

# PARTICLES AND QUANTUM FIELDS

# Particles and Quantum Fields

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*To my wife Annemarie  
and our son Hagen Michael II*

# Preface

This book arose from lectures I gave at the Freie Universität Berlin over the past five decades. They were intended to prepare graduate students for their research in elementary-particle physics or in many-body theory of condensed matter. They should serve as a general introduction and a basis for understanding more advanced work on the subject.

The theory of quantum fields presented in this book is mainly based on the perturbative approach. Elementary particles are introduced initially without any interactions. These are added later, and their strength is parametrized by some coupling constant  $g$ . The consequences are studied order by order in  $g$ , with the particles propagating forward from interaction to interaction. Such a treatment is clearly a gross simplification of what happens in nature, where even the existence of a free particle involves the full interaction from the very beginning. Nevertheless, this kind of procedure has been the basis of many successful theories. In all of them, there exist dominant freely propagating excitations or elementary particles at least in some experimentally accessible limit. The most prominent example is the theory of strongly interacting particles. There they are described as being composed of quarks held together by gluons which interact via a nonabelian gauge theory called quantum chromodynamics (QCD). In the limit of large energies, the particles behave like free point-like particles. This behavior was named *parton-like* by Richard Feynman. The existence of such a limiting behavior in QCD was called *asymptotic freedom*. It was the main reason for the possibility of developing a theory for these particles, which gave good explanations of many interaction processes between elementary particles. The initial *creation* of the particles, however, remained far from being understood. It involves a regime of strong interactions where perturbation theory fails.

A field-theoretic method to reach into this regime has been developed in quantum field theory of many-body physics. There a separation of the two regimes, the formation of particle-like excitation and their scattering, is much clearer to observe experimentally than in particle physics. For this reason, many-body theory has been a major source of inspiration for the development of theoretical methods to describe strongly interacting phenomena. An extension of perturbation theory into the strongly interacting regime has so far been possible mainly by employing resummation techniques. Initially, theorists have summed certain classes of Feynman diagrams by repeating infinitely many times the same interaction leading to a geometric series whose sum can be evaluated. This has allowed the understanding of many pronounced observable phenomena as consequences of a sum of infinitely

many bubbles and ladders of diagrams. The methods for this were developed by Hartree, Fock, and Bogoliubov in many-body theory, and by Bethe and Salpeter in quantum electrodynamics.

The development of renormalization group theory has led to a generalization of this method. It permits to extend the sum of bubbles and ladders to sums of diagrams of many different topologies. This makes them applicable in the regime of strong couplings, where they can be used to study various many-body phenomena even in the so-called *critical regime*. There the interactions become so strong that they are much more important than the free-particle propagation.

In many-body theory, one can parametrize the separation of the two regimes quite clearly by formulating the theory on a lattice. The propagation is characterized by a so-called hopping amplitude from lattice point to lattice point. The critical regime is reached when the masses of some of the participating excitations go to zero. In this limit, the range of their propagation tends to infinity, and their interaction becomes increasingly important.

An efficient alternative to the summation of infinitely many perturbation-theoretic diagrams is based on a variational approach. Its power was discovered in 1877 by John Rayleigh and formalized by Walter Ritz in 1908. Some time ago, the theory was revived by Feynman and Kleinert.<sup>1</sup> They set up a first-order variational approximation to path integrals, which led to reasonable approximations for a variety of quantum mechanical problems. The approximations were later expanded to all orders, and have finally led to the powerful *field-theoretic variational perturbation theory* (VPT). In that form, the theory is able to simplify and replace the popular renormalization group approach of critical phenomena. It has been successfully applied to many phase transitions, and is published in a monograph.<sup>2</sup>

An important aspect of a theory of critical phenomena is the fact that the free-field propagators play no longer the important role they have in perturbation expansions. The underlying free-particle behavior is based on a Gaussian approximation to field fluctuations. In the critical regime, this approximation of the distributions has tails which follow power-like distributions. Such tails are observed in the statistics of very rare events, which are called “black-swan events”.<sup>3</sup> These occur in nature in many different circumstances, ranging from oceanic monster waves over earthquakes and wind gusts, to catastrophic crashes of financial markets.<sup>4</sup>

I want to thank my friend Remo Ruffini for creating an extremely lively and inspiring environment for scientific work in particle and astrophysics at many exciting places of the globe, where I was invited for lectures and discussions of topics of this

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<sup>1</sup>R.P. Feynman and H. Kleinert, Phys. Rev. A *34*, 5080 (1986).

<sup>2</sup>H. Kleinert and V. Schulte-Frohlinde, *Critical Properties of  $\Phi^4$ -Theories*, World Scientific, Singapore 2001, pp. 1–489 (<http://klrnt.de/b8>). See Chapter 20 for the variational approach.

<sup>3</sup>H. Kleinert, *Quantum Field Theory of Black-Swan Events*, EPL *100*, 10001 (2013) ([www.ejtp.com/articles/ejtpv11i31p1.pdf](http://www.ejtp.com/articles/ejtpv11i31p1.pdf)); *Effective Action and Field Equation for BEC from Weak to Strong Couplings*, J. Phys. B *46*, 175401 (2013) (<http://klrnt.de/403>).

<sup>4</sup>H. Kleinert, *Path Integrals in Quantum Mechanics, Statistics, Polymer Physics, and Financial Markets*, World Scientific, Singapore, 2009 (<http://klrnt.de/b5>). See Chapter 20.

book. Ruffini, who holds a chair in theoretical physics at the university of Rome “La Sapienza”, founded an international center which I am part of, where scientists from all over the world do research, and where students can prepare their Ph.D. degree (for details see ICRANet.org).

I am also very grateful to my colleague Axel Pelster who, for many years, has shared with me the burden and joy of bringing students of the Freie Universität Berlin to their master’s and doctor’s degrees. His careful reading of large parts of the manuscript has produced useful insights and corrections.

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The reader who detects errors, is kindly asked to report them by email to [h@klrnt.de](mailto:h@klrnt.de).

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# Contents

<b>Preface</b> . . . . .	vii
<b>1 Fundamentals</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
1.1 Classical Mechanics . . . . .	1
1.2 Relativistic Mechanics in Curved Spacetime . . . . .	10
1.3 Quantum Mechanics . . . . .	11
1.3.1 Bragg Reflections and Interference . . . . .	11
1.3.2 Matter Waves . . . . .	13
1.3.3 Schrödinger Equation . . . . .	14
1.3.4 Particle Current Conservation . . . . .	17
1.4 Dirac's Bra-Ket Formalism . . . . .	18
1.4.1 Basis Transformations . . . . .	19
1.4.2 Bracket Notation . . . . .	20
1.4.3 Continuum Limit . . . . .	22
1.4.4 Generalized Functions . . . . .	24
1.4.5 Schrödinger Equation in Dirac Notation . . . . .	25
1.4.6 Momentum States . . . . .	27
1.4.7 Incompleteness and Poisson's Summation Formula . . . . .	29
1.5 Observables . . . . .	31
1.5.1 Uncertainty Relation . . . . .	32
1.5.2 Density Matrix and Wigner Function . . . . .	33
1.5.3 Generalization to Many Particles . . . . .	34
1.6 Time Evolution Operator. Definition . . . . .	35
1.7 Time Evolution Operator. Properties . . . . .	38
1.8 Heisenberg Picture of Quantum Mechanics . . . . .	40
1.9 Interaction Picture and Perturbation Expansion . . . . .	43
1.10 Time Evolution Amplitude . . . . .	44
1.11 Fixed-Energy Amplitude . . . . .	47
1.12 Free-Particle Amplitudes . . . . .	49
1.13 Quantum Mechanics of General Lagrangian Systems . . . . .	53
1.14 Particle on the Surface of a Sphere . . . . .	58
1.15 Spinning Top . . . . .	61
1.16 Classical and Quantum Statistics . . . . .	69
1.16.1 Canonical Ensemble . . . . .	69
1.16.2 Grand-Canonical Ensemble . . . . .	70
1.17 Density of States and Tracelog . . . . .	75



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Appendix 1A	Simple Time Evolution Operator . . . . .	77
Appendix 1B	Convergence of the Fresnel Integral . . . . .	77
Appendix 1C	The Asymmetric Top . . . . .	78
	Notes and References . . . . .	80
<b>2</b>	<b>Field Formulation of Many-Body Quantum Physics</b>	<b>82</b>
2.1	Mechanics and Quantum Mechanics for $n$ Nonrelativistic Particles . . . . .	82
2.2	Identical Particles: Bosons and Fermions . . . . .	85
2.3	Creation and Annihilation Operators for Bosons . . . . .	91
2.4	Schrödinger Equation for Noninteracting Bosons in Terms of Field Operators . . . . .	95
2.5	Second Quantization and Symmetrized Product Representation . . . . .	97
2.6	Bosons with Two-Body Interactions . . . . .	101
2.7	Quantum Field Formulation of Many-Body Schrödinger Equations for Bosons . . . . .	102
2.8	Canonical Formalism in Quantum Field Theory . . . . .	104
2.9	More General Creation and Annihilation Operators . . . . .	109
2.10	Quantum Field Formulation of Many-Fermion Schrödinger Equations . . . . .	111
2.11	Free Nonrelativistic Particles and Fields . . . . .	113
2.12	Second-Quantized Current Conservation Law . . . . .	116
2.13	Free-Particle Propagator . . . . .	117
2.14	Collapse of Wave Function . . . . .	120
2.15	Quantum Statistics of Free Nonrelativistic Fields . . . . .	121
	2.15.1 Thermodynamic Quantities . . . . .	121
	2.15.2 Degenerate Fermi Gas Near $T = 0$ . . . . .	127
	2.15.3 Degenerate Bose Gas Near $T = 0$ . . . . .	132
	2.15.4 High Temperatures . . . . .	137
2.16	Noninteracting Bose Gas in a Trap . . . . .	138
	2.16.1 Bose Gas in a Finite Box . . . . .	138
	2.16.2 Harmonic and General Power Trap . . . . .	141
	2.16.3 Anharmonic Trap in Rotating Bose-Einstein Gas . . . . .	142
2.17	Temperature Green Functions of Free Particles . . . . .	143
2.18	Calculating the Matsubara Sum via Poisson Formula . . . . .	148
2.19	Nonequilibrium Quantum Statistics . . . . .	150
	2.19.1 Linear Response and Time-Dependent Green Functions for $T \neq 0$ . . . . .	150
	2.19.2 Spectral Representations of Green Functions for $T \neq 0$ . . . . .	153
2.20	Other Important Green Functions . . . . .	156
2.21	Hermitian Adjoint Operators . . . . .	159
2.22	Harmonic Oscillator Green Functions for $T \neq 0$ . . . . .	160
	2.22.1 Creation Annihilation Operators . . . . .	160
	2.22.2 Real Field Operators . . . . .	163
Appendix 2A	Permutation Group and Representations . . . . .	165
Appendix 2B	Treatment of Singularities in Zeta-Function . . . . .	169

---

2B.1	Finite Box . . . . .	170
2B.2	Harmonic Trap . . . . .	172
	Notes and References . . . . .	174
<b>3</b>	<b>Interacting Nonrelativistic Particles</b>	<b>177</b>
3.1	Weakly Interacting Bose Gas . . . . .	178
3.2	Weakly Interacting Fermi Gas . . . . .	188
3.2.1	Electrons in a Metal . . . . .	188
3.3	Superconducting Electrons . . . . .	196
3.3.1	Zero Temperature . . . . .	201
3.4	Renormalized Theory at Strong Interactions . . . . .	205
3.4.1	Finite Temperature . . . . .	207
3.5	Crossover to Strong Couplings . . . . .	211
3.5.1	Bogoliubov Theory for Bose Gas at Finite Temperature . . . . .	212
3.6	Bose Gas at Strong Interactions . . . . .	214
3.7	Corrections Due to Omitted Interaction Hamiltonian . . . . .	231
	Appendix 3A Two-Loop Momentum Integrals . . . . .	234
	Notes and References . . . . .	237
<b>4</b>	<b>Free Relativistic Particles and Fields</b>	<b>240</b>
4.1	Relativistic Particles . . . . .	240
4.2	Differential Operators for Lorentz Transformations . . . . .	247
4.3	Space Inversion and Time Reversal . . . . .	257
4.4	Free Relativistic Scalar Fields . . . . .	258
4.5	Other Symmetries of Scalar Action . . . . .	265
4.5.1	Translations of Scalar Field . . . . .	266
4.5.2	Space Inversion of Scalar Field . . . . .	267
4.5.3	Time Reversal of Scalar Field . . . . .	268
4.5.4	Charge Conjugation of Scalar Field . . . . .	272
4.6	Electromagnetic Field . . . . .	272
4.6.1	Action and Field Equations . . . . .	273
4.6.2	Gauge Invariance . . . . .	275
4.6.3	Lorentz Transformation Properties of Electromagnetic Fields . . . . .	278
4.7	Other Symmetries of Electromagnetic Action . . . . .	280
4.7.1	Translations of the Vector Field . . . . .	281
4.7.2	Space Inversion, Time Reversal, and Charge Conjugation of the Vector Field . . . . .	281
4.8	Plane-Wave Solutions of Maxwell's Equations . . . . .	282
4.9	Gravitational Field . . . . .	287
4.9.1	Action and Field Equations . . . . .	288
4.9.2	Lorentz Transformation Properties of Gravitational Field . . . . .	291
4.9.3	Other Symmetries of Gravitational Action . . . . .	292
4.9.4	Translations of Gravitational Field . . . . .	292

---

4.9.5	Space Inversion, Time Reversal, and Charge Conjugation of Gravitational Field . . . . .	292
4.9.6	Gravitational Plane Waves . . . . .	293
4.10	Free Relativistic Fermi Fields . . . . .	299
4.11	Spin-1/2 Fields . . . . .	300
4.12	Other Symmetries of Dirac Action . . . . .	310
4.12.1	Translations and Poincaré Group . . . . .	310
4.12.2	Space Inversion . . . . .	310
4.12.3	Dirac's Original Derivation . . . . .	316
4.12.4	Maxwell Equations Written à la Dirac . . . . .	318
4.12.5	Pauli-Villars Equation for the Klein-Gordon Field . . . . .	320
4.12.6	Charge Conjugation . . . . .	320
4.12.7	Time Reversal . . . . .	323
4.12.8	Transformation Properties of Currents . . . . .	325
4.13	Majorana Fields . . . . .	326
4.13.1	Plane-Wave Solutions of Dirac Equation . . . . .	329
4.14	Lorentz Transformation of Spinors . . . . .	340
4.15	Precession . . . . .	343
4.15.1	Wigner Precession . . . . .	343
4.15.2	Thomas Precession . . . . .	344
4.15.3	Spin Four-Vector and Little Group . . . . .	345
4.16	Weyl Spinor Calculus . . . . .	348
4.17	Massive Vector Fields . . . . .	350
4.17.1	Action and Field Equations . . . . .	350
4.17.2	Plane Wave Solutions for Massive Vector Fields . . . . .	351
4.18	Higher-Spin Representations . . . . .	354
4.18.1	Rotations . . . . .	354
4.18.2	Extension to Lorentz Group . . . . .	357
4.18.3	Finite Representation Matrices . . . . .	359
4.19	Higher Spin Fields . . . . .	365
4.19.1	Plane-Wave Solutions . . . . .	368
4.20	Vector Field as a Higher-Spin Field . . . . .	369
4.21	Rarita-Schwinger Field for Spin 3/2 . . . . .	370
Appendix 4A	Derivation of Baker-Campbell-Hausdorff Formula . . . . .	371
Appendix 4B	Wigner Rotations and Thomas Precession . . . . .	373
Appendix 4C	Calculation in Four-Dimensional Representation . . . . .	376
Appendix 4D	Hyperbolic Geometry . . . . .	377
Appendix 4E	Clebsch-Gordan Coefficients . . . . .	379
Appendix 4F	Spherical Harmonics . . . . .	383
Appendix 4G	Projection Matrices for Symmetric Tensor Fields . . . . .	385
Notes and References	. . . . .	386

<b>5</b>	<b>Classical Radiation</b>	<b>389</b>
5.1	Classical Electromagnetic Waves . . . . .	389
5.1.1	Electromagnetic Field of a Moving Charge . . . . .	390
5.1.2	Dipole Moment . . . . .	395
5.2	Classical Gravitational Waves . . . . .	396
5.2.1	Gravitational Field of Matter Source . . . . .	396
5.2.2	Quadrupole Moment . . . . .	402
5.2.3	Average Radiated Energy . . . . .	405
5.3	Simple Models for Sources of Gravitational Radiation . . . . .	406
5.3.1	Vibrating Quadrupole . . . . .	406
5.3.2	Two Rotating Masses . . . . .	408
5.3.3	Particle Falling into Star . . . . .	414
5.3.4	Cloud of Colliding Stars . . . . .	417
5.4	Orders of Magnitude of Different Radiation Sources . . . . .	418
5.5	Detection of Gravitational Waves . . . . .	420
5.6	Inspiralling Plunge of One Black Hole into another . . . . .	423
	Appendix 5A Attractive Gravity versus Repulsive Electromagnetism . . . . .	424
	Appendix 5B Nonlinear Gravitational Waves . . . . .	424
	Appendix 5C Nonexistence of Gravitational Waves in $D = 3$ and $D = 2$ . . . . .	426
	Appendix 5D Precession of Gyroscope in a Satellite Orbit . . . . .	430
	Notes and References . . . . .	434
<b>6</b>	<b>Relativistic Particles and Fields in External Electromagnetic Potential</b>	<b>436</b>
6.1	Charged Point Particles . . . . .	436
6.1.1	Coupling to Electromagnetism . . . . .	437
6.1.2	Spin Precession in an Atom . . . . .	439
6.1.3	Relativistic Equation of Motion for Spin Vector and Thomas Precession . . . . .	442
6.2	Charged Particle in Schrödinger Theory . . . . .	445
6.3	Charged Relativistic Fields . . . . .	447
6.3.1	Scalar Field . . . . .	447
6.3.2	Dirac Field . . . . .	448
6.4	Pauli Equation from Dirac Theory . . . . .	449
6.5	Relativistic Wave Equations in the Coulomb Potential . . . . .	451
6.5.1	Reminder of the Schrödinger Equation in a Coulomb Potential . . . . .	452
6.5.2	Klein-Gordon Field in a Coulomb Potential . . . . .	454
6.5.3	Dirac Field in a Coulomb Potential . . . . .	455
6.6	Green Function in an External Electromagnetic Field . . . . .	461
6.6.1	Scalar Field in a Constant Electromagnetic Field . . . . .	461
6.6.2	Dirac Field in a Constant Electromagnetic Field . . . . .	467
6.6.3	Dirac Field in an Electromagnetic Plane-Wave Field . . . . .	469
	Appendix 6A Spinor Spherical Harmonics . . . . .	472
	Notes and References . . . . .	473

---

<b>7</b>	<b>Quantization of Relativistic Free Fields</b>	<b>474</b>
7.1	Scalar Fields . . . . .	475
7.1.1	Real Case . . . . .	475
7.1.2	Field Quantization . . . . .	475
7.1.3	Propagator of Free Scalar Particles . . . . .	481
7.1.4	Complex Case . . . . .	485
7.1.5	Energy of Free Charged Scalar Particles . . . . .	487
7.1.6	Behavior under Discrete Symmetries . . . . .	488
7.2	Spacetime Behavior of Propagators . . . . .	494
7.2.1	Wick Rotation . . . . .	495
7.2.2	Feynman Propagator in Minkowski Space . . . . .	497
7.2.3	Retarded and Advanced Propagators . . . . .	500
7.2.4	Comparison of Singular Functions . . . . .	504
7.3	Collapse of Relativistic Wave Function . . . . .	508
7.4	Free Dirac Field . . . . .	509
7.4.1	Field Quantization . . . . .	509
7.4.2	Energy of Free Dirac Particles . . . . .	512
7.4.3	Lorentz Transformation Properties of Particle States . . . . .	514
7.4.4	Behavior under Discrete Symmetries . . . . .	523
7.5	Free Photon Field . . . . .	527
7.5.1	Field Quantization . . . . .	528
7.5.2	Covariant Field Quantization . . . . .	533
7.5.3	Gupta-Bleuler Subsidiary Condition . . . . .	552
7.5.4	Behavior under Discrete Symmetries . . . . .	559
7.6	Massive Vector Bosons . . . . .	560
7.6.1	Field Quantization . . . . .	561
7.6.2	Energy of Massive Vector Particles . . . . .	563
7.6.3	Propagator of Massive Vector Particles . . . . .	564
7.7	Wigner Rotation of Spin-1 Polarization Vectors . . . . .	568
7.7.1	Behavior under Discrete Symmetry Transformations . . . . .	570
7.8	Spin-3/2 Fields . . . . .	571
7.9	Gravitons . . . . .	573
7.10	Spin-Statistics Theorem . . . . .	574
7.11	CPT-Theorem . . . . .	578
7.12	Physical Consequences of Vacuum Fluctuations. Casimir Effect . . . . .	578
7.13	Zeta Function Regularization . . . . .	585
7.14	Dimensional Regularization . . . . .	588
7.15	Accelerated Frame and Unruh Temperature . . . . .	591
7.16	Photon Propagator in Dirac Quantization Scheme . . . . .	593
7.17	Free Green Functions of $n$ Fields . . . . .	594
7.17.1	Wick's Theorem . . . . .	598
7.18	Functional Form of Wick's Theorem . . . . .	602
7.18.1	Thermodynamic Version of Wick's Theorem . . . . .	606
Appendix 7A	Euler-Maclaurin Formula . . . . .	610

---

Appendix 7B Liénard-Wiechert Potential . . . . .	614
Appendix 7C Equal-Time Commutator from Time-Ordered Products . . .	615
Notes and References . . . . .	617
<b>8 Continuous Symmetries and Conservation Laws.</b>	
<b>Noether's Theorem</b>	<b>619</b>
8.1 Point Mechanics . . . . .	619
8.1.1 Continuous Symmetries and Conservation Law . . . . .	619
8.1.2 Alternative Derivation . . . . .	621
8.2 Displacement and Energy Conservation . . . . .	622
8.3 Momentum and Angular Momentum . . . . .	624
8.3.1 Translational Invariance in Space . . . . .	624
8.3.2 Rotational Invariance . . . . .	625
8.3.3 Center-of-Mass Theorem . . . . .	626
8.3.4 Conservation Laws Resulting from Lorentz Invariance . . . .	628
8.4 Generating the Symmetry Transformations . . . . .	630
8.5 Field Theory . . . . .	632
8.5.1 Continuous Symmetry and Conserved Currents . . . . .	632
8.5.2 Alternative Derivation . . . . .	633
8.5.3 Local Symmetries . . . . .	634
8.6 Canonical Energy-Momentum Tensor . . . . .	636
8.6.1 Electromagnetism . . . . .	637
8.6.2 Dirac Field . . . . .	638
8.7 Angular Momentum . . . . .	640
8.8 Four-Dimensional Angular Momentum . . . . .	641
8.9 Spin Current . . . . .	643
8.9.1 Electromagnetic Fields . . . . .	643
8.9.2 Dirac Field . . . . .	646
8.10 Symmetric Energy-Momentum Tensor . . . . .	648
8.10.1 Gravitational Field . . . . .	650
8.11 Internal Symmetries . . . . .	651
8.11.1 U(1)-Symmetry and Charge Conservation . . . . .	651
8.11.2 SU( $N$ )-Symmetry . . . . .	652
8.11.3 Broken Internal Symmetries . . . . .	653
8.12 Generating the Symmetry Transformations of Quantum Fields . . .	653
8.13 Energy Momentum Tensor of a Relativistic Massive Point Particle .	655
8.14 Energy Momentum Tensor of a Massive Charged Particle in a Maxwell Field . . . . .	656
Notes and References . . . . .	659
<b>9 Scattering and Decay of Particles</b>	<b>660</b>
9.1 Quantum-Mechanical Description . . . . .	660
9.1.1 Schrödinger Picture . . . . .	660
9.1.2 Heisenberg Picture . . . . .	661

9.1.3	Interaction Picture . . . . .	662
9.1.4	Neumann-Liouville Expansion . . . . .	662
9.1.5	Møller Operators . . . . .	664
9.1.6	Lippmann-Schwinger Equation . . . . .	667
9.1.7	Discrete States . . . . .	669
9.1.8	Gell-Mann-Low Formulas . . . . .	670
9.2	Scattering by External Potential . . . . .	675
9.2.1	The $T$ -Matrix . . . . .	675
9.2.2	Asymptotic Behavior . . . . .	679
9.2.3	Partial Waves . . . . .	681
9.2.4	Off Shell $T$ -Matrix . . . . .	687
9.2.5	Cross Section . . . . .	690
9.2.6	Partial Wave Decomposition of Total Cross Section . . . . .	694
9.2.7	Dirac $\delta$ -Function Potential . . . . .	695
9.2.8	Spherical Square-Well Potential . . . . .	697
9.3	Two-Particle Scattering . . . . .	700
9.3.1	Center-of-Mass Scattering Cross Section . . . . .	701
9.3.2	Laboratory Scattering Cross Section . . . . .	703
9.4	Decay . . . . .	707
9.5	Optical Theorem . . . . .	707
9.6	Initial- and Final-State Interactions . . . . .	708
9.7	Tests of Time-Reversal Violations . . . . .	709
9.7.1	Strong and Electromagnetic Interactions . . . . .	710
9.7.2	Selection Rules in Weak Interactions . . . . .	711
9.7.3	Phase of Weak Amplitudes from Time-Reversal Invariance . . . . .	712
Appendix 9A	Green Function in Arbitrary Dimensions . . . . .	713
Appendix 9B	Partial Waves in Arbitrary Dimensions . . . . .	715
Appendix 9C	Spherical Square-Well Potential in $D$ Dimensions . . . . .	720
	Notes and References . . . . .	722
<b>10</b>	<b>Quantum Field Theoretic Perturbation Theory</b>	<b>723</b>
10.1	The Interacting $n$ -Point Function . . . . .	723
10.2	Perturbation Expansion for Green Functions . . . . .	725
10.3	Feynman Rules for $\phi^4$ -Theory . . . . .	727
10.3.1	The Vacuum Graphs . . . . .	729
10.4	The Two-Point Function . . . . .	732
10.5	The Four-Point Function . . . . .	734
10.6	Connected Green Functions . . . . .	736
10.6.1	One-Particle Irreducible Graphs . . . . .	740
10.6.2	Momentum Space Version of Diagrams . . . . .	742
10.7	Green Functions and Scattering Amplitudes . . . . .	744
10.8	Wick Rules for Scattering Amplitudes . . . . .	751
10.9	Thermal Perturbation Theory . . . . .	752
	Notes and References . . . . .	755

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<b>11</b>	<b>Extracting Finite Results from Perturbation Series. Regularization, Renormalization</b>	<b>757</b>
11.1	Vacuum Diagrams . . . . .	757
11.2	Two- and Four-Point Functions . . . . .	760
11.3	Divergences, Cutoff, and Counterterms . . . . .	762
11.4	Bare Theory and Multiplicative Renormalization . . . . .	769
11.5	Dimensional Regularization of Integrals . . . . .	773
11.6	Renormalization of Amplitudes . . . . .	787
11.7	Additive Renormalization of Vacuum Energy . . . . .	790
11.8	Generalization to $O(N)$ -Symmetric Models . . . . .	791
11.9	Finite $S$ -Matrix Elements . . . . .	796
	Appendix 11A Second Proof of Veltman's Integral Rule . . . . .	798
	Notes and References . . . . .	799
<b>12</b>	<b>Quantum Electrodynamics</b>	<b>801</b>
12.1	Gauge Invariant Interacting Theory . . . . .	801
12.1.1	Reminder of Classical Electrodynamics of Point Particles . . . . .	802
12.1.2	Electrodynamics and Quantum Mechanics . . . . .	804
12.1.3	Principle of Nonholonomic Gauge Invariance . . . . .	806
12.1.4	Electrodynamics and Relativistic Quantum Mechanics . . . . .	807
12.2	Noether's Theorem and Gauge Fields . . . . .	808
12.3	Quantization . . . . .	810
12.4	Perturbation Theory . . . . .	813
12.5	Ward-Takahashi Identity . . . . .	818
12.6	Magnetic Moment of Electron . . . . .	819
12.7	Decay of Atomic State . . . . .	823
12.8	Rutherford Scattering . . . . .	827
12.8.1	Classical Cross Section . . . . .	827
12.8.2	Quantum-Mechanical Born Approximation . . . . .	829
12.8.3	Relativistic Born Approximation: Mott Formula . . . . .	829
12.9	Compton Scattering . . . . .	833
12.9.1	Classical Result . . . . .	834
12.9.2	Klein-Nishina Formula . . . . .	835
12.10	Electron-Positron Annihilation . . . . .	840
12.11	Positronium Decay . . . . .	845
12.12	Bremsstrahlung . . . . .	846
12.12.1	Classical Bremsstrahlung . . . . .	846
12.12.2	Bremsstrahlung in Mott Scattering . . . . .	849
12.13	Electron-Electron Scattering . . . . .	852
12.14	Electron-Positron Scattering . . . . .	854
12.15	Anomalous Magnetic Moment of Electron and Muon . . . . .	857
12.15.1	Form Factors . . . . .	862
12.15.2	Charge Radius . . . . .	863
12.15.3	Anomalous Magnetic Moment . . . . .	864



12.16	Vacuum Polarization . . . . .	868
12.17	Dimensional Regularization . . . . .	872
12.18	Two-Dimensional QED . . . . .	873
12.19	Self-Energy of Electron . . . . .	874
12.20	Ward-Takahashi Identity . . . . .	877
12.21	Lamb Shift . . . . .	879
12.21.1	Rough Estimate of the Effect of Vacuum Fluctuations . . .	880
12.21.2	Relativistic Estimate . . . . .	882
12.21.3	Effect of Wave Functions . . . . .	883
12.21.4	Effect of the Anomalous Magnetic Moment . . . . .	891
Appendix 12A	Calculation of the Dirac Trace in Klein-Nishina Formula . .	894
Notes and References	. . . . .	897
<b>13</b>	<b>Formal Properties of Perturbation Theory</b>	<b>900</b>
13.1	Connectedness Structure of Feynman Diagrams . . . . .	900
13.2	Functional Differential Equations . . . . .	901
13.3	Decomposition of Green Functions into Connected Green Functions	903
13.4	Functional Differential Equation for $W[j]$ . . . . .	905
13.5	Iterative Solution . . . . .	905
13.6	Vertex Functions . . . . .	907
13.7	The Generating Functional for Vertex Functions . . . . .	907
13.8	Functional Differential Equation for $\Gamma[\Phi]$ . . . . .	912
13.9	Effective Action as Basis for Variational Calculations . . . . .	916
13.10	Effective Potential . . . . .	916
13.11	Higher Effective Actions . . . . .	917
13.12	High Orders in a Simple Model . . . . .	922
Notes and References	. . . . .	925
<b>14</b>	<b>Functional-Integral Representation of Quantum Field Theory</b>	<b>926</b>
14.1	Functional Fourier Transformations . . . . .	926
14.2	Gaussian Functional Integral . . . . .	928
14.3	Functional Formulation for Free Quantum Fields . . . . .	930
14.4	Interactions . . . . .	933
14.5	Euclidean Quantum Field Theory . . . . .	936
14.6	Functional Integral Representation for Fermions . . . . .	937
14.7	Relation Between $Z[j]$ and the Partition Function . . . . .	941
14.8	Bosons and Fermions in a Single State . . . . .	946
14.9	Free Energy of Free Scalar Fields . . . . .	947
14.10	Interacting Nonrelativistic Fields . . . . .	949
14.10.1	Functional Formulation . . . . .	951
14.10.2	Grand-Canonical Ensembles at Zero Temperature . . . . .	952
14.11	Interacting Relativistic Fields . . . . .	958
14.12	Plasma Oscillations . . . . .	960
14.12.1	General Formalism . . . . .	960

14.12.2	Physical Consequences . . . . .	964
14.13	Pair Fields . . . . .	968
14.14	Competition of Plasmon and Pair Fields . . . . .	975
14.15	Ambiguity in the Selection of Important Channels . . . . .	977
14.16	Gauge Fields and Gauge Fixing . . . . .	981
14.17	Nontrivial Gauge and Faddeev-Popov Ghosts . . . . .	989
14.18	Functional Formulation of Quantum Electrodynamics . . . . .	992
14.18.1	Decay Rate of Dirac Vacuum in Electromagnetic Fields . . . . .	993
14.18.2	Constant Electric and Magnetic Background Fields . . . . .	997
14.18.3	Decay Rate in a Constant Electromagnetic Field . . . . .	1000
14.18.4	Effective Action in a Purely Magnetic Field . . . . .	1001
14.18.5	Effective Action in a Purely Magnetic Field . . . . .	1001
14.18.6	Effective Action in a Purely Magnetic Field . . . . .	1002
14.18.7	Heisenberg-Euler Lagrangian . . . . .	1003
14.18.8	Alternative Derivation for a Constant Magnetic Field . . . . .	1006
Appendix 14A	Propagator of the Bilocal Pair Field . . . . .	1010
Appendix 14B	Fluctuations around the Composite Field . . . . .	1012
Appendix 14C	Two-Loop Heisenberg-Euler Effective Action . . . . .	1014
	Notes and References . . . . .	1015
<b>15</b>	<b>Systematic Graphical Construction of Feynman Diagrams . . . . .</b>	<b>1019</b>
15.1	Generalized Scalar $\phi^4$ -Theory . . . . .	1020
15.2	Basic Graphical Operations . . . . .	1022
15.2.1	Cutting Lines . . . . .	1022
15.2.2	Removing Lines . . . . .	1025
15.3	Perturbation Theory for Vacuum Energy . . . . .	1025
15.4	Functional Differential Equation for Free Energy in Scalar Theory . . . . .	1027
15.5	Recursion Relation and Graphical Solution in Scalar Theory . . . . .	1028
15.6	Scalar Yukawa-like Theory . . . . .	1031
15.7	Perturbation Theory for the Yukawa-like Theory . . . . .	1032
15.8	Functional Differential Equation for the Free Energy in Yukawa-like Theory . . . . .	1032
15.9	Recursion Relation and Graphical Solution in the Yukawa-like Theory . . . . .	1033
15.10	Matrix Representation of Diagrams . . . . .	1035
15.11	Practical Generation . . . . .	1037
15.11.1	Connected Vacuum Diagrams . . . . .	1037
15.11.2	Two- and Four-Point Functions from Cutting Lines . . . . .	1040
15.11.3	Two- and Four-Point Function from Removing Lines . . . . .	1041
Appendix 15A	Tables . . . . .	1043
	Notes and References . . . . .	1052

<b>16 Spontaneous Symmetry Breakdown</b>	<b>1053</b>
16.1 Scalar $O(N)$ -Symmetric $\phi^4$ -Theory . . . . .	1053
16.2 Nambu-Goldstone Particles . . . . .	1060
16.2.1 The Mechanism . . . . .	1060
16.2.2 General Considerations . . . . .	1061
16.2.3 Experimental Consequences . . . . .	1063
16.3 Domain Walls in the $O(1)$ -Symmetric Theory . . . . .	1064
16.4 Vortex Lines in the $O(2)$ -Symmetric Theory . . . . .	1069
Notes and References . . . . .	1076
<b>17 Scalar Quantum Electrodynamics</b>	<b>1077</b>
17.1 Action and Generating Functional . . . . .	1077
17.2 Meissner-Ochsenfeld-Higgs Effect . . . . .	1080
17.3 Spatially Varying Ground States . . . . .	1087
17.4 Two Natural Length Scales . . . . .	1088
17.5 Planar Domain Wall . . . . .	1090
17.6 Surface Energy . . . . .	1095
17.7 Single Vortex Line and Critical Field $H_{c1}$ . . . . .	1096
17.8 Critical Field $H_{c2}$ where Superconductivity is Destroyed . . . . .	1102
17.9 Order of Superconductive Phase Transition . . . . .	1106
17.10 Quartic Interaction and Tricritical Point . . . . .	1106
17.11 Four-Dimensional Version . . . . .	1108
17.12 Spontaneous Mass Generation in a Massless Theory . . . . .	1110
Notes and References . . . . .	1111
<b>18 Exactly Solvable <math>O(N)</math>-Symmetric <math>\phi^4</math>-Theory for Large <math>N</math></b>	<b>1112</b>
18.1 Introduction of a Collective Field . . . . .	1112
18.2 The Limit of Large $N$ . . . . .	1115
18.3 Variational Equations . . . . .	1121
18.3.1 Non-trivial Ground States . . . . .	1123
18.4 Special Features of Two Dimensions . . . . .	1127
18.5 Experimental Consequences . . . . .	1128
18.6 Correlation Functions for Large $N$ . . . . .	1132
18.7 No-Tachyon Theorem . . . . .	1134
Notes and References . . . . .	1134
<b>19 Nonlinear <math>\sigma</math>-Model</b>	<b>1136</b>
19.1 Definition of Classical Heisenberg Model . . . . .	1136
19.2 Spherical Model . . . . .	1139
19.3 Free Energy and Gap Equation in $D > 2$ Dimensions . . . . .	1140
19.3.1 High-Temperature Phase . . . . .	1142
19.3.2 Low-Temperature Phase . . . . .	1143
19.4 Approaching the Critical Point . . . . .	1145
19.5 Physical Properties of the Bare Temperature . . . . .	1146

19.6	Spherical Model on Lattice . . . . .	1148
19.7	Background Field Treatment of Cold Phase . . . . .	1152
19.8	Quantum Statistics at Nonzero Temperature of Nonlinear $\sigma$ -Model . . . . .	1154
19.8.1	Two-Dimensional Model . . . . .	1155
19.8.2	Four-Dimensional Model . . . . .	1159
19.8.3	Temperature Behavior in Any Dimension . . . . .	1160
19.9	Criteria for the Onset of Fluctuations in Ginzburg-Landau Theories . . . . .	1165
19.9.1	Ginzburg's Criterion . . . . .	1166
19.9.2	Azimuthal Correction to Ginzburg's Criterion . . . . .	1167
19.9.3	Experimental Consequences . . . . .	1169
	Notes and References . . . . .	1170
<b>20</b>	<b>The Renormalization Group</b>	<b>1172</b>
20.1	Example for Redundancy in Parametrization of Renormalized Theory . . . . .	1173
20.2	Renormalization Scheme . . . . .	1175
20.3	The Renormalization Group Equation . . . . .	1177
20.4	Calculation of Coefficient Functions from Counter Terms . . . . .	1178
20.5	Solution of Renormalization Group Equations for Vertex Functions . . . . .	1182
20.6	Renormalization Group for Effective Action and Effective Potential . . . . .	1185
20.7	Approach to Scaling . . . . .	1188
20.8	Explicit Solution of RGE Close to $D = 4$ Dimensions . . . . .	1190
20.9	Further Critical Relations . . . . .	1193
20.10	Comparison of Scaling Relations with Experiments . . . . .	1197
20.11	Higher-Order Expansion . . . . .	1199
20.12	Mean-Field Results for Critical Indices . . . . .	1201
20.13	Effective Potential in the Critical Regime to Order $\varepsilon$ . . . . .	1203
20.14	$O(N)$ -Symmetric Theory . . . . .	1208
20.15	Direct Scaling Form in the Limit of Large $N \rightarrow \infty$ . . . . .	1211
20.16	QED and Landau Ghosts . . . . .	1212
	Notes and References . . . . .	1214
<b>21</b>	<b>Critical Properties of Nonlinear <math>\sigma</math>-Model</b>	<b>1215</b>
21.1	Introductory Remarks . . . . .	1215
21.2	Perturbation Theory . . . . .	1217
21.3	Symmetry Properties of the Renormalized Effective Action . . . . .	1222
21.4	Critical Behavior in $D = 2 + \varepsilon$ Dimensions . . . . .	1225
21.5	Critical Exponents . . . . .	1226
21.6	Two- and Three-Loop Results . . . . .	1232
21.7	Variational Resummation of $\varepsilon$ -Expansions . . . . .	1235
21.7.1	Strong-Coupling Theory . . . . .	1236
21.7.2	Interpolation . . . . .	1239
21.8	Relation of $\sigma$ -Model to Quantum Mechanics of a Point Particle on a Sphere . . . . .	1245
21.9	Generalization of the Model . . . . .	1248

Notes and References . . . . .	1250
<b>22 Functional-Integral Calculation of Effective Action. Loop Expansion</b>	<b>1253</b>
22.1 General Formalism . . . . .	1253
22.2 Quadratic Fluctuations . . . . .	1256
22.3 Massless Theory and Widom Scaling . . . . .	1265
22.4 Critical Coupling Strength . . . . .	1267
22.5 Resumming the Effective Potential . . . . .	1270
22.6 Fractional Gross-Pitaevskii Equation . . . . .	1272
22.7 Summary . . . . .	1273
Appendix 22A Effective Action to Second Order in $\hbar$ . . . . .	1274
Appendix 22B Effective Action to All Orders in $\hbar$ . . . . .	1277
Notes and References . . . . .	1279
<b>23 Exactly Solvable <math>O(N)</math>-Symmetric Four-Fermion Theory in <math>2 + \epsilon</math> Dimensions</b>	<b>1281</b>
23.1 Four-Fermion Self-Interaction . . . . .	1281
23.2 Spontaneous Symmetry Breakdown . . . . .	1286
23.3 Dimensionally Transmuted Coupling Constant . . . . .	1287
23.4 Scattering Amplitude for Fermions . . . . .	1289
23.5 Nonzero Bare Fermion Mass . . . . .	1295
23.6 Pairing Model and Dynamically Generated Goldstone Bosons . . . . .	1297
23.7 Spontaneously Broken Symmetry . . . . .	1304
23.8 Relation between Pairing and Gross-Neveu Model . . . . .	1307
23.9 Comparison with the $O(N)$ -Symmetric $\phi^4$ -Theory . . . . .	1309
23.10 Two Phase Transitions in the Chiral Gross-Neveu Model . . . . .	1313
23.11 Finite-Temperature Properties . . . . .	1316
Notes and References . . . . .	1327
<b>24 Internal Symmetries of Strong Interactions</b>	<b>1330</b>
24.1 Classification of Elementary Particles . . . . .	1330
24.2 Isospin in Nuclear Physics . . . . .	1334
24.3 Isospin in Pion Physics . . . . .	1338
24.4 $SU(3)$ -Symmetry . . . . .	1341
24.5 Newer Quarks . . . . .	1361
24.6 Tensor Representations and Young Tableaux . . . . .	1362
24.7 Effective Interactions among Hadrons . . . . .	1367
24.7.1 The Pion-Nucleon Interaction . . . . .	1367
24.7.2 The Decay $\Delta(1232) \rightarrow N\pi$ . . . . .	1370
24.7.3 Vector Meson Decay $\rho(770) \rightarrow \pi\pi$ . . . . .	1373
24.7.4 Vector Meson Decays $\omega(783) \rightarrow \rho\pi$ and $\omega(783) \rightarrow \pi\pi\pi$ . . . . .	1374
24.7.5 Vector Meson Decays $K^*(892) \rightarrow K\pi$ . . . . .	1374
24.7.6 Axial Vector Meson Decay $a_1(1270) \rightarrow \rho\pi$ . . . . .	1375

24.7.7	Coupling of $\rho(770)$ -Meson to Nucleons . . . . .	1376
	Appendix 24A Useful SU(3)-Formulas . . . . .	1377
	Appendix 24B Decay Rate for $a_1 \rightarrow \rho\pi$ . . . . .	1379
	Notes and References . . . . .	1379
<b>25</b>	<b>Symmetries Linking Internal and Spacetime Properties</b>	<b>1381</b>
25.1	Approximate SU(4)-Symmetry of Nuclear Forces . . . . .	1381
25.2	Approximate SU(6)-Symmetry in Strong Interactions . . . . .	1388
25.3	From SU(6) to Current Algebra . . . . .	1399
25.4	Supersymmetry . . . . .	1405
	Notes and References . . . . .	1407
<b>26</b>	<b>Hadronization of Quark Theories</b>	<b>1408</b>
26.1	Introduction . . . . .	1408
26.2	Abelian Quark Gluon Theory . . . . .	1410
26.3	The Limit of Heavy Gluons . . . . .	1427
26.4	More Quarks . . . . .	1442
26.5	Summary . . . . .	1443
26.6	Baryons . . . . .	1443
	Appendix 26A Remarks on the Bethe-Salpeter Equation . . . . .	1444
	Appendix 26B Vertices for Heavy Gluons . . . . .	1448
	Appendix 26C Some Algebra . . . . .	1450
	Notes and References . . . . .	1452
<b>27</b>	<b>Weak Interactions</b>	<b>1457</b>
27.1	Fermi Theory . . . . .	1457
27.2	Lepton-Number Conservation . . . . .	1461
27.3	Cabibbo Angle . . . . .	1462
27.4	Cabibbo Mass Matrix . . . . .	1463
27.5	Heavy Vector Bosons . . . . .	1464
27.6	Standard Model of Electroweak Interactions . . . . .	1465
27.7	Masses from Meissner-Ochsenfeld-Higgs Effect . . . . .	1469
27.8	Lepton Masses . . . . .	1471
27.9	More Leptons . . . . .	1471
27.10	Weak Interaction of Hadrons . . . . .	1472
27.11	Quantum Oscillations . . . . .	1474
	27.11.1 Oscillations between Neutral Kaons . . . . .	1474
	27.11.2 Mesons containing the Bottom Quark . . . . .	1477
	27.11.3 General Flavor Mixing . . . . .	1477
27.12	Neutrino Mixing . . . . .	1478
27.13	Simple Theory of Two-Neutrino Mixing . . . . .	1479
27.14	Experiments . . . . .	1480
27.15	Entangled Wavefunction . . . . .	1482
	Notes and References . . . . .	1483

<b>28 Nonabelian Gauge Theory of Strong Interactions</b>	<b>1486</b>
28.1 Local Color Symmetry . . . . .	1486
28.2 Gluon Action . . . . .	1488
28.3 Quantization in the Coulomb Gauge . . . . .	1489
28.4 General Functional Quantization of Gauge Fields . . . . .	1496
28.5 Equivalence of Landau and Coulomb Gauges . . . . .	1502
28.6 Perturbative QCD . . . . .	1505
28.7 Approximate Chiral Symmetry . . . . .	1507
Notes and References . . . . .	1509
<b>29 Cosmology with General Curvature-Dependent Lagrangian</b>	<b>1511</b>
29.1 Simple Curvature-Saturated Model . . . . .	1512
29.2 Field Equations of Curvature-Saturated Gravity . . . . .	1514
29.3 Effective Gravitational Constant and Weak-Field Behavior . . . . .	1516
29.4 Bicknell's Theorem . . . . .	1516
Appendix 29A Newtonian Limit in a Nonflat Background . . . . .	1518
Notes and References . . . . .	1520
<b>30 Einstein Gravity from Fluctuating Conformal Gravity</b>	<b>1522</b>
30.1 Classical Conformal Gravity . . . . .	1524
30.2 Quantization . . . . .	1525
30.3 Outlook . . . . .	1535
Appendix 30A Some Algebra . . . . .	1535
Appendix 30B Quantization without Tachyons . . . . .	1536
Notes and References . . . . .	1542
<b>31 Purely Geometric Part of Dark Matter</b>	<b>1545</b>
Notes and References . . . . .	1552
<b>Index</b>	<b>1555</b>

# List of Figures

1.1	Probability distribution of a particle wave behind a double-slit . . .	12
1.2	Relevant function $\sum_{n=-N}^N e^{2\pi i \mu n}$ in Poisson's summation formula . .	30
1.3	Illustration of time-ordering procedure . . . . .	37
1.4	Triangular closed contour for a Cauchy integral . . . . .	78
2.1	Average Bose occupation number . . . . .	123
2.2	Average Fermi occupation number . . . . .	123
2.3	Temperature behavior of the specific heat of a free Fermi gas . . . .	131
2.4	Temperature behavior of the chemical potential of a free Bose gas .	132
2.5	Temperature behavior of the fraction of zero-momentum bosons in a free Bose gas . . . . .	133
2.6	Temperature behavior of the specific heat of a free Bose gas . . . .	135
2.7	Rotating trap potential for $\omega^2 > 0$ and $\omega^2 < 0$ . . . . .	142
2.8	Contour $C$ in the complex $z$ -plane . . . . .	148
2.9	Finite-size corrections to the critical temperature for $N > 300$ . . .	172
3.1	Typical values of mass, $s$ -wave scattering length $a \equiv a_s$ , and number of atoms in a condensate of various atomic gases . . . . .	178
3.2	Plot of the quasiparticle energies as function of momenta in an in- teracting Bose gas . . . . .	187
3.3	Common volume of two spheres at a distance $\mathbf{q}$ in momentum space	193
3.4	Energy density of an electron gas in uniform background of positive charge . . . . .	195
3.5	Historical evolution of critical temperatures of superconductivity . .	197
3.6	Approximate energy of a free electron near the Fermi surface in a grand-canonical ensemble . . . . .	199
3.7	Gap in the energy spectrum caused by attraction of pairs of electrons with opposite spin and momenta . . . . .	200
3.8	Detail of the gap in energy spectrum . . . . .	201
3.9	Solution of the gap equation for a weak attraction between electrons	210
3.10	Plot of the gap function and of the chemical potential . . . . .	211
3.11	Temperature dependence of the normal fraction $\rho_{\mathbf{n}}/\rho$ in a Bose gas .	215
3.12	Reduced gap $s \equiv \bar{\Sigma}/\varepsilon_a$ as a function of the reduced $s$ -wave scattering length $\hat{a}_s = 8\pi a_s/a = 8\pi a_s \rho^{1/3}$ . . . . .	223



3.13	Reduced energy per particle $w_1^e = W_1/N\varepsilon_a$ as a function of the reduced $s$ -wave scattering length, compared with Bogoliubov's weak-coupling result . . . . .	223
3.14	Temperature dependence of the normal particle density . . . . .	231
3.15	Diagrams picturing the Wick contractions . . . . .	233
4.1	Six leptons and quarks . . . . .	312
4.2	Asymmetry observed in the distribution of electrons from the $\beta$ -decay of polarized ${}^{60}_{27}\text{Co}$ . . . . .	314
4.3	Effect of raising and lowering operators $\hat{L}_+$ and $\hat{L}_-$ upon the states $ s, m\rangle$ . . . . .	357
4.4	Triangle formed by rapidities in a hyperbolic space. The sum of angles is smaller than $180^\circ$ . The angular defect yields the angle of the Thomas precession . . . . .	378
5.1	Two equal masses $M$ oscillating at the ends of a spring as a source of gravitational radiation . . . . .	407
5.2	Two spherical masses in circular orbits around their center of mass . . . . .	409
5.3	Gravitational amplitudes arriving on Earth from possible sources . . . . .	411
5.4	Shift of time of the periastron passage of PSR 1913+16 . . . . .	412
5.5	Two pulsars orbiting around each other . . . . .	413
5.6	Two masses in a Keplerian orbit around the common center-of-mass . . . . .	413
5.7	Energy emitted by two point-masses on a circular orbit around each other . . . . .	414
5.8	Particle falling radially towards a large mass . . . . .	415
5.9	Spectrum of the gravitational radiation emitted by a particle of mass $m$ falling radially into a black hole of mass $M$ . . . . .	416
5.10	Distortions of a circular array of mass points caused by the passage of a gravitational quadrupole wave . . . . .	421
5.11	Field lines of tidal forces of a gravitational wave . . . . .	422
5.12	Two chirps detected by the LIGO collaboration . . . . .	424
5.13	Gyroscope carrying a frame $x', z'$ around a polar orbit with a fixed orientation with respect to the fixed stars . . . . .	432
6.1	Hydrogen spectrum according to Dirac's theory . . . . .	458
7.1	Pole positions in the complex $p^0$ -plane in the integral representations of Feynman propagators . . . . .	495
7.2	Wick rotation of the contour of integration in the complex $p^0$ -plane . . . . .	495
7.3	Integration contours in the complex $p^0$ -plane of the Fourier integral for various propagators . . . . .	507
7.4	Different coupling schemes for two-particle states of total angular momentum $j$ and helicity $m$ . . . . .	519
7.5	Geometry of the silver plates for the calculation of the Casimir effect . . . . .	579

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9.1	Behavior of wave function for different positions of a bound state near the continuum . . . . .	695
9.2	Behavior of binding energy and scattering length in an attractive square-well potential . . . . .	699
9.3	Geometry of particle beams in a collider . . . . .	706
11.1	Singularities in the complex $q_0$ -plane of a Feynman propagator . . .	797
12.1	An electron on the mass shell absorbing several photons . . . . .	816
12.2	An electron on the mass shell absorbing several photons, plus one additional photon . . . . .	816
12.3	An internal electron loop absorbing several photons, plus an additional photon, and leaving again on the mass shell . . . . .	817
12.4	Transition of an atomic state from a state $n$ with energy $E_n$ to a lower state $n'$ with energy $E_{n'}$ , thereby emitting a photon with a frequency $\omega = (E_{n'} - E_n)/\hbar$ . . . . .	823
12.5	Kinematics of Rutherford scattering . . . . .	828
12.6	Lowest-order Feynman diagrams contributing to Compton Scattering and giving rise to the Klein-Nishina formula . . . . .	833
12.7	Illustration of the photon polarization sum in Compton scattering .	837
12.8	Ratio between total relativistic Compton cross section and nonrelativistic Thomson cross section . . . . .	840
12.9	Lowest-order Feynman diagrams contributing to electron-positron annihilation . . . . .	840
12.10	Illustration of the photon polarization sum in electron-positron annihilation . . . . .	843
12.11	Electron-positron annihilation cross section . . . . .	844
12.12	Lowest-order Feynman diagrams contributing to the decay of parapositronium decay . . . . .	845
12.13	Lowest-order Feynman Diagrams contributing to decay of orthopositronium decay . . . . .	846
12.14	Trajectories in the simplest classical Bremsstrahlung process: An electron changing abruptly its momentum . . . . .	847
12.15	Lowest-order Feynman diagrams contributing to Bremsstrahlung. The vertical photon line indicates the nuclear Coulomb potential . .	850
12.16	The angles $\theta'$ , $\theta$ , $\varphi$ in the Bethe-Heitler cross section formula . . . .	851
12.17	Lowest-order Feynman diagrams contributing to electron-electron scattering . . . . .	852
12.18	Kinematics of electron-electron scattering in the center of mass frame	853
12.19	General form of diagrams contributing to electron-positron scattering	854
12.20	Lowest-order contributions to electron-positron scattering . . . . .	855
12.21	Experimental data for electron-electron and electron-positron scattering at $\theta = 90^\circ$ as a function of the incident electron energy . . . .	856
12.22	Cross section for Bhabha scattering at high energy . . . . .	857

12.23	Vertex correction responsible for the anomalous magnetic moment . . . . .	858
12.24	Leading hadronic vacuum polarization corrections to $a_\mu$ . . . . .	866
12.25	One-loop electroweak radiative corrections to $a_\mu$ . . . . .	867
12.26	Measured values of $a_\mu$ and prediction of the Standard Model (SM) . . . . .	868
12.27	Lowest-order Feynman diagram for the vacuum polarization . . . . .	868
12.28	Lowest-order Feynman diagram for the self-energy of the electron . . . . .	875
12.29	Diagrammatic content in the calculation of the energy shift via Schrödinger wave function . . . . .	886
13.1	Graphical solution of the recursion relation (13.30) for the generating functional of all connected Green functions . . . . .	906
13.2	Tree decomposition of connected Green functions into one-particle irreducible parts . . . . .	911
13.3	Graphical solution of the functional differential equation (13.64) . . . . .	914
13.4	Recursion relation for two-particle-irreducible graphs in the effective action . . . . .	920
13.5	The anharmonic model integral $Z$ as a function of $g' = g/\omega^4$ . . . . .	923
13.6	Approximations to $\beta F$ obtained from the extrema of the higher ef- fective action . . . . .	924
14.1	Pure-current term of the collective action . . . . .	963
14.2	Non-polynomial self-interaction terms of plasmons . . . . .	963
14.3	Free plasmon propagator . . . . .	964
14.4	Fundamental particles entering any diagram only via the external currents . . . . .	970
14.5	Free pair field following the Bethe-Salpeter equation . . . . .	972
14.6	Free pair propagator . . . . .	974
14.7	Self-interaction terms of the non-polynomial pair action . . . . .	975
16.1	Effective potential of the $\phi^4$ -theory for $N = 2$ in mean-field approx- imation . . . . .	1056
16.2	Magnetization $\Phi_0$ in mean-field approximation as a function of the temperature ratio $T/T_c^{\text{MF}}$ . . . . .	1057
16.3	Magnetization $\Phi_j$ as a function of the external source $j$ in mean-field approximation . . . . .	1059
16.4	Plot of the symmetric double-well potential . . . . .	1065
16.5	Classical kink solution in double-well potential connecting the two degenerate maxima in the reversed potential . . . . .	1066
16.6	Reversed double-well potential governing the motion of the position $\phi$ as a function of the imaginary time $x$ . . . . .	1067
16.7	Reduced order parameter $\bar{\rho} =  \varphi / \varphi_0 $ around a vortex line . . . . .	1071
17.1	Dependence of order parameter $\rho$ and magnetic field $H$ on the re- duced distance $z$ between the normal and superconductive phases . . . . .	1092
17.2	Order parameter $\rho$ and magnetic field $h$ for a vortex line . . . . .	1100

17.3	Critical field $h_{c1}$ where a vortex line of strength $n$ begins invading a type-II superconductor . . . . .	1101
17.4	Spatial distribution magnetization of the order parameter $\rho(\mathbf{x})$ in a typical mixed state in which the vortex lines form a hexagonal lattice	1102
17.5	Effective potential for the order parameter $\rho$ with fluctuation-generated cubic term . . . . .	1107
17.6	Effective potential for the order parameter $\rho$ in four spacetime dimensions . . . . .	1109
19.1	Free energy as a function of $\lambda$ for $D = 2$ . . . . .	1141
19.2	Free energy as a function of $\lambda$ for $D > 2$ . . . . .	1143
19.3	Solution of the gap equation (19.48) for $\epsilon = 1$ and large volume $L^D$	1145
19.4	Temperature behavior of the correlation length . . . . .	1146
20.1	Curves in the $(\mu, g)$ -plane corresponding to the same physical fermion mass . . . . .	1175
20.2	Flow of the coupling constant $g(\sigma)$ as the scale parameter $\sigma$ approaches zero (infrared limit) . . . . .	1190
20.3	Flow of the coupling constant $\alpha_\mu$ as the scale parameter $\mu$ increases (ultraviolet limit) . . . . .	1213
21.1	Two-loop diagrams . . . . .	1232
21.2	Three-loop diagrams . . . . .	1232
21.3	Integrands of the Padé-Borel transform for the Padé approximants .	1236
21.4	Inverse of the critical exponent $\nu$ for the classical Heisenberg model in the O(3)-universality class plotted as a function of $\epsilon = 4 - D$ . . .	1243
21.5	Inverse of the critical exponent $\nu$ for the O(3)-universality class plotted as a function of $\epsilon = 4 - D$ . . . . .	1244
21.6	Inverse of the critical exponent $\nu$ for the O(5)-universality class plotted as a function of $\epsilon = 4 - D$ . . . . .	1244
21.7	Highest approximations ( $M = 4$ ) for $n = 3, 4, 5$ , and the $1/n$ -expansions to order $1/n^2$ . . . . .	1244
21.8	Inverse of the critical exponent $\nu$ for the O(1)-universality class (of the Ising model) plotted as a function of $\epsilon = 4 - D$ . . . . .	1245
22.1	Solution of the variational equation (22.118) . . . . .	1272
22.2	Condensate density from the Gross-Pitaevskii equation and its fractional version . . . . .	1274
23.1	One-loop Feynman diagram in the inverse propagator of the $\sigma'$ -field	1289
23.2	Function $J(z) + 2$ in the denominator of the $\sigma'$ -propagator . . . . .	1291
23.3	Two transition lines in the $N$ - $g$ -plane of the chiral Gross-Neveu model in $2 + \epsilon$ dimensions . . . . .	1316
23.4	Solution of the temperature-dependent gap equation . . . . .	1320

24.1	Total and elastic $\pi^+$ -proton cross section . . . . .	1332
24.2	Total and elastic $\pi^-$ -proton cross section . . . . .	1333
24.3	Photon-proton and photon-deuteron total cross sections . . . . .	1334
24.4	Mirror nuclei ${}_5\text{B}^{11}$ and ${}_6\text{C}^{11}$ with their excited states . . . . .	1335
24.5	Singlets and triplets of isospin in the nuclei ${}_6\text{C}^{14}$ , ${}_7\text{N}^{14}$ , ${}_8\text{O}^{14}$ . . . . .	1337
24.6	Pseudoscalar meson octet states associated with the triplet of pions. The same picture holds for the vector meson octet states with the replacement (24.62) . . . . .	1343
24.7	Baryon octet states associated with nucleons . . . . .	1344
24.8	Baryon decuplet states associated with the first resonance of nucleons	1345
24.9	Quark content of the pseudoscalar meson octet . . . . .	1347
24.10	Effect of raising and lowering operators on quark and antiquark states	1350
24.11	Addition of the fundamental weights in product representation space of 3 and $\bar{3}$ vectors . . . . .	1351
24.12	States of the $\bar{3}$ -representation . . . . .	1352
24.13	Quark-antiquark content of the meson octet . . . . .	1353
24.14	Combination of indices $a$ in the pseudoscalar octet field $M_a^\dagger$ . . . . .	1354
24.15	Quark content in the reduction of the product $3 \times 3 = 6 + \bar{3}$ . . . . .	1355
24.16	Octet and singlet states obtained from $3 \times \bar{3}$ . . . . .	1356
24.17	Irreducible three-quark states 10 and 8 in the product $3 \times 6$ . . . . .	1357
24.18	The four quarks $u, d, s, c$ and their position in the three-dimensional weight space . . . . .	1362
25.1	Would-be SU(4) -partner of the deuteron, with spin-1 and isospin-0 .	1385
25.2	Pseudoscalar and vector mesons of the 35-representation of SU(6) .	1390
25.3	SU(3)-content of particles in the 56-representation of SU(6) . . . . .	1391
25.4	Nucleon resonances of negative parity in the 70-representation of SU(6) . . . . .	1392
25.5	Octet of spin-parity $\frac{1}{2}^+$ -baryons . . . . .	1393
26.1	Ladder diagrams summed by a Bethe-Salpeter equation . . . . .	1417
26.2	Ladder diagrams summed in the tadpole term . . . . .	1418
26.3	Rainbow diagrams in the tadpole term . . . . .	1418
26.4	Ladder of gluon exchanges summed in a meson tadpole diagram . .	1419
26.5	Gluon diagrams contained in a three-meson vertex . . . . .	1421
26.6	Three-meson vertex drawn in two alternative ways . . . . .	1422
26.7	Quark-gluon exchanges summed in meson exchange diagrams . . . .	1423
26.8	Quark-gluon diagrams summed in a meson loop diagram . . . . .	1424
26.9	Multi-meson emission from a quark line . . . . .	1424
26.10	Twisted exchange of a meson between two quark lines . . . . .	1425
26.11	Vector meson dominance in the coupling of an external photon to a quark line . . . . .	1425
26.12	Vector meson dominance in a photon propagator . . . . .	1426
26.13	Gluon diagrams in a meson propagator . . . . .	1426

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26.14	Diagrams in the Bethe-Salpeter equation . . . . .	1445
26.15	Momenta in the integral equation . . . . .	1445
27.1	Quark diagrams for $K^+$ and $K^0$ decays involving strangeness changing neutral currents . . . . .	1473
27.2	Diagrams for the $K^0 \rightarrow \mu^+ \mu^-$ decay with compensating strangeness-changing neutral currents . . . . .	1473
27.3	Oscillation of decay rate into $\pi^+ \pi^-$ of $K^0$ -beam . . . . .	1476
27.4	Asymmetry of the number of mesons as a function of time . . . . .	1476
27.5	Oscillations of decay rate for the processes (148127.141148027.5) and (148127.142148027.5). The period is in both cases roughly 7 sec. The inserts show the frequency analyses. Plots are from Ref. [27]. . . . .	1481
27.6	The upper KamLAND regime of 2006 [36] is compatible with the present result $\Delta m^2 \approx 22.5 \times 10^{-5} \text{eV}^2$ . . . . .	1481
28.1	Propagators in the Yang-Mills theory . . . . .	1502
28.2	Vertices in the Yang-Mills theory . . . . .	1502
28.3	Flow of the coupling constant $\alpha_s$ towards the origin as the scale parameter $\mu$ approaches infinity (ultraviolet limit) . . . . .	1507
29.1	Curvature-saturated Lagrangian . . . . .	1514
29.2	Effective gravitational constant . . . . .	1516
29.3	Potential $V(\psi)$ associated with the curvature-saturated action via Bicknell's theorem . . . . .	1518
30.1	Calculation of Feynman propagator . . . . .	1537
30.2	Calculation of Feynman propagator without tachyons . . . . .	1539
31.1	Details of the fits to the velocity data. Filled triangles refer to the northern half of the galaxy, open squares to the southern half. . . . .	1545
31.2	Velocity curve (points) of the galaxy M33 and comparison with a best fit model calculation . . . . .	1546
31.3	Various types of matter in the universe . . . . .	1546
31.4	Various contributions to Dark Matter . . . . .	1547

## List of Tables

4.1	Transformation properties of various composite fields . . . . .	325
4.2	Lowest Clebsch-Gordan coefficients . . . . .	381
5.1	Binary systems as sources of gravitational radiation . . . . .	410
5.2	Some observed parameters of PSR 1913+16 . . . . .	412
5.3	Typical astrophysical sources of gravitational radiation . . . . .	417
12.1	Different contributions to $a_{\mu}^{\text{str}}(\text{vac. pol.})$ in the integral 12.433 . . . .	867
15.1	Vacuum diagrams. Connected diagrams with their multiplicities in the $\phi^4$ -theory with their multiplicities up to five loops . . . . .	1043
15.2	Two-point functions. Connected diagrams with their multiplicities in the $\phi^4$ -theory up to four loops . . . . .	1044
15.3	Four-point functions. Connected diagrams with their multiplicities in the $\phi^4$ -theory up to three loops . . . . .	1045
15.4	Vacuum diagrams. Connected graphs with their multiplicities in the Yukawa-like $\phi^2 A$ -theory . . . . .	1047
15.5	Connected <i>vacuum</i> diagrams. Unique matrix representation . . . . .	1048
15.6	Connected <i>two-point</i> functions. Unique matrix representation . . . . .	1049
15.7	Connected <i>four-point</i> functions. Unique matrix representation . . . . .	1050
17.1	Different critical magnetic fields for various superconducting materials	1105
19.1	Values of the lattice Yukawa potential $v_l^D(\mathbf{0})$ of mass $l^2$ at the origin for different dimensions and $l^2$ . . . . .	1149
21.1	Coefficients $b_n(\hat{g}_0)$ of the strong-coupling expansion . . . . .	1239
21.2	Coefficients of the successive extension of the expansion coefficients for $n = 3$ . . . . .	1241
21.3	Coefficients of the successive extension of the expansion coefficients for $n = 4$ . . . . .	1241
21.4	Coefficients of the successive extension of the expansion coefficients for $n = 5$ . . . . .	1241
21.5	Coefficients of the successive extension of the expansion coefficients for $n = 1$ . . . . .	1241
24.1	Masses and lifetimes of the octet states associated with the isodoublet of nucleons . . . . .	1344

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24.2	Structure constants of SU(3)	1348
24.3	The symmetric couplings $d_{abc}$	1349
24.4	List of Quarks and their properties.	1361
24.5	Isoscalar factors of SU(3)	1378
25.1	Action of the different interchange operators	1382
25.2	Action of spin and isospin operators in the expansion (25.8)	1383
25.3	Eigenvalues of charge and other operators on quark states	1394
27.1	List of leptons and their properties.	1472





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