

Synopsis

The Principia is "justly regarded as one of the most important works in the history of science". The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, often referred to as simply the Principia, is a work in three books by Sir Isaac Newton, in Latin, first published 5 July 1687. After annotating and correcting his personal copy of the first edition, Newton also published two further editions, in 1713 and 1726. The Principia states Newton's laws of motion, forming the foundation of classical mechanics, also Newton's law of universal gravitation, and a derivation of Kepler's laws of planetary motion (which Kepler first obtained empirically). The French mathematical physicist Alexis Clairaut assessed it in 1747: "The famous book of mathematical Principles of natural Philosophy marked the epoch of a great revolution in physics. The method followed by its illustrious author Sir Newton ... spread the light of mathematics on a science which up to then had remained in the darkness of conjectures and hypotheses." A more recent assessment has been that while acceptance of Newton's theories was not immediate, by the end of a century after publication in 1687, "no one could deny that" (out of the Principia) "a science had emerged that, at least in certain respects, so far exceeded anything that had ever gone before that it stood alone as the ultimate exemplar of science generally." In formulating his physical theories, Newton developed and used mathematical methods now included in the field of calculus. But the language of calculus as we know it was largely absent from the Principia; Newton gave many of his proofs in a geometric form of infinitesimal calculus, based on limits of ratios of vanishing small geometric quantities. In a revised conclusion to the Principia (see General Scholium), Newton used his expression that became famous, *Hypotheses non fingo* ("I contrive no hypotheses").

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Customer Reviews

This is the work which, for better and for worse, changed how we humans live forever, uniting the heavens and earth under a satisfying physical theory for the first time. The English translation is smooth enough that it feels like Newton wrote the work 'yesterday'. The introductory sections by Cohen give a detailed overview of the work itself and the broader context in which it was written, which helps in recognising some mathematical presentation and concepts we no longer use or are unfamiliar with. The overall methods used in the Principia have found their use throughout modern physics practice--mathematical modelling, idealisations, theory-mediated measurements, etc. Even with the advent of General Relativity and Quantum Field Theory, we still do physics (in a broad fashion) in a way which is present in this book. No wonder, as a physicist-in-training, I found this work to be an exemplar, despite the less-than-satisfying results in some sections, as Newton himself admitted, of how natural science is to be done (notwithstanding its limitations, as unfortunately we learned the hard way).

This book is a facsimile version, which appeals to my sense of history; although it has a drawback: in places bits of letters have gone missing and it can impede reading ease and comprehension. Kind of like both sides of a coin I guess, so I present this as a fact, not a criticism. The real challenge is that it isn't helping me learn maths, I see no evidence of it being like a tutorial or textbook. It reads much more like a reference for people who have a very good understanding of the maths in it already. I'm very interested in understanding what it says, and it's going to take additional help. All up, I think it's a treasure in the historical sense as a time capsule of science, it's an economical price and looks as though it's made to last as a book.

The explanatory material, publishers's notes, and most of the reviews above all refer to the Bernard Cohen translation and commentary (UC Berkeley Press, blue cover) - but they are attached to the

listing for the Snowball Publishing edition (brownish cover), which is not the same thing at all!! The entry for the Snowball edition - listed on discount for about \$13 - clearly states that it is the Cohen translation with his commentaries. In fact, it is merely a cheap reproduction of some earlier edition of the standard Motte translation, with modernized spelling. It is the complete text of the (translated) Third Edition of the Principia, but with no other associated works by Newton and nothing by Cohen. Snowball does not even give the translator's name, either on the cover or in the front matter! The lithographic reproduction is readable but poor quality - with many broken characters and even edges of pages slightly cut off. This is a usable cheap edition of the well-known 1729 translation, but it is NOT the modern translation, as the listing explicitly states. (In fact, 's "Search Inside This Book" feature, from the Snowball edition page, takes you to the search pages for the Cohen edition - a completely different, and much more expensive, book!) I'm sure this was a good-faith error on 's part, but it is completely misleading. Buyers should know what they are getting. If you are reading this on the page listing for the Snowball Publishing edition of the Principia, you aren't getting what they say you are. Be forewarned.

I wanted to get an idea of why Newton discovered/created the calculus framework. I was more interested in the problems he was trying to solve than the explicit descriptions of the math problems. The dated English is hard to decipher at times but its worth reading through at least once. Its a bit dry and a bit slow but it does something most present math books don't do; this book explains why.

Love Sir Newton. Good book but difficult read.

A masterpiece but very difficult

EXCELLENT..

Excellent!

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