

were spoken of as a hypothesis, which is a mere work of fancy; and the critic added, "we cannot conclude our review without entreating the attention of the Royal Society, which has admitted of late so many hasty and unsubstantial papers into its *Transactions*;" which habit he urged them to reform. The same aversion to the undulatory theory appears soon after in another article by the same reviewer, on the subject of Wollaston's measures of the refraction of Iceland spar; he says, "We are much disappointed to find that so acute and ingenious an experimentalist should have adopted the wild optical theory of vibrations." The reviewer showed ignorance as well as prejudice in the course of his remarks; and Young drew up an answer, which was ably written, but being published separately had little circulation. We can hardly doubt that these Edinburgh reviews had their effect in confirming the general disposition to reject the undulatory theory.

We may add, however, that Young's mode of presenting his opinions was not the most likely to win them favor; for his mathematical reasonings placed them out of the reach of popular readers, while the want of symmetry and system in his symbolical calculations, deprived them of attractiveness for the mathematician. He himself gave a very just criticism of his own style of writing, in speaking on another of his works:<sup>3</sup> "The mathematical reasoning, for want of mathematical symbols, was not understood, even by tolerable mathematicians. From a dislike of the affectation of algebraical formality which he had observed in some foreign authors, he was led into something like an affectation of simplicity, which was equally inconvenient to a scientific reader."

Young appears to have been aware of his own deficiency in the power of drawing public favor, or even notice, to his discoveries. In 1802, Davy writes to a friend, "Have you seen the theory of my colleague, Dr. Young, on the undulations of an ethereal medium as the cause of light? It is not likely to be a popular hypothesis, after what has been said by Newton concerning it. He would be very much flattered if you could offer any observations upon it, *whether for or against it.*" Young naturally felt confident in his power of refuting objections, and wanted only the opportunity of a public combat.

Dr. Brewster, who was, at this period, enriching optical knowledge with so vast a train of new phenomena and laws, shared the general aversion to the undulatory theory, which, indeed, he hardly overcame

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<sup>3</sup> See *Life of Young*, p. 54.