B7.3 Further Quantum Theory

Problem Sheet 1

Hilary Term 2020

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Throughout this course we will use examples of quantum systems which were discussed in the Part A course. It will be important to be familiar with the structure of these examples, so if you have forgotten some of this, you should solve the revision problems on any problem sheet. They will not be marked by the class TAs.

1.0 Harmonic oscillator (Revision)

Consider a quantum particle moving in one dimension. Show that the harmonic oscillator Hamiltonian

$$H = \frac{P^2}{2m} + \frac{1}{2}m\omega^2 X^2 \ ,$$

can be expressed as $H = \frac{1}{2m}a_+a_- + \frac{\hbar\omega}{2} = \frac{1}{2m}a_-a_+ - \frac{\hbar\omega}{2}$, where you should define $a_\pm$ with $(a_+)^* = a_-$. Further show that for any state ψ,

$$\|a_\pm\psi\|^2 = 2m\mathbb{E}_\psi(H) \pm m\hbar\omega \ .$$

Finally show that

$$[a_-, a_+] = 2m\omega\hbar \ , \qquad [H, a_\pm] = \pm\hbar\omega a_\pm \ .$$

Suppose that there is a normalised state ψ_0 (the *ground state*) for which $a_-|\psi_0\rangle = 0$. Show that $|\psi_n\rangle = (a_+)^n|\psi_0\rangle$ is an energy eigenstate with energy $E_n = (n + \frac{1}{2})\hbar\omega$. Comment on the existence and uniqueness of these energy eigenstates.

1.1 Coherent states for the harmonic oscillator

This problem is a modified version of problem 2.19 from Sakurai's Modern Quantum Mechanics. *We inherit notation from the previous revision problem.*

A coherent state of the quantum harmonic oscillator is an eigenstate of the (normalized) annihilation operator $\alpha_- = (2m\hbar\omega)^{-1/2}a_-$ (define also $\alpha_+ = (2m\hbar\omega)^{-1/2}a_+$).

(*i*) Show that $|\lambda\rangle = e^{-\frac{1}{2}|\lambda|^2}e^{\lambda\alpha_+}|\psi_0\rangle$ is a normalised coherent state with α_- eigenvalue λ for any complex λ.

(*ii*) Determine the expansion of the coherent state $|\lambda\rangle$ in terms of the (normalised) energy eigenstates $|n\rangle = |\psi_n\rangle/(\|\psi_n\|)^{1/2}$. Find the most probable value of n to be observed when measuring the energy of $|\lambda\rangle$.

(*iii*) Show that a coherent state can be obtained by applying the *finite displacement operator* $U(a) = \exp(-iPa/\hbar)$ to the ground state $|\psi_0\rangle$.

(*iv*) Determine the overlap between two different coherent states $|\lambda\rangle$ and $|\mu\rangle$ for $\mu \neq \lambda$. Explain why there is no contradiction in the fact that states with different eigenvalues are not orthogonal.

In this problem it may be useful to look up and use the "Baker-Campbell-Hausdorff" formula if you have not seen it before.

1.2 Practice with bra-ket notation

Let $|\xi\rangle\langle\eta|$ be the linear operator $|\xi\rangle\langle\eta| : |\zeta\rangle \mapsto |\xi\rangle\langle\eta|\zeta\rangle = (\eta, \zeta)|\xi\rangle$.

(*i*) Show that if ξ is normalised then $|\xi\rangle\langle\xi|$ is a projection, and projects onto the state ξ.

(*ii*) Show that if $\phi_1, \phi_2, \dots \phi_n$ is an orthonormal basis for the Hilbert space $\mathcal{H}$, then $\sum_{j=1}^n |\phi_j\rangle\langle\phi_j|$ is the identity operator on $\mathcal{H}$.

(*iii*) Show that the trace of the linear operator $|\xi\rangle\langle\eta|$ is

$$\mathrm{Tr}[|\xi\rangle\langle\eta|] = (\eta, \xi) \ .$$

[*The trace of a linear operator A can be defined as* $\mathrm{Tr}[A] = \sum_j(\phi_j, A\phi_j)$.]

1.3 Dispersion of Gaussian wave packet

Consider a free particle in one dimension whose initial wave function (at time zero) is the stationary *Gaussian wave packet* given by

$$\psi(x) = \frac{1}{(2\pi\sigma^2)^{1/4}} e^{-x^2/4\sigma^2} \ .$$

(*i*) Find the corresponding wave function $\tilde{\psi}(p)$ in momentum space by decomposing the initial wave function into (generalised) momentum eigenstates $|p\rangle$.

(*ii*) Now evolved the resulting state to some time t using the fact that the free particle Hamiltonian is diagonalised on the momentum states.

(*ii*) Directly determine the time evolution of the position-space wave function using the free particle propagator $U(x', t'; x, t)$ as described in lectures.

Comment on the behaviour of the dispersions $\Delta_\psi(X)$ and $\Delta_\psi(P)$ over time.

In this problem, you may find it useful to know (if you don't know it already) the expression for the general Gaussian integral (valid for $\Re(A) \geqslant 0$) is

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2}Ax^2 + Bx\right) \mathrm{d}x = \sqrt{\frac{2\pi}{A}} \exp\left(\frac{B^2}{2A}\right) \ .$$

1.4 Practice with identical particles

Consider a system of two identical particles. First, assume that they are free to move in the interval $[0, a]$ with respective coordinates x_1 and x_2.

(*i*) Explain why, if the particles are fermions, the ground state wave function is given by

$$\psi(x_1, x_2) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \left(\psi_1(x_1)\psi_2(x_2) - \psi_1(x_2)\psi_2(x_1)\right) \ ,$$

where x_1 and x_2 are the positions of the particles and $\psi_k(x) = \sqrt{\frac{2}{a}} \sin\left(\frac{k\pi x}{a}\right)$. What is the ground state wave function if the particles are bosons?

(*ii*) In both cases, calculate the probability that, in the ground state, both particles will be found in the interval $[0, \frac{1}{2}a]$.

Now the particles move on the full x-axis with external potential $V(x) = \frac{1}{2}m\omega^2 x^2$. They also repel one another with a force arising from an interaction potential $V_{\text{int}}(x_1, x_2) = -\frac{1}{4}\kappa m\omega^2(x_1 - x_2)^2$ with $\kappa < 1$ is a real constant.

(*iii*) Define new coordinates $y_\pm := (x_1 \pm x_2)/\sqrt{2}$. Show that if the particles are bosons, then the wave function $\psi(y_+, y_-)$ must be an even function of y_-. What if the particles are fermions?

(*iv*) Show that the time-independent Schrödinger equation separates when written in terms of $y_\pm$. Given that the normalised ground state and first excited state wave functions of the standard oscillator are given by

$$\psi_0(x) = (\pi\sigma^2)^{-\frac{1}{4}} \exp\left(-x^2/2\sigma^2\right) \ , \qquad \psi_1(x) = \frac{\sqrt{2}x}{\sigma}\psi_0(x) \ , \qquad \text{where} \qquad \sigma^2 = \frac{\hbar}{m\omega} \ ,$$

determine the ground state wave function of the coupled system when the particles are bosons and when they are fermions. Determine the spectrum of energy levels in both cases.

(*v*) Show that the expected distance $|x_1 - x_2|$ between the particles in the ground state is twice as large for fermions as for bosons. This is an example of what is sometimes called *Pauli repulsion.*

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