

Pauli Lectures on Physics: Volume 3, Thermodynamics and the Kinetic Theory of Gases

By Wolfgang Pauli

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These lectures covering topics basic to classical and modern physics were given by Pauli at the Zurich Federal Institute, where they were transcribed by his collaborators. They have now been translated and edited for English publication, and are introduced by Victor Weisskopf, who writes as follows:

"It is often said that scientific texts quickly become obsolete. Why are the Pauli lectures brought to the public today, when some of them were given as long as twenty years ago? The reason is simple: Pauli's way of presenting physics is never out of date. His famous article on the foundations of quantum mechanics appeared in 1933 in the German encyclopedia *Handbuch der Physik*. Twenty-five years later it reappeared practically unchanged in a new edition, whereas most other contributions to this encyclopedia had to be completely rewritten. The reason for this remarkable fact lies in Pauli's style, which is commensurate to the greatness of its subject in its clarity and impact. Style in scientific writing is a quality that today is on the point of vanishing. The pressure of fast publication is so great that people rush into print with hurriedly written papers and books that show little concern for careful formulation of ideas. Mathematical and instrumental techniques have become complicated and difficult today; they demand so much skill and training that most of the effort of writing and learning is devoted to the acquisition of this skill instead of insight into important concepts. Essential ideas of physics are often lost in the dense forest of mathematical reasoning. This situation need not be so. Pauli's lectures show how physical ideas can be presented clearly and in good mathematical form, without being hidden in formalistic expertise."

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