now is a single entity more than it ever was before, perhaps more so than the casual reader will realize from von Laue's book. The reader who may wish to ponder on the interrelation of the various disciplines would derive much assistance from a chronological listing of the most important landmarks in the history of our science.

Eugene P. Wigner Princeton University

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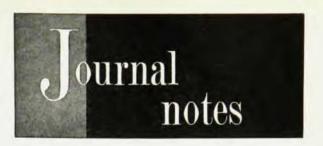
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Polarization

The ionosphere is a region of charged particles above the earth which owes its existence to ionization of atmospheric gases by ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Knowledge of the structure and characteristics of the ionosphere is necessary for predicting its effect on radiowave propagation. Much information can be obtained by observing the echo reflected from the region when a strong pulse of radio frequency energy is directed toward it from the ground. Because the earth's magnetic field renders the medium doubly refracting to radio waves, the reflected wave usually is elliptically polarized. An instrument has been developed capable of measuring precisely the orientation and dimensions of the polarization ellipse.

The 1.5 megawatt transmitter with which the polarimeter is used emits a 150 microsecond pulse of radio frequency energy every 0.64 second on a carrier frequency of 150 kilocycles per second. The downcoming elliptical echo is resolved into two quadrature components by crossed loop antennas. The components are amplified with equal gains and phase shifts by two identical, broadband, superheterodyne receivers, and then connected to an oscilloscope which displays the original ellipse. The direction of rotation of the ellipse is determined by shifting the phase of one receiver output 90 degrees, and using this signal to turn off the oscilloscope intensity on every half cycle. The resulting Lissajous figure reveals the direction of rotation.

The observations are recorded photographically at a rate of one every 3 to 5 seconds, and the film is scaled for the ratio of axes, the angle of tilt, and the direction of rotation.

Measurements on the electric vector indicate that the polarization is, in general, elliptical with the major axis of the ellipse tilted east of magnetic north, and that only left-handed polarization is present which corresponds to the ordinary ray in the Northern Hemisphere. These results check well with simple ray theory.

H.J.N.

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Conductivity of an Electron-Proton Gas

Previous detailed analyses of conductivity in gases, developed by Enskog, Chapman, and others usually involve the tacit assumption that each collision between two molecules involves a large change in their velocities, either in magnitude or direction. In a gas consisting entirely of protons and electrons this assumption is not realistic. The velocity of a single electron changes frequently by relatively small amounts, with each change produced by a relatively distant encounter with another electron or with a proton. The cumulative effect of these small velocity changes gradually produces large changes in the velocity of an electron. Thus the position of an electron in velocity space changes in the same way that the physical position of a particle changes in Brownian motion, where the cumulative effect of many small displacements is also relevant. The differential equations developed to describe the effect of Brownian motion on the spatial distribution of a set of particles may be