

Contents

Preface	<i>page</i> xiii
Acknowledgements	xxi
1 From philosophy to physics	1
The years that left nothing unaffected	2
The appeal of ideas	5
Goethe as a scientist	7
How absolute is our knowledge?	8
Acquiring knowledge	10
London's teachers in philosophy: Alexander Pfänder and Erich Becher	11
Husserl's teachings	12
Abhorrence of reductionist schemata	14
The philosophy thesis	15
Tolman's principle of similitude	23
The necessary clarifications	25
Work on quantum theory	26
Transformation theory	28
Unsuccessful attempts at unification	31
2 The years in Berlin and the beginnings of quantum chemistry	38
The mysterious bond	39
London in Zürich	42
Binding forces	44
The Pauli exclusion principle	48

x	FRITZ LONDON	
	The early years in Berlin	49
	Reactions to the Heitler–London paper	51
	Polyelectronic molecules and the application of group theory to problems of chemical valence	53
	Chemists as physicists?	57
	London’s first contacts in Berlin	59
	Marriage	61
	Job offers	64
	Intermolecular forces	66
	The book which could not be written	69
	Leningrad and Rome	71
	Difficulties with group theory	74
	Linus Pauling’s resonance structures	75
	Robert Mulliken’s molecular orbitals	78
	Trying to save what could not be saved	82
	3 Oxford and superconductivity	96
	The rise of the Nazis	97
	The changes at the University	102
	Going to Oxford	105
	Lindemann, Simon and Heinz London	106
	Electricity in the very cold	110
	The end of old certainties	113
	The thermodynamic treatment	116
	The Londons’ theory of superconductivity	117
	Initial reactions by von Laue	123
	The discussion at the Royal Society	127
	Termination of the ICI fellowship	129
	4 Paris and superfluidity	139
	The Popular Front	140
	The article in <i>Nature</i> 1937 and <i>Une Conception Nouvelle de la Supraconductibilité</i>	143
	Von Laue again	144
	The structure of solid helium	147
	The peculiar properties of helium	151
	Bose–Einstein condensation	152
	The note in <i>Nature</i>	157
	The two-fluid model	159
	The trip to Jerusalem	163
	Leaving again	167
	The role of the observer in quantum mechanics	169

CONTENTS	xi
5 Tying up loose ends: London in the USA	180
Duke University, North Carolina, USA	181
The Soviet Union, Kapitza and Landau	182
The war years	190
The 1946 Cambridge Conference on Low Temperatures	198
Unsettled and unsettling issues in superfluidity and superconductivity	200
Heisenberg's theory and London's program for a microscopic theory	206
More problems with von Laue	210
Hopeful signs from He ³	214
Second sound velocity measurements at very low temperatures	215
Writing <i>Superfluids</i>	217
The trip to Europe	220
Some developments in the theory of superconductivity	224
An ugly finale	227
Could Landau be right?	229
The worrisome realities of the postwar era	238
The second volume of <i>Superfluids</i>	242
William Fairbank	244
Further developments	245
The Lorentz Medal	247
Consultancy at Los Alamos and the interview for security clearance	252
The last days	255
 Afterword: background leading to the microscopic theory of superconductivity by John Bardeen	 267
 Publications by Fritz London	 273
Bibliography	276
Index	290