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By Thomas F. Quantum mechanics is the new language physicists use to describe the things the world is made of and how they interact. It is the basic language of atomic, molecular, solid-state, nuclear, and particle physics. Once found, it was developed quickly, then extended and applied with continuing success as each new area of physics grew.

It emerged after a quarter century of work in atomic physics in which experiments revealed properties of the atomic world that could not be understood with the existing theories and led physicists into new ways of thinking. The first steps toward the new language were taken in by Werner Heisenberg, then Max Born and Pascual Jordan, those three in collaboration, and Paul Dirac.

Born was one of the first people to appreciate what was happening. He expected a new mathematical language, a quantum mechanics, would be needed for atomic physics, and he had the mathematical knowledge to develop it [1—3]. At 42, Born was an established physicist, a professor at Göttingen. The logical difficulty became ever more acute. This Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms was brought to a sudden end by Heisenberg...

He... replaced guesswork by a mathematical rule. To me the decisive part in his work is the requirement that one must find a rule whereby from a given array... the array for the square... may be found or, in Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms, the multiplication law of such arrays. By consideration of... examples... he found this rule... This was in the summer of Heisenberg... took leave of absence... and handed over his paper Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms me for publication... Such quadratic arrays are quite familiar to mathematicians and Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms called matrices, in association with a definite rule of multiplication.

It was easy to guess what the remaining elements must be, namely, null; and immediately there stood before me the strange formula. This is one of the fundamental equations of quantum mechanics.

In it Q represents a position coordinate of a particle, P represents the momentum Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms the particle in the same direction, and i and h are fixed numbers.

For an electron in a hydrogen atom, typical values for Q and P are 5×10^{-9} cm and 2×10^{-9} g. These are small but otherwise ordinary physical quantities. This equation says they are not the same. That is indeed strange. That is Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms small, so the equation says the difference between QP and PQ is small, but not zero. There is something else that is strange in this equation. The number i has the property that. How can the square of $QP - PQ$ be negative?

We see there are some things that have to be learned before all this can be understood. We will consider the question about squares first and then come back to the question of how QP can be different from PQ . We can also begin to see that the quantum language gives us a new view of the world. We shall find many features of it that differ from everyday experience and even from common sense. They represent an extension of human knowledge to a much smaller scale of size, to atoms and atomic particles.

Quantum mechanics is one of the most important and interesting accomplishments of science, but it is not part of our common knowledge. It has been used for over half a century but still, for each of us who learns it, it is strange and wonderful.

Born, Z. Dover, New York, pp. Mehra and H. Springer-Verlag, New York, McCommach and L. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, particularly pp.

Born, Science Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms have rewritten the equation in the notation we will use here. Inventing the negative numbers took some imagination too. By -1 we mean the number such that. If the imaginary number i were not invented, there would be no number z that is a solution of the equation. The positive and negative numbers and zero are all called real numbers. The square of any real number is either zero or positive. It is never negative. For example.

Therefore i cannot be a real number. It is different from all the real numbers, something new, just as -1 is different from all the positive numbers. Starting with -1 , we can make other negative numbers by multiplying with positive numbers. Starting with i we can make other imaginary numbers by multiplying with real numbers. Let v and y be real numbers. Then iv and iy are imaginary numbers and. If x is zero, then z is imaginary.

If y is zero, then z is real. Let u and v be real numbers. The sum of Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms complex numbers is a complex number. The real part of the sum is the sum of the real parts, and the imaginary part of the sum is the sum of the imaginary parts. When we say two complex numbers are the same, we mean that both the real and imaginary parts are the same. When we say a complex number is zero, we mean that both the real and imaginary parts are zero.

We can add, subtract, multiply, and divide any two complex numbers, except of course we cannot divide by zero. There is nothing surprising in the way these operations are done. All the usual rules of algebra apply. The only new thing is the appearance of imaginary numbers. The complex conjugate of the product is the product of the complex conjugates. When z is not zero we have. The absolute value of the product is the product of the absolute values.

From this we can see that if wz is zero then either w is zero or z is zero, because if wz is zero then either w is zero or z is zero, and w is zero only when w is zero. If z were 0, its square would be 0. Complex numbers are widely used in practical applications as well as in mathematics. There are problems, for example in electrical engineering, for which complex numbers are as useful as negative numbers are for problems with money. In quantum mechanics we shall see that complex numbers are not only useful; they are necessary.

Now we consider the question of how QP can be different from PQ. The answer, which Born was the first to see, is that they are matrices. A matrix is a square array of complex numbers, for example. When Born realized that Q and P are matrices, he saw not just that they are square arrays of numbers, but that they should be multiplied according to a rule mathematicians had already devised.

There are also rules for adding matrices and multiplying them by numbers. These rules of matrix algebra are part of the quantum language.

We use capital letters to denote matrices and small letters for real or complex numbers. The numbers in a matrix are labeled as a_{jk} . Thus a_{jk} is the number in the j th row and the k th column of the matrix A .

Addition of two matrices is Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms only if they are the same size. Thus subtraction of matrices is defined. When we say two matrices are equal, we mean they are just the same. Upload Sign In Join. Find your next favorite book Become a member today and read free for 30 days Start your free 30 days. Home Books Science. Create a List. Download to App.

Ratings: Rating: 3. Length: pages 4 hours. Description This elementary text introduces basic quantum mechanics to undergraduates with no background in Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms beyond algebra. Containing more than problems, it provides an easy way to learn part of the quantum language and apply it to problems. Emphasizing the matrices representing physical quantities, it Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms states simply by mean values of physical quantities or by probabilities for possible values.

This approach requires using the algebra of matrices and complex numbers together with probabilities and mean values, a technique introduced at the outset and used repeatedly. Students discover the essential simplicity of quantum mechanics by focusing on basics and working only with key elements of the mathematical structure--an original point of view that Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms a refreshing alternative for students new to quantum mechanics.

Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Form | Mathematical Association of America

The Basic Library List Committee suggests that undergraduate mathematics libraries consider this book for acquisition. In the preface of this book by Thomas F. Jordan, the author states that most people who read the Scientific American can read this book.

Nevertheless I found this book quite readable and a delightful introduction to some of the basic ideas in matrix mechanics, as well as offering a nice on-ramp to quantum mechanics that could be used in undergraduate mathematics or physics courses.

The book divides naturally into two parts, the first of which is decidedly more elementary than the second. The first half of the book uses only elementary facts about matrices, high school algebra and some very simple probability. Mostly this first half is an introduction to complex numbers and relatively simple matrix and probability calculations that would be accessible to bright undergraduates and high school students. As with any attempt to take a very complex subject and make it accessible to a lay audience, some topics have to be omitted.

While the book strives to minimize prerequisites, there is a cost, in that many important ideas are glossed over. The author goes through Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms contortions to describe what it means for a matrix to Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms a physical quantity; in effect, he is describing observables and Hermitian matrices, though these terms are nowhere used.

State spaces are not mentioned, though they are lurking behind many of the examples. Neither are bras nor kets nor wave functions. The Pauli spin matrices are introduced and used, but no hint of where they come from is given. That said, the book does a good Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms of illustrating how matrices and probabilities are used with two and four state quantum systems such as spin angular momentum, a quantum analogue of angular momentum and its corresponding magnetic moment, a quantum analogue of a compass needle.

The mathematics of quantum mechanics has two fundamental aims, to describe the spectrum of possible results from an experiment and to finding the probability of each Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms in this spectrum. In other words, the goal is to predict the outcomes of experiments.

The connection with quantum physics makes for an exciting introduction to matrices. The second half of the book is considerably more advanced.

Topics discussed include harmonic oscillators and their energy quantization, the Bohr model of the atom, as well as the quantization of orbital angular momentum and the hydrogen atom. There are some exercises in the book, but really too few. The range of complexity of the matrix algebraic calculations Quantum Mechanics in Simple Matrix Forms from the very simple in the first part of the book to the quite involved later. Still, despite some of these drawbacks, I would rate this book highly.

There is only one minor thing I might quibble with. On page the author asserts that Dirac invented the word commute. Dirac certainly used it and may have been the first to use it in the quantum physics literature but the term was not new. Steven Deckelman is a professor of mathematics at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, where he has been since He received his Ph. D from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in for a thesis in several complex variables written under Patrick Ahern.

Some of his interests include complex analysis, mathematical biology and the history of mathematics. Skip to main content. Search form Search. Login Join Give Shops. Halmos - Lester R. Ford Awards Merten M.

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