- Differential topology, 197f, Chap. 9, *esp.* 240–243. *See also specific concepts, e.g.,* Manifold, Lie derivative
- Dimensionality, 10, 12
- Dirac brackets, 486, 520
- Dirac delta function, 121
- Dirac equation, in Schwarzschild geometry, 1165
- Directional derivative
  - of a function along a vector, 59–60
  - operator for, 61
  - as a tangent vector, 227–230
- Disks, rapidly rotating, in general relativity, 621
- Dispersion relations obtained from Hamiltonians, 486f, 494, 498
- Distance, proper. *See* Interval, Lorentz
- Distance-redshift relation. *See under* Cosmology: observational probes of standard model
- Distances, as raw material of metric, 306–309
- Distant action. *See* Action at a distance
- Distant stars, inertial influence of. *See* Mach’s principle
- Distribution. *See* Dirac delta function
- Distribution function, 583f, 590
- Divergence of a vector or tensor, 82, 213, 222, 261
- Divergences, in theory of particles and fields, 426–428
- Double star. *See* Binary star
- Dragging of inertial frames
  - in PPN formalism, 1117–1120
  - by Earth’s rotation, 1119f
  - by a slowly rotating star, 699
  - in Kerr-Newman geometry, 879ff, 893–896
  - prospects to measure, 1120
  - See also* Mach’s principle
- Dual bases, 60f, 119, 202, 232
- Duality operation on forms, vectors, and tensors
  - on forms, 88, 97f, 108, 119, 151
  - on simple forms, expressed in terms of perpendicularity, 98
  - application to electromagnetism, 88, 97f, 114
  - double dual of Riemann, 371, 376
  - not to be confused with duality of bases, 119
  - special star operation that does not act on forms, 376–380
- Duality rotation of electromagnetic field, 108, 482f
- Dynamical path length
  - in elementary mechanics, 486–487
  - as proportional to phase of wave function, 486
  - in superspace formulation of geometrodynamics, 419, 1186
  - See also* Variational principle
- E**
- Earth
  - atmosphere and gravity, 388
  - crust, as detector of gravitational waves, 1013, 1015
  - general precession (precession of rotation axis), 391, 392, 1112, 1113
  - gravitational multipole moments, 401
  - mass, radius, density. *See* endpapers
  - motion relative to cosmic microwave radiation, 713
  - particles oscillating in hole bored through, 39
  - rotation of, drags inertial frames, 1119f. *See also* Day
  - satellite orbits used to deduce mass, 638
  - shape as described by collection of distances, 306–309
  - subsurface mass variations, 401
  - tides, as experimental test of general relativity, 1123f
  - vibrations of, as detector for gravitational waves, 1013, 1015, 1035f
- Eccentricity of an elliptical orbit, 647
- Eclipses, 24–26, 1104
- Eddington-Finkelstein coordinates, 828–831, 849
- Eddington-Finkelstein diagrams, 829, 830, 849, 864, 873
- Effective potentials
  - for test particles in Schwarzschild geometry, 639, 656, 659–662

- Effective potentials (*continued*)  
 for charged test particles in equatorial plane of Kerr-Newman hole, 911  
 for waves in Schwarzschild geometry, 868, 870  
 for scalar waves in Kerr geometry, 915  
 for radius of Friedmann universe, 706, 744, 746, 748f  
 for oscillations of mixmaster universe, 809ff
- Einstein.** *See under* Curvature, formalism of  
 EIH equations of motion, 1091, 1094–1095  
 Eikonal method, 1102  
 Einstein A coefficients, 1029  
 Einstein's elevator, 298. *See also*  
 Equivalence principle  
 Einstein field equation, 431–434  
 elementary introduction to, 41ff  
 integral equation equivalent to, 995–996  
 variational principles for. *See under*  
 Variational principles  
 derivations of  
   *in extenso*. Chap. 17, esp. 406, 416–482  
   from automatic conservation of source, 379f, 417  
   from Hilbert's action principle, 418  
   from physics on a spacelike slice, 419–423  
   from spin-2 field theory, 424f, 437  
   from superspace analysis, 423f  
   from “metric elasticity of space,” 426ff  
   modified by cosmological term, 410–412  
   correspondence with Newtonian theory, 412–416  
   and collapse, 1198–1199  
   *See also* Geometrodynamics  
 Einstein-Infeld-Hoffman equations of motion, 1091, 1094–1095  
 Einstein-Rosen bridge, 837ff  
 Einstein-Schrödinger equation, 1189f  
 Einstein static universe, 746, 747, 750, 758f  
 Einstein summation convention, 9  
 Einstein tensor. *See under* Curvature, formalism of  
 Einstein's theory of gravity. *See* General relativity  
 Elasticity, 426–428  
 Electrodynamics  
   in flat spacetime, *in extenso*, Chap. 3  
   in curved spacetime, *in extenso*, 385–391, 568–570  
   in language of forms, *in extenso*, Chap. 4  
   in language of spinors, 1154, 1165  
   in terms of boundary of a boundary, 365–370  
   in geometric optics limit. *See* Geometric optics  
   canonical formulation of, as a guide to geometrodynamics, 496f, 522ff  
   analog of Palatini variational method in, 495–498  
   three-plus-one view versus geometric view, 78–79  
   deduced from vector potential, 122  
   deduced from electrostatics plus covariance, 81  
   lines of force never end, as core principle of, 420  
   analogies and comparisons with geometrodynamics, 35, 348, 364, 367–370  
   *See also* Initial-value problem, Integrating forward in time  
 Electromagnetic field  
   descriptions of and equations governing electric and magnetic fields, 73f  
   Lorentz transformation of, 78f  
   dual of electromagnetic field tensor, **Maxwell**  
     introduced, 88, 105  
     egg-crate picture of, 107, 109  
     divergence vanishes, 88  
     exterior derivative gives charge density and current, 113f  
   vector potential, 88f, 120, 569  
   wave equation for, 89, 120, 388–391, 569  
 electromagnetic field tensor (or 2-form), **Faraday**  
   as machinery to produce force from 4-velocity, 73, 101, 104  
   components of, 73–74  
   expressed in terms of exterior products, 99  
   egg-crate pictures of, 99f, 104, 106, 107, 111  
   “canonical representation” of, 122  
   special cases of pure electric, pure magnetic, and null, 122  
   generic case reduced to simplest form, 122, 483  
   Maxwell's equations for, in component notation, 80f, 568  
   divergence gives charge density and current, 81, 88  
   exterior derivative vanishes, 112f, 117  
   invariants, 110, 480–483  
   field momentum, 496f, 522ff  
   stress-energy tensor, 140f  
     divergence vanishes, 89  
   complexion, 108, 482  
   calumoid, 125  
   Lorentz force, 71ff, 101, 104, 568  
   Maxwell's equations, 80f, 568. *See also* Maxwell's equations  
     Lorentz transformations, 78f, 108ff, 482f  
 Electromagnetic field produced by specific sources  
   oscillating dipole, 111–112  
   point charge, 107–111, 121f  
 Electron  
   quasibound in field of small black hole, 1164  
   spinning, Thomas precession of, 175–176  
 Electron capture, in white-dwarf matter, 619  
 Elementary-particle experiments as tests of relativity theory, 1054f, 1060. *See also*  
   *under* Conservation laws, energy-momentum  
 Elements, abundances of, 765  
 Elevator, 431. *See also* Uniqueness of free fall, Tide-producing acceleration  
 Embedding diagrams  
   general discussion, 613  
   for a static, spherical star, 613–615, 617  
   for Schwarzschild geometry, 837, 839, 528  
   for a spherical, collapsing star, 855–856  
   for Friedmann cosmological models, 723, 725  
 Energy-at-infinity  
   in Schwarzschild geometry, 656ff  
   in Kerr-Newman geometry, 898f, 910  
 Energy in mechanics, as time rate of change of action, 486–487  
 Energy of a particle, expressed as  $-\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{u}$ , 65  
 Energy-momentum  
   4-vector, 51, 53f, 68  
   density of  
     revealed by stress-energy tensor, 131  
     3-form for, 151  
   of gravitational field  
     nonlocalizable in generic case, 466ff  
     precisely localizable only for spherical systems, 603–604, 858f  
     localizable only to within a wavelength for gravitational waves, 955f, 964–966, 969f  
   total, of a gravitating source  
     in terms of asymptotic gravitational field, Chap. 19  
     expressed as a flux integral, 461–464  
     expressed as a volume integral, 464–466  
   conservation of. *See under* Conservation laws  
 Entropy. *See under* Second law of thermodynamics  
 Eötvös-Dicke experiments, 14–17, 1050–1055  
 early Einstein words on, 431  
 implications for constancy of fundamental constants, 1061–1063  
 for massive (self-gravitating) bodies, 1127–1131  
 Ephemeris for solar system (J.P.L.), 1095, 1097  
 Ephemeris second, 28  
 Equation of structure, Cartan's, 378  
 Equations of motion  
   derived from Einstein field equation, 42–43, 471–480  
   for bodies separated by distances large compared to their sizes  
   “EIH” (post-Newtonian) for spherical bodies, 1091, 1094–1095  
   deviations from geodesic motion, 1120–1121, 1128  
 Equations of state  
   for nuclear and white-dwarf matter, 624–626  
   for “cosmological fluid,” 713, 726



- Equinoxes, precession of, 391f, 1112f
- Equivalence principle  
 enunciated, 386f, 1060  
 Einstein's 1911 formulation of, 17  
 bridge from special relativity to general relativity, 164, Chap. 16, 207  
 out of spin-2 field theory, 425  
 in Newton-Cartan theory, 297  
 basis for affine parameter, 211, 250  
 factor-ordering problems in, 388–391  
 role in metric theories, 1067f  
 tests of, 187–190, 1054–1063  
 weak equivalence principle. *See* Uniqueness of free fall
- Ergosphere, 880
- Ether, 1051, 1064f
- Euclidean geometry, 19–22
- contrasted with Lorentz geometry, 51
- Euler angles, 243
- Euler relation, on vertices, edges, faces, 1175
- Euler equation of hydrodynamics  
 in flat spacetime, 152f  
 in curved spacetime, 564  
 in PPN formalism, 1088  
 applied to a pulsating star, 693–694  
 applied to a collapsing star, 858
- Eulerian perturbations, 690–691
- Events, 6, 9f  
 identifiability as key, 225  
 as classical, not valid quantum concept, 1184
- Expansion of universe. *See under* Cosmology
- “Expansion,” of a bundle of null rays, 582, 1165
- “Expansion,” of a congruence of world lines, 565f
- Experimental tests of general relativity  
*in extenso*, Chaps. 38, 39, 40  
 Beall test of uniqueness of free fall, 17  
 black holes, 1047  
 catalogued, 1129  
 constancy of fundamental constants, 1061–1063  
 cosmological observations used for, 707, 1047, 1061, 1067  
 deflection of electromagnetic waves by sun, 1048, 1069, *esp.* 1101–1105  
 “de Sitter effects” in Earth-moon orbit, 1116, 1119  
 Earth's failure to collapse, 398f  
 Earth's rotation rate, periodicities in, 1124–1125  
 Earth tides due to galaxy and to motion relative to preferred frame, 1123–1124
- Eötvös-Dicke experiment. *See* Eötvös-Dicke experiments
- ether-drift experiments, 1064–1065
- expansion of universe, 707
- geophysical observations, 1061, 1123–1125
- gyroscope precession, 1117–1120
- gravitational (Cavendish) constant, variations of. *See under* Cavendish
- gravitational constant
- gravitational waves, 1047, 1072
- Hughes-Drever experiment, 1064
- isotropy of space, 1064
- Kreuzer experiment, 1125
- laser ranging to moon, 1048, 1130–1131
- lunar orbit, 1048, 1116, 1119, 1127, 1128–1131
- Newtonian experiments, 1067
- Nordtvedt effect, 1128–1131
- null experiments, 1050, 1064
- perihelion shift, *esp.* 1110–1116
- planetary orbits, deviations from geodesic motion, 1111, 1126–1131
- planetary orbits, periodic effects in, 1069, 1111
- Pound-Rebka-Snider experiment, 1056–1058
- preferred-frame effects, 1098, 1113–1114
- pulsars used for, 1047
- quasars used for, 1047, 1048, 1061, 1101, 1103, 1104–1105
- radar time delay, 1048, 1103, *esp.* 1106–1109
- redshift, gravitational. *See* Redshift, gravitational
- redshift, due to “ether drift,” 1064–1065
- singularities in spacetime, existence of, 939
- Turner-Hill experiment, 1064–1065
- See also* Parametrized post-Newtonian formalism, Dicke's framework for analyzing experiments, Experimental tests of special relativity
- Experimental tests of special relativity, 1054–1055
- Exterior calculus  
 introduction to and detailed summary of, 91–98  
 application to electromagnetism, Chap. 4  
 largely unaffected by presence or absence of metric, 233  
 extended to vector- and tensor-valued forms, 348–363  
*See also specific concepts, e.g.,* Forms, differential; Exterior derivative; Stokes theorem
- Exterior derivative  
 introduced, for scalar fields, 93f  
 as operation to augment the order of a form, 114–120  
 applied twice in succession, automatically gives zero, 116, 118  
 results of, 119  
 extended to vector- and tensor-valued forms, 348–363, Chap. 15
- Exterior product. *See* Wedge product
- External field of a gravitating source. *See* Asymptotically flat spacetime geometry
- Extrema, number of, 318
- Extreme Kerr-Newman geometry, as limiting case of Kerr-Newman, 878
- Extremization, of integral for proper time, 316–324
- Extrinsic curvature. *See under* Curvature, formalism of
- Extrinsic time, of Kuchař and York, 487, 490
- F**
- Factor-ordering problems, 388–391
- Faraday.** *See under* Electromagnetic field
- Faraday stresses, 140f, 481
- Fast-motion approximation, 1072–1073
- Fermat's principle in a static gravitational field, 1106, 1108
- Fermi energy, in neutron stars and white dwarfs, 599–600
- Fermi gas, ideal, 565, 599
- Fermi normal coordinates, 332
- Fermi-Walker transport, 165, 170f, 1117
- Feynman's sum over histories, 320, 419, 499f
- Field equations. *See* Einstein field equations
- Fields, long range (i.e., zero rest mass)  
 spin of, deduced from transformation laws for polarization of waves, 954  
 radiation fields must have  $l \geq S$ , 866, 977  
 role in slightly nonspherical collapse of a star, 866
- direct coupling vs. indirect coupling, 1063–1064
- direct coupling, experimental searches for, 1063–1065
- indirect coupling, 1068, 1069
- Final state of stellar evolution, 624. *See also* White dwarfs, Neutron stars, Black holes
- Fine-structure constant, electromagnetic, constancy of, 399, 1061
- First law of thermodynamics  
 general formulation for a simple fluid, 559–560  
 for a fluid in adiabatic flow, 563  
 in PPN formalism, 1088  
 role in laws of hydrodynamics, 564  
 application to pulsating stars, 692  
 application to collapsing stars, 858  
 application to closed Friedmann universe, 705, 726ff
- Fixed-point theorem, 978
- Flatness  
 test for, 30  
 equivalent to zero Riemann curvature, 283–284  
 does not imply Euclidean topology, 284  
 local, accompanied by global curvature, 190–191  
 of space slices in Newton-Cartan spacetime, 291–295
- Flatness, asymptotic. *See* Asymptotically flat spacetime
- Flat spacetime. *See* Special relativity; Lorentz geometry
- “Foamlike” character of space, 419, 480, 1190–1194, 1202
- Fluctuations, *See* Quantum fluctuations



- Fluid. *See* Hydrodynamics  
 Flux of particles. *See* Number-flux vector  
 Flux of energy, defined, 782  
 Focusing  
     of null rays, 582f, 932, 1165  
     *See also* Lens effect  
 4-Force, Lorentz, 73  
 Forms, differential  
     list of all definitions and formulas, 91–98.  
         *Note:* this list is not indexed here,  
         since it itself is organized like an  
         index!  
     machinery for working with, illustrated in  
     context of electromagnetism, Chap. 4  
     as intersecting stacks of surfaces, 99–120  
     ordered progression of (1-form,  
         2-form, . . .), 114–120  
     closed forms distinguished from general  
     forms, 114–119  
     operations on. *See* Duality, Exterior  
     derivative, Integration  
 1-forms  
     motivated, 53, 55f  
     defined, 56f  
     illustrated, 55–58  
     “corresponding” tangent vector, 58f,  
         62, 310  
     pictorial addition of, 57  
     basis. *See* Basis 1-forms  
     algebra of, for general basis, 202–203  
     in metric-free context, 226, 231–233  
     closed, 123  
     curl-free, 123  
     rotation-free, 123–124  
     with rotation, 123  
 2-forms  
     as machines to construct “number of  
     tubes” from oriented surface,  
         105–107  
     simple, 103  
     general, expressible as sum of two  
         simple 2-forms, 103, 122f  
     basis 2-forms, in direct and dual  
         labeling, 151  
     used in description and calculation of  
         curvature, 337–340, 348–363  
     vector-valued and tensor-valued forms,  
         348–363 and chapter 15  
 Four-momentum. *See under*  
     Energy-momentum  
 Four-vector. *See* Vector  
 Four-velocity. *See* Velocity 4-vector  
 Friedmann cosmologies. *See under*  
     Cosmological models  
 Frobenius theorem, on rotation-free  
     1-forms, 124  
 Frozen star. *See* Black hole  
 “Future of.” *See* Causal relationships
- G**
- Galaxies  
     classification of, 786f, 789, 793, 795  
     origin of, 766, 769f
- evolution of, 791  
 distribution of, homogeneity vs.  
     hierarchy, 703  
 fraction of sky covered by, 799  
 nuclei of  
     explosions in, 634  
     black holes in, 887  
     relativistic star clusters in, 634, 687  
 Galaxy, The (Milky Way), 756–761  
     metric correction at, 459  
     oscillations of star through disc, analyzed,  
         318–319  
 Galilean coordinates, 289, 291–298, 414  
 Gamma-ray observations, as tests of  
     cosmological models, 770  
 Gauge transformations and invariance  
     in electromagnetism, 89  
     in linearized gravitation theory (flat-space  
         spin-2 theory), 180, 182f, 440f, 463  
     in perturbations of curved spacetime,  
         967ff  
     *See also* Lorentz gauge  
 Gauss-Bonnet theorem, for 2-sphere  
     topology, 309  
 Gauss-Codazzi relations, 514ff  
 Gauss-Weingarten equations, for  
     4-transport  
         in terms of extrinsic curvature, 512  
 Gaussian flux integrals  
     for energy-momentum and angular  
         momentum, 460–464  
     for charge, 461  
 Gaussian normal coordinate system, 552,  
     717  
 Gauss’s theorem, 148–151  
     as special case of generalized Stokes  
         theorem, 97  
     applied to conservation of  
         energy-momentum, 146, 152  
 General covariance, principle of, 80, 431f  
 General relativity  
     epitomized briefly, 130 (line 1), 164, 190f,  
         266, 289  
     foundations developed in detail, Chaps.  
         16, 17  
     *See also* Einstein field equation,  
     Equivalence principle, Experimental  
     tests of general relativity,  
     Geometrodynamics  
 Generating function, for transformation  
     from one canonical representation of a  
     2-form to another, 122–123  
 Geodesics  
     track-1 introduction to, 211  
     track-2 treatment, in absence of metric,  
         244–247  
     affine parametrization of, 244–246  
     as straight-on parallel transport, 245  
     as straight lines of local Lorentz  
         geometry, 312–315, 321–324  
     as curves of extremal proper length,  
         314–321, 324  
     “dynamic” variational principle for, 322f  
     one-parameter family of, 265–267  
     can’t change from timelike to null or  
         spacelike *en route*, 321  
     simple examples  
         great circle on sphere, 211f  
         straight line on plane, in polar  
             coordinates, 213  
     of specific manifolds. *See under the*  
         *manifold of interest*  
     as world lines of freely falling particles,  
         4, 196  
     as tools for building ideal rods and  
         clocks, 396–399  
 Geodesic deviation  
     elementary introduction to, 29–37  
     double role: defines curvature, predicts  
         motion, 72  
     equation of, presented in track-1  
         language, 218ff  
     equation of, derived, 265–275  
     in spacetime of Newton-Cartan, 272f, 293  
     in gravitational-wave detector, 444–445,  
         950–955, 1011f  
 Geodesic equation 211, 262ff  
 Geodesic motion  
     experimental tests of, 1055–1060  
     departures from. *See under* Equations  
         of motion  
 Geodesic separation vector, 265–270  
 Geometric objects, 48  
     absolute vs. dynamic, and “no prior  
         geometry,” 431  
     spinor representation of, 1154f  
     *See also specific objects, e.g.,* Vectors,  
         Forms, Connection  
 Geometric units  
     introduced, 27ff, 36  
     factors of conversion to and from, 36,  
         638, end papers  
 Geometric optics  
     as limiting case of physical optics, 412  
     *in extenso*, for electromagnetic waves,  
         570–583  
     basic references on, 570n.  
     conditions for validity of, 571  
     two-length-scale expansion underlying,  
         571–572  
     basic concepts of, 571–582  
         summarized, 578–580  
         affine parameter of ray, 575  
         angular frequency, 575  
         bundle of rays, 581–582  
         electric field, 579  
         magnetic field, 579  
         phase, 571, 572, 574–575  
         photons, 580, 581  
         polarization vector, 573, 574–575, 577,  
             578, 581  
         scalar amplitude, 573  
         rays, 573, 574–575  
         stress-energy tensor, 579  
         wave vector, 573, 574–575  
     laws of  
         described qualitatively, 571  
         summarized in detail, 578–580

- photon interpretation of, 580
  - derived from wave equation and Lorentz gauge condition for vector potential, 573, 576–577
  - post-geometric optics corrections, 572f, 803f
- in spinor language, 1165
- examples of applications of, 570
- geometry of a bundle of rays, 581–582
- focusing equation, 582f
- breakdown of, related to pair creation, 803–804
- Geometrodynamics (dynamics of geometry)
  - ideas of, in brief, 4f
  - built-in plan: initial data plus time evolution, 408f, 484f
  - some history of, 486–488
  - analogies with electrodynamics, 364, 367–370
  - causal propagation of effects in, 554
  - Arnowitt, Deser, Misner formulation of in brief, 486–490
    - action principle in, 521
    - geometrodynamical field momenta for, 521
  - 3-geometry fixed at surfaces in, 522
  - split of variables made by, 525–526
  - electrodynamical analog, 522–524
- Dirac formulation of, 520
- subject to standard quantum indeterminism, 1182
- illustrated in action, for Schwarzschild geometry, 528
- See also* Einstein field equation, General relativity, Initial value, Integrating forward in time
- Geometry. *See specific types*: Spacetime, Euclidean, Lorentz, Differential, Affine, Riemannian, Prior. *See also* Curvature
- Geon, 886
- Global techniques of analyzing spacetime structure
  - in extenso*, Chap. 34
  - basic references on, 916–917
  - examples of, 926–931
  - attempt to combine with local methods, 806
- See also* Infinity, regions of, in asymptotically flat spacetime; Causal structure of spacetime; Singularities in spacetime
- Globular clusters, 757
  - black holes in, 887
- “Glory,” in particle scattering, 670
- Gowdy metrics, 804
- Gradient
  - of a scalar, in flat spacetime, 59f
  - of a tensor, in flat spacetime, 81f
  - in a curved manifold, 208–212, 259–261
  - See also* Exterior derivative
- Gradiometer, gravity, 400–403
- Gravitation, 13, 163–164
  - local description in terms of tide-producing acceleration, 29–37
- Gravitation-matter “coupling loop,” in brief, 5, 37
- Gravitation, theories of
  - catalogs of, 429
  - criteria for viability of, 1066–1067
  - Bergmann’s scalar-tensor theories, 1049
  - Birkhoff’s, 1067
  - Cartan’s (general relativity plus torsion), 1049, 1068
  - Cartan-Newton. *See* Newton-Cartan theory of gravity
  - Coleman’s, 1114
  - completeness of, 1067, 1068
  - conservative, 1093
  - Dicke-Brans-Jordan, 1048f, 1068f, *esp.* 1070, 1093, 1098, 1122, 1127, 1129
  - cosmological models in, 770
  - general relativity, foundations of, Chaps. 16, 17
  - Kustaanheimo’s, 1067
  - linearized. *See* Linearized theory of gravity
  - metric. *See* Metric theories of gravity
  - metric, not encompassed by the 10-parameter PPN formalism, 1069
  - Newtonian. *See* Newton-Cartan theory of gravity
  - Ni’s, 1068f, *esp.* 1070f, 1083, 1098, 1123, 1129
  - Nordström’s, 429ff, 1049
  - Papapetrou’s, 1124
  - post-Newtonian. *See* Post-Newtonian approximation; Post-Newtonian formalism, parametrized preferred-frame, 1083, 1093, 1098, 1123–1125
  - prior-geometric, 429–431, 1068, 1070–1071
  - self-consistency of, 1066–1067
  - spin-0 field, in flat spacetime, 178f
  - spin-1 field, in flat spacetime, 179
  - spin-2 field, in flat spacetime. *See* Linearized theory of gravity
  - Whitehead’s, 430, 1049, 1067, 1069, 1124
- Gravitational collapse. *See* Collapse, gravitational
- Gravitational constant
  - value of, 29, endpapers
  - measurement of, 1121, 1123
  - as measure of “metric elasticity of space,” 426–428
  - See also* Cavendish gravitational constant
- “Gravitational field” in general relativity theory
  - as term with many meanings and none, 399f
  - spacetime geometry as, 399–400
  - metric as, 399f
  - covariant derivative and connection coefficients as, 387, 399–400
  - Riemann curvature as, 399–403
  - contribution of, to standard stress-energy tensor, specifically excluded, 131
- Gravitational lens effect, 589, 887
- Gravitational mass, 431
- Gravitational potential. *See under* Newton-Cartan theory, Post-Newtonian formalism
- Gravitational radiation reaction. *See* Gravitational waves; radiation reaction
- Gravitational radius, 820–826. *See also* Horizon, Black hole, Schwarzschild geometry, Kerr-Newman geometry
- Gravitational-wave detectors
  - conceivable types of
    - Earth-moon separation, 1013, 1014, 1018
    - normal-mode vibrations of Earth and moon, 1013, 1015
    - oscillations of Earth’s crust, 1013, 1015
    - normal-mode vibrations of an elastic bar, 1013, 1016, 1025, 1035, 1038
    - normal-mode vibrations of general elastic bodies, 1013, 1016, 1025, 1028–1035, 1041–1042
    - angular accelerations of rotating bars (“heterodyne detector”), 1013, 1016–1017
    - angular accelerations of driven oscillators, 1013, 1017
    - pumping of fluid in a rotating pipe, 1013, 1018
    - idealized vibrator (2 masses on a spring), 1022–1028
    - beads on stick, 444f
    - nonmechanical detectors, 1040
    - electromagnetic waves in a toroidal wave guide, 1043–1044
  - methods of analyzing (for mechanical detectors small compared to wavelength)
    - proper reference frame of detector, 1005–1006, 1010, 1012
  - dynamic analysis: Newtonian equation of motion plus wave driving forces, 1006–1009
  - driving forces of waves, 1006, 1009, 1010
  - line-of-force diagram, 1011–1012
  - method of detailed balance, 1028, 1029–1030, 1033
  - for noisy detector, 1019, 1036–1040
- detailed analysis of
  - two freely falling bodies, 1018
  - idealized vibrator (two masses on a spring), 1022–1028
  - any resonant vibrator, analyzed by detailed balance, 1030, 1033
  - any resonant vibrator, analyzed by dynamic method, 1031–1034
  - noisy resonant vibrator (extraction of signal from noise), 1036–1040
- Earth vibrating in quadrupole mode, 1035–1036
- electromagnetic waves in a toroidal wave guide, 1043–1044
- cross sections
  - limits on usefulness of concept of cross section, 1019, 1022

- Gravitational-wave detectors (*continued*)  
 summary of ways to use, for  
 wave-dominated detectors,  
 1020–1021  
 used to calculate total energy deposited  
 in detector, 1027, 1028  
 use of, for noisy detectors, 1038–1039  
 related to emission patterns, 1032–1033,  
 1035  
 for idealized vibrator, 1024, 1025  
 for any resonant, mechanical detector,  
 1025, 1029, 1032  
 for a Weber bar, 1025  
 for a Weber bar in multimode  
 operation, 1035  
 for Earth in fundamental quadrupole  
 mode, 1036  
 thermally noisy detectors  
 extraction of small signal from noise,  
 1036–1040  
 sensitivity of, to hammer-blow waves,  
 1039  
 ways to improve sensitivity, 1040  
 sensors for monitoring displacements,  
 1041, 1042  
 prospects for the future, 1040ff  
 Gravitational waves  
 exact solutions  
 cylindrical wave, 950  
 plane waves with one state of  
 polarization, 957–963. *See also*  
 Plane gravitational waves  
 plane waves with two polarization  
 states, 964  
 experimental tests of general relativity  
 using, 1047, 1072  
 generation by slow-motion, weak-field  
 sources  
 nonexistence of monopole and dipole  
 waves, 974–978  
 waves are predominantly quadrupolar,  
 975–978  
 assumptions underlying formulas, 989,  
 991  
 formula for metric perturbation, 991  
 formulas for emitted flux of energy  
 and angular momentum, 992  
 formulas for total output of energy and  
 angular momentum, 975, 992  
 formulas for radiation reaction in  
 source, 993–994  
 formulas for spectrum in various  
 polarization states, 1033, 1035  
 formulas specialized to impulse events,  
 987  
 order-of-magnitude formulas for,  
 978–979, 980–981  
 derivation of formulas, 995–1003  
 role of “gravitational stresses” in  
 generation, 996–998  
 generation by strong-field sources,  
 techniques for calculating  
 particle falling into black hole, by  
 perturbations of Schwarzschild  
 metric, 982, 983  
 vibrations of a relativistic star, by  
 perturbations of equilibrium stellar  
 structure, 984–985  
 rotation of a deformed relativistic star,  
 by perturbations of spherical  
 stellar structure, 986  
 initial-value solutions for, 536  
 intensity and spectrum of waves that  
 bathe Earth, estimate of, 986  
 linearized theory of  
*in extenso*, 944–955  
 Lorentz gauge condition, 944–945  
 propagation equation, 945  
 gauge transformations that maintain  
 Lorentz gauge, 945  
 plane-wave solutions, 945–946, 949,  
 1004–1005  
 transverse-traceless gauge 946–950  
 methods to calculate transverse-traceless  
 part, 948–949  
 Riemann tensor, 948  
 geodesic deviation, 950–955, 1011–1012  
 relative accelerations are purely  
 transverse, 951  
 polarization, 952–955  
 Fourier analysis of, 1026, 1027  
 specific flux of, 1027  
 monopole and dipole waves absolutely  
 forbidden, 977, 978  
 nonlinear interaction of waves with  
 themselves  
 nonexistence of precisely periodic  
 waves, 956  
 self-gravitational attraction, 957, 968  
 wave-wave scattering, 968  
 propagation through curved spacetime  
 analogy with water waves on ocean,  
 993–994  
 refraction of wave fronts (deflection of  
 rays) by background curvature,  
 956, 968, 972  
 gravitational redshift of frequency,  
 956–957, 968  
 backscatter off curvature, 957, 864–865,  
 869–871  
 tails due to interaction with  
 background curvature, 957,  
 864–865, 869–871  
 shock fronts, 554  
 shortwave formalism for, 964–973. *See*  
*also* Gravitational waves:  
 shortwave formalism  
 propagation equation, 967–968  
 stress-energy tensor, 969–970. *See also*  
 Gravitational waves: stress-energy  
 tensor for  
 geometric optics formalism, 971–972  
 propagation of polarization tensor, 968,  
 971  
 spinor formalism for, 1165  
*See also* Gravitational waves: nonlinear  
 interaction of waves with  
 themselves  
 radiation reaction  
 order-of-magnitude formulas for, 979,  
 981  
 formalism for calculating, in weak-  
 field, slow-motion sources, 993ff,  
 1001ff  
 linked to outgoing-wave condition, 993,  
 1001–1002  
 forbids existence of exactly periodic  
 waves, 956  
 damping of neutron-star vibrations by,  
 620, 628, 984f  
 evolution of binary-star orbits due to,  
 988  
 shortwave formalism  
 “steady” coordinates, 964  
 expansion parameters of, 964  
 assumptions underlying, 964  
 expansion of Ricci tensor, 964–965  
 coarse-grain viewpoint vs. fine-grain  
 viewpoint, 965  
 propagation equation, 967–968  
 gauge freedom, 967–969  
 Lorentz gauge, 968  
 transverse-traceless gauge, 969  
 stress-energy tensor, 969–970. *See also*  
 Gravitational waves: stress-energy  
 tensor  
 Brill-Hartle averaging process, 970  
 geometric optics specialization, 971–972  
 variational principle used to derive,  
 972–973  
 sources of  
 astrophysical sources,  
 order-of-magnitude formulas for,  
 980–981  
 big-bang origin of universe, 712,  
 736–737, 764–765  
 gravitational collapse of a star, 628,  
 629, 1041  
 supernova explosions, 982, 1040, 1042  
 explosion of a star, 987  
 collapses and explosions in Virgo  
 cluster of galaxies, 1042  
 vibrations of neutron star, 982–986  
 rotation of a deformed neutron star  
 (young pulsar), 628f, 983, 986, 1040  
 binary stars, 986, 988–990, 995  
 fall of matter into a black hole, 885,  
 982, 983, 986  
 collision and coalescence of black  
 holes, 886, 939, 982  
 vibrations of a black hole, 886  
 rotating steel beam, 979–980  
 fission of an atomic nucleus, 987  
 atomic bomb, 987  
 meteorite striking earth, 987  
 stress-energy tensor for  
 elementary summary of, 955–956  
 expressed in terms of metric  
 perturbations, 969



- expression for in traceless Lorentz gauge, 970
- gauge invariance of, 972
- expressed as an average of stress-energy pseudotensor, 972
- divergence vanishes, 970
- as source for background curvature of spacetime, 966, 973
- for geometric-optics waves, 972
- for waves in nearly flat spacetime, 955–956
- for exact plane wave, 963
- Gravitons, 972
- Gravity gradiometer, 400–403
- Group. *See* Rotation group; Lorentz group
- Group of motions, 652–653. *See also* Killing vector fields
- Gyroscopes
  - employed in definition of Fermi-Walker transport, 165
  - employed in constructing proper reference frame, 327, 330f
  - precession of, as experimental test of general relativity, 1117–1120
  - See also* Dragging of inertial frames
- Gyromagnetic ratio, of Kerr-Newman black hole, 883, 892
- H**
- HII regions in galaxies, 710, 761, 786f
- Hair on a billiard ball, 978
- Hair on a hole. *See* Kerr-Newman geometry, uniqueness of
- “Hammer-blow waves” defined, 1019
- Hamilton-Jacobi theory, 486ff, 641–649
  - relation to quantum theory, 641–643
  - for harmonic oscillator, 1194
  - for free particle, 1194
  - for test-particle motion
    - in Newtonian  $M/r$  potential, 644–649
    - in Schwarzschild gravitational field, 649
    - in Kerr-Newman gravitational and electromagnetic fields, 900–901
  - deflection of light by sun, in PPN formalism, 1102f
  - perihelion shift in PPN formalism, 1114f
  - for electrodynamics, 1195
  - for geometrodynamics in superspace, 423f, 1180–1190
- Hamiltonian
  - contrasted with super-Hamiltonian, for charged particle in field, 488–489
  - electromagnetic, 497
  - for test-particle in Newtonian  $1/r$  potential, 644
  - See also* Super-Hamiltonian
- Hamiltonian, ADM, applied to mixmaster cosmology, 809
- Hamiltonian dynamics,
  - in the language of forms, 125–126
  - symplectic structure of, 126
- Hamilton’s principle for geodesic motion, 654
- Harrison-Wheeler equation of state, 625
- Harrison-Wakano-Wheeler stellar models, 625ff, 696
- Hat product. *See* Wedge product
- Heat flow in general relativity
  - references on, 559
  - heat-flux 4-vector, 567
  - law of thermal conductivity, 567
  - in a stationary gravitational field, 568
- Hilbert’s variational principle. *See* Variational principle, Hilbert’s
- Histories,
  - space of, 318–319
  - democracy of, 320
  - sum over, 320, 419, 499f
- “History of geometry,” defined, 418–419
- Holonomic basis, 204, 210, 239
- Homologous pulsations of a star, 697, 1079
- Honeycomb structure. *See* Forms
- Horizons, in black-hole physics
  - definition of, 923–924
  - global structure of (theorem), 924–925
  - global structure analyzed, 926–931
  - caustics of, 925
  - generators of, 903–904, 925, 929–931, 932
  - created by gravitational collapse, 862, 863, 867, 924
  - for Kerr-Newman geometry, 879ff
    - angular velocity of, 914
    - area of, 889, 914
    - generators of, 903f
- Horizons, in cosmology, 815f
  - in Friedmann cosmologies, 740ff, 815
- Hubble expansion rate, 709f
  - history of knowledge of, 709–710, 758–761
  - expressed in terms of expansion factor  $a(t)$ , 732
  - distance-redshift relation used in measuring, 780–781
  - relationship to other cosmological parameters, 771–773
  - See also under* Cosmological models, Cosmology
- Hughes-Drever experiment, 1064
- Hydrodynamics
  - Newtonian, in absence of gravity, 152ff
  - Newtonian, in presence of gravity, 387f, 1077–1080
  - post-Newtonian. *See under* PPN formalism
  - general relativistic
    - basic references, 562n, 568
    - for a simple fluid with no heat flow or viscosity, 562–563
    - for a fluid with viscosity and heat flow, 567–568
    - volume changes related to divergence of flow lines, 565
    - gradient of 4-velocity resolved into 4-acceleration, expansion, rotation, and shear, 566
- Euler equation, 564
- equilibrium in a stationary gravitational field, 566, 568
- interaction of charged matter with an electromagnetic field, 570
- See also* Thermodynamics, laws of
- Hydrostatic equilibrium
  - in any stationary gravitational field, 566
  - in static, spherical star, 601–602, 605
- Oppenheimer-Volkoff equation of, 605
- buoyant force, 606
- Hyperbolic motion of an accelerated observer, 166ff, 173f
- Hypersurface, spacelike. *See* Spacelike slice
- I**
- Imaginary time coordinate not used, 51
- Ideal gas, 139f
- Impact parameter
  - for hyperbolic, Newtonian orbit, 647
  - for hyperbolic orbit in Schwarzschild field, 670
  - for photon in Schwarzschild field, 672
  - for photon in PPN formalism, 1101f
- Identity, as automatically fulfilled conservation law, 405
- Index, contravariant and covariant, 76
- Index manipulations
  - in global Lorentz frames, 85
  - in curved, Riemannian manifolds, 201–204, 223f
  - in affine manifolds, 225f
  - in linearized theory, 436
- Induction, from electromagnetic 4-potential, 122
- Inertia, 460
- Inertial forces, 165, 332
  - in Newton-Cartan theory, 294
- Inertial frames, dragging of. *See* Dragging of inertial frames.
- Inertial guidance, 247
- Inertial mass, 159f, 431, 1051
- Inertial reference frame, local ( $\equiv$  local Lorentz frame if orthonormal coordinates are used), 18f
  - defined by uniform velocity of free test particles, 23
  - used in analysis of tide-producing acceleration, 29–37
  - mathematical representation of. *See* Riemann normal coordinates
  - See also* Lorentz frame, local
- Infinitesimal Lorentz transformation. *See* Lorentz transformation, infinitesimal
- Infinity, regions of, in asymptotically flat spacetime
- $I^+$ ,  $I^-$ ,  $I^0$ ,  $\mathcal{I}^+$ ,  $\mathcal{I}^-$  defined, 917–918
- conformal transformations of, 919–921, 936
- conformally transformed coordinate diagrams, 919–921



- Initial-value data
  - as uniquely determining future, Hilbert on, 434
  - mystery of what fixes them, 555
  - formulation of, on characteristic hypersurface, 554
- Initial-value data for geometrodynamics
  - in extenso*, Chap. 21
  - required for dynamics, 484–485
  - compatible on spacelike slice, 489–490
  - on characteristic surface, 490
  - thin-sandwich conjecture, 534
  - count of, 529–533
  - time and dynamic data mixed in 3-geometry, 533
- improperly posed data, 534–535
- separation of time and dynamic data, 533
- York's formulation of
  - sketched, 490
  - on hypersurface of zero or constant extrinsic time, 539–540
  - gives conformal 3-geometry, 540–541
  - gives York's curvature, 541
  - gives conjugate York momenta, 542
- Initial-value equations for
  - geometrodynamics, 515–516, 519, 525, 531–535
- Initial-value problem for geometrodynamics
  - York's formulation of
    - wave equation for conformal factor, 542
  - existence and uniqueness of solutions, 543
- thin-sandwich formulation of
  - as option in specifying data, 529
  - electrodynamic analog, 529
  - as guide in counting degrees of freedom, 529–533
  - as guide to geometrodynamics, 529–531
- time-symmetric case, 490
  - formulated, 535
  - role of base metric in, 535
  - gravitational wave amplitude in, 536
  - wave equation for conformal correction factor, 535
- time-antisymmetric case, 490
  - formulated, 536
  - wave equation for conformal correction factor, 536
  - mass of wave is positive, 536
- other symmetric cases
  - Friedmann universe, 537, 705f, 727f, 744
  - mixmaster universe, 537, 806–811
  - waves with cylindrical symmetry, 537
  - waves with spherical symmetry, 537
  - pulsating star, 691–694
  - as route to cosmology, 537
- See also* Geometrodynamics, Integrating forward in time
- Initial-value theory for electrodynamics, 523f, 526, 529ff. *See also* Electrodynamics, Integrating forward in time
- Injection energy, 561, 562
- Integral conservation law, 146
- Integrating forward in time
  - geometrodynamical equation
    - statement of initial data in, 526–527
    - options in choice of lapse and shift, 527–528
  - compared to electrodynamics, 527–528
- Maxwell's equations
  - statement of initial data in, 527
  - options in choice of potential, 527
  - as guide to geometrodynamics, 527
- See also* Electrodynamics, Geometrodynamics, Initial value
- Integration
  - of differential forms, 94–97, 150f
  - of tensors, in track-1 language, 147ff
  - See also* Stokes' theorem, Gauss's theorem, Volume
- Interference, constructive and destructive, 419, 423f, 1185–1187
- Interferometry, used to measure deflection of radio waves by sun, 1104–1105
- Intergalactic matter, mean density of, 712, 761f
- Interval, Lorentz, 19–23
- Intrinsic curvature. *See under* Curvature, formalism of
- Intrinsic time of Sharp, Baierlein, and Wheeler, 487, 490
- Invariants
  - of electromagnetic field, 110, 480–483
  - of Riemann tensor, 491
- Irreducible mass of a black hole, 889f, 913
- Isolated system, 454
- Isometry, 652–653. *See also* Killing vector fields
- Isotasy, 402
- Isothermal star clusters, 685ff
- Isotropic coordinates
  - for a star, 595
  - for Schwarzschild geometry, 840
  - in post-Newtonian approximation, 1097
- Isotropy and homogeneity of universe
  - in extenso*, Chap. 30
  - man could not exist in an anisotropic universe, 939
  - adiabatic cooling of anisotropy, 802
  - viscous dissipation of anisotropy, 769, 802–803
  - pair creation by anisotropy energy, 769, 803–804
- See also* Cosmological models; Cosmology
- Isotropy implies homogeneity, 715, 723
- J**
- Jacobi identity, for commutators, 240
- Jacobian, 93, 148, 160f
- Jacob's ladder. *See* Schild's ladder
- Jeans instability, 757
- Junction conditions, 490
  - from electrodynamics as guide, 551
- relevant components of Einstein field equation, 552
- surface stress-energy tensor, 552–553
- intrinsic geometry continuous, 553
- extrinsic curvature may jump, 554
- across null surface, 554
- and motion of surface layer, 555
- applied to collapsing shell of dust, 555–556
- applied to surface of a collapsing star, 852–853
- Jupiter, motion of satellites, 637
- K**
- K'ai-feng observatory, ii
- Kasner cosmological model, 801, 805ff
- Keplerian orbits in Newtonian field of a point mass, 647–649
  - analyzed using Hamilton-Jacobi theory, 644–649
- effective potential for, 661
- "Kepler density" from satellite period, 44
- Kepler's laws,
  - discovery by Kepler, 755
  - "1-2-3" law, 39, 450, 457
- Kernel, of wave operator, 121
- Kerr coordinates, 879f
- Kerr diagram, 881
- Kerr geometry, as limiting case of
  - Kerr-Newman, 878
- Kerr-Newman geometry and electromagnetic field
  - history of, 877n
  - parameters of ( $M$ ,  $Q$ ,  $S$ , or  $a$ ), 878
  - limiting cases (Schwarzschild, Reissner-Nordström, Kerr, extreme Kerr-Newman), 878
  - uniqueness as external field of a black hole
    - heuristic explanation of uniqueness, 875, 877
    - theorems implying uniqueness, 876, 938, 939
    - implications for realistic gravitational collapse, 863
- Boyer-Lindquist coordinates
  - metric, 877, 878
  - electromagnetic field tensor, 877, 878
  - vector potential, 898
  - pathology of, at horizon, 880
- Kerr coordinates
  - electromagnetic field tensor, 879
  - metric, 879
  - transformation between Kerr and Boyer-Lindquist coordinates, 879f
- Kerr-Schild coordinates, 903
- stationary observers, 893–894
- locally nonrotating observers, 895–896
- Kerr diagram for, 881
- maximal analytic extension of, 882
- Killing vectors, 879, 892ff
- Killing tensor, 893
- principal null congruences, 901–904

- light cones, 891, 896–897
  - electromagnetic-field structure, 877ff, 883, 892
  - magnetic dipole moment, 883, 892
  - multipole moments of, 883, 892
  - horizon, 879ff
    - null generators of, 903–904
    - area of, 889, 914
    - angular velocity of, 914
  - rotational properties
    - intrinsic angular momentum vector, 891
    - gyromagnetic ratio, 883, 892
    - static limit, 879ff, 894
    - ergosphere, 880
    - dragging of inertial frames, 879ff, 893–896
  - dynamic properties
    - role as endpoint of gravitational collapse, 882–883
    - stability against small perturbations, 884–885
    - change of  $M$ ,  $Q$ ,  $S$  when particles fall into horizon, 904–910, 913
    - reversible and irreversible transformations of, 889–890
    - rotational energy of, 890
    - electromagnetic energy of, 890
    - irreducible mass, 889–890, 913
  - test-particle motion in,
    - super-Hamiltonian for, 897
    - energy-at-infinity, 898–899, 910
    - axial component of angular momentum, 898–899
    - rest-mass of particle, 899
    - Carter's fourth constant of the motion,  $\mathcal{Q}$  or  $\mathcal{K}$ , 899
    - equations of motion in separated form, 899–900, 901
    - Hamilton-Jacobi derivation of
      - equations of motion, 900–901
    - orbits in equatorial plane, 911–912
    - effective potential for equatorial motion, 911
    - binding energy of last stable circular orbit, 885, 911
  - wave propagation in, 914–915
  - Kerr-Schild coordinates, 903
  - Killing vector fields, 650–653
    - associated conservation laws for test-particle motion, 651
    - commutator of is Killing vector, 654
    - eigenvalue problem for finding, 654
    - for flat spacetime, 654
    - for spherically symmetric manifolds, 658
    - for Kerr-Newman geometry, 879, 892ff
  - Killing's equation, 650
  - Killing tensor field, 893n
  - Kinetic theory in curved spacetime
    - in extenso*, 583–590
    - basic laws
      - Liouville's theorem for noninteracting particles in curved spacetime, 584, 586–587, 590
      - collisionless Boltzmann equation (kinetic equation), 587, 590
      - specialized to photons, 587–589
    - basic concepts
      - mass hyperboloid, 585
      - momentum space, 583ff, 590
      - phase space, 584f, 590
      - volume in phase space, 584–587, 590
      - distribution function (number density in phase space) defined, 583f, 590
    - applications, 583
    - elementary expression for pressure, 139–140
    - stress-energy tensor as integral over momentum space, 589f
    - photons, 587ff
    - relativistic star clusters, 679–687
    - computation of optical appearance of a collapsing star, 850
  - Klein-Alfven cosmology, 748, 770
  - Kronecker delta, 22
  - Kruskal diagrams, 528, 834f, 839, 848, 855
  - Kruskal-Szekeres coordinates for Schwarzschild geometry, 828–832
  - metric in, 827
  - relationship to Schwarzschild coordinates, 833–835
- L**
- Lagrangian perturbations, 690–691
  - Lamb-Retherford shift, principal mechanism, 1190
  - Landau-Lifshitz pseudotensor. *See* Pseudotensor
  - Laplace operator, vs. d'Alembertian, 177
  - Lapse function
    - as Lagrange multiplier, 487
    - metric interval as fixed by, 507
    - covariant and contravariant forms of, 507–508
    - award of arbitrariness in, reversed, 532
    - variational principle for, 538
  - Laser ranging to moon, 1048, 1130f
  - Lattice. *See* Clocks; Rods
  - Laws of physics in curved spacetime, 384–393. *See also specific laws, e.g.,* Kinetic theory, Hydrodynamics, Conservation laws
  - Leap second, 28
  - Least action, principle of
    - applied in elementary Hamiltonian mechanics, 125–126
    - related to extremal time, 315–324
  - Lens effect, 589, 795f, 887
  - Levi-Civita tensor
    - in flat spacetime, 87f
    - orientation of, 87f
    - in general basis, 202, 207
    - in spherical coordinates, 206
  - Lie derivative
    - of a vector, 240
    - of a tensor, 517
  - independent of any affine connection, 517
  - Lie groups, 198
  - Lie transport law, 240
  - Light, bending of. *See* Deflection of light.
  - Light cone
    - characterization of advanced and retarded potentials, 122
    - Newton-Cartan vs. Einstein difference, 297
    - See also* Causal relationships
  - Line element. *See* Metric
  - Lines of force
    - relation to honeycomb structure, 102
    - never end, as core of Maxwell's equations, 420
    - diagram for gravitational waves, 1011f
  - Linearized theory of gravity (*same as* Spin-2 theory in flat spacetime)
    - equivalence of the two theories spelled out, 435
    - presentation from spin-2 viewpoint, 179–186
    - presentation as linearized limit of
      - general relativity, Chap. 18, 448–451, 461–464, 944–955
      - sketched, 435
      - bar operation, 436–438
      - field equations, 437–438, 461f
      - formula for metric, 438
      - gauge transformations, 438–441
      - gauge invariance of of Riemann curvature, 438
      - Lorentz gauge, 438, 441
      - global Lorentz transformations, 439
      - curvilinear coordinates, 441
      - effect of gravity on matter and photons, 442–444
    - self-inconsistency of, 180, 186, 443f
    - complete repair of, leads to general relativity, 186, 424f
    - partial repair for slow-motion systems
      - leads to Newtonian and post-Newtonian formalisms, 1073–1078, 1089f
  - applications
    - external field of static spherical body, 438
    - external field of any source, 448–451, 461–464
    - bending of light, redshift, perihelion advance, 183ff, 446
    - gravitational waves, 185f, 442, 444f, 944–955. *See also under* Gravitational waves
  - Liouville's theorem, 584, 586f, 590
  - Local physics is simple physics, 4, 19, 29f
  - Local inertial frame. *See* Inertial frame, local
  - Local Lorentz frame. *See* Lorentz frame, local
  - Locally nonrotating observers, 895–896
  - Lorentz contraction, 48

- Lorentz force law  
 compared equation of geodesic deviation, 35  
 formulated, in flat spacetime, 73  
 energy change associated with, 73  
 double role: defines fields and predicts motions, 71–74  
 in language of forms, 101–104  
 in language of energy-momentum conservation, 155  
 in curved spacetime, 201, 568  
 for a continuous medium, 570  
 derived from Einstein's field equations, 473–475  
 in three languages, 474
- Lorentz frame, local  
 closest to global Lorentz frame, 207  
 mathematical representations of, 217f, 285ff, 314f  
 straight lines are geodesics of curved spacetime, 312–324  
 evidences for acceleration relative to, 327  
 used to analyze redshift experiments, 1056–1060  
*See also* Inertial frame, local
- Lorentz gauge. *See* Gauge transformations and invariance
- Lorentz geometry, global, 19–23  
 contrasted with Euclidean geometry, 51  
 spacetime possesses, if and only if **Riemann** vanishes, 284
- Lorentz group, 242
- Lorentz invariance, experimental tests of, 1054f
- Lorentz transformations, 66–69  
 key points, 67f  
 matrix description of, 66  
 way to remember index positions, 66  
 velocity parameter in, 67  
 boost, 67, 69  
 rotation in a coordinate plane, 67  
 infinitesimal  
 antisymmetric matrix for, 171  
 generator of, 329  
 special case: boost along coordinate axis, 80  
 in spin-matrix language, 1142–1145  
 velocity parameter, 1145  
 post-Newtonian limit of, 1086  
 used to annul Poynting flux, 122  
*See also* Rotations
- Lowering indices. *See* Index manipulations
- Lunar orbit, experimental tests of general relativity using, 1048, 1116, 1119, 1127–1131
- M**
- Machine with slots. *See under* Covariant derivative, Metric, Tensor
- Mach's principle, 490, 543–545  
 acceleration relative to distant stars, 543  
 and York's formulation of initial-value problem, 546
- gives inertia here in terms of mass there, 546  
 and Foucault pendulum, 547  
 and dragging of inertial frames, 547.  
*See also* Dragging of inertial frames  
 dragging analogous to magnetic effect, 548  
 inertial influence of distant stars, 548  
 sum-for-inertia in, 549  
 “flat” space as part of closed space in, 549
- Magnetic flux, from integration of **Faraday**, 99–101
- Magnetic poles, absence of, 80
- Magnetostatics, plus covariance, gives magnetodynamics, 80, 106
- “Magnitude, absolute,” defined, 786
- “Magnitude, apparent,” defined, 782
- Magnitude-redshift relation. *See under* Cosmology, observational probes of standard model
- Manifold, differentiable, 10, 13, 241ff
- Many-fingered time, and arbitrariness in slice through spacetime, 713f, 1184
- Mass  
 active vs. passive. *See* Cavendish  
 gravitational constant  
 center of, 161  
 experimental, finite, as difference between two infinities, 474–475  
 inertial, density of, 159f  
 inertial vs. gravitational, 431, 1051 *See also* Uniqueness of free fall  
 “Mass-energy inside radius  $r$ ,” 602ff, 858f
- Mass-energy, density of. *See* Stress-energy tensor
- Mass-energy, total, of an isolated, gravitating system ( $\equiv$  “active gravitational mass”)  
 defined by rate metric approaches flatness  
*in extenso*, Chap. 19  
 in linearized theory, 448–450  
 in general, 453, 455  
 no meaning of, for closed universe, 457–459  
 as geometric object residing in asymptotically flat spacetime, 453  
 measured via Kepler's 1-2-3 law, 450, 457, 636ff  
 contribution of gravitational field to, 467  
 not localizable in generic case, 466ff  
 precisely localizable only for spherical systems, 603f, 803f  
 localizable to within a wavelength for gravitational waves, 955f, 964ff, 969f  
 conservation law for, 455, 468–471  
*See also under* Energy-momentum
- Mass hyperboloid, 585
- Matter in universe, luminous, mean density of, 710f, 761
- Matrix, inverse, explicit expression for, 161.  
*See also* Jacobian, Determinant
- Maxima, number of, 318
- Maximal analytic extension of a geometry, 882
- Maxwell**, dual 2-form representation of electromagnetic field, introduced, 105.  
*See under* Electromagnetic field
- Maxwell energy density, 140–141
- Maxwell's equations  
 component version in flat spacetime, 80f  
 geometric version, 88–89  
 in language of forms, 112–114  
 solution for particle in an arbitrary state of motion, 121–122  
 in curved spacetime, 391, 568  
 for vector potential, 569  
 deduced from “lines of force end only on charge,” 79–81  
 derived from physics on a spacelike slice, 419–420  
 derived from stress-energy and Einstein field equation, 471–473  
 and conservation of energy-momentum, 483  
 nowhere failing, 1200  
*See also* Electrodynamics, Lorentz force law
- Mean eccentric anomaly, 648
- Measurability of geometry and fields in classical theory, 13
- Measurement, possibilities defined by theory, 1184
- Measuring rods. *See* Rods
- Mercury, perihelion precession of. *See* Perihelion shift
- Meshing of local Lorentz frames, 190–191
- Metric  
 distilled from distances, 306–309  
 descriptions  
 summarized, 77, 305, 310f  
 as machine with slots, 22, 51–53, 77, 305, 310f  
 in component language, 77, 310f  
 in terms of basis 1-forms, 77, 310  
 as line element, 77, 305, 310  
 introduced and defined, 22  
 components of  
 in arbitrary basis, 201, 310f  
 in Euclidean coordinates, 22  
 in Lorentz coordinates, 22, 53  
 determinant of components  
 defined, 202  
 differentiated, gives contraction of connection coefficients, 222  
 variation of, 503  
 computation of connection coefficients  
 from, 210, 216  
 compatibility with covariant derivative, 313ff, 353f  
 structure, and symplectic structure, 126  
 enters electromagnetism only in concept of duality, 105, 114  
 role in spacetime of general relativity  
 measured by light signals and free particles, 324



- as “gravitational field,” 399–400
  - test for local Lorentz character, 311–312
  - components not all predicted by geometrodynamics law, 409
  - role in Newton-Cartan spacetime, 300, 302
  - coefficients in specific manifolds and frames. *See specific manifolds, e.g., Sphere, 3-dimensional; Schwarzschild geometry, or coordinate systems, e.g., Kerr-Schild coordinates*
  - Metric elasticity of space, 426–428
  - Metric theories of gravity, 1067ff
    - experiments to test whether the correct theory is metric, Chap. 38, 1067
    - PPN formalism as approximation to, 1069
  - Microwave radiation. *See Cosmic microwave radiation.*
  - Minima, number of, 318
  - Minkowski geometry. *See Lorentz geometry*
  - Missing matter, “mystery of,” 710. *See also under Cosmology*
  - Mixmaster universe, 805–814.
  - Mixmaster oscillations damp chaos, 769
  - Möbius strip, 96
  - Moment of inertia tensor defined, 977
  - Moment of rotation
    - as meaning of Einstein curvature, 373–377
    - conservation of, 378ff, 473
  - “Moment of time” means “spacelike hypersurface,” 713–714, 1184
  - Momentum, in mechanics, as space rate of change of action, 486–487
  - Momentum field, electromagnetic, 497f, 524
  - Momentum space, 583ff, 590
  - Momentum vector. *See Energy-momentum 4-vector*
  - Moon
    - effect on tides, 44
    - shadow on Earth, 24–26
    - laser ranging to, 1048, 1130f
    - orbit of, tests of general relativity using, 1048, 1116, 1119, 1127–1131
    - separation from Earth as gravitational-wave detector, 1013f, 1018
  - Morse theory, 318
  - Mössbauer effect, 63, 1056, 1057
  - Motion. *See Equations of motion*
  - Moving frame. *See Tetrad*
  - Multicomponent fluid, 558
  - Multipole expansion of Newtonian potential, 991
  - Multipole moments of Kerr-Newman black hole, 883, 892
- N**
- Near zone for radiation theory, 997, 999–1000
  - Neutral stability, 697
  - “Neutral relationship to.” *See Causal relationships*
  - Neutrinos
    - emitted in stellar collapse, 599
    - transport energy in collapsing star, 628
    - redshift when emitted by a collapsing star, 850
    - from big-bang, 712, 736–737, 764–765
    - damp anisotropy of expansion, 803
    - formalism for analyzing in curved spacetime, 1164
  - Neutron-star matter, 599
    - idealized as simple fluid, 558
    - equations of state for, 624–626
  - Neutron stars, 619f, 622
    - models for, 625–627
    - mass limits, 627
    - rotation of, 628
      - as source of gravitational waves, 983, 986, 1040
    - pulsation of, 628
      - as source of gravitational waves, 982–986
    - stability of 626–627, 696
    - creation by stellar collapse, 627–629
  - Newman-Penrose constants, 870f
  - Newton-Cartan theory of gravity
    - contrasted with Einstein’s theory, 3ff, 197, 245, 297f, 302f
    - incompatibility with special relativity, 177, 304
    - standard Newtonian formulation of in brief, 177, 301
    - as approximation to general relativity, 412–416
    - as approximation to metric theories of gravity, 1077f, 1097
    - useful formulas and computational techniques, 1078f
    - virial theorems, 1079
    - stress tensor for Newtonian gravitational field, 1078f
  - Cartan’s curved-spacetime formulation of in *extenso*, Chap. 12
    - in brief, in language of Galilean coordinates, 289f
    - in brief, in coordinate-free language, 300f
    - transition between languages, 298f
    - transition between Newton formulation and Cartan formulation, 289f, 299
  - Noise, extraction of signals from, 1036ff. *See also Gravitational-wave detectors*
  - Nonlocalizability of gravitational energy. *See under Mass-energy, total; Energy-momentum; Pseudotensor*
  - Nonorientable surface, 96
  - Nordström’s theories of gravity. *See under Gravitation, theories of*
  - Nordtvedt effect, 1128–1131
  - Norm of a  $p$ -form, 97
  - Normal, unit normal in terms of lapse and shift, 508
  - Normal coordinate system, 1055
  - Nothing, as foundation of everything
    - Leibniz on, 1219
    - geometrodynamics as early model for, 1202–1203
    - calculus of propositions as a later model for, 1209, 1211–1212
  - Novikov coordinates, 826f
  - Nuclear burning in stars
    - drives pulsational instability, 632
    - HCNO cycle, 632
    - catalyzed to endpoint, 624–626
    - formulation of thermodynamics in presence of, 558
  - Number-flux vector
    - introduced, 138–139
    - for photons in geometric optics limit, 580
  - Number-flux relation, in cosmology, 798
  - Number space, 241
  - Nuclear matter. *See Neutron-star matter*
  - Nucleosynthesis in big bang, 760, 762
  - Null experiments, 1050, 1064
- O**
- Observational cosmology, Chap. 29. *See under Cosmology*
  - One-form. *See under Forms, differential*
  - Optics. *See Geometric optics*
  - Olber’s paradox, 756
  - Oppenheimer-Volkoff equation of hydrostatic equilibrium, 605
  - Oppenheimer-Snyder model for collapsing star, 851–856
  - Orbit. *See Keplerian orbits. Planetary orbits. See also geometry in which the orbits occur, e.g., Schwarzschild geometry*
  - Orientation
    - of space, embodied in duality operation, 97
    - of forms
      - 1-form, illustrated, 55
      - 2-form, illustrated, 100, 104, 107, 109, 116
      - 3-form, 117
    - of volumes, 133, 135f, 147–150
    - relative, of domain and its boundary, 96
- P**
- Pair production
    - by photon, 70
    - at high temperatures, 558
    - by tidal gravitational forces, 750, 769, 803f, 816
    - damps anisotropies of geometry, 769, 803f
  - Pairs
    - free-fall of, experimental test, 1051
    - in early stages of standard cosmological model, 736f, 764



- Parallax, 757
- Parallel transport  
in brief, 208f  
*in extenso*, 245–263  
equation of, summarized, 224  
illustrated, 209, 212  
*See also* Fermi-Walker transport
- Parallelepiped, trivector and 1-form  
representation of, 133, 135–136
- Parametrization, of geodesic, 244–246
- Parametrized post-Newtonian formalism  
history of, 1049, 1073  
described qualitatively, 1049, 1068f, 1072f  
summary of technical details, 1092  
notation, 1073f, 1092f  
accuracy and realm of validity, 1069, 1072f, 1075  
metric theories encompassed by and not encompassed by, 1069
- parameters  
described qualitatively, 1069, 1072  
defined precisely, 1080f  
translated from one convention to another, 1093  
values for several theories, 1072
- parameters, experimental limits on  
 $\gamma$ , 1103, 1105, 1108f  
 $\beta$ , 1111, 1113  
 $\alpha_3 = 4\beta, -2\gamma - 2 - \zeta$ , 1114  
 $\alpha_2 - \Delta_2 + \zeta - 1$ , 1124  
 $\alpha_3 = 4\beta, -2\gamma - 2 - \zeta$ , 1125
- foundations of  
coordinates of, 1073f, 1082–1087, 1089, 1091, 1097  
expansion parameters and their magnitudes in the solar system, 1068, 1075  
radiation zone excluded from, 1075  
time derivatives small compared to space derivatives, 1075  
shear stresses typically negligible, 1074f  
expansion procedure, 1075ff  
metric coefficients, pattern of, 1076f, 1080, 1100
- description of matter  
thermodynamic functions in, 1074f  
velocity of matter, 1073f, 1086  
transformation between coordinate frame and rest frame of matter, 1087  
stress-energy tensor, 1086f
- matter generates gravity  
gravitational potentials (functions appearing in metric), 1080f, 1085  
nonlinear superposition of gravitational fields, 1096  
identities relating potentials to each other, 1082, 1089  
metric coefficients, precise form of, 1084f  
Christoffel symbols, 1089  
equations of motion for matter, 1087ff  
baryon (rest mass) conservation, 1088  
energy conservation law, 1088
- Euler equation, 1088
- post-Galilean transformations, and invariance, 1085
- velocity of coordinate frame relative to universal preferred frame, 1083f, 1098, 1114
- applications of  
total mass-energy of a body calculated, 1091, 1094, 1099, 1125f  
gravitational field of isolated, spherical sun, 1097ff  
gravitational field of sun with quadrupole moment, 1115  
gravitational field of rotating Earth, 1119  
why high-speed particle motion probes only the parameter  $\gamma$ , 1099ff  
propagation of light and radio waves, 1099–1109  
deflection of electromagnetic waves by sun, 1101ff  
radar time-delay in sun's gravitational field, 1103, 1106–1109  
many-body (“EIH”) equations of motion, 1091, 1094f  
equation of motion for a spinning body, 1120f  
perihelion shift, 1110–1116  
three-body effects in lunar orbit, 1116  
precession of a gyroscope, 1117–1120  
Cavendish gravitational constant derived, 1125f
- Partial differential equations,  
applications of differential geometry to, 198  
rationale of analyzing, 485
- Particle-physics experiments as tests of special relativity, 1054f, 1060. *See also* *under* Conservation laws.
- Particles. *See* Pairs; Conservation laws
- Passive vs. active transformations, 1140
- “Past of.” *See* Causal relationships
- Path integral. *See* Feynman's sum over histories
- Pauli principle, as test of Riemannian geometry, 398–399
- “Peeling theorem,” in radiation theory, 1165
- Perfect cosmological principle, 745
- Perfect fluid  
defined, 132, 140  
stress-energy tensor for, 132, 140  
*See also* Hydrodynamics
- Perihelion shift, 391f  
for nearly circular orbits in exact Schwarzschild geometry, 670  
in post-Newtonian limit of general relativity, 1110–1116  
in PPN formalism, 1110–1116  
in linearized (spin-2) theory, 183f, 446  
in spin-0 and spin-1 theories of gravity, 179  
observational data on, 1112f  
Einstein on, 433
- Permutation tensor (*same as* alternating tensor), 126, 128f, 207, 343
- Perturbation theory for spacetime geometry  
general formalism  
connection coefficients in terms of metric perturbation, 966–967  
curvature tensors in terms of metric perturbations, 966–967  
action principle for metric perturbations, in vacuum, 972f  
gauge transformations, 967ff  
stress-energy of metric perturbations in shortwave limit, 969
- applications  
shortwave approximation for gravitational waves, 964–973  
pulsation of relativistic stars, 688–699  
slow rotation of a star, 699  
to Friedmann cosmology, 800f  
to collapsing star, 844ff  
stability analyses of Schwarzschild and Kerr holes, 884f
- Petrov-Pirani classification of spacetimes, 902
- Phase, of de Broglie wave, 53–55
- Phase, in geometric optics, 571f, 574f
- Phase space, 126, 584f, 590
- Photons  
splitting, forbidden for plane wave, 70  
world lines of, 388  
kinetic-theory description of, 587–589  
in geometric optics, 580
- Physical optics, correspondence with geometric optics, 412
- Piercing of surfaces, of a form. 55f, 60, 99, 202, 231
- Piezoelectric strain transducer, 401
- Pit in the potential, 636–637
- Planck length  
defined, 10  
relevance to fluctuations in geometry, 10, 1180, 1192ff
- Plane electromagnetic waves in curved spacetime, 961–962
- Plane gravitational waves, exact  
form of metric, 957  
field equations and solution for a pulse of waves, 958–959  
linearized limit of, 958  
Riemann curvature of, 959  
global structure of spacetime, 958–960  
effect on test particles, 960–961  
comparison with exact electromagnetic plane wave, 961–963  
stress-energy of, 963  
in language of shortwave approximation, 962–963
- Plane gravitational waves in linearized theory, 945f, 949, 1004ff
- Planetary orbits  
periodic relativistic effects in, 1009, 1011  
deviations from geodesic motion, 1111, 1126–1131  
*See also* Keplerian orbits, Perihelion shift

- Plateau, problem of, 877  
Poincaré transformation, 68  
Positive sense. *See* Orientation  
Poisson bracket, 654  
    generalized, 486  
Poisson's equation for Newtonian  
    gravitational potential, 290, 299, 301  
Polarization of a gravitational wave  
    tensors defined 953f, 971  
    plane (linear), 952f  
    circular, 953f  
    elliptical, 955  
    compared with that of an electromagnetic  
        wave, 952–954  
    rotational transformation of states, 954  
    parallel transport of, in geometric-optics  
        limit, 971  
    line-of-force diagram, 1011–1012  
Polarization of a neutrino, 954  
Polarization of radiation fields with  
    arbitrary spin, 954–955  
Polarization vector for electromagnetic  
    waves, 573ff, 577f, 581  
Post-Galilean transformations, 1085  
Post-Newtonian approximation to general  
    relativity, 1069  
    obtained from PPN formalism, 1073  
    derived by post-Newtonian expansion of  
        field equations, 1089f  
    stellar structure and stability analyzed  
        using, 1073  
    many-body (“EIH”) equations of motion,  
        1091, 1094f  
    *See also* Parametrized post-Newtonian  
        formalism  
Post-Newtonian expansion procedure,  
    1075ff. *See also* Parametrized  
        post-Newtonian formalism.  
Post-post-Newtonian approximation, 1069,  
    1077  
Post<sup>5/2</sup>-Newtonian approximation and its  
    relationship to radiation damping, 1077  
Potentials, effective. *See* Effective potentials  
Pound-Rebka-Snider experiment, 1056ff  
Poynting flux, 122, 140f, 481, 550  
Precession  
    of perihelion. *See* Perihelion  
    of spin axis. *See under* Spinning body  
Precession component, of Einstein field, 547  
Preferred-frame theories of gravity, 1083,  
    1093, 1098, 1123ff  
Preferred-frame effects, experiments to  
    search for, 1098, 1113f  
Pregeometry, 1203–1212 *passim*  
    as calculus of propositions, 1208–1209,  
        1211–1212  
Pressure, in stress-energy tensor for a  
    perfect fluid, 132  
Price's theorem, 863, 866  
Primordial fireball. *See* Cosmic microwave  
    radiation  
Principal null congruences of Weyl tensor  
    defined, 902  
    for Kerr-Newman geometry, 901–904  
Prior geometry, 429ff, 1068, 1070f  
Probability amplitude  
    for a history, 419  
    phase of, given by action, 486, 491  
Projection operator for transverse-traceless  
    part of a tensor, 948  
Projection tensors, 565f  
Propagator, mentioned, 120  
Proper distance. *See* Interval, Lorentz  
Proper reference frame of an accelerated  
    (or unaccelerated) observer  
    constructed, 327–332  
    metric, 331f  
    connection coefficients, 330f  
    inertial and Coriolis forces, 332  
    applied to definition of thermodynamic  
        potentials, 557f  
    applied to analysis of gravitational-wave  
        detector, 1005–1010, 1012  
Proper time. *See* Interval, Lorentz  
Pseudotensors of stress-energy for  
    gravitational field, 465f  
    do not localize gravitational energy, 466f  
    order of magnitude of, 996, 999f  
    used in analyzing generation of  
        gravitational waves, 996–999  
    for waves, averaging gives stress-energy  
        tensor, 972  
Pulsars  
    discovery of, 620, 762  
    theory of, 628, 630  
    timing data as a probe of neutron-star  
        structure, 628, 630  
    experimental tests of general relativity  
        using, 1047  
    in idealized experiment on “prior  
        geometry,” 430  
    *See also* Neutron stars  
**Q**  
*Q* of an oscillator, 1025  
Quadrupole-moment parameter for sun,  $J_2$ ,  
    1112f, 1115  
Quadrupole moment, 977  
    coupling to curvature produces  
        departures from geodesic motion,  
            476–480  
    precession of spin axis, 391f  
    reduced, 977  
        as integral over mass distribution, 975,  
            977  
        as trace-free part of second moment of  
            mass distribution, 977  
        as coefficient in  $1/r$  expansion of  
            Newtonian potential, 991  
        and generation of gravitational waves,  
            975, 991–994  
Quantum fluctuations  
    in electromagnetic field, 427, 1190f  
    in geometry of spacetime, 419, 480,  
        1190–1194, 1202  
    and zero-point energy of particles and  
        fields, as responsible for gravity,  
            426ff  
Quantum geometrodynamics  
    commutation of observables in, on  
        spacelike hypersurface, 554  
    ideas of Penrose and Hawking on, 936,  
        938, 940  
    *See also* Pair production, Quantum  
        fluctuations  
Quantum theory  
    angular momentum commutators, 236  
    general operators, 236  
    correspondence principle, 413  
    particle self-energies, 474f  
Quantum propagator, 1194  
Quasars, 761f  
    distances to, controversy over, 767  
    evolution of population, 767f, 770  
    models for energy source, 634–635, 687  
    use in experimental tests of general  
        relativity, 1047f, 1061, 1101, 1103ff  
Quaternions. *See* Spin matrices  
**R**  
Radiation, description of spectrum, 588  
    specific intensity  $I_\nu$  defined, 587, 589  
    specific flux  $F_\nu$  defined, 1025  
    flux  $F$  defined, 782  
    conservation of  $I_\nu/\nu^3$  (Liouville's  
        theorem), 587–588  
    redshift of temperature of black-body  
        radiation, 588  
Radiation, electromagnetic  
    pictorial explanation of  $1/r$  behavior,  
        110f  
    and causality, 110  
    of oscillating dipole, 111–112  
Radiation, gravitational. *See* Gravitational  
    waves  
Radiation reaction, 474, 993f  
Radiation zone, 997  
Radar time delay in Sun's gravitational  
    field, 1048, 1103, *esp.* 1106–1109  
Radio sources, cosmic, 759–762  
    isotropy on sky, 703  
    *See also* Quasars  
Radius of closed Friedmann universe, 704f  
Raising indices. *See* Index manipulations  
Rays, in geometric optics, 573ff, 581f  
Redshift, cosmological  
    independent of wavelength, 775  
    “tired light” does not explain, 775  
    derivations  
        from standing waves, 776  
        from wave-crest emission, propagation,  
            and reception, 777f  
        using symmetry-induced constant of  
            geodesic motion, 777, 780  
    used to characterize distances and times  
        in universe, 779  
    contrasted with Doppler shift, 794  
    of particle energies and de Broglie waves,  
        780

- Redshift (*continued*)  
of cosmic microwave radiation, 764–765, 779  
in anisotropic cosmology, 801  
*See also under* Cosmology
- Redshift  
Doppler, 63f, 794  
due to “ether drift,” 1064f  
of radiation from a collapsing star, 847, 849f, 872
- Redshift, gravitational, for gravitational waves, 956f, 968
- Redshift, gravitational, for photons  
compared with 1970 clock technology, 1048  
experimental results, 1058, 1060  
Pound-Rebka-Snider experiment, 1056–1058  
in solar spectrum, 1058–1060  
equivalence principle tested by, 189f, 1056  
geodesic motion tested by, 1055–1060  
implies spacetime is curved, 187–189  
derivation  
from energy conservation, 187  
from geodesic equation in generic static metric, 657, 659  
in linearized theory, 446f
- Redshift, gravitational, for temperature, 568, 685
- Redshift parameter,  $z$ , defined, 187
- Regge-Wheeler radial coordinate, *See* Tortoise coordinate
- Reference system. *See* Coordinate system, Inertial frame, Lorentz frame, Proper reference frame
- Regge calculus,  
surveyed, Chap. 42  
suitable for low-symmetry  
  geometrodynamics, 1166  
geometry determined by lengths, 1167  
simplexes and deficit angles, 1167–1169  
skeleton geometry, 1169  
hinges, 1169  
continuum limit of, 1169  
blocks associated with one hinge, 1170  
variational principle for  
  geometrodynamics, 1170  
flow diagram for, 1171–1172  
initial-value data in, 1172  
Einstein’s geometrodynamics law,  
  expressed in, 1173  
choice of lattice structure, 1173–1177  
supplementary vertices in, 1176  
facing, packing, and right-through blocks, 1176  
count of faces, 1177  
choice of edge lengths, 1177–1178  
applications and future of, 1178–1179
- Reissner-Nordström geometry  
derivation of metric, 840–841  
Kruskal-like coordinates for, 841  
coordinates with infinity conformally transformed, 920
- global structure of, 920–921  
throat for  $Q = M$  identical to  
  Bertotti-Robinson universe, 845  
uniqueness of (Birkhoff-type theorem), 844ff  
  as limiting case of Kerr-Newman, 878
- Reversible and irreversible transformations  
in black-hole physics, 889f
- Relative acceleration. *See* Geodesic deviation
- Relativity. *See* Special relativity; General relativity
- Renormalization of zero-point energy of particles and fields, 426ff
- “Reprocessing” of universe, 1209, 1213–1217
- Retarded fields and radiation reaction, 474
- Retarded potential, 121
- Ricci curvature. *See under* Curvature, formalism of
- Ricci rotation coefficients. *See* Connection coefficients
- Ricci rotation 1-forms. *See* Rotation 1-forms.
- Riemann.** *See under* Curvature, formalism of
- Riemann normal coordinates, 285ff, 480–486
- Riemannian geometry  
characterized, 242, 304f  
track-1 treatment of, Chap. 8  
track-2 treatment of, Chap. 13  
Riemann’s founding of, 220  
of apple, is locally Euclidean, 19–21  
of spacetime, is locally Lorentzian, 19–23  
*See also specific concepts, such as* Metric, Connection
- Robertson-Walker line element, 722, 759
- Rods, 301, 393, 396–399
- Roll-Krotkov-Dicke experiment. *See* Eötvös-Dicke experiments
- Rotation  
as stabilizer of stars, 633f  
rigid-body, 123f  
of universe, limits on, 939
- “Rotation”  
of a field of 1-forms, 123f  
of a field of 4-velocities, 566  
of rays, in spinor language, 1165
- Rotation group,  $SO(3)$ , manifold of generators, 242–243, 264  
structure constants, 243, 332  
geodesics and connection, 264, 332  
Riemann curvature, 288  
metric, 332  
isometric to 3-sphere, 725  
used in constructing mixmaster cosmological model, 807
- Rotation matrices. *See* Spin matrices
- Rotation 1-forms  $\omega^\mu$ , 350–354, 360  
matrix notation for, 359  
*See also* Covariant derivative, Connection coefficients
- Rotation operators. *See* Spin matrices
- Rotations  
in coordinate plane, 67  
composition of, 1135–1138  
Rodrigues formula, 1137  
represented as two reflections, 1137ff  
half-angles arise from reflections, 1137  
infinitesimal, 170f, 1140ff
- Rutherford scattering, 647, 669  
relativistic corrections to, 669f
- S**
- Saddle points, number of, 318
- Sakharov view of gravitation, 426–428
- Scalar field  
stress-energy tensor, 483  
equation of motion, from Einstein’s field equation, 483  
propagation in Schwarzschild geometry, 863, 868ff
- Scalar product of vectors, 22, 52f, 62
- Scalar-tensor theories of gravity. *See under* Gravitation, theories of
- Schild’s argument for curvature, 187–189
- Schild’s ladder,  
described, 249  
applications, 251–253, 258, 263, 268, 278
- Schwarzschild coordinates  
for any static, spherical system, 597  
for Schwarzschild geometry, 607  
pathology at gravitational radius, 11, 823–826  
for a pulsating star, 689
- Schwarzschild geometry, 822  
*in extenso*, Chaps. 25, 31  
as limiting case of Kerr-Newman, 878  
Birkhoff’s theorem for, 843–844  
derivation from  
  full field equations, 607  
  initial-value equation, 538  
coordinate systems and reference frames  
  Schwarzschild coordinates, 607, 823–826  
  isotropic coordinates, 840  
  Novikov coordinates, 826–827  
  ingoing Eddington-Finkelstein coordinates, 312, 828f, 849  
  outgoing Eddington-Finkelstein coordinates, 829ff  
Kruskal-Szekeres coordinates, 827, 831–836. *See also*  
  Kruskal-Szekeres coordinates  
  tortoise coordinate, 663, 665f  
  coordinates with infinity conformally transformed, 919f  
  orthonormal frames, 821f  
  Riemann curvature, 821ff  
  structure and evolution  
    Einstein-Rosen bridge (wormhole), 837ff, 842f  
  topology, 838ff  
  not static inside gravitational radius, 838  
  evolution, 838ff, 842



- embedding diagrams, 528, 837, 839
- diagram of causal structure, 920
- singularities. *See* Singularities of Schwarzschild geometry
- singularities at  $r = 0$ . *See under* Singularities.
- explored by radially infalling observer, 820–823
- destruction of all particles that fall inside gravitational radius, 836, 839, 860–862
- test-particle motion in
  - in extenso*, Chap. 25
  - analyzed using Hamilton-Jacobi theory, 649
  - analyzed using symmetry-induced constants of the motion, 656–672
  - orbit lies in a “plane,” 645f, 655
  - conserved quantities for, 656
  - angular momentum, 656ff
  - energy-at-infinity, 656ff
  - effective potential for radial part of motion, 639, 656, 659–662
  - qualitative description of orbits, 662
  - radial orbits, details of, 663–668, 820–823, 824–826, 835
  - nonradial orbits, details of, 668
  - circular orbits, stability of, 662
  - binding energy of last stable circular orbit, 885, 911
  - periastron shift for nearly circular orbits, 670
  - scattering cross section, 669f
  - deflection angle, 671
- photon motion in
  - shape of orbit, 673, 677
  - effective potential for radial part of motion, 673f, 676
  - qualitative description of, 674f
  - impact parameter, 672
  - critical impact parameter for capture, 673
- escape versus capture as a function of propagation direction, 675
- scattering cross section, 676–679
- capture cross section, 679
- wave propagation in
  - effective potentials for, 868, 870
  - scalar field, analyzed in detail, 863, 868ff
- electromagnetic field, Newman-Penrose constants, 870f
- fields of zero rest mass, integer spin, 866
- Dirac equation in, 1164
- perturbations of
  - high-frequency, analyzed by geometric optics, 640
  - wave equations for, related to Hamilton-Jacobi equation, 640
  - stability against small, 884
- applications
  - as external field of a static star, 607
  - as exterior of a collapsing star, 846–850
  - matched to Friedmann geometry to produce model for collapsing star, 851ff
  - many Schwarzschild solutions joined in lattice to form closed universe, 739f
- Schwarzschild lattice universe, 739f
- Schwarzschild radius. *See* Gravitational radius
- Schwarzschild surface. *See* Gravitational radius
- Schwarzschild’s uniform-density stellar model, 609–612
- Second, changing definitions of, 23–29
- Second law of black-hole dynamics, 931ff
  - formulated with assumptions ignored, 889, 891
  - reversible and irreversible transformations, 889f, 907–910, 913
  - used to place limits on gravitational waves from hole-hole collisions, 886
- Second law of thermodynamics, 563, 567f
- Second moment of mass distribution, defined, 977
- Selector parameter
  - defined, 265–266
  - used in analysis of geodesic deviation, Chap. 11
- “Self-energy,” infinite, 474
- “Self-force,” 474
- Semicolon notation for covariant derivative, 210
- Semimajor axis of an elliptic orbit, 647
- “Sense.” *See* Orientation
- Separation vector, 29ff, 218f, 265–270
- “Shear”
  - of a congruence of world lines, 566
  - of a bundle of null rays, 582
  - in spinor language, 1165
- Shear stress
  - idealized away for perfect fluid, 140
  - produced by viscosity, 567
  - in PPN formalism, 1074, 1075n
- Shell crossing, 859
- Shift function
  - as Lagrange multiplier, 487
  - metric interval as fixed by, 507
  - covariant and contravariant forms of, 507f
  - award of arbitrariness in, reversed, 532
  - two variational principles for, 538
- Shock waves
  - hydrodynamic, 559, 564, 628
  - in spacetime curvature, 554
- Signature, of metric, 311
- Simple fluid, defined, 558
- Simplex, 307, 380f, 1167ff
- Simultaneity
  - in Newton, Minkowskii, and Einstein spacetime, 296
  - as term for spacelike slice. *See* Spacelike slice
- Singularities, coordinate, 10–12
  - illustrated by Schwarzschild coordinates, 11, 823ff
- Singularities in geometry of spacetime
  - definitions of, 934
  - theorems on creation of, 934ff, 936, 938, 762
  - structures of, 935, 940, 804ff
  - cosmic censorship vs. naked singularities, 937
  - in Schwarzschild geometry, and evolution of the geometry, 838f
  - remote possibility that infalling objects might destroy, 840
  - and spherical gravitational collapse of a star, 846, 860ff
- Mixmaster, 805–813
  - is generic, 806, 940
  - changing standards of time near, 813f
  - initial, of the universe, 769f
  - what “preceded” it? 769f
  - prospects for understanding, 707
  - should one worry about singularities? Misner’s viewpoint, 813f
  - Thorne’s neutrality
  - Wheeler’s viewpoint, 1196ff
  - unphysical, due to overidealization
  - surface layers, 552–556
  - shell crossings, 859
- Signals, extraction of from noise, 1036–1038
- Size
  - related to angular momentum, 162
  - of accelerated frame, 168f
- Skeleton geometry, 309, 1169
- Skeleton history, 499
- Slicing of spacetime, 506. *See also* Spacelike slice
- “Slot” in machine concept of tensor. *See* Tensor
- Solar system, 752–756
  - ephemeris for (J.P.L.), 1095, 1097
  - relativistic effects in, magnitude of, 1048, 1068
  - Nordtved effect in, 1128
  - See also* Earth, Moon, Planetary orbits, Sun, Experimental tests of general relativity
- Space
  - Newtonian absolute, 19, 40, 291f
  - foamlike structure and quantum fluctuations, 1204
  - not spacetime, as the dynamic object, 1181
  - See also* Manifold, Differential geometry, Differential topology, Affine geometry, Riemannian geometry
- Space theory of matter, 1202–1205
- Source counts in cosmology, 798
- Spacecraft, used to test general relativity, 1108f, 1114
- “Spacelike relationship to.” *See* Causal relationships
- Spacelike slice
  - as “moment of time” in spacetime, 713f
  - as the dynamic object in superspace, 423f, 1181
  - geometrodynamics and electrodynamics derived from physics on, 419–423



- Spacelike slice (*continued*)  
*See also* Embedding diagrams, Initial value, Three-geometries
- Spacetime geometry  
 Newtonian. *See* Newton-Cartan theory of gravity.  
 Minkowskiian (Lorentz). *See* Lorentz geometry  
 Einsteinian  
   modeled by apple, 4  
   Riemannian character tested by stability of Earth, 398f  
   curvature of, implied by gravitational red shift, 187ff  
   stratification denied by locally Lorentz character of physics, 304f  
   viewed as a “gravitational field,” 399f  
   as dynamic participant in physics, 337  
   response to matter, as heart of general relativity, 404  
   as classical approximation, 1181f  
   as classical leaf slicing through superspace, 1184  
   *See also* General Relativity, Geometrodynamics, Curvature of spacetime  
 Newtonian, Minkowskiian, and Einsteinian, compared and contrasted, 296, 437
- Special relativity  
   briefly outlined, 47–48  
   spelled out, Chaps. 2–6  
   does not take in gravitation, Chap. 7  
   local validity as central feature of curved spacetime, 304f  
   *See also specific concepts, e.g.,*  
     Electromagnetic field, Lorentz transformations
- Specific intensity, defined, 587, 589
- Specific flux, defined, 1025
- Sphere, 2-dimensional ( $S^2$ )  
   two coordinate patches to cover, 12  
   topology of, 241f  
   metric on, 340  
   Riemann tensor of, 341
- Sphere, 3-dimensional ( $S^3$ )  
   volume of, 724  
   hyperspherical coordinates and metric for, 723f  
   Riemann curvature tensor, 721  
   embedding diagram, 723  
   compared with spheres of lower dimensionality, 704  
   isometric to manifold of rotation group, 725
- Spherical symmetry, Killing vectors for, 658
- Spherical systems, static  
   Schwarzschild coordinates for, 594–597  
   isotropic coordinates for, 595  
   orthonormal frames for, 598  
   rigorous derivation of line element, 616f  
   curvature tensors for, 360f
- Spherical systems, dynamic  
   Schwarzschild coordinates for, 616f, 689  
   curvature tensors for, 361f  
   Birkhoff’s theorem for, 883f
- Spin, as nonclassical two-valuedness, 1204
- Spin matrices  
   in law of combination of rotations, 1136  
   as quaternions or rotation operators, 1136  
   Hermitian conjugate of, 1138  
   algebraic properties, 1137–1142  
   and 3-vectors, 1140f  
   and 4-vectors, 1142f  
   associated spin matrices, 1152f  
   multiplication law for, 1153
- Spinning body  
   equation of motion for, 1120f  
   transport law for spin  
     Fermi-Walker, in absence of curvature coupling, 165, 176f, 1117  
     modified by curvature coupling, 391f  
   spin precessions  
     “general,” 391f  
     Thomas, 175f, 1118, 1145ff  
     frame-dragging, 1119f  
     due to space curvature (“geodetic”), 1119f
- Spin-down of black holes, 886
- Spinors  
   general account, Chap. 41  
   and orientation-entanglement relation, 1148ff  
   defined by their law of transformation, 1148ff  
   conjugate complex, 1150  
   with dotted indices, 1150  
   correspondence with vectors, 1150ff  
   of higher rank, 1151  
   algebra of, 1151–1155  
   spinor equivalent of tensors, 1153f  
   spin space and basis spinors, 1156  
   flagpole plus flag plus  
     orientation-entanglement relation, 1157–1160  
   in curved spacetime, 1164  
   analyze appearance of night sky, 1160–1164  
   as tool in gravitation theory, 1164f
- Standard candle, 789
- Standard hot big-bang cosmological model.  
*See under* Cosmology
- Star clusters, relativistic, 621, 635  
   creation by evolution of a galactic nucleus, 634  
   analysis of structure, 679–683  
   equations of structure summarized, 683f  
   relativistic instability in, 621, 686f  
   collapse of, 884  
   possible roles in quasars and galactic nuclei, 634, 687  
   specific models  
     with purely circular orbits, 683  
     self-similar, 683  
     isotropic, 683f  
     isothermal, spherical, 685ff
- Star operations. *See* Duality
- Starquake, 628
- Stars, evolution into final state, 621, 624, 627–629
- Stars, Newtonian  
   equations of structure, 601–602, 605ff  
   gravitational energy, 606–607  
   uniform-density model, 609  
   pulsation theory  
     dynamical analysis, 697f  
     virial-theorem analysis, 1079f  
     volume-averaged analysis, 630f
- Stars, relativistic, nonrotating  
   structure  
     *in extenso*, Chaps. 23, 24  
     equations of structure summarized, 608–609, 689  
     must be spherical, 593  
     Schwarzschild coordinate system, 597  
     isotropic coordinate system, 595  
     curvature tensors for, 360f  
     Newtonian limit of gravitational potentials, 595  
     parameters describing matter, 597–600  
     proper reference frame of fluid, 598  
     equations of structure derived, 600–606  
     Newtonian limit of equations of structure, 601–602, 605ff  
     mass-energy inside radius  $r$ , 602ff  
     must have  $2m/r < 1$ , 605, 612f, 615  
     total number of baryons, 606  
     external gravitational field. *See* Schwarzschild geometry.  
     monotonicity of  $r$ , 612–613, 615  
     embedding diagrams for, 613–615, 617
- specific models  
   how to construct, 608f  
   Schwarzschild’s uniform-density model, 609–612  
   Fermi-gas model with  $\rho_c = \infty$ , 615ff  
   numerical models for white dwarfs and neutron stars, 625ff, 696
- radial pulsation of  
   dynamic analysis, 688–699  
   boundary conditions for, 694  
   eigenvalue problem for normal modes, 695f  
   Newtonian limit, 697f  
   post-Newtonian limit, 698f, 1080
- stability of  
   critical adiabatic index for radial pulsations, 697ff  
   pulsational instability in massive stars, 632  
   relativistic instability, 605, 697ff  
   *See also under* White-dwarf stars, Neutron stars, Supermassive stars
- collapse of. *See* Collapse, Gravitational nonradial pulsation of, 984f
- Stars, relativistic, rotating  
   slowly rotating, spherical stars, 699  
   rapidly rotating disks, 621  
   stabilizing effects of rotation, 633f
- Stars. *See also* Binary stars, Cepheid variable stars, Neutron stars, Supermassive stars, White dwarfs

- Static limit, 879ff, 894
- Stationary gravitational field  
  hydrostatic equilibrium in, 566  
  thermal equilibrium in, 568
- Steady coordinates, 964
- “Steady flux of waves,” defined, 1019
- Steady-state cosmology, 745, 750, 770
- Stokes theorem, generalized, 96f, 127  
  content in pictures, 117  
  Gauss’s theorem as special case, 97, 150f  
  applications, 96f, 125, 378
- Stress. *See* Stress-energy tensor
- Stress-energy pseudotensor. *See* Pseudotensor
- Stress-energy tensor  
  summarized, 131–132  
  *in extenso*, Chap. 5  
  as machine to reveal energy density, momentum density, and stress, 131f  
  physical interpretation of components, 137f  
  symmetry of, 141–142  
  vanishing divergence, 152  
  as functional derivative of Lagrangian, 485, 503ff  
  specific form for  
    nearly Newtonian fluid, 152, 154  
    perfect fluid, 132, 140  
    viscous fluid with heat flowing through it, 567  
  stressed medium with no heat flow, 1086f  
  swarm of particles (kinetic theory), 138f, 589f, 680, 682  
  spherical star cluster, 680, 682  
  photons in geometric optics limit, 579f  
  geometric-optics waves, 579  
  electromagnetic field, 139–140, 480ff  
  scalar field, 504f  
  gravitational field in spin-2 theory, 425  
  gravitational field in general relativity.  
    *Does not exist; see* Pseudotensor
- Structure  
  Cartan’s equation of, 378  
  constants, of rotation group, 243  
  deformation of, 530  
  differentiable, 242  
  symplectic, of Hamiltonian mechanics, 125–126  
  *See also* Global techniques, Horizons
- Sum-for-inertia. *See* Mach’s principle
- Sum over histories. *See* Feynman’s sum over histories
- Summation convention, Einstein’s, 9
- Sun  
  mass deduced from planetary orbits, 638, endpapers  
  quadrupole moment, 1112f, 1115f, 1053f  
  gravitational field in PPN formalism, 1097ff  
  velocity relative to Galaxy, local group, and universe, 1114  
  effect on tides, 44  
  observed redshift of light from, 1058ff
- radiation flux negligible compared to pressure, 1075  
  *See also under* Experimental tests of general relativity
- Super-Hamiltonian  
  contrasted with Hamiltonian, 488f  
  for test-particle motion  
    in electromagnetic field, 488f  
    in gravitational field, 654  
    in combined electromagnetic and gravitational fields, 897f  
  for mixmaster cosmology, 809–813
- Supermassive stars, 620f, 634  
  convection in, 600  
  entropy constant in, 600  
  adiabatic index in, 633  
  pulsational instability in, 632–633  
  relativistic instability in, 605, 620, 633f  
  rotation as a stabilizer, 633–634  
  possible roles in quasars and galactic nuclei, 634  
  *See also* Neutron stars, White dwarfs
- Supernova, 619, 622  
  Crab nebula created by, ii, 619f  
  theoretical scenario for, 628  
  as source of gravitational waves, 982, 987, 1040, 1042
- Superspace, 1180–1183  
  as starting point for Einstein’s geometrodynamics law, 423  
  quantum fluctuations, 1180  
  spread-out wave versus wave packet, 1185  
  conserved probability current in, 1189  
  truncated, skeleton version, 1181  
  mixmaster version (“minisuperspace”), 806  
  of 2-geometries, 221
- Surface integral. *See* Integration
- Surface of last influence, 873f
- Symmetry of tensor, indicated by round or square bracket, 126
- Symmetry operations as tensors, 126, 128–129
- Symmetries, more subtle than symmetry and antisymmetry, 86
- Symmetries of spacetime. *See* Killing vector fields
- Symmetrization, of tensor, 83
- Synchronous coordinate system, 717. *See also* Gaussian normal coordinate system
- Système International (SI) second, 28
- T**
- Tails of waves in curved spacetime, 957, 864f, 869ff
- Tangent space, 205, 227–231  
  at neighboring points, linked, 246f, 252
- Tangent vector. *See* Vector, tangent.
- Taub-NUT space, 940
- TCP, experimental tests of, 1054
- Teichmüller space, 221
- Temperature. *See* Thermodynamics
- Temperature, redshift of, 568, 588, 685
- Tensors  
  summaries of formalism for manipulating  
    in global Lorentz frame, 85  
    in manifold without metric, 233f  
    in curved manifold with metric, 203f, 223f  
  machine-with-slots definition, 22, 74ff, 131, 133f, 233f, 310f  
  ambiguity of slots removed by component notation, 84  
  rank, defined, 75f, 234  
  components of  
    in Lorentz frame, 75f  
    in general frame, 201–204, 312  
  operations on, introduced in global Lorentz frame  
    indices, raising and lowering, 75–76  
    addition, 76  
    multiplication by scalar, 76  
    tensor product, 76  
    basis tensors, 76  
    gradient, 81–82, 84  
    contraction, 82, 84  
    divergence, 82  
    transpose, 83  
    symmetrization, antisymmetrization.  
      83, 85f, 126  
    wedge product, 83  
    duality, 85, 87, 88  
    integration, 147ff  
  algebraic operations extended to general frames, 201–207, 233f  
  covariant derivative introduced, 208ff, 257–261  
  Lie derivative introduced, 517  
  spinor representation of, 1153–1155
- Tensors, first rank. *See* Vectors, Forms, 1-forms
- Tensors, second-rank symmetric, decomposition of, 947
- Tensors, completely antisymmetric. *See* Forms, differential
- Tensor density, 501f
- “Test body,” defined, 1050n
- Tests of general relativity. *See* Experimental tests of general relativity
- Test particle, freely falling, defines geodesic, 196
- Test particles  
  three needed to explore Lorentz force, 72  
  more needed to explore Riemann curvature, 72
- Tetrad  
  carried by a uniformly accelerated observer, 169–170  
  in Fermi-Walker transport, 170–171  
  carried by accelerated observer, 328–332
- Tetrahedron, 307, 309
- Theories of gravitation. *See* Gravitation, theories of
- Thermal conductivity. *See* Heat conduction

Thermal equilibrium in a stationary  
gravitational field, 568

Thermodynamics  
*in extenso*, 557–562  
basic references, 557n, 568  
basic concepts defined  
simple fluid, 558  
multicomponent fluid, 558  
baryon number density, 558  
density of total mass-energy, 558  
chemical potential, 558, 561, 562  
entropy per baryon, 558  
entropy 4-vector, 567  
temperature, 508  
heat-flux 4-vector, 567  
pressure, 558  
primary thermodynamic potential, 561  
physical free energy, 561  
chemical free energy, 561  
equations of state, 560  
adiabatic index, 692  
viscosity coefficients, 567

laws and equations of  
law of heat conduction, 559  
Maxwell relations, 561, 564  
*See also* Conservation laws, baryons;  
First law of thermodynamics;  
Second law of thermodynamics;  
Equation of state

extension of formalism when nuclear  
burning occurs, 558

some applications and processes  
injection energy, 561f  
shock waves, 559  
pair production at high temperatures,  
558  
chemical potential for an ideal Fermi  
gas, 565  
*See also* Hydrodynamics

Thin-sandwich conjecture, 534

Thomas precession, 175–176, 1118, 1146f

Three-geometry  
of initial and final spacelike  
hypersurfaces, 488  
as carrier of information about time, 488,  
533  
fixed at surface in ADM formulation, 522  
conformal  
in York's formulation of initial-value  
problem, 540–541  
pure spin-2 representation via York  
curvature, 541  
YES vs. NO vs. quantum probability for,  
1184f  
*See also* Initial value, Spacelike slice

Three-plus-one split of spacetime, 486, 505  
sandwiches and rigidification, 506  
via 3-metric plus lapse and shift, 506–507  
4-metric vs. 3-metric in, 508  
choice of slicing doesn't matter, 526

Tidal forces, 823, 860ff. *See also* Curvature  
of spacetime, Geodesic deviation

Tides, produced by sun and moon, 38, 44,  
391f

Time  
standards of, 23–29  
defined so motion looks simple, 23–29  
end of, in gravitational collapse, Chap. 44  
many-fingered, 495, 498, 527  
proper. *See* Interval  
imaginary coordinate for, not used, 51  
Newtonian universal, 40, 299  
*See also* Bubble-time derivative, Clocks,  
Day

Time dilation, experimental tests of, 1054f

Tired light, 775

Tolman universe, 733

Topology, point-set, 241, 926n

Topology of spacetime  
various possibilities for Schwarzschild  
geometry, 837–840  
various possibilities for Friedmann  
cosmological models, 725  
Einstein vs. flat space views of, 437  
*See also* Differential topology

Torque of sun and moon on Earth, 391–392

Torsion  
not present in affine connection if  
equivalence principle is valid, 250  
vanishes in Riemannian geometry, 378  
possible incorporation into general  
relativity, 1049, 1068

Tortoise coordinate, 663, 665–666

Torus, three-dimensional, 284, 725

Transformations  
active vs. passive, 1140  
of tensors, 201–204  
of connection coefficients, 262  
of spinors, 1149f

Transpose of tensor, 83

Transverse-traceless gauge  
in linearized theory, 946–950  
in a curved background, 969

Trapped surface, 934, 936

Trivector, defined, 83

Tubes of force, 102, 114

Twin “paradox,” 167

Two-length-scale expansion, 571f

Twistors, 937

Two-form. *See under* Forms, differential

## U

Unified theory of electricity and gravitation,  
Riemann's unsuccessful search for, 32,  
221

Uniqueness of free fall (“weightlessness,”  
“weak equivalence principle”), 13–19,  
197, 1050–1054  
formulation of this book, 1050  
Einstein's 1908 formulation, 5  
contained in Einstein's 1911 equivalence  
principle, 17  
experimental tests of 13–17, 1051–1054.  
*See also* Eötvös-Dicke experiment

Universal Time (UT0, UT1, UT2), 28

Universe. *See* Cosmological models,  
Cosmology

## V

Variational principles for spin-0, spin-1,  
and spin-2 theories of gravity in flat  
spacetime, 178–181

Variational principles for test particle motion  
extremal proper time, 314–324  
“dynamic” principle, 322f

Variational principles for geometrodynamics  
Hilbert's, 434  
*in extenso*, Chap. 21  
in brief, 418, 485  
what fixed at limits, 485  
scalar curvature as integrand in, 491,  
519  
grounded in quantum character of  
physics, 499f  
in space-plus-time split, 519f  
put into ADM form, 520  
Sakharov renormalization of, 426

Hilbert's, by Palatini's method  
sketched, 491  
analogy with mechanics, 491–495  
analogy with electrodynamics, 495–498  
connection as independently variable  
in, 492

Arnowitt, Deser, Misner  
in simplest form, 521  
exploited, 526  
specialized to mixmaster cosmology,  
808f

thin-sandwich, for lapse and shift, 538  
in shortwave approximation, 927f  
in Regge calculus, 1170  
in superspace formulation, 1186

Vector, tangent  
introduced, 8–13  
definitions of  
as arrow, 49  
as parametrized straight line, 49  
as derivative of point, 49, 205, 226–229  
as directional derivative operator, 205,  
227–230  
manipulations summarized. *See under*  
Tensor

formalism of, in global Lorentz frames,  
timelike, null, and spacelike, 53  
defining directional derivative, 59f  
correspondence to 1-form, 58ff  
from 1-form by raising index, 62  
test for linear dependence, 83  
transition to curved spacetime, 201–207,  
230f

commutator, 204

formula for determining components of,  
232

transformation laws for, 230ff  
comparison by parallel transport, 245–263  
correspondence of, with spinors, 1150ff  
covariant components from spinor  
analysis, 1153

Vector, *p*-vector, 91

Vectors, three-dimensional (spatial),  
introduced, 64

## SUBJECT INDEX

1279

Vector potential for electromagnetic field,  
in curved spacetime, 569f  
Velocity 4-vector  
defined, 49  
components, 50  
unit length, 54  
related to energy-momentum 4-vector,  
53f  
Velocity parameter, in Lorentz  
transformation, 67  
Vierbein. *See* Tetrad  
Virial theorems in Newtonian theory of  
gravity, 1078  
evaluated for spherical stars, 607  
Viscosity and viscous stresses  
formalism for, 567  
damping of primordial chaos by, 769,  
802ff  
Vlasoff equation, 680. *See also* Collisionless  
Boltzman equation  
Volume, Hero-Tartaglia formula for, 307  
Volume 1-form, 133–137  
4-volume, 147  
volume integrals, 147–151  
Volume in phase space, 584–587, 590

## W

“Wave-dominated detector,” defined, 1019  
Wave vector, 573ff  
Wave function. *See* Probability amplitude

Wave operators  
d’Alembertian, 89, 120, 177, 183  
de Rham, for vector fields, 569  
Lichnerowicz-de Rham, for tensor fields,  
382  
conformally invariant, 542  
Wave number 1-form, 55–58  
related to energy-momentum 4-vector, 57  
Weak equivalence principle. *See*  
Uniqueness of free fall.  
Wedge product  
of tensors and of forms, 83, 91f  
rules for addition and multiplication, 92  
other names for, 83, 99  
of permutation tensors, 128f  
Weight, of a tensor density, 501  
Weightlessness. *See* Uniqueness of free fall  
White-dwarf matter  
thermal pressures negligible, 599–600  
electron capture in, 619  
equation of state for, 624ff  
White-dwarf stars, 619  
models for, 625–626  
Chandrasekhar mass limit, 619  
stability of, 605, 619, 626f, 696  
Whitehead’s theory of gravity. *See under*  
Gravitation, theories of  
“Wire up” source to field, 367ff, 405  
World line, 4, 13. *See also* Geodesic  
World sheet, swept out by one face of  
3-volume, 133

World tube, analysis of balance of  
4-momentum in, 473  
Wormholes in space  
and Betti numbers, 221  
of Schwarzschild geometry, 837ff, 842  
of Reissner-Nordström geometry, 921  
probably do not exist in real universe at  
classical level, 842f  
at quantum level, 1200f, 1203  
electric charge as lines of force trapped  
in, 1200

## X

X-ray diffraction, related to 1-forms, 232  
X-ray sources, 761–762  
X-rays from gas around black holes, ix, 885

## Y

York momenta measure deformation,  
recoordinatization, and scaling, 542  
York’s curvature, 541  
Young symmetry diagrams 86

## Z

Zero-point energy, 426ff