

“If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be without meaning.”

C.S. Lewis

The Hubble Ultra Deep Field

# What We Will Learn Today

- What are you seeing right now?
- What are the basic properties of light?
- What is the Electromagnetic Spectrum?
- What are the basic building blocks of matter?
- What is temperature?
- How does light interact with matter?

# Light

- Everything we see is light!
- We only see a tiny window of all the light there is!
- All of astronomy is the study of light!
- So, let's understand light, matter, and how the two interact!



# The Nature of Light

- Light is made up of tiny particles
  - Photons
- Each photon demonstrates a wave-like behavior
- Thus, light is both a particle and a wave at the same time!



# Wave Properties of Light

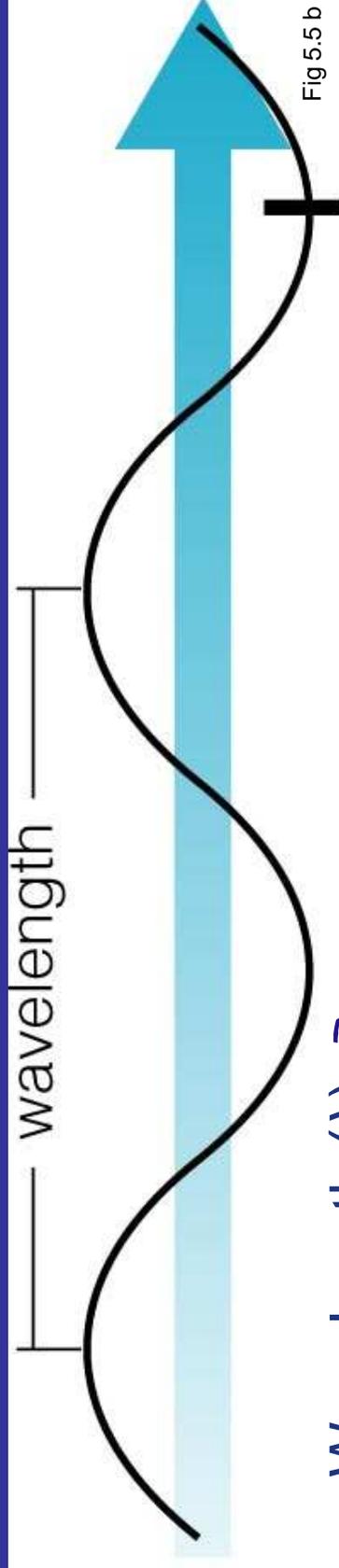


Fig 5.5 b

- Wavelength ( $\lambda$ )
  - Frequency ( $\nu$ )
- } “Flavors” of light

- Speed ( $c$ ) – constant for all flavors of light

$$c = \lambda \nu$$

- Higher wavelength implies lower frequency
  - And vice-versa

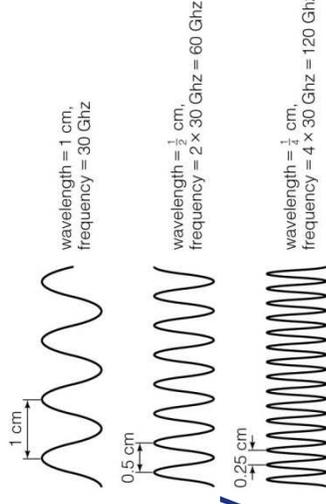
- Energy carried by light (radiative energy,  $E$ )

$$E = h\nu$$

$h$  = Planck’s constant

- Higher frequency implies higher energy

- Also implies smaller wavelength



# The Electromagnetic Spectrum

G X U V I R

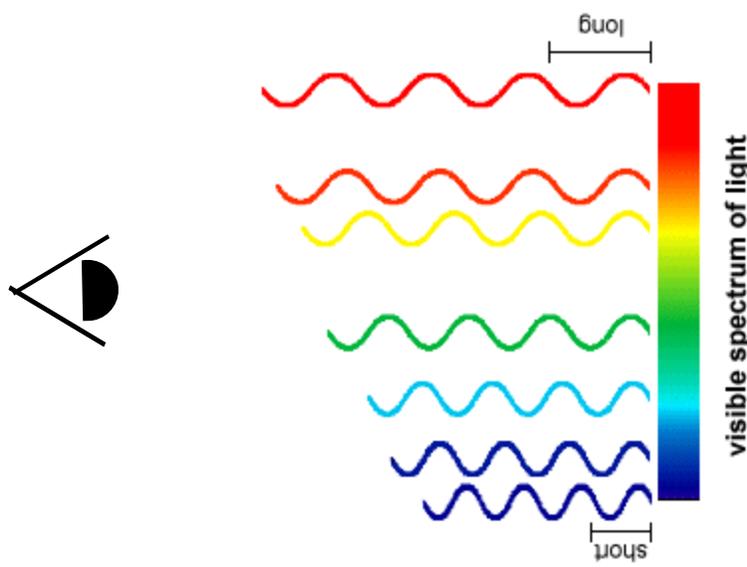
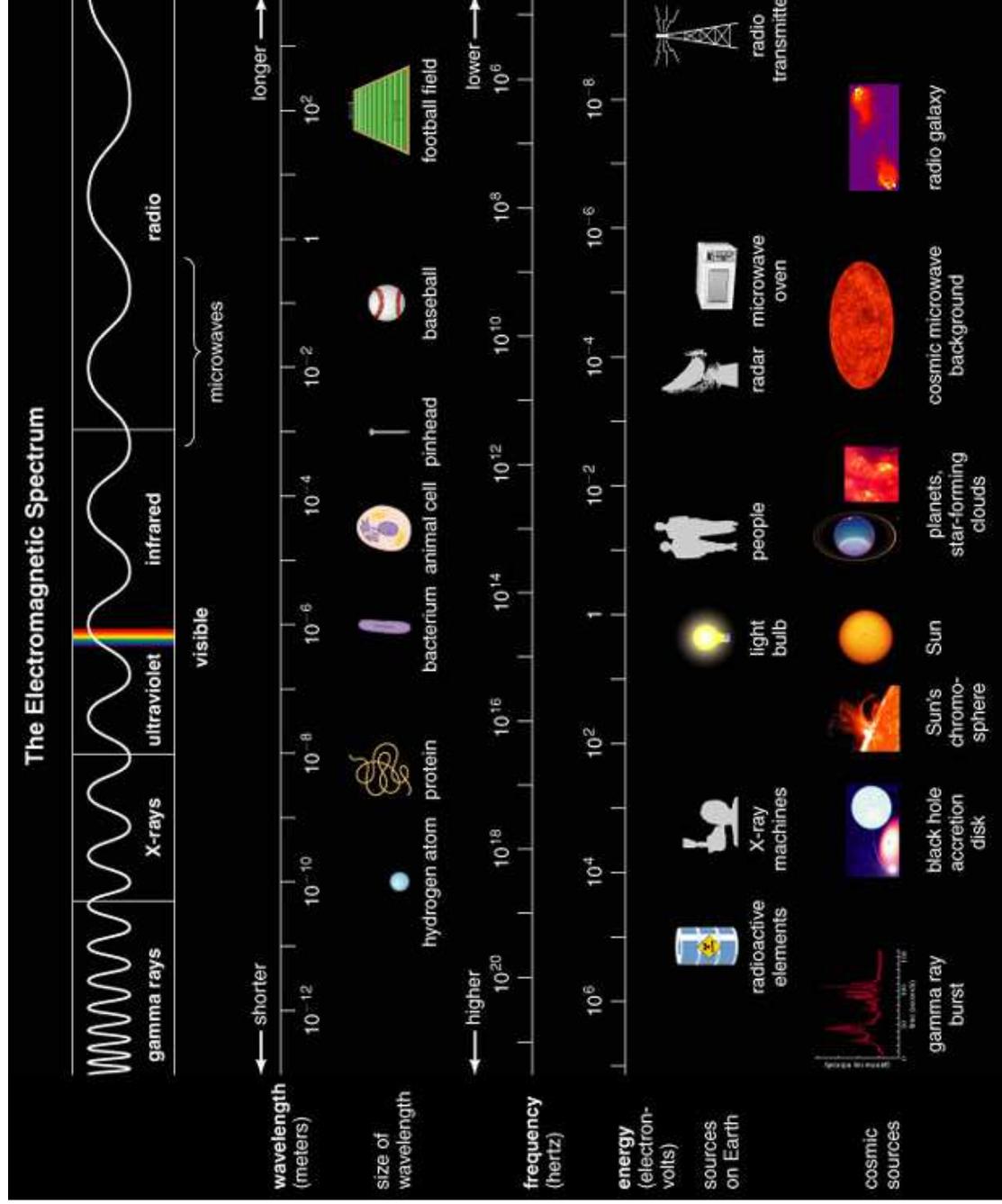


Fig 5.7

# The Building Blocks of Matter

- Smallest to largest
  - Quarks & Leptons
  - Nucleus (Protons, Neutrons) & Shells (Electrons)
  - Atoms
  - Molecules

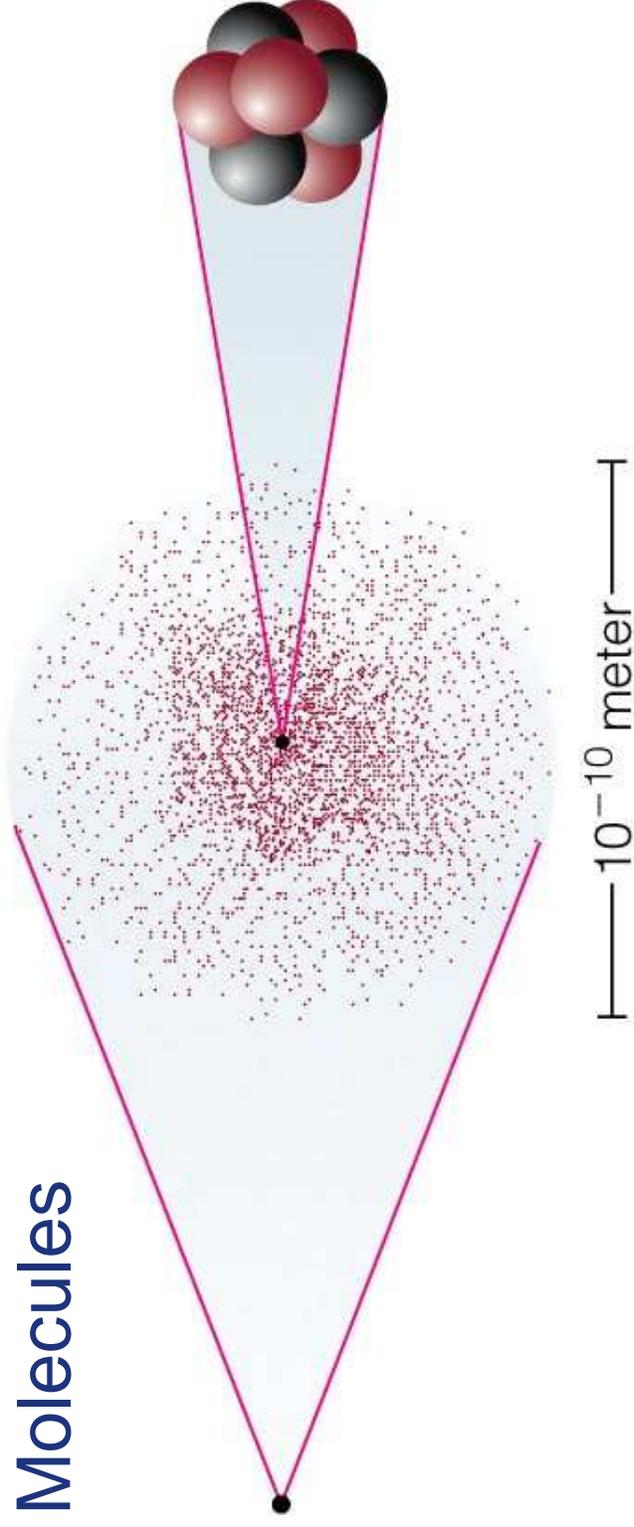


Fig 5.8

# Atoms

- Incredibly small
  - Millions can fit in one period at the end of a sentence in a typical book
  - Number of atoms in a drop of water exceeds the number of stars in the Universe!
- Atoms are mostly empty
  - If nucleus is the size of your fist, electron clouds are many miles away!
- Nucleus contains most of the mass
- Electrons inhabit specific shells based on energy levels

# Phases of Matter

- Loosely bound to tightly bound
  - Hottest to coolest
  - Fully ionized plasma (stellar cores)
  - Plasma (stellar interiors)
  - Molecular disassociation (Earth core)
  - Molecular phases (Earth surface)
    - Gas phase
    - Liquid phase
    - Solid phase

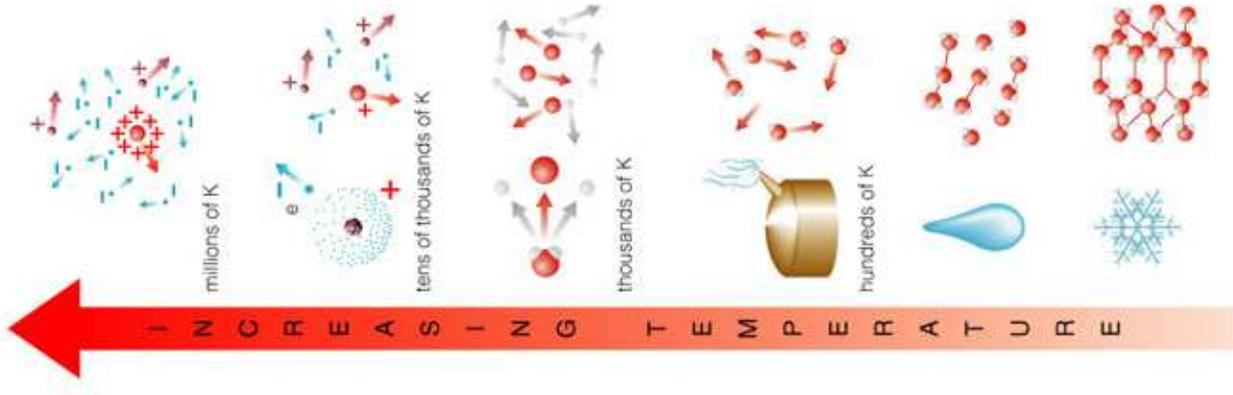


Fig 5.10



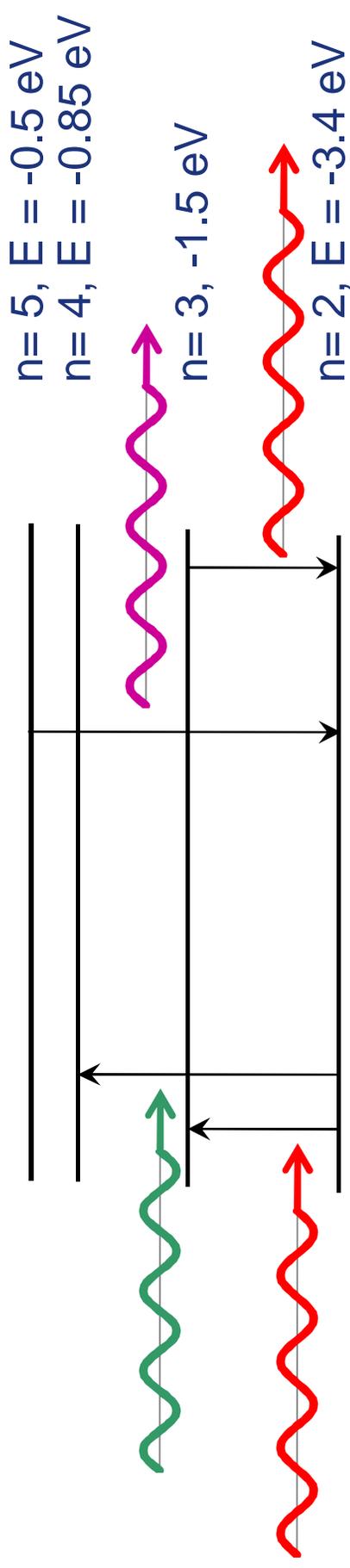
# Important Elements in Astronomy

- Hydrogen (H,  $n = 1$ )
  - Simplest element: 1 proton + 1 electron
  - Most abundant element in the universe (74%)
  - Over 90% of the Sun's mass
- Helium (He,  $n = 2$ )
  - 2 protons, 2 neutrons, 2 electrons
  - 24% of the universe, 9% of the Sun
- Carbon (C,  $n = 6$ )
  - 0.05% of the universe, 0.03% of the Sun
  - Basis of all life forms on Earth
- Nitrogen (N,  $n = 7$ )
  - Principal component of Earth's atmosphere
- Oxygen (O,  $n = 8$ )
  - 0.1% of the universe, 0.08% of the Sun
- Iron (Fe,  $n = 26$ )
  - Densest nucleus, reason for Supernovae

## Key Molecules



# Interaction of Light with Matter



- Absorption line
    - Photon absorbed by electron to jump to higher energy level
  - Emission line
    - Photon emitted by electron to jump back to lower energy level
  - Only specific energy levels of photons absorbed or emitted
    - i.e. only specific wavelengths or colors
- \_\_\_\_\_  $n=1$  (Ground state)  
 $E = -13.6 \text{ eV}$