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Oliver Lodge

Frontmatter

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My Philosophy

In his study of optics, Newton postulated that light, like sound, must be carried through a medium, and that this medium must exist even in a vacuum. By the late nineteenth century, this theoretical substance was known as the luminiferous ether. But the ether theory faced several problems. If the earth moved through ether, there would be ether wind, and light travelling against the flow would move more slowly than light travelling with it. That was soon disproven. Nor could the ether be stationary: by 1905, Einstein's work on relativity had disproven absolute motion. In this fascinating advocacy of ether, first published in 1933, Sir Oliver Lodge (1851–1940) fiercely defends ether against the new physics, arguing for solid models over mathematical abstractions, and urging new ether experiments. With in-depth references to Einstein, Jeans and Eddington, this book is still relevant to students in the history of science.

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MY PHILOSOPHY

REPRESENTING MY VIEWS ON THE
MANY FUNCTIONS OF

THE ETHER OF SPACE

by

SIR OLIVER LODGE

“ We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.”
WORDSWORTH: *Intimations of Immortality*.

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FOREWORD

The Ether of Space has been my life study, and I have constantly urged its claims to attention. I have lived through the time of Lord Kelvin with his mechanical models of an ether, down to a day when the universe by some physicists seems resolved into mathematics, and the idea of an ether is by them considered superfluous, if not contemptible. I always meant some day to write a scientific treatise about the Ether of Space; but when in my old age I came to write this book, I found that the Ether pervaded all my ideas, both of this world and the next. I could no longer keep my treatise within the proposed scientific confines; it escaped in every direction, and now I find has grown into a comprehensive statement of my philosophy.

OLIVER LODGE.

9th February, 1933.

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