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BY W. H. MCCREA, F. R. S. 'THE only justification for our concepts and system of concepts is that they serve to represent the complex of our experiences; beyond this they have no legitimacy. 'So Einstein writes on page 2 of this book. Most present-day physicists would agree, and many before Einstein must have held the same opinion. Einstein, however, put the opinion into practice to better purpose than any physicist before him. And for Einstein it evidently meant what it means for most of us today: a theory is the construction of a theoretical model of the world of physics; all the mathematical discussion applies to the model; the model embodies the 'system of concepts', and it serves 'to represent the complex of our experiences' if the experience of the theoretical observer in the theoretical model can be put into satisfactory correspondence with the experi ence of the actual observer in the actual physical world. Classical mechanics and classical electromagnetism pro vide models that are good representations of two sets of actual experiences. As Einstein was the first fully to appreciate, however, it is not possible to combine these into a single selfconsistent model. The construction of the simplest possible self-consistent model is the achieve ment of Einstein's theory of special relativity. The theory is found, in particular, to give a satisfactory representation of the electromagnetic interaction between charged particles through its use of the concept of the electromagnetic field.



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