Coordinates and Measurement Methods

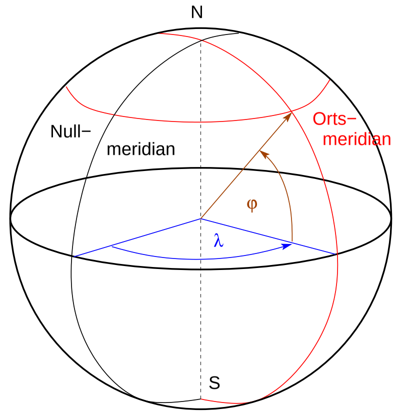
Introduction

We now move away from solar system

$\Longrightarrow$ before we can continue with science, we need to understand

- where astronomical objects are $\Longrightarrow$ coordinate systems
- how astronomical measurements are made $\Longrightarrow$ telescopes

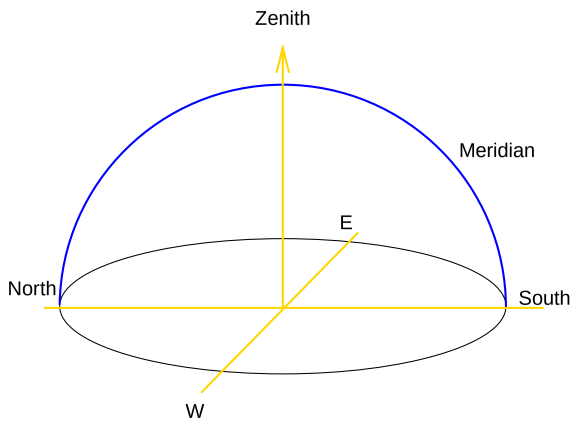
Positions on Earth



λ: geographic longitude (deg),
φ: geographic latitude (deg)

$\lambda = 0^\circ$ defined by position of a meridian circle in Greenwich (London)

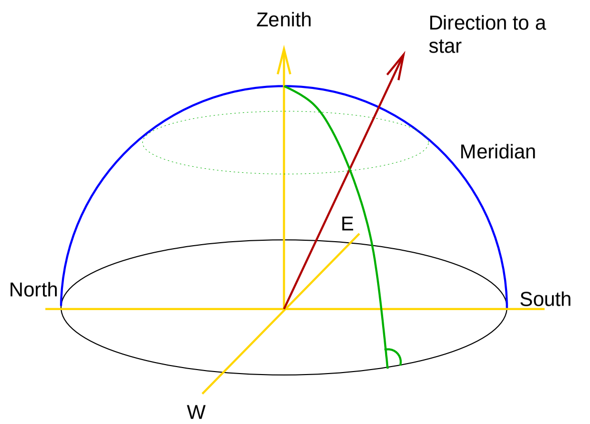
Horizon System



after Giese

Position on sky:

Horizon System

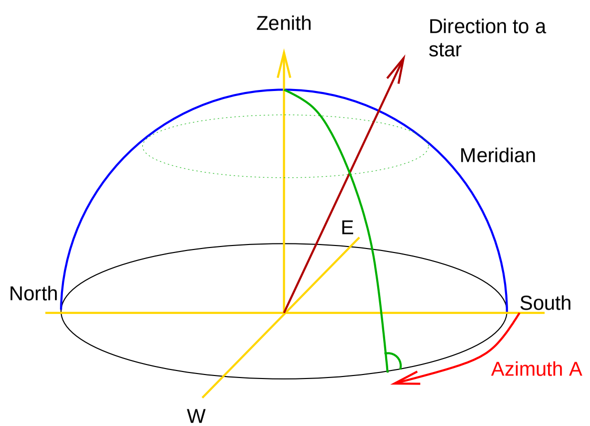


after Giese

Position on sky:

- Define position by giving direction to star.

Horizon System

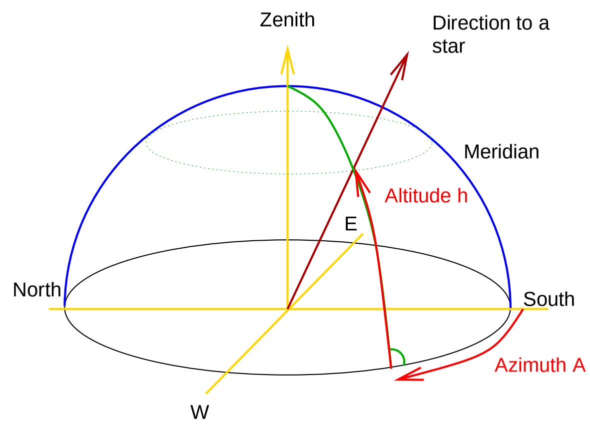


after Giese

Position on sky:

- Define position by giving direction to star.
- Azimuth A: angle in horizontal S-W-N-E

Horizon System

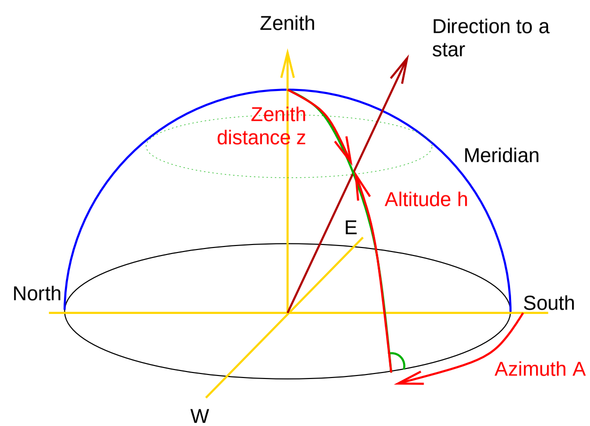


after Giese

Position on sky:

- Define position by giving direction to star.
- Azimuth A: angle in horizontal S-W-N-E
- Altitude h: angle from horizon towards zenith

Horizon System



after Giese

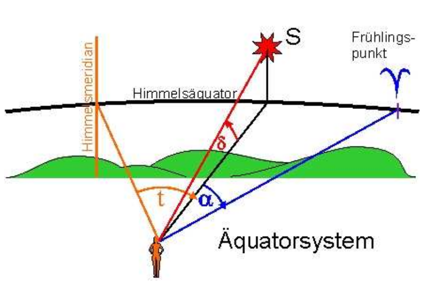
Position on sky:

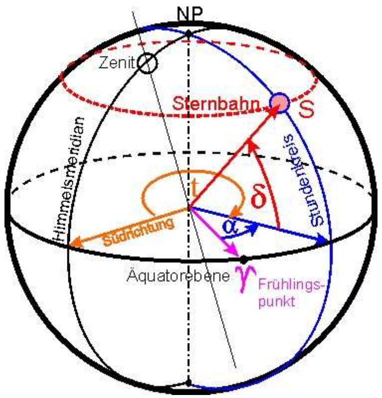
- Define position by giving direction to star.
- Azimuth A: angle in horizontal S-W-N-E
- Altitude h: angle from horizon towards zenith
- Zenith distance z: $z = 90^\circ - h$

http://joeorman.shutterace.com/Trails/Trails_021227_5.html

Earth rotates: A, h do not define position of stars at any time

Equatorial System, fixed, I

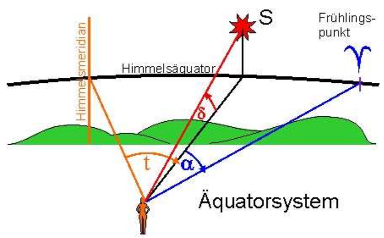


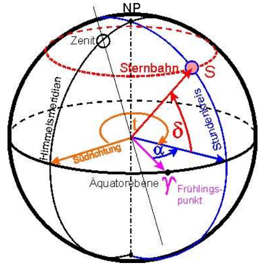


t = hour angle (h,m,s), changes constantly with time

δ = declination (deg), constant with time

Equatorial System, co-moving





correct for earth rotation

$\Longrightarrow$ use vernal equinox as a co-rotating zero point on the sky

α = Right ascension (h,m,s) measured from vernal equinox

δ = declination

Θ siderial time = hour angle of the vernal equinox

transformation from fixed to co-moving equatorial system:

$$\Theta = t + \alpha$$

Equatorial System, co-moving

Note: Siderial time $\neq$ common time

Common time: 24 h between culminations of the Sun (i.e., passes of Sun through meridian).

BUT

Sun moves on sky towards east

$\Longrightarrow$ one "solar day" takes slightly longer than one rotation of the Earth

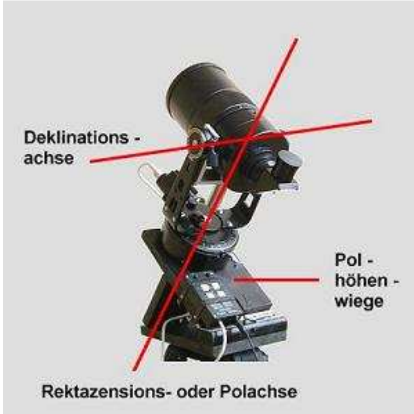
Angular speed of Sun: 360° degrees in 365.25 days, i.e., $0.9856^\circ\,\mathrm{d}^{-1}$.

$\Longrightarrow$ During 365.25 days the Earth rotates 366.25 times

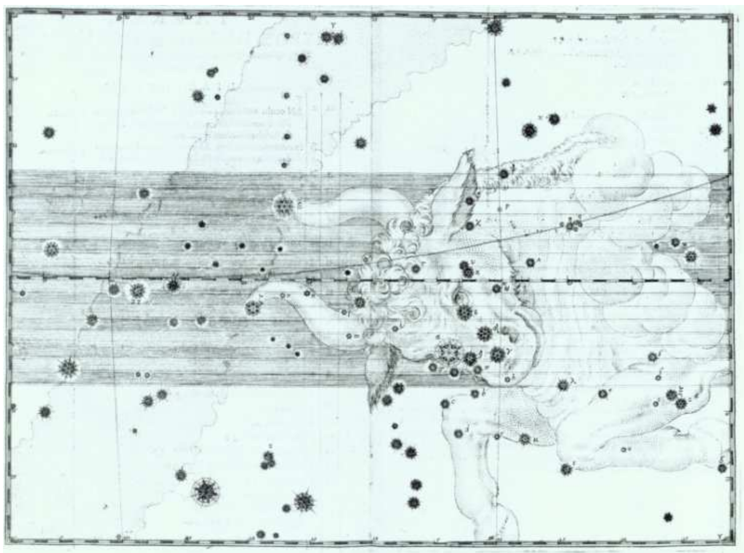
$\Longrightarrow$ Earth's rotation takes $24\,\mathrm{h} \times 365.25/366.25 = 23\,\mathrm{h}\;56\,\mathrm{minutes}$.

Telescope Mountings

azimuthal mounting: horizontal axis and vertical axis



equatorial mounting: declination axis and polar axis

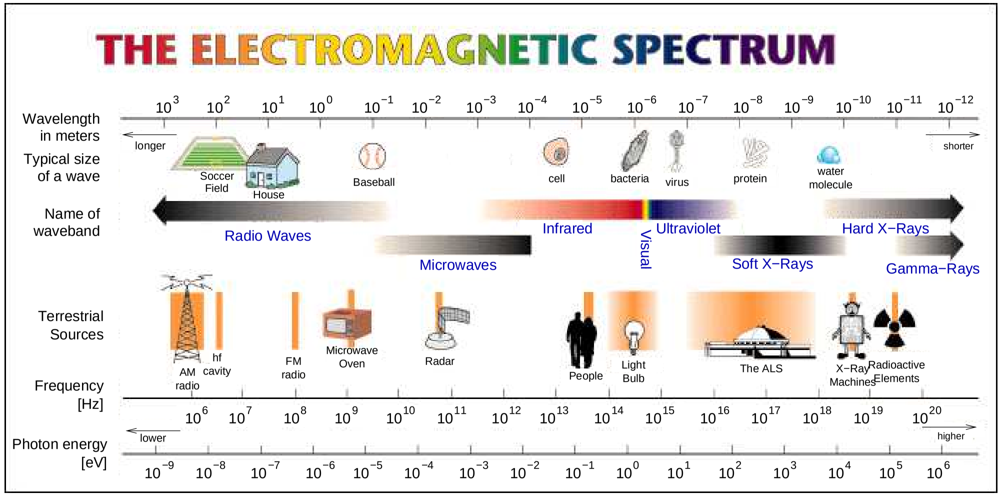


Bayer's Uranometria (1603; University of Illinois collections)

Because of precession and nutation: need to state epoch of coordinate!

Aldebaran = α Tau: $\alpha_{\mathrm{J2000.0}} = 04^{\mathrm{h}}35^{\mathrm{m}}55.2387^{\mathrm{s}}$, $\delta_{\mathrm{J2000.0}} = +16^\circ30'33.485''$

corresponding to $\alpha_{\mathrm{B1950.0}} = 04^{\mathrm{h}}33^{\mathrm{m}}02.9^{\mathrm{s}}$, $\delta_{\mathrm{B1950.0}} = +16^\circ24'37.6''$



Electromagnetic Spectrum

As we all know, light can be characterized by

Wavelength: λ, measured in m, mm, cm, nm, Å.

Frequency: ν, measured in Hz, MHz.

Energy: E, measured in J, erg, Rydbergs, eV, keV, MeV, GeV.

Temperature: T, measured in K.

These quantities are related:

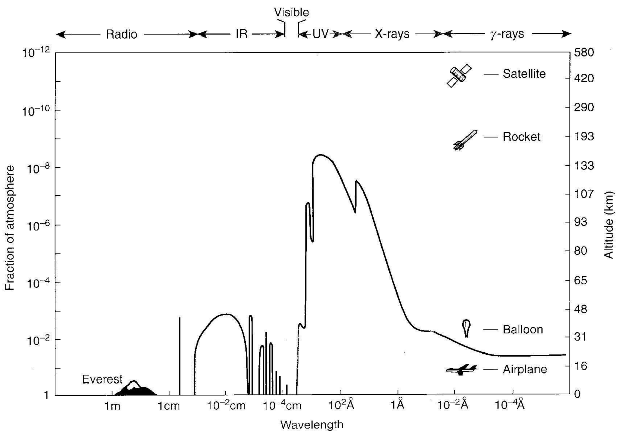
$$\lambda\nu = c \qquad E = h\nu \qquad T = E/k \tag{9.1}$$

where

$$c = 299792458\,\mathrm{m\,s^{-1}} \tag{9.2}$$
$$h = 6.6260693(11) \times 10^{-34}\,\mathrm{J\,s} \tag{9.3}$$
$$k = 1.3806505(24) \times 10^{-23}\,\mathrm{J\,K^{-1}} \tag{9.4}$$

Constants are 2002 CODATA values, `http://physics.nist.gov/cuu/Constants/index.html`
uncertainty is 1σ in units of last digit shown.

Earth's Atmosphere, I



Charles & Seward, Fig. 1.12

Earth's atmosphere is opaque for all types of EM radiation except for optical light and radio.

$\Longrightarrow$ Astronomy is today multi-wavelength astronomy, although optical studies are still very important

$\Longrightarrow$ For time reasons only optical telescopes will be discussed.

Introduction, I

Scientific purposes of a telescope:

1. Collect light, lots of light, to show faint objects ("Light bucket")
2. Resolve small features

Instrumentation used...

1. to make images
   $\Longrightarrow$ Imaging (with Charge Coupled Devices [CCDs], formerly also with film)
2. to measure spectra
   $\Longrightarrow$ Spectrographs
3. to measure stellar brightness
   $\Longrightarrow$ Photometers (often CCDs, but there are also dedicated photometers for msec-resolution photometry)

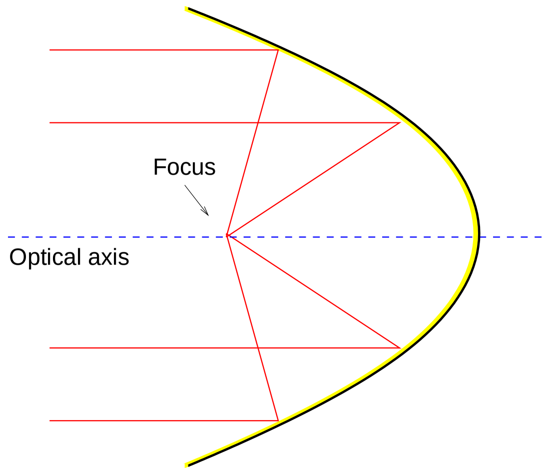
For physics of instrumentation $\longrightarrow$ Astronomy Laboratory

Types of Telescopes

To collect light, we have two possibilities:

1. Lenses: Refractors
   Disadvantage: lens cannot be supported from the back
   $\Longrightarrow$ limits max. diameter to $\lesssim$ 1 m
   largest refractor at Yerkes Observatory (University of Chicago): $d = 1.02$ m
   $\Longrightarrow$ not of interest for science
2. Mirrors: Reflectors
   Mirrors can be supported, instrument of choice for today, with diameters up to 11 m

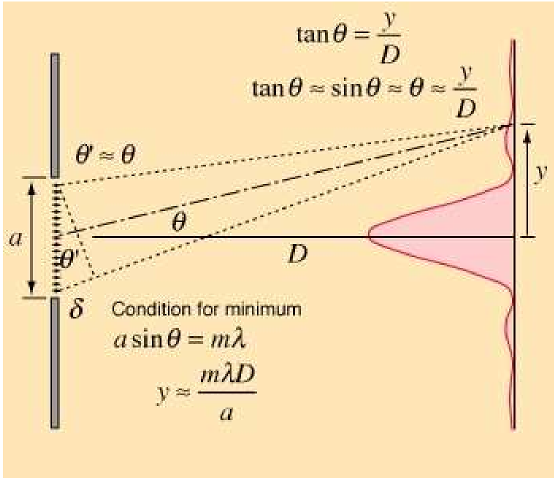
Types of Telescopes



To form image: focus light with a parabolic mirror

Spherical mirrors show spherical aberration $\Longrightarrow$ *not* suited for astronomical telescopes (at least not without correction).

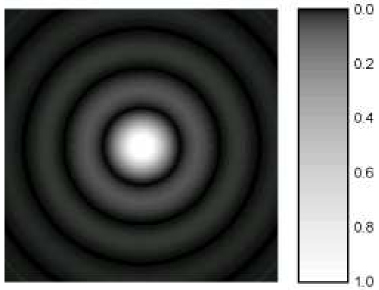
Resolution, I



GSU

Wave nature of light results in interference pattern caused by diffraction on optical elements in telescope (mainly aperture).

Resolution, II



Diffraction pattern on telescope aperture: Airy pattern
For a circular aperture with radius r:

$$I(\theta) \propto \pi^2 r^4 \left[\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (-1)^n \frac{1}{n+1} \left(\frac{m^n}{n!}\right)^2 \right]^2 \propto \frac{\pi^2 r^4}{m^2} (J_1(2m))^2 \quad (9.5)$$

where $m = \pi(r/\lambda)\sin\theta$ and where $J_1(x)$ s the Bessel function of the first kind of order unity.

$I(\theta)$ has minima for $m =$ 1.916, 3.508, 5.087,..., or

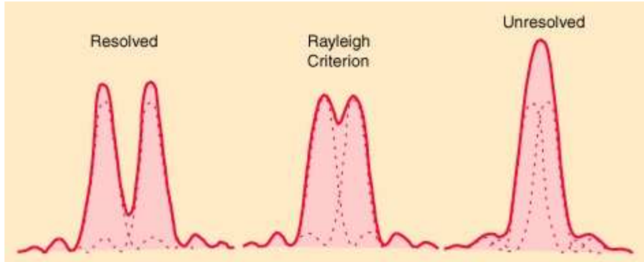
$$\sin\theta = \frac{1.916\lambda}{\pi r}, \frac{3.508\lambda}{\pi r}, \frac{5.087\lambda}{\pi r}, \dots \quad (9.6)$$

or for θ small ($\sin\theta \sim \theta$) minima are found at:

$$\theta = \frac{1.220\lambda}{d}, \dots \quad (9.7)$$

where d: diameter.

Resolution, III



Resolution of telescope: ability to separate two (point-like) light sources

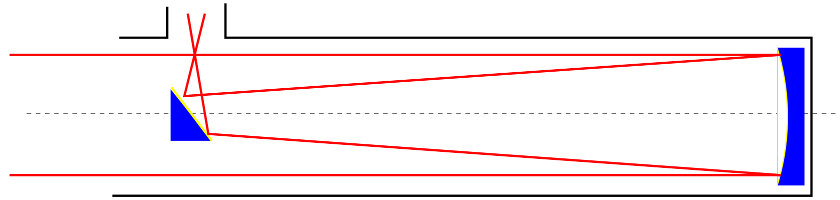
Rayleigh criterion for resolution: maximum of diffraction pattern of one source must fall into minimum of diffraction pattern of other source.

Therefore the diffraction limited resolution is

$$\alpha = \frac{1.220\lambda}{d} = \frac{12''}{D/1\,\text{cm}} \quad \text{for optical light} \quad (9.8)$$

Note: Rayleigh criterion is a criterion, *not* a law. Detailed object separability depends on ratio of intensities of two objects, in practice resolutions up to 3× smaller are acheivable.

Newtonian Telescope, I

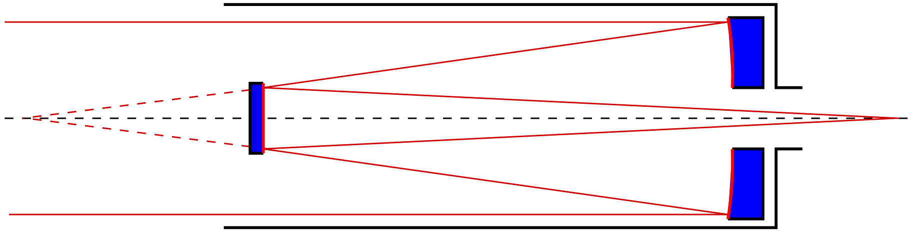


Newtonian telescope: reflector with parabolic mirror.

Common in cheaper telescopes.

Disadvantage: large size (∼ focal length)

Cassegrain Telescope, I



Cassegrain telescope, after Wikipedia

Cassegrain telescope: reflector with "folded optical path"

(M1: paraboloid, M2: hyperboloid)

$\Longrightarrow$ Much shorter than Newtonian

$\Longrightarrow$ Telescope of choice for modern instruments

Schmidt Telescope

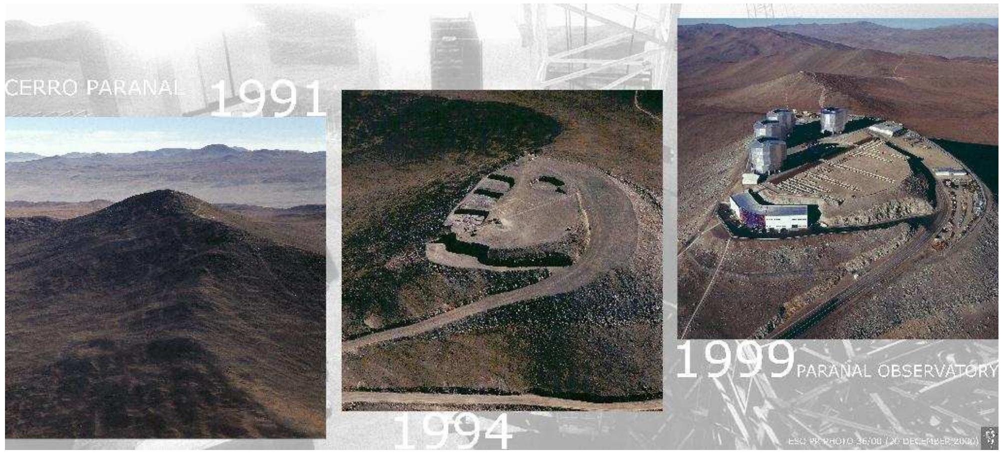
Bernhard Schmidt (Hamburg)
`http://www.sky-win.de/`

2m Schmidt telescope at the Landesternwarte Thüringen in Tautenburg near Jena: largest Schmidt telescope in the world.

Uses spherical mirror for larger field view, correction plate used to correct for spherical aberration.

Many amateur telescopes are combination of Schmidt telescope and Cassegrain telescope

$\Longrightarrow$ Schmidt-Cassegrain telescopes.



Example: Building of the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope

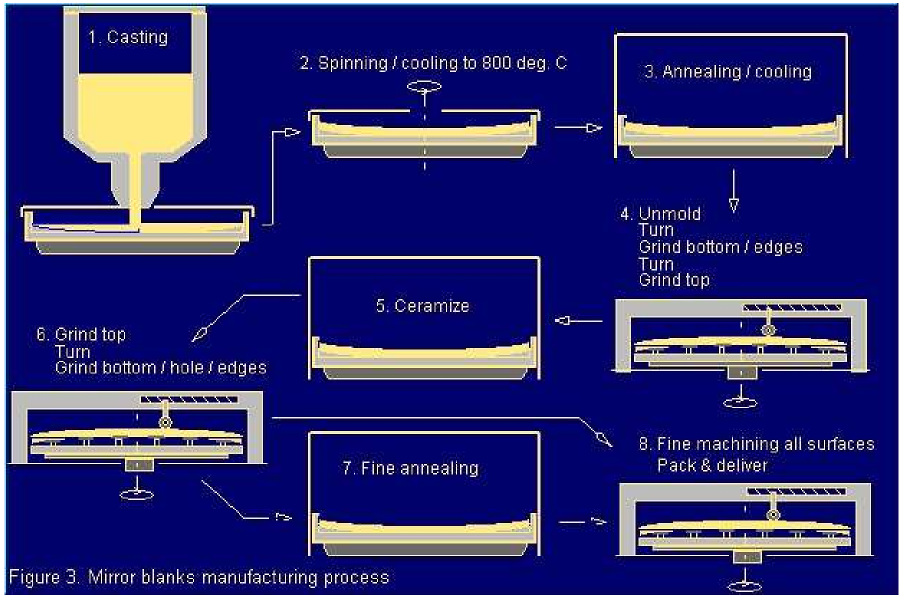
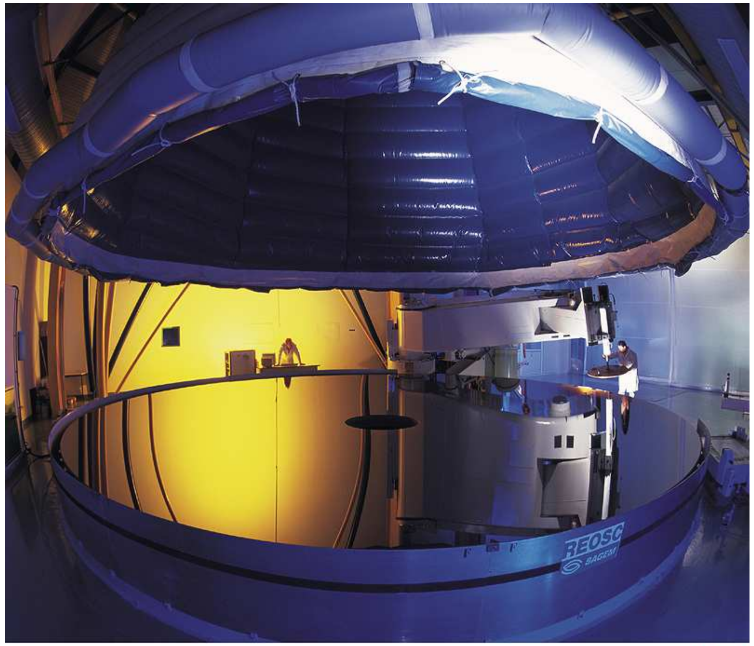


Figure 3. Mirror blanks manufacturing process

ESO



The Polished Fourth VLT 8.2-m Mirror at REOSC

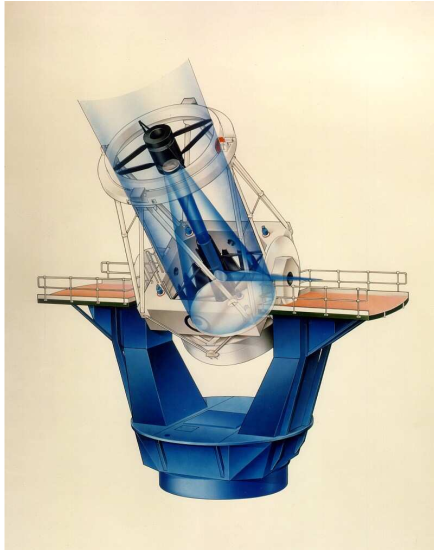
Photo: SAGEM

ESO PR Photo 44/99 (14 December 1999)

European Southern Observatory

ESO

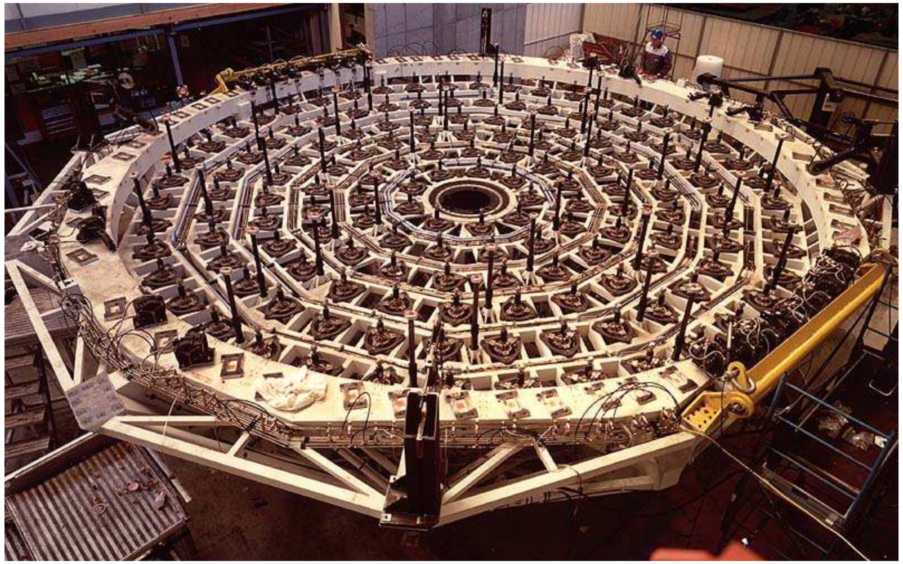
Building the VLT



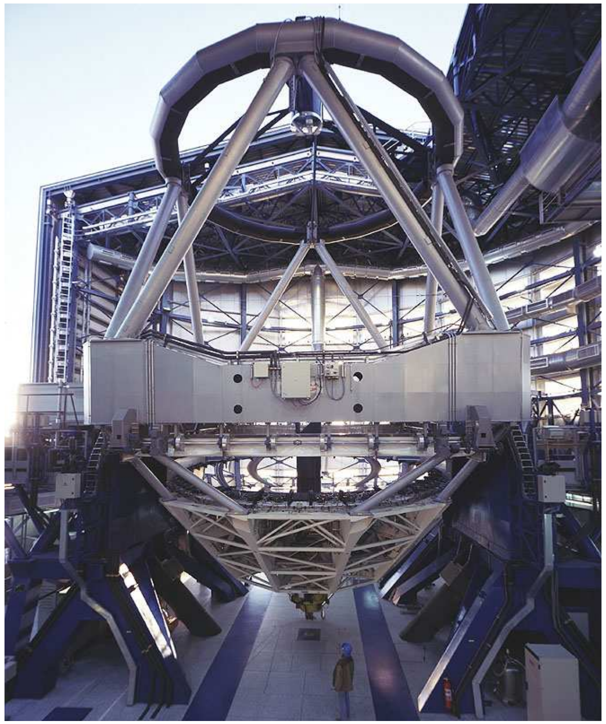
Nasmyth Focus:
light reflected through axis

- ideal for modern azimutal mountings
  e.g., European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope
- two stationary platforms
- can host large instruments
- very stable

William Herschel Telescope, La Palma



Mirror cell supporting the mirror, actuators keep mirror in shape ("adaptive optics", correcting all possible deformations of the mirror).



VLT at Paranal

ESO PR Photo 43a/99 (8 December 1999)

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Active Optics

From Eq. 8.8, the resolution of a telescope of diameter d is

$$\alpha = \frac{1.220\lambda}{d} = \frac{12''}{D/1\,\text{cm}} \quad (8.8)$$

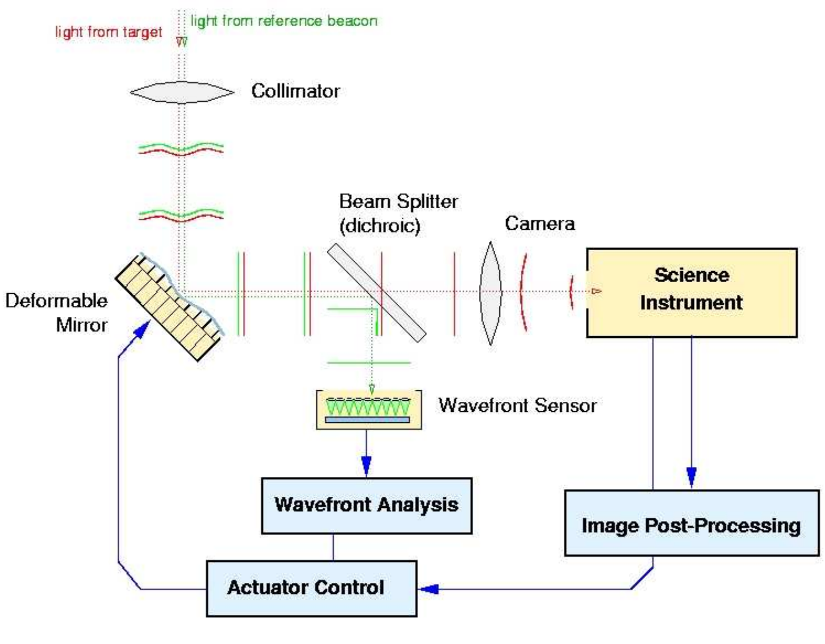
Problem: astronomical seeing

$\Longrightarrow$ turbulence in atmosphere smears pictures of stars to disks with $\theta \gtrsim 0.3''$

$\Longrightarrow$ Increasing telescope diameter to $\gtrsim$40 cm does *not* result in increase in resolution!

Solution to seeing problem: adaptive optics

. . . which only works in the IR so far, need to go to space for optical and UV



Scheme of an adaptive optics system (Lick observatory)

The AO system of Mt. Hopkins observatory, a 30 W laser (©G. Furesz).

The AO system of Mt. Hopkins observatory, a 30 W laser (©G. Furesz).

Active Optics

Gemini North/AURA

Picture of the galactic center in the IR taken with the Gemini North

Active Optics

Gemini North/AURA

Picture of the galactic center in the IR taken with the Gemini North

. . . and corrected with adaptive optics

$\Longrightarrow$ Resolution: diffraction limited!

$$\theta = 1.22\,\text{rad} \cdot \lambda/d \sim 70\,\text{mas} \quad (9.9)$$

(for $d = 8\,\text{m}$, $\lambda = 2.2\,\mu\text{m}$)