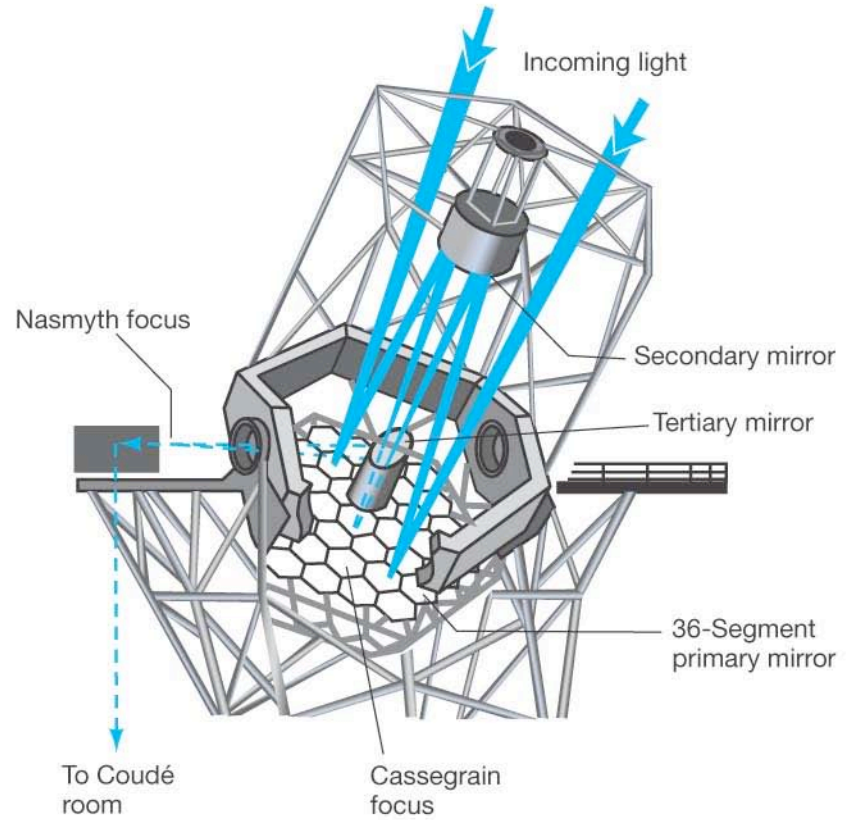
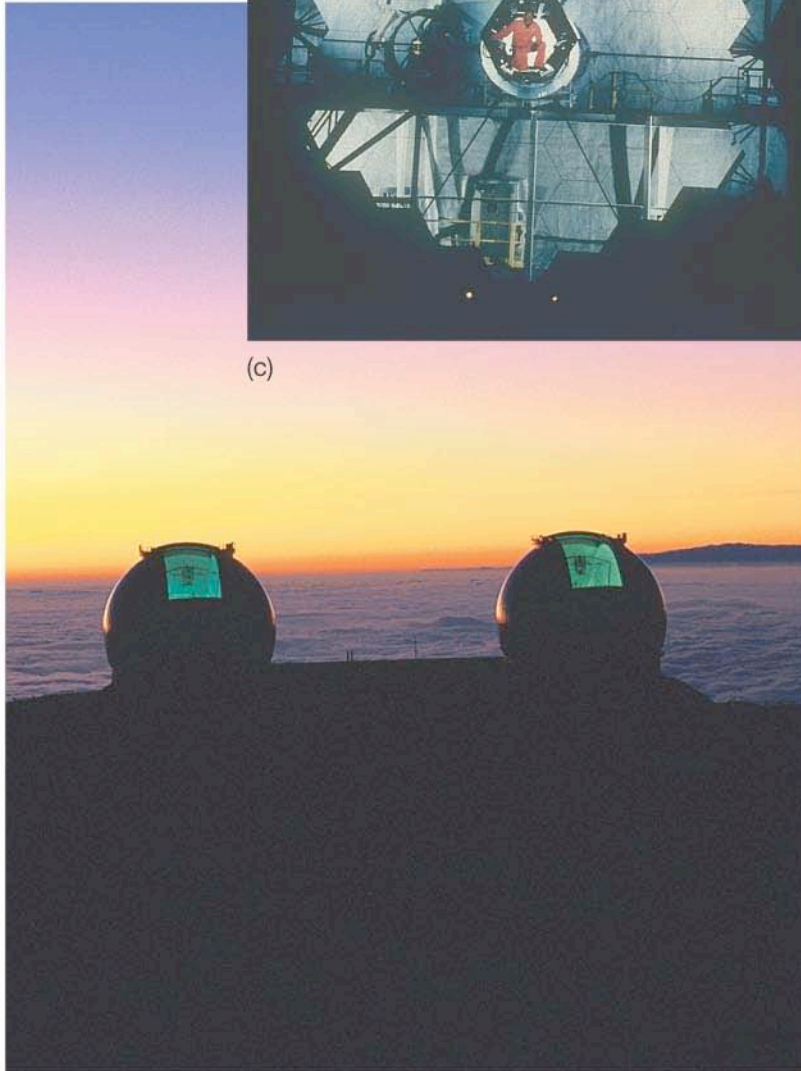


# Chapter 5: Telescopes

You don't have to know different types of reflecting and refracting telescopes.



(b)

# Why build bigger and bigger telescopes?

There are a few reasons. The first is:

## *Light-gathering power:*

Obviously bigger telescopes can collect more light, because the amount gathered just depends on the area of the telescope (diameter squared).

This property determines the ability to see faint objects. Faint objects might not be nearby, but could be very distant. So need a large telescope to see the faintest, nearby objects in the universe, and the most distant.

You also need a LOT of light to obtain spectra with high enough *spectral* resolution to analyze spectral lines!

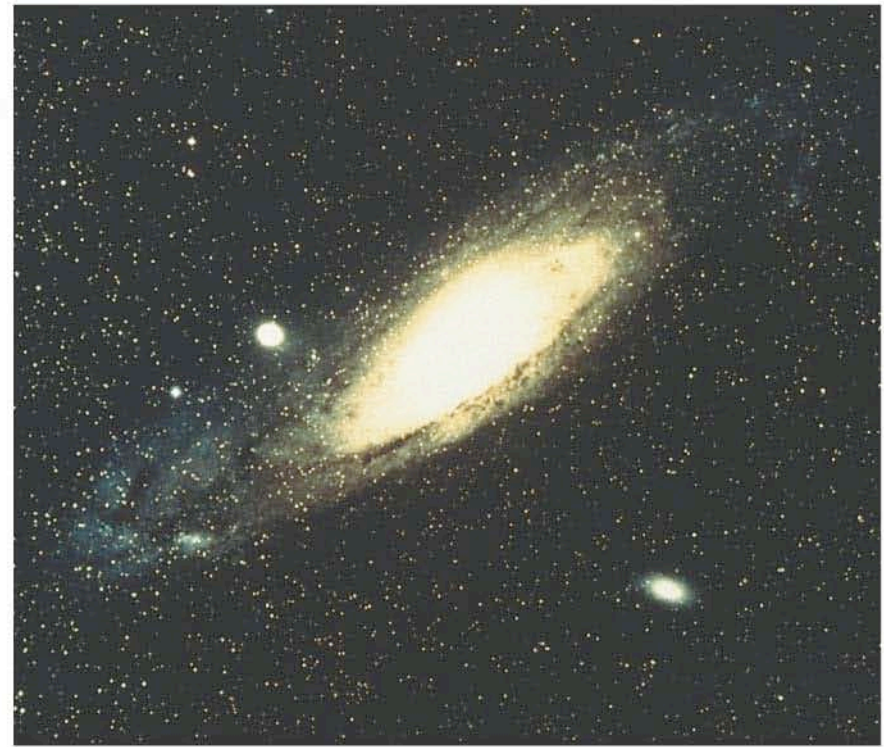
(Think about it--you're trying to study a tiny fraction of the entire spectrum of an object if you try to analyze a spectral line.)

Larger telescope means more photons collected:  
Can see fainter objects, or parts of objects.

Below: same galaxy but image from smaller telescope is on the left:  
Outer regions (right) too faint to see.



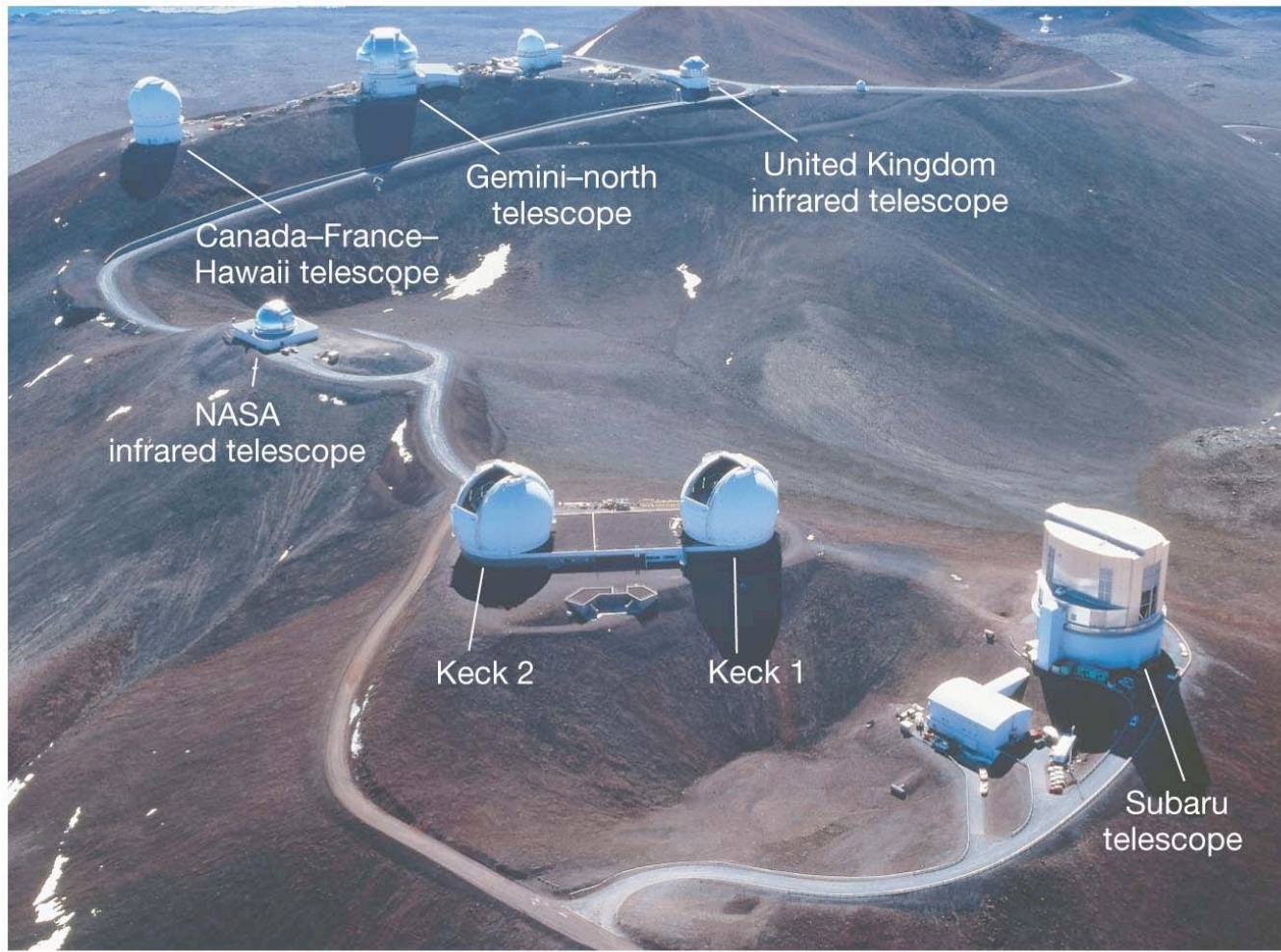
(a)



(b)



The largest telescopes are built at the highest altitudes, in order to avoid as much of the Earth's atmosphere as possible. This shows the collection of some of the world's largest telescopes on the same mountain in Hawaii.



(a)

# European counterpart

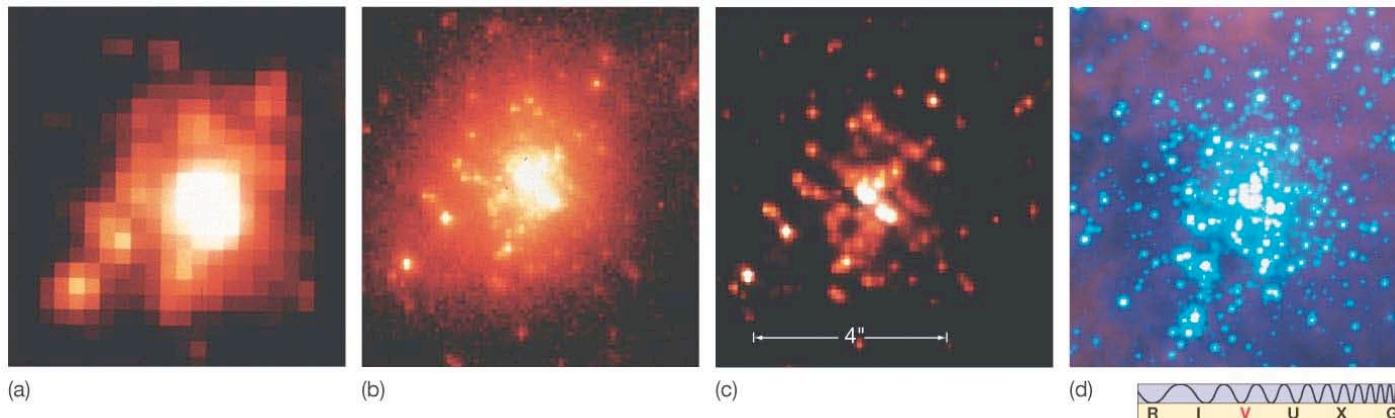




Example: we want to resolve individual stars in galaxies.



With increasing resolution, the “blob” on the left is seen to be a cluster of thousands of stars (right)





## Resolution (continued)

Note: if you have trouble remembering “resolution”, remember that poor resolution means “blurry,” and is equivalent to being nearsighted, or having a digital camera with only 0.2 megapixels.

**How to enhance resolution? First must understand the limitations, which are**

- 1. The “seeing limit” (Earth’s atmosphere), and**
- 2. The “diffraction limit” (inherent in observing through an instrument)**

# The diffraction limit

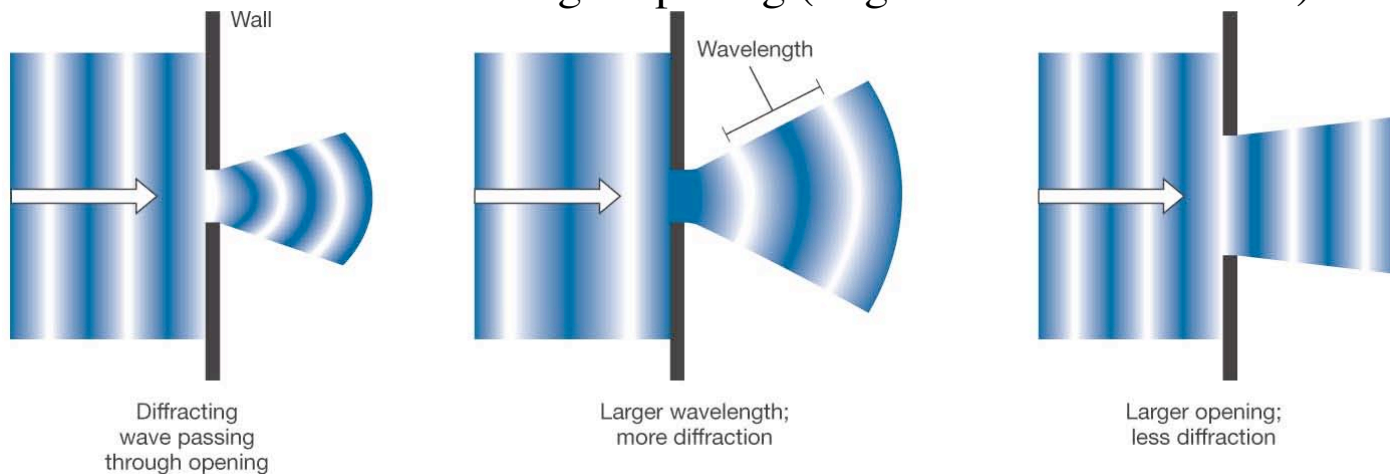
**Diffraction limit**  $\propto \lambda / D$  (just due to the fact that you're using an instrument with edges and boundaries—see text)

( $\lambda$  = wavelength,  $D$  = diameter of telescope)

(Remember: poor resolution means a large number, like 7 arcsec compared to 2 arcsec.) So resolution is poorer at radio wavelengths than, say, optical wavelengths for a given telescope diameter  $D$ ; i.e.  **$D$  has to be huge for radio telescopes. (see next slide)**

But even optical telescopes must deal with this effect.

Drawing from textbook illustrates how diffraction distorts a wave passing through an opening. Notice the image is less distorted for the larger opening (large  $D$  in formula above)



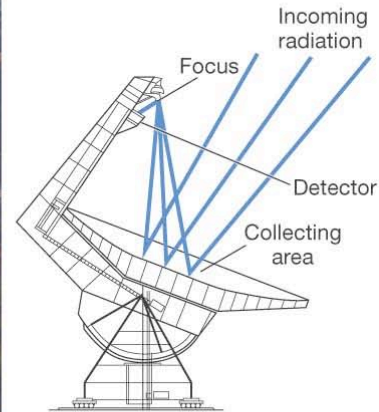
# Diffraction limit requires huge radio telescopes

Radio waves can get into the atmosphere without being blocked. But a problem is that their wavelengths are so large that their diffraction limit on resolution is also very large.

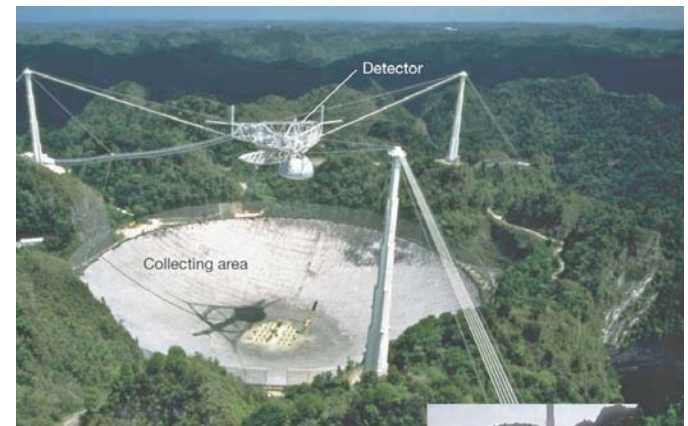
*If radio telescopes were the size of optical telescopes, the radio sky would look like one big blur.*



(a)

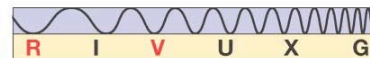
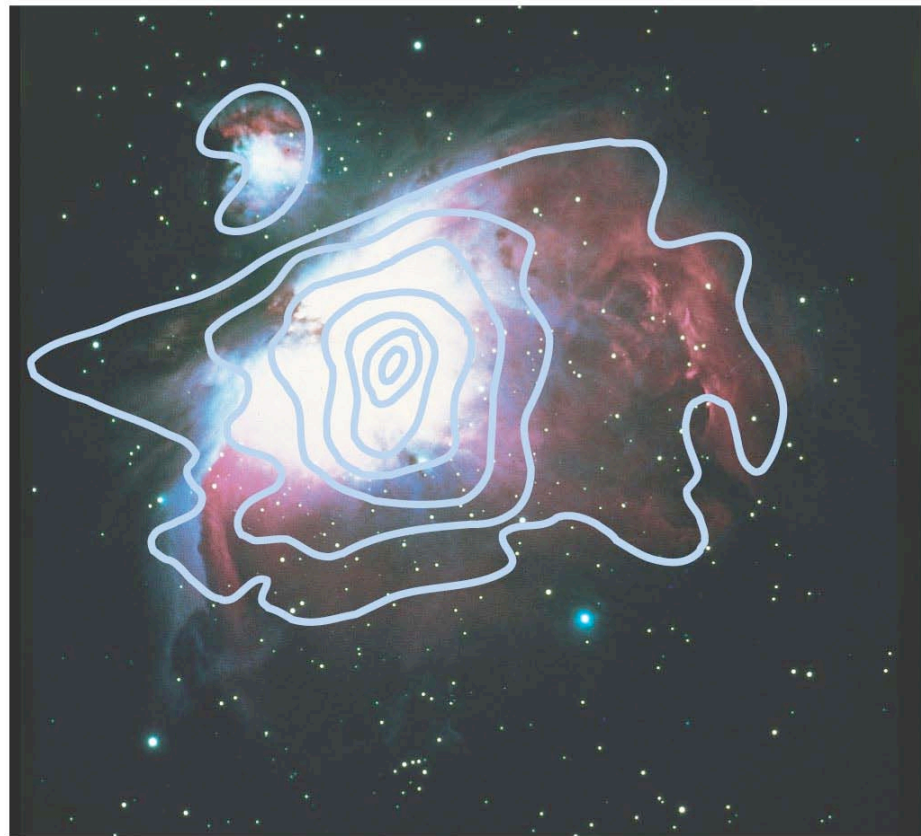


(b)



World's largest: Arecibo (1,000 ft. dish)

The “contours” show the low resolution image that a radio telescope was able to produce for this object. The rest of the image is from an optical telescope, so much higher resolution.



## A solution: Interferometers

One way around the diffraction limit, which has almost entirely been used for radio telescopes so far, is to use interferometers— several radio telescopes used to simulate one huge telescope in order to get great resolution. Biggest interferometers can get amazing resolutions of 0.001 arc sec or better!  
(Read sec. 5.6)

To the right are some pictures of present-day large-baseline interferometers: The VLA and the VLBA

VLBA=effective size  $\sim$  half of U.S.



(a)

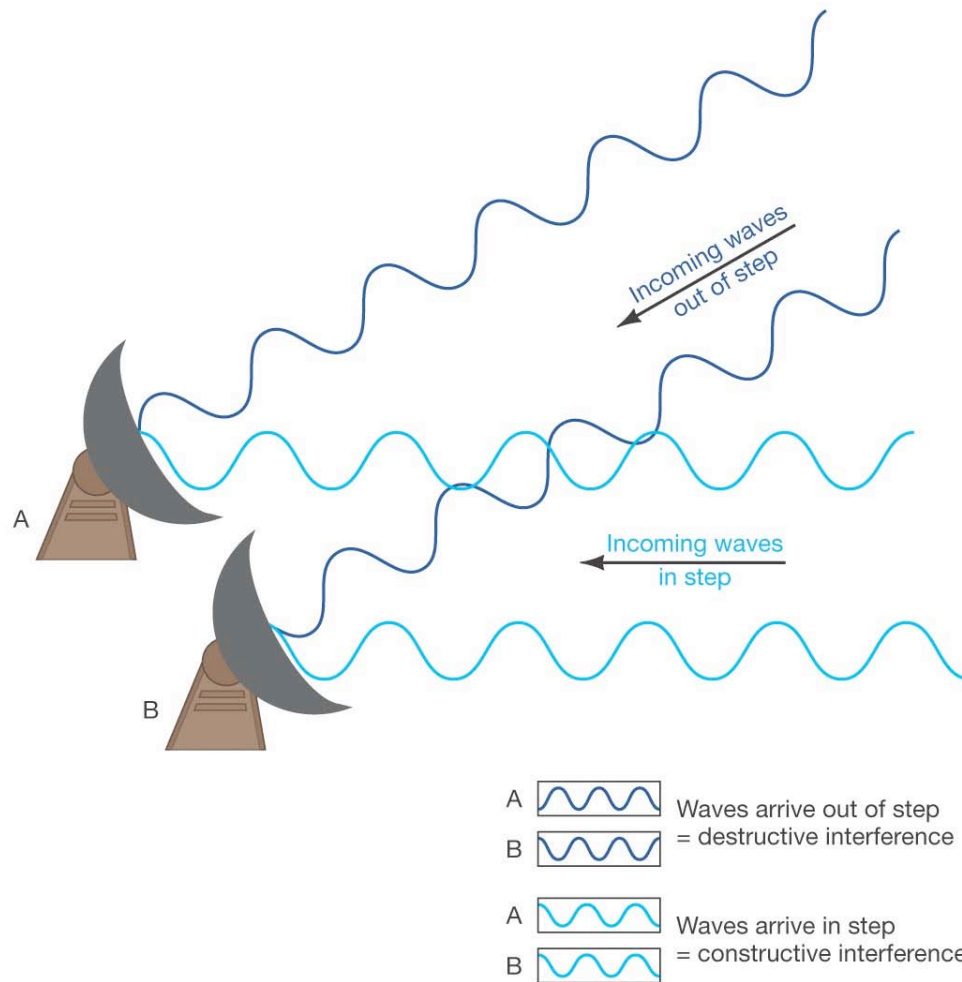
### The “Very Large Array” (VLA)



**FIGURE 5.18**

**The Very Long Baseline Array** A map showing the distribution of the ten antennas that constitute an array of radio telescopes stretching across the United States. (National Radio Astronomy Observatory)

# How an interferometer works



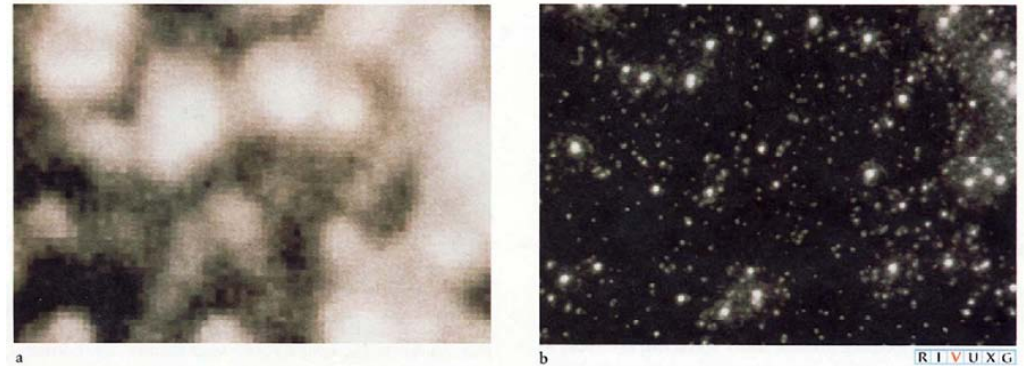
# The Seeing Limit



## 2. Seeing limit: due to scintillation in the Earth's atmosphere

“*Scintillation*” caused by scattering of light as it passes through the Earth's atmosphere. Images become “smeared out” over 1-5 arcsec, depending on altitude, weather, ... because they are “twinkling.” (see example)

For a ground-based optical telescope the best res.  $\approx$  **1 arc sec** because of this effect.



**Effects of Twinkling** The same star field photographed with (a) a ground-based telescope, which is subject to twinkling, and (b) the Hubble Space Telescope, which is free from the effects of twinkling.

Two ways around seeing:

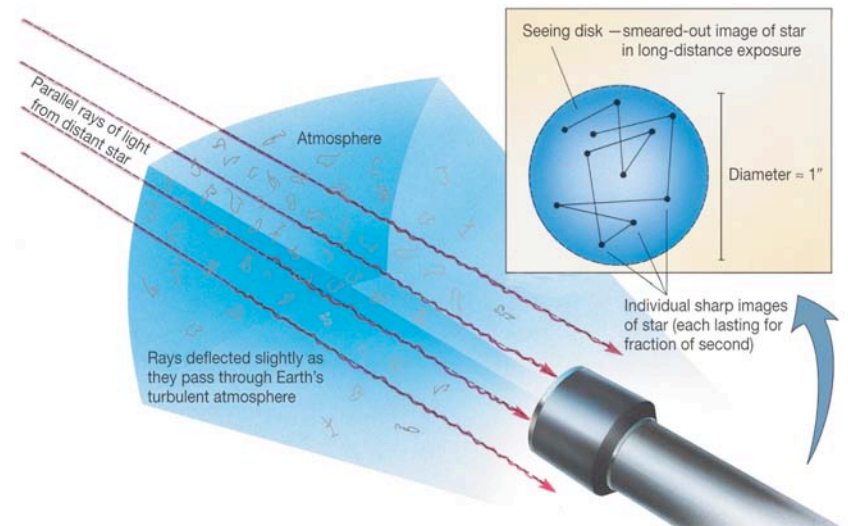
1. [Adaptive optics](#) in which the mirror constantly

and rapidly adjusts its orientation and shape (sometimes thousands of times per second!) in order to compensate for scintillation. (See discussion sec. 5.4)

2. [Space telescopes](#) (Hipparcos, IRAS, HST, Spitzer,

Chandra, ... Sec. 5.7)

**Both** of these methods to beat the *seeing limit* can get resolutions approaching *0.05 arc sec* or less.



# Adaptive optics at work



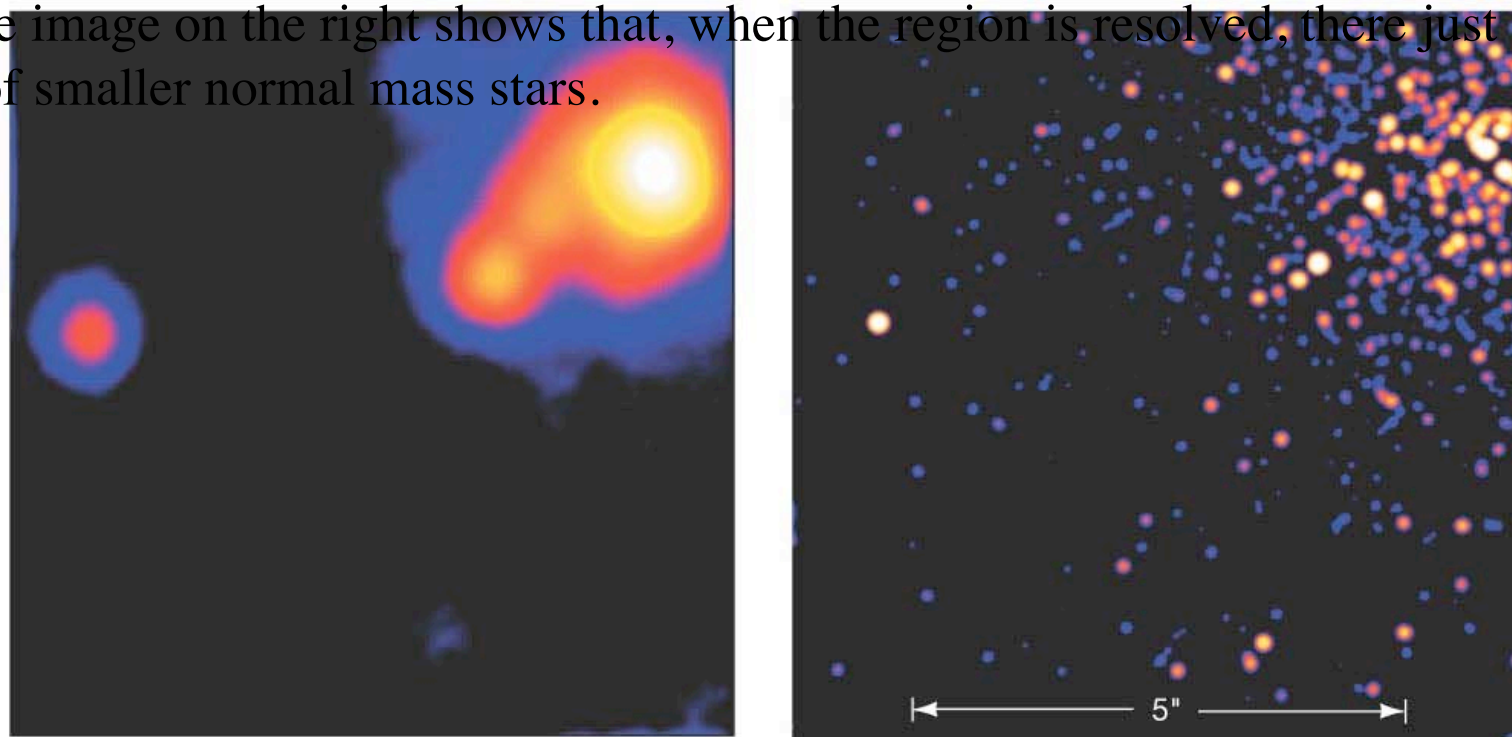
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**Left:** Observation from ground, can see three blurred objects.

**Right:** Above atmosphere, or with adaptive optics, blurry object is *resolved* into a star cluster.

This is an important example: Based on the low-resolution image, people supposed there could be supermassive stars, 1000 times the Sun's mass.

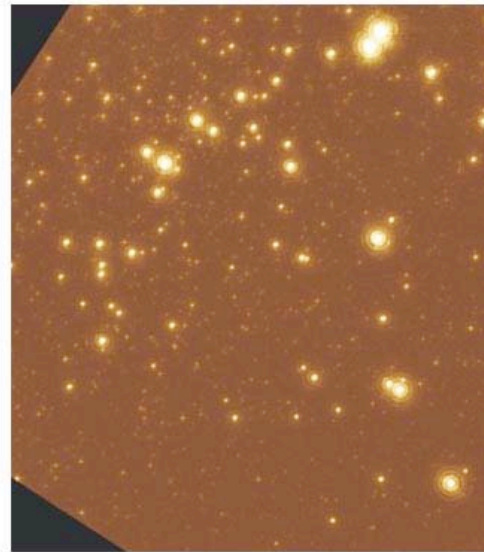
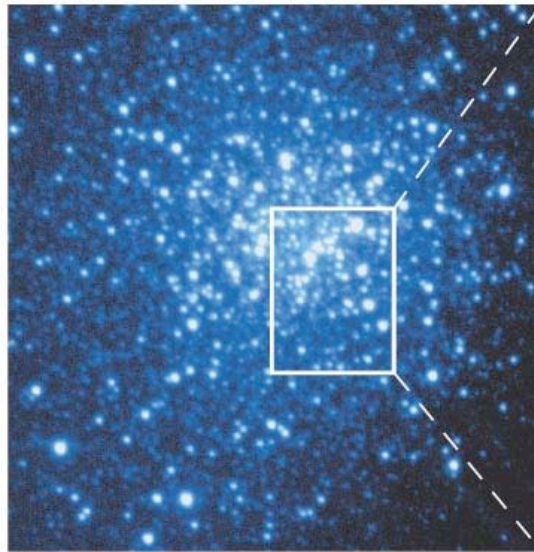
But the image on the right shows that, when the region is resolved, there just 100s of smaller normal mass stars.



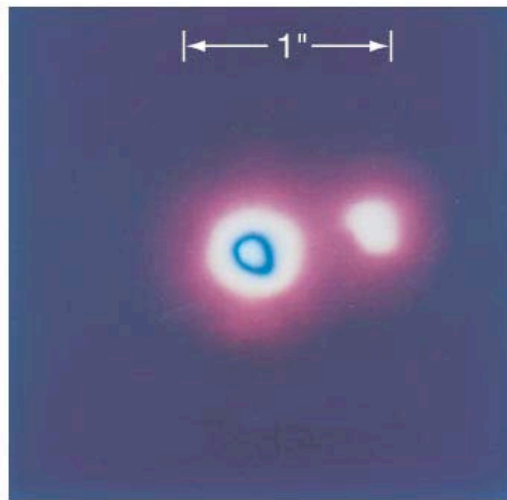
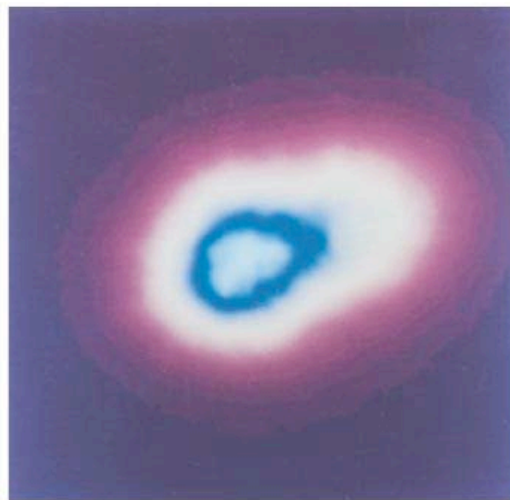
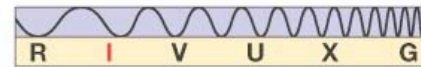
(a)

(b)

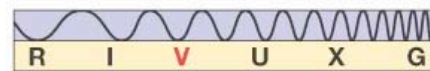




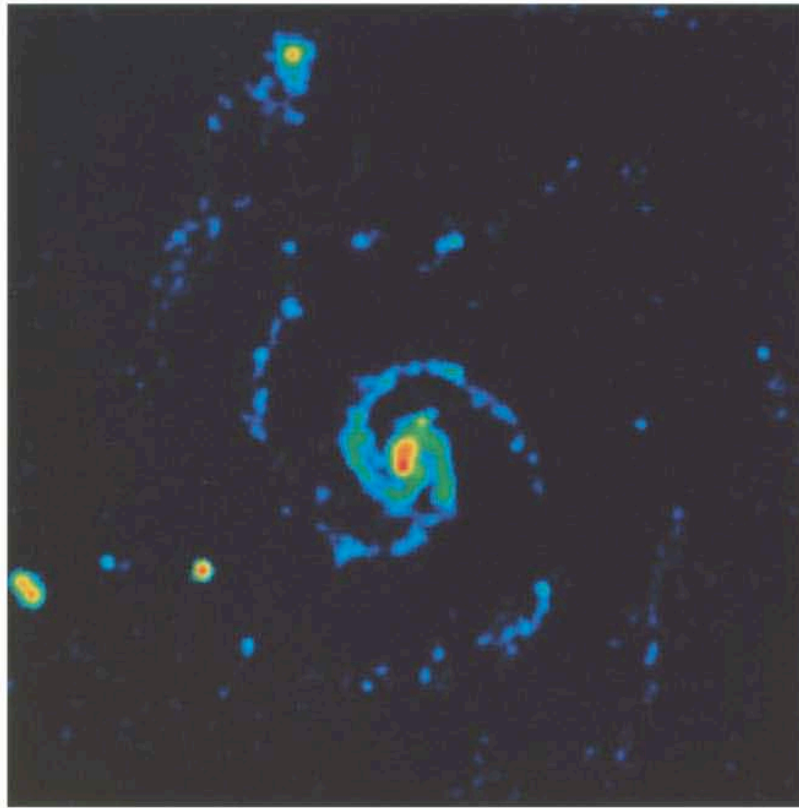
(a)



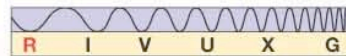
(b)



# Example of resolution enhancement by adaptive optics



(a)



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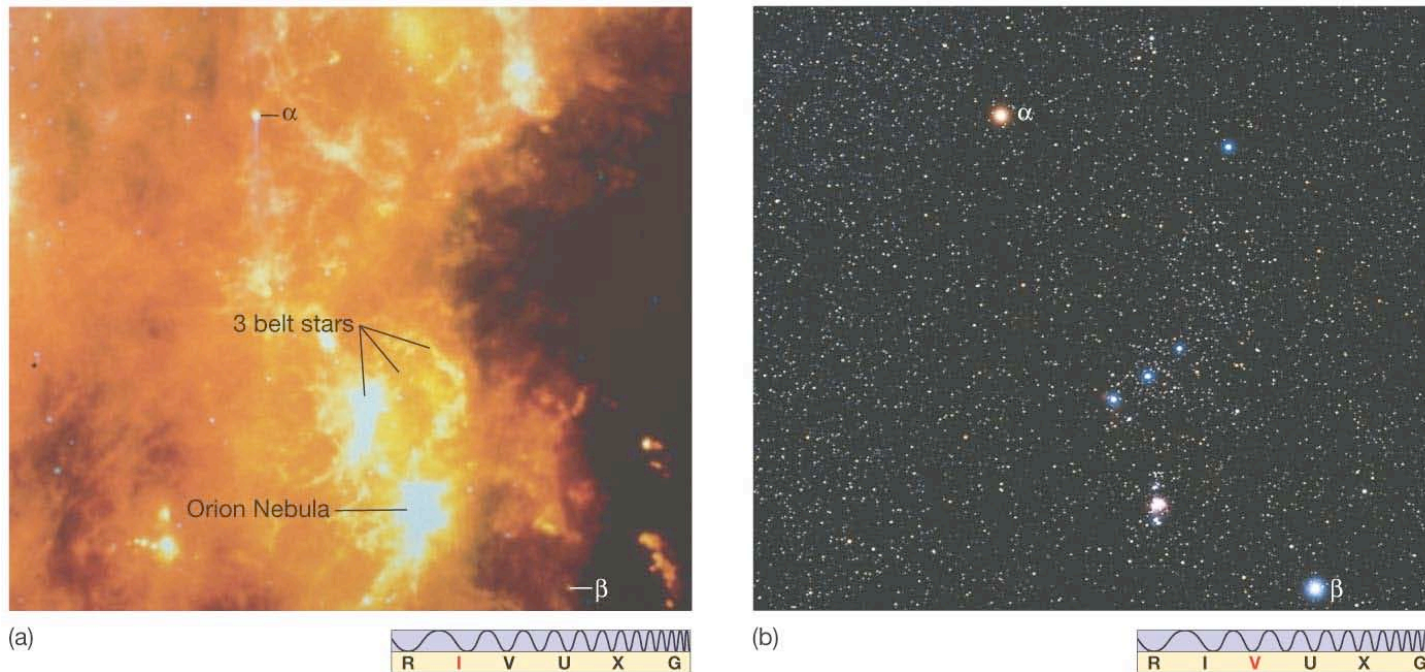
(b)



# Additional considerations

1. Atmospheric transmission--Besides being responsible for *seeing*, the Earth's atmosphere also just blocks out light. Visible and radio wavelengths are least affected (recall material from ch.3). For other wavelength regions, need satellite observatories or at least very high mountains (same for visible because of seeing). (Sec. 5.7)
2. CCDs—Photographic plates only capture about 1% of the light, while charge-coupled devices (CCDs) can get about 75% efficiency, *and extremely accurate*. (sec. 5.2 in text). For optical telescopes, photographic plates are no longer used.
3. Infrared telescopes—special problem: must be cold, because the telescope itself emits IR radiation (why?). Also, best when above the Earth's atmosphere to avoid molecular absorption (see 1 above). (Sec. 5.7)
4. X-ray and gamma-ray observations—All must be done far up in Earth's atmosphere because absorption is so strong. Need special telescopes, since these don't reflect off mirrors the way that longer-wavelength light does (why not?). See book sec. 5.7 for more details.

**Infrared observations:** Reveals the gas that is currently forming stars in regions like Orion (shown below). Right is optical photograph of Orion in the night sky. Left is infrared image of the region around Orion's "belt".

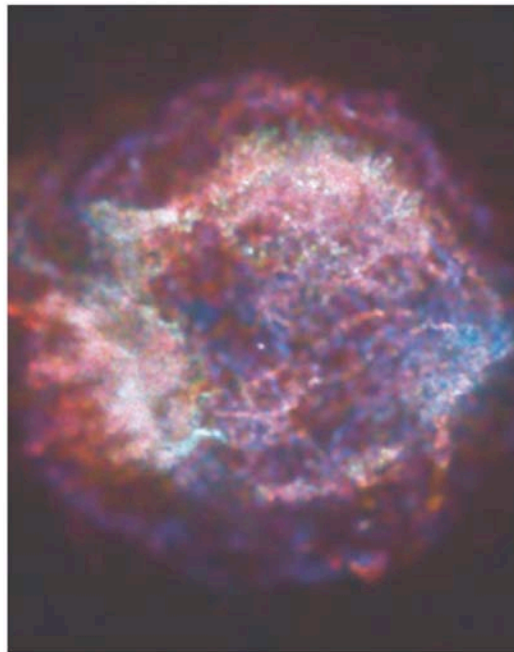
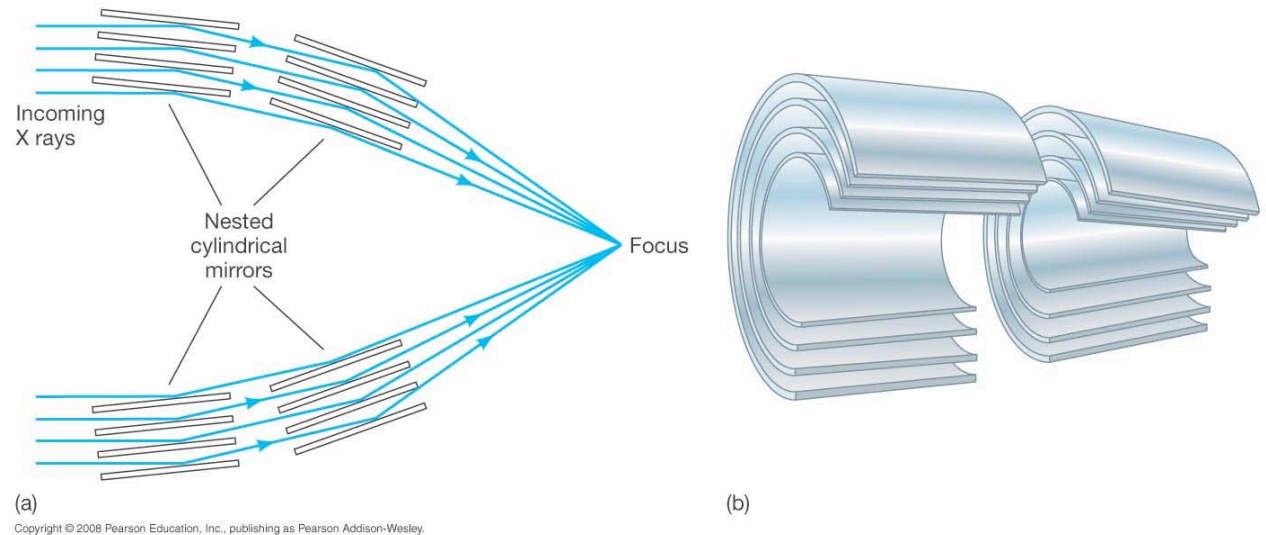


Why infrared for star-forming regions? Because the hot young stars heat the dust grains to a few hundred degrees, like the Earth.

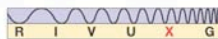
1984: IRAS satellite IR telescope gave the first full IR view of the entire sky. Currently (and for some time) the premier infrared observatory is the **Spitzer Space Telescope** (see text)

## X-ray and gamma-ray telescopes: Require completely different design (see textbook)

This is one of the most important advances in astronomy in the past half-century: The ability to observe the universe as it appears in X-rays and gamma-rays. You have to be above the Earth's atmosphere to do it!



← A “supernova” explosion observed in X-rays





Views of the entire sky at different wavelengths.  
Horizontal band in center is the disk of our galaxy, the Milky Way

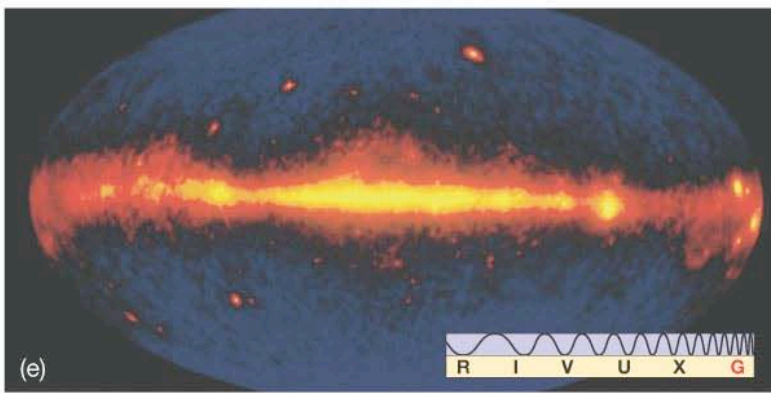
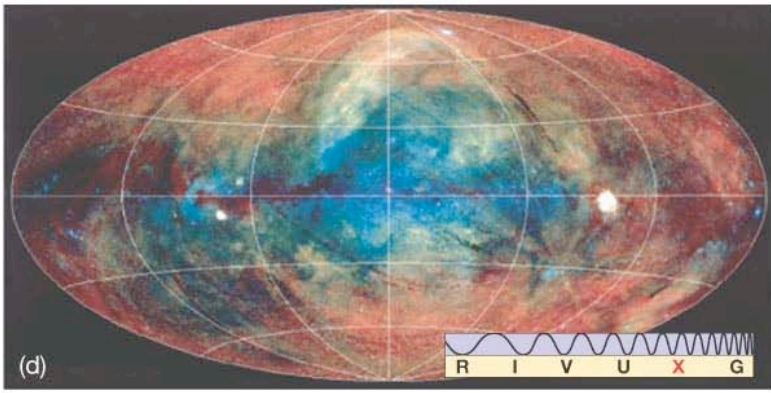
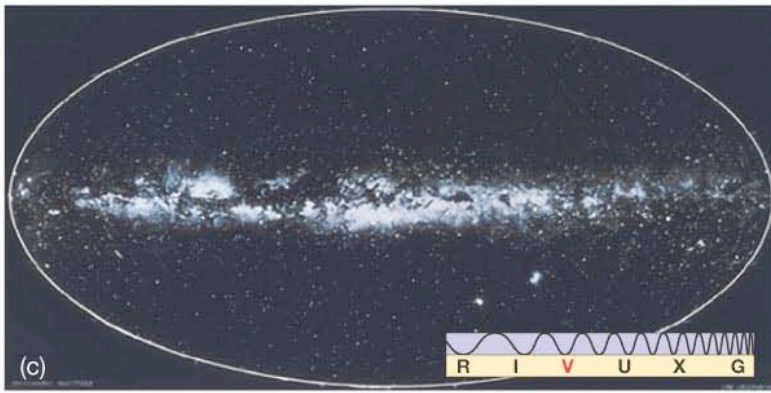
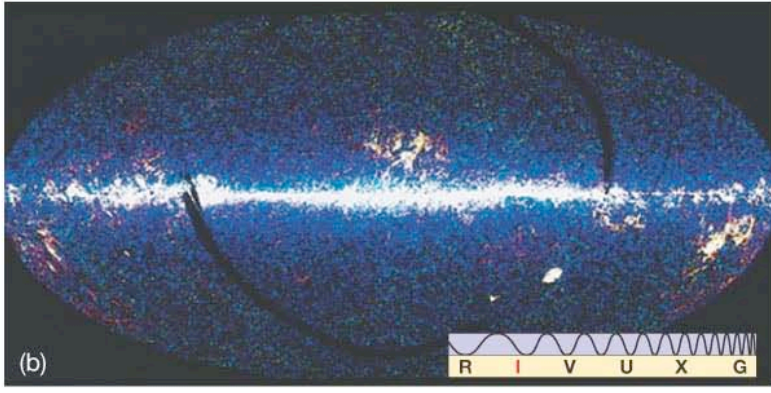
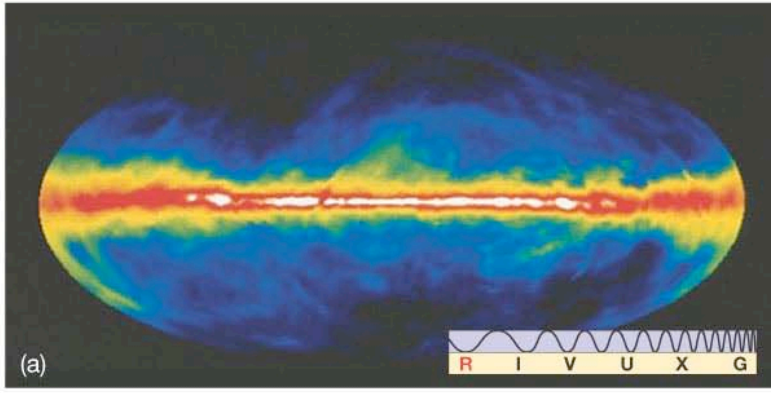


Table 5.1

TABLE 5.1 Astronomy at Many Wavelengths		
	General Considerations	Common Applications (Chapter Reference)
<i>Radio</i>	<p>Can penetrate dusty regions of interstellar space</p> <p>Earth's atmosphere largely transparent to these wavelengths</p> <p>Can be detected in the daytime as well as at night</p> <p>High resolution at long wavelengths requires very large telescopes or interferometers</p>	<p>Radar studies of planets (2,9)</p> <p>Planetary magnetic fields (11)</p> <p>Interstellar gas clouds and molecules (18)</p> <p>Galactic structure (23, 24)</p> <p>Galactic nuclei and active galaxies (23, 24)</p> <p>Cosmic background radiation (27)</p>
<i>Infrared</i>	<p>Can penetrate dusty regions of interstellar space</p> <p>Earth's atmosphere only partially transparent to infrared radiation, so some observations must be made from space</p>	<p>Star formation (19,20); cool stars (20)</p> <p>Center of the Milky Way Galaxy (23)</p> <p>Active galaxies (24)</p> <p>Large-scale structure of the universe (25, 27)</p>
<i>Visible</i>	<p>Earth's atmosphere transparent to visible light</p>	<p>Planets (7–14)</p> <p>Stars and stellar evolution (17, 20, 21)</p> <p>Normal and active galaxies (23, 24)</p> <p>Large-scale structure of the universe (25)</p>
<i>Ultraviolet</i>	<p>Earth's atmosphere is opaque to ultraviolet radiation, so observations must be made from space</p>	<p>Interstellar medium (19)</p> <p>Hot stars (21)</p>
<i>X-ray</i>	<p>Earth's atmosphere is opaque to X-rays, so observations must be made from space.</p> <p>Special mirror configurations are needed to form images</p>	<p>Stellar atmospheres (16)</p> <p>Neutron stars and black holes (22)</p> <p>Active galactic nuclei (24)</p> <p>Hot gas in galaxy clusters (25)</p>
<i>Gamma ray</i>	<p>Earth's atmosphere is opaque to gamma rays, so observations must be made from space.</p> <p>Cannot form images</p>	<p>Neutron stars (22)</p> <p>Active galactic nuclei (24)</p>