

phonon

Elementary excitation in the quantum mechanical treatment of vibrations in a crystal lattice. An energy bundle that behaves as a particle of energy $h\nu$, with ν the vibration frequency and h the Planck constant.

Note 1: A phonon can be considered as an acoustic mode of thermal vibration of a crystal lattice (or liquid helium II).

Note 2: Every harmonic vibration can be decomposed in phonons, which are the elementary vibrations. The total number of phonons in a system that has internal vibrations (e.g., a crystal) is related to the temperature of the system.

Note 3: The concept of phonons provides a simplification in the theories of thermal and electrical conduction in solids.

Note 4: For example, interactions between phonons and electrons are thought to be responsible for such phenomena as “superconductivity”.

2007, 79, 382