

Contents

Preface	9
Introduction	II
Abbreviations	16
I <i>Descartes' Theory of Explanation and the Foundations of his Theory of Light</i>	17
1. The position expressed in the <i>Dioptric</i> and the <i>Discourse</i> : arguing from suppositions, p. 17; discussion with Morin, p. 20; limitation of proof in physics, p. 22. 2. Metaphysical foundations of physics, p. 24. 3. The role of analogies: in the <i>Dioptric</i> and <i>Le Monde ou Traité de la Lumière</i> , p. 27, in the <i>Regulae</i> , p. 29; Cartesian analysis and Baconian induction, p. 30. 4. The role of natural history: Descartes and Bacon, p. 33. 5. The deductive procedure, p. 37; ' <i>venir au-devant des causes par les effets</i> ': the role of experiment, p. 38; conjectural explanation; absolute and moral certainties, p. 41. 6. Conclusion, p. 44	
II <i>Descartes' Doctrine of the Instantaneous Propagation of Light and his Explanation of the Rainbow and of Colours</i>	46
1. The doctrine of the instantaneous propagation of light before Descartes, p. 46; place of the doctrine of instantaneous propagation in Descartes' system of physics, p. 48; the doctrine as expounded in the <i>Traité de la Lumière</i> : the cosmological fable, p. 50; the laws of nature and their cosmological application, p. 51; instantaneous propagation and the Cartesian concept of matter, p. 55; Descartes' argument from lunar eclipses, p. 57; the crossing of light rays, p. 59. 2. Theory of colours and the rainbow: birth of the <i>Meteors</i> , p. 60; experimental character of Descartes' investigations: explanation of the rainbow, p. 62; mechanical explanation of colours, p. 65	
III <i>Descartes' Explanation of Reflection. Fermat's Objections</i>	69
1. Explanation of reflection before Descartes: in antiquity, p. 69; by Ibn al-Haytham, p. 72; by Roger Bacon,	

CONTENTS

- p. 76, and Kepler, p. 78. 2. Descartes' explanation in the *Dioptric*: the ball analogy, p. 78; denial of *quies media* and of elasticity, p. 80; kinematical derivation of the law of reflection, p. 82. 3. The controversy with Fermat, p. 85; Fermat's objection against Descartes' use of the parallelogram method, p. 87; Descartes' reply, p. 89
- IV *Descartes' Explanation of Refraction. Fermat's 'Refutations'* 93
1. Explanation of refraction before Descartes: Ptolemy, p. 93; Ibn al-Haytham, p. 93; Roger Bacon, Witelo and Kepler, p. 98. 2. Discovery of the law of refraction: Descartes and Snell, p. 99. 3. Descartes' treatment of refraction: in the *Cogitationes privatae* (1619-21), p. 105; in the *Dioptric*, p. 107. 4. Analysis of the Cartesian treatment: derivation of the refraction law, p. 110; physical interpretation of Descartes' assumptions, p. 112. 5. The controversy with Fermat over refraction: Fermat's statement of 1664, p. 116; Fermat and Descartes' distinction between 'force' and 'determination' of motion, p. 117; Fermat's 'refutation' of Descartes' proof of the refraction law, p. 121. 6. Fermat and Clerselier: the mathematical problem, p. 127; Clerselier's collision model, p. 133
- V *Fermat's Principle of Least Time* 136
1. Introductory, p. 136. 2. La Chambre, Fermat and the principle of economy, p. 137; Fermat's interpretation of the principle as a principle of least time, p. 139. 3. Fermat's method of maxima and minima, p. 144; his *Analysis for Refractions*, p. 145; Fermat, Leibniz and Descartes, p. 147. 4. Fermat's *Synthesis for Refractions*, p. 150. 5. Conclusion, p. 154
- VI *Huygens' Cartesianism and his Theory of Conjectural Explanation* 159
1. Mechanical explanation as the aim of physical science: Huygens' dispute with Roberval over the cause of gravity, p. 159; Huygens' Cartesianism, p. 163; Huygens and Newton, p. 164. 2. Conjectures *versus* induction: Huygens and Bacon, p. 170; Baconian induction, p. 175; Huygens' position in the *Traité de la Lumière*, p. 181

- VII *Two Precursors of Huygens' Wave Theory: Hooke and Pardies* 185
1. Introductory: the formation of Huygens' theory and preceding achievements in optics, p. 185. 2. Hooke's investigations in the *Micrographia*, p. 187; his explanation of the refraction of waves, p. 192. 3. Pardies' wave hypothesis and Ango's *L'optique*, p. 195
- VIII *Huygens' Wave Theory* 198
1. Huygens and the 'difficulties' in Descartes' theory of light: *Projet du Contenu de la Dioptrique* (1673), p. 198, Huygens and Roemer, p. 202, the crossing of light rays, p. 207. 2. Mathematization of the Cartesian picture: Huygens' principle of secondary waves and his explanation of rectilinear propagation, p. 212; E. Mach and the origin of Huygens' principle, p. 215. 3. Huygens' construction for ordinary refraction, p. 216; derivation of Fermat's principle, p. 218; total and partial reflections, p. 219. 4. Explanation of double refraction: Huygens and Bartholinus, p. 221; Huygens' researches, p. 223; Newton and double refraction, p. 226. 5. Conclusion, p. 229
- IX *Newton's Theory of Light and Colours, 1672* 231
1. Introductory, p. 231. 2. Analysis of Newton's 1672 paper to the Royal Society: the geometrical problem of dispersion, p. 234; the *experimentum crucis* and the doctrine of white light, p. 239. 3. The historicity of the 1672 account, p. 244; Newton's inductive argument, p. 248
- X *Three Critics of Newton's Theory: Hooke, Pardies, Huygens* 251
1. Hooke's 'Considerations': his general attitude to Newton's theory, p. 251; his explanation of the generation of colours by refraction in the *Micrographia*, p. 254; his idea that white light might be represented by the 'coalescence' of vibrations or waves, p. 259; his insistence (in 1672) on his dualistic theory of colours, p. 261. 2. Pardies' suggestions: his difficulties in understanding Newton's experiments, and his final acceptance of the unequal refractions of colours, p. 264. 3. Huygens' reservations: his demand for a mechanical explanation of colours, and his final acceptance of their differential refrangibility, p. 268

XI	<i>Newton's Dogmatism and the Representation of White Light</i>	273
	<p>1. Newton's general strategy with his critics, p. 273. 2. White light as a heterogeneous mixture—Newton and Hooke, p. 276. 3. Newton's empirical dogmatism and the use of hypotheses, p. 284; his <i>a priori</i> conception of rays as discrete entities, p. 287. 4. Colours as qualities of the rays and Huygens' demand for a mechanical explanation, p. 290. 5. Newton's atomism and his interpretation of the <i>experimentum crucis</i>, p. 294</p>	
XII	<i>The Two Levels of Explanation: Newton's Theory of Refraction</i>	298
	<p>Introductory, p. 298. 1. Dynamical explanation of refraction—Newton and Descartes, p. 299; Newton's demonstration of the refraction law in the <i>Principia</i>, p. 302, in the <i>Opticks</i>, p. 304. 2. Hypothetical explanation of refraction in terms of impulsion, p. 308, in terms of attraction, p. 311; logical status of Newton's dynamical explanation, p. 313; the role of Foucault's experiment, p. 315</p>	
XIII	<i>The Two Levels of Explanation: Newton's Theory of the Colours of Thin Plates</i>	319
	<p>Introductory: the problem of partial reflection, p. 319. 1. Hooke and the colours of thin plates: Boyle and Hooke, p. 321; Hooke's researches in the <i>Micrographia</i>, p. 322; Hooke and Newton, p. 327. 2. Newton's quantitative approach, p. 331; his theory of 'fits', p. 334; his explanation of partial reflection, p. 336; logical status of the theory, p. 337; alternative hypothetical explanations of the 'fits', p. 338</p>	
	<i>Bibliography</i>	343
	<i>Index</i>	355