Nebulae as Gravitational Lenses

Einstein recently published[1] some calculations concerning a suggestion made by R. W. Mandl, namely, that a star B may act as a "gravitational lens" for light coming from another star A which lies closely enough on the line of sight behind B. As Einstein remarks the chance to observe this effect for stars is extremely small.

Last summer Dr. V. K. Zworykin (to whom the same idea had been suggested by Mr. Mandl) mentioned to me the possibility of an image formation through the action of gravitational fields. As a consequence I made some calculations which show that extragalactic *nebulae* offer a much better chance than *stars* for the observation of gravitational lens effects.

In the first place some of the massive and more concentrated nebulae may be expected to deflect light by as much as half a minute of arc. In the second place nebulae, in contradistinction to stars, possess apparent dimensions which are resolvable to very great distances.

Suppose that a distant globular nebula A whose diameter is 2ξ lies at a distance, a, which is great compared with the distance D of a nearby nebula B which lies exactly in front of A. The image of A under these circumstances is a luminous ring whose average apparent radius is $\beta=(\gamma_0 r_0/D)^{\frac{1}{2}}$, where γ_0 is the angle of deflection for light passing at a distance r_0 from B. The apparent width of the ring is $\Delta\beta=\xi/a$. The apparent total brightness of this luminous ring is q times greater than the brightness of the direct image of A. In our special case $q=2la/\xi D$, with $l=(\gamma_0 r_0 D)^{\frac{1}{2}}$. In actual cases the factor q may be as high as $q=100$, corresponding to an increase in brightness of five magnitudes. The surface brightness remains, of course, unchanged.

The discovery of images of nebulae which are formed through the gravitational fields of nearby nebulae would be of considerable interest for a number of reasons.

(1) It would furnish an additional test for the general theory of relativity.

(2) It would enable us to see nebulae at distances greater than those ordinarily reached by even the greatest telescopes. Any such *extension* of the known parts of the universe promises to throw very welcome new light on a number of cosmological problems.

(3) The problem of determining nebular masses at present has arrived at a stalemate. The mass of an average nebula until recently was thought to be of the order of $M_N=10^9\,M_\odot$, where $M_\odot$ is the mass of the sun. This estimate is based on certain deductions drawn from data on the intrinsic brightness of nebulae as well as their spectrographic rotations. Some time ago, however, I showed[2] that a straightforward application of the virial theorem to the great cluster of nebulae in Coma leads to an average nebular mass four hundred times greater than the one mentioned, that is, $M_N'=4\times10^{11}M_\odot$. This result has recently been verified by an investigation of the Virgo cluster.[3] Observations on the deflection of light around nebulae may provide the most direct determination of nebular masses and clear up the above-mentioned discrepancy.

A detailed account of the problems sketched here will appear in *Helvetica Physica Acta*.

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[1] A. Einstein, Science **84**, 506 (1936).
[2] F. Zwicky, Helv. Phys. Acta **6**, 124 (1933).
[3] Sinclair Smith, Astrophys. J. **83**, 23 (1936).

Emergence of Low Energy Protons from Nuclei

In some experiments recently described[1] the emission of protons in alpha-particle induced transmutations has been studied. In several cases the interesting fact was noticed that protons of relatively low energy were emitted in considerable numbers. Thus for each of the reactions

$$Al^{27}+He^4\rightarrow Si^{30}+H^1,$$
$$P^{31}+He^4\rightarrow S^{34}+H^1,$$
$$Cl^{35}+He^4\rightarrow A^{38}+H^1,$$
$$Ca^{40}+He^4\rightarrow Sc^{43}+H^1,$$

a group of protons of maximum range 20 cm or less is found and the yield is in general large (more than one-third of the total number of protons emitted). In each case protons of range 10 cm are observed with no apparent diminution of the probability of emission. The question arises as to how these low energy protons get out of the composite nucleus.

In recent experiments in this laboratory the excitation curve for the emission of neutrons from argon under alpha-particle bombardment has been plotted and the nuclear radius found to be 7.3×10^{-13} cm which is in accord with Bethe's revised radii for the radioactive elements[2] and may be taken as a basis for calculation of the nuclear radii of Si^{30}, S^{34}, A^{38}, Ca^{42} and Sc^{43}. Other evidence (e.g., scattering experiments) indicates, if anything, smaller radii than those found in this way. In Table I are given the radii so calculated, together with the heights of the corresponding proton barriers and the range of a proton just able to surmount them. It will be seen that in every case the experimentally observed ranges are smaller than necessary to scale the barrier. It therefore appears that we can draw one of two significant conclusions from the experimental data. Either *barriers to emerging protons are abnormally low* or *the composite nucleus containing the final product element and the proton has a finite lifetime sufficiently long to enable the proton to leak through the barrier*. The latter view, which is in accordance with Bohr's conception of transmutation,[3]

Table I.

Product Nucleus	Nuclear Radius ($\times10^{13}$cm)	Proton Barrier Height (Mev)	Range to Scale Barrier (cm)	Experimentally Found Range
Si^{30}	6.7	3.0	14.0	<10
S^{34}	6.9	3.3	16.5	<10
A^{38}	7.2	3.6	19.0	<10
Ca^{42}	7.4	3.9	22.0	14
Sc^{43}	7.5	4.0	23.0	<10