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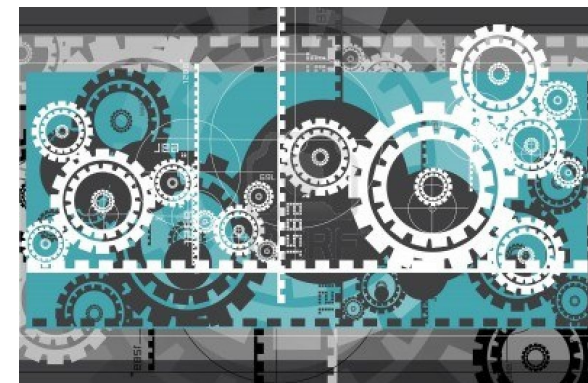
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MACHINES

PATHFINDER



THERMODYNAMICS

Thermodynamics is a branch of natural science concerned with heat and its relation to energy and work. It defines macroscopic variables (such as temperature, internal energy, entropy, and pressure) that characterize materials and radiation, and explains how they are related and by what laws they change with time. Thermodynamics describes the average behavior of very large numbers of microscopic constituents, and its laws can be derived from statistical mechanics.

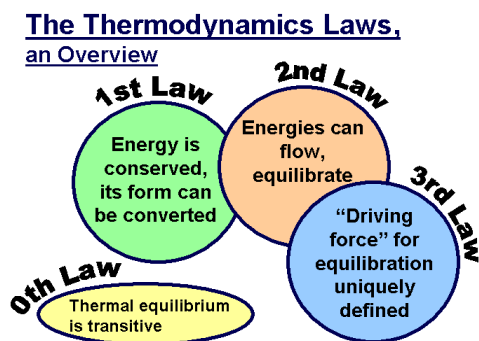
Thermodynamics applies to a wide variety of topics in science and engineering—such as engines, phase transitions, chemical reactions, transport phenomena, and even black holes. Results of thermodynamic calculations are essential for other fields of physics and for chemistry, chemical engineering, aerospace engineering, mechanical engineering, cell biology, biomedical engineering, and materials science—and useful in other fields such as economics.

Much of the empirical content of thermodynamics is contained in the four laws. The first law asserts the existence of a quantity called the internal energy of a system, which is distinguishable from the kinetic energy of bulk movement of the system and from its potential energy with respect to its surroundings. The first law distinguishes transfers of energy between closed systems as heat and as work. The second law concerns two quantities called temperature and entropy. Entropy expresses the limitations, arising from what is known as irreversibility, on the amount of thermodynamic work that can be delivered to an external system by a thermodynamic process. Temperature, whose properties are also partially described by the zeroth law of thermodynamics, quantifies the direction of energy flow as heat between two systems in thermal contact and quantifies the common-sense notions of "hot" and "cold".

HISTORY

The history of thermodynamics as a scientific discipline generally begins with Otto von Guericke who, in 1650, built and designed the world's first vacuum pump and demonstrated a vacuum using his Magdeburg hemispheres. Guericke was driven to make a vacuum in order to disprove Aristotle's long-held supposition that 'nature abhors a vacuum'. Shortly after Guericke, the physicist and chemist Robert Boyle had learned of Guericke's designs and, in 1656, in coordination with scientist Robert Hooke, built an air pump. Using this pump, Boyle and Hooke noticed a correlation between pressure, temperature, and volume. In time, Boyle's Law was formulated, stating that for a gas at constant temperature, its pressure and volume are inversely proportional. In 1679, based on these concepts, an associate of Boyle's named Denis Papin built a steam digester, which was a closed vessel with a tightly fitting lid that confined steam until a high pressure was generated.

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thermodynamics>



The Thermodynamics Laws

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