

Newton's hypothesis of the composition of white light is presented in textbooks as a straightforward result that can be justified by the prism experiment that produces a luminous spectrum. However, Newton's theory is much more complex, and required a lot of experiments and indirect arguments to provide its foundation. This dissertation presents some of the difficulties of Newton's theory and discusses the inadequacy of the usual textbook approach, taking into account all optical Newton's writing and the critics of his contemporaries.