

ENS ICFP MASTER - First year - 2018/2019
Relativistic quantum mechanics and introduction to quantum field theory
Solution of the homework

1 Some operator identities

Note first that if $O(t)$ is a t -dependent operator whose derivative $\frac{dO}{dt}$ commutes with $O(t)$, then $\frac{d}{dt}e^{O(t)} = \frac{dO}{dt}e^{O(t)} = e^{O(t)}\frac{dO}{dt}$, as can be proven by deriving term by term the series defining the exponential.

a) With $O(t) = tA$, one has $\frac{dO}{dt} = A$ that commutes with $O(t)$, hence

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{d}{dt}(e^{tA}Xe^{-tA}) &= \frac{d}{dt}(e^{tA})Xe^{-tA} + e^{tA}X\frac{d}{dt}(e^{-tA}) = e^{tA}(AX - XA)e^{-tA} \\ &= e^{tA}[A, X]e^{-tA}\end{aligned}$$

for any operator X . By induction on n one deduces that

$$\frac{d^n}{dt^n}F(t) = \frac{d^n}{dt^n}(e^{tA}Be^{-tA}) = e^{tA}[A, [A, \dots, [A, B] \dots]]e^{-tA}$$

with n commutators. The identity (1) of the problem then follows from

$$F(1) = F(0) + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n!} \left. \frac{d^n}{dt^n}F(t) \right|_{t=0} ;$$

the Taylor expansion of $F(t)$ in 0 has indeed an infinite radius of convergence for bounded operators A .

b) One computes the derivative of $G(t)$ as suggested,

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{dG}{dt} &= \frac{d}{dt}(e^{tA}e^{tB}) = Ae^{tA}e^{tB} + e^{tA}Be^{tB} = Ae^{tA}e^{tB} + (e^{tA}Be^{-tA})e^{tA}e^{tB} \\ &= Ae^{tA}e^{tB} + (B + t[A, B])e^{tA}e^{tB} ,\end{aligned}$$

where in the last step we used the identity (1), the series stopping at $n = 1$ because A commutes with $[A, B]$. The differential equation thus obtained, $\frac{dG}{dt} = (A + B + t[A, B])G(t)$, with $G(0) = \mathbf{1}$, can be integrated in $G(t) = \exp\left[t(A + B) + \frac{t^2}{2}[A, B]\right]$ thanks to the preliminary remark above and the commutation of $A + B$ with $[A, B]$. The identity (2) then follows with $t = 1$.

c) Taking $A = \int d\vec{q}g(\vec{q})a^\dagger(\vec{q})$ and $B = \int d\vec{q}f(\vec{q})a(\vec{q})$, one has $[A, B] = \int d\vec{q}_1d\vec{q}_2g(\vec{q}_1)f(\vec{q}_2)[a^\dagger(\vec{q}_1), a(\vec{q}_2)] = -\int d\vec{q}g(\vec{q})f(\vec{q})$; then (3) follows directly from (2).

2 Some Lorentz algebra

We shall use the identity (1) with $A = -\frac{i}{2}\omega_{\rho\sigma}J^{\rho\sigma}$ and $B = P^\mu$. We compute the commutator

$$[A, B] = -\frac{i}{2}\omega_{\rho\sigma}[J^{\rho\sigma}, P^\mu] = -\frac{i}{2}\omega_{\rho\sigma}(-i)(\eta^{\sigma\mu}P^\rho - \eta^{\rho\mu}P^\sigma) = \omega_{\rho\sigma}\eta^{\rho\mu}P^\sigma = \omega^\mu{}_\sigma P^\sigma ,$$

where we used (3.50) from the lecture notes and the antisymmetry of $\omega_{\rho\sigma}$. We have thus

$$[A, P^\mu] = \omega^\mu{}_\rho P^\rho , \quad \text{hence} \quad [A, [A, \dots [A, P^\mu] \dots]] = (\omega^n)^\mu{}_\rho P^\rho$$

with n commutators on the left-hand-side and ω^n being the n -th matrix power of ω . The identity (5) is then obtained by resumming the series in (1) to obtain $e^\omega = \Lambda$.

3 Relations for products of γ -matrices and their traces

The Clifford algebra $\{\gamma^\mu, \gamma^\nu\} = 2\eta^{\mu\nu}\mathbf{1}$ translates into $(\gamma^0)^2 = -\mathbf{1}$, $(\gamma^i)^2 = \mathbf{1}$ for $i = 1, 2, 3$, and the anti-commutation of γ^μ and γ^ν if $\mu \neq \nu$. The matrices with covariant indices are defined as usual by $\gamma_0 = -\gamma^0$, $\gamma_i = \gamma^i$ for $i = 1, 2, 3$.

$$\gamma_\mu \gamma^\mu = -(\gamma^0)^2 + (\gamma^1)^2 + (\gamma^2)^2 + (\gamma^3)^2 = 4 \times \mathbf{1}$$

$$\gamma_\mu \gamma^\nu \gamma^\mu = \gamma_\mu (\{\gamma^\nu, \gamma^\mu\} - \gamma^\mu \gamma^\nu) = 2\eta^{\mu\nu} \gamma_\mu - \gamma_\mu \gamma^\mu \gamma^\nu = -2\gamma^\nu, \text{ by using the previous result.}$$

$$\gamma_\mu \gamma^\nu \gamma^\rho \gamma^\mu = \gamma_\mu \gamma^\nu (\{\gamma^\rho, \gamma^\mu\} - \gamma^\mu \gamma^\rho) = 2\eta^{\rho\mu} \gamma_\mu \gamma^\nu - \gamma_\mu \gamma^\nu \gamma^\mu \gamma^\rho = 2\gamma^\nu \gamma^\rho + 2\gamma^\nu \gamma^\rho = 2\{\gamma^\rho, \gamma^\nu\} = 4\eta^{\rho\nu} \times \mathbf{1}$$

$$\gamma_\mu \gamma^\nu \gamma^\rho \gamma^\sigma \gamma^\mu = \gamma_\mu \gamma^\nu \gamma^\rho (\{\gamma^\sigma, \gamma^\mu\} - \gamma^\mu \gamma^\sigma) = 2\eta^{\sigma\mu} \gamma_\mu \gamma^\nu \gamma^\rho - 4\eta^{\rho\nu} \gamma^\sigma = 2\gamma^\sigma (\gamma^\nu \gamma^\rho - \{\gamma^\nu, \gamma^\rho\}) = -2\gamma^\sigma \gamma^\rho \gamma^\nu$$

$$\text{tr } \gamma_\mu \gamma_\nu = \frac{1}{2} \text{tr} (\gamma_\mu \gamma_\nu + \gamma_\nu \gamma_\mu) = \eta_{\mu\nu} \text{tr } \mathbf{1} = 4\eta_{\mu\nu}$$

In the following proof we move γ_μ to the right by using the Clifford algebra :

$$\begin{aligned} \text{tr } \gamma_\mu \gamma_\nu \gamma_\rho \gamma_\sigma &= 2\eta_{\mu\nu} \text{tr } \gamma_\rho \gamma_\sigma - \text{tr } \gamma_\nu \gamma_\mu \gamma_\rho \gamma_\sigma \\ &= 2\eta_{\mu\nu} \text{tr } \gamma_\rho \gamma_\sigma - 2\eta_{\mu\rho} \text{tr } \gamma_\nu \gamma_\sigma + \text{tr } \gamma_\nu \gamma_\rho \gamma_\mu \gamma_\sigma \\ &= 2\eta_{\mu\nu} \text{tr } \gamma_\rho \gamma_\sigma - 2\eta_{\mu\rho} \text{tr } \gamma_\nu \gamma_\sigma + 2\eta_{\mu\sigma} \text{tr } \gamma_\nu \gamma_\rho - \text{tr } \gamma_\nu \gamma_\rho \gamma_\sigma \gamma_\mu \end{aligned}$$

By the cyclicity of the trace the last term on the right is equal to the term on the left hand side, hence $\text{tr } \gamma_\mu \gamma_\nu \gamma_\rho \gamma_\sigma = \frac{1}{2}(2\eta_{\mu\nu} \text{tr } \gamma_\rho \gamma_\sigma - 2\eta_{\mu\rho} \text{tr } \gamma_\nu \gamma_\sigma + 2\eta_{\mu\sigma} \text{tr } \gamma_\nu \gamma_\rho) = 4(\eta_{\mu\nu} \eta_{\rho\sigma} - \eta_{\mu\rho} \eta_{\nu\sigma} + \eta_{\mu\sigma} \eta_{\nu\rho})$

We recall that $\gamma_5 = -i\gamma^0 \gamma^1 \gamma^2 \gamma^3$ is a matrix that anticommutes with the four γ^μ 's, and that square to one. Thus

$$\text{tr } \gamma_{\mu_1} \dots \gamma_{\mu_{2n+1}} = \text{tr } \gamma_5 \gamma_5 \gamma_{\mu_1} \dots \gamma_{\mu_{2n+1}} = \begin{cases} \text{tr } \gamma_5 \gamma_{\mu_1} \dots \gamma_{\mu_{2n+1}} \gamma_5 \\ -\text{tr } \gamma_5 \gamma_{\mu_1} \dots \gamma_{\mu_{2n+1}} \gamma_5 \end{cases},$$

where in the first line we used the cyclicity of the trace, and in the second line the fact that γ_5 anticommutes with the product of an odd number of γ^μ 's. This implies that $\text{tr } \gamma_{\mu_1} \dots \gamma_{\mu_{2n+1}} = 0$.

4 Energy levels of a relativistic charged spin-0 particle in a constant magnetic field

a) With $\vec{A} = A_z(x, y, z)\vec{e}_z$ the associated magnetic field is $\vec{B} = \vec{\nabla} \wedge \vec{A} = (\partial_y A_z)\vec{e}_x - (\partial_x A_z)\vec{e}_y$, we can thus take $A_z = -Bx$ to have $\vec{B} = B\vec{e}_y$. The Klein-Gordon equation in presence of an electromagnetic potential is

$$[-(\partial_\mu - iqA_\mu)(\partial^\mu - iqA^\mu) + m^2] \phi = 0 .$$

With the above choice for \vec{A} one obtains

$$\left[\frac{\partial^2}{\partial t^2} - \Delta + m^2 + q^2 B^2 x^2 - 2iqBx \frac{\partial}{\partial z} \right] \phi(t, \vec{x}) = 0 ,$$

with Δ the spatial Laplacian.

b) We shall look for a stationary solution of the form $\phi(t, \vec{x}) = e^{-iEt} \varphi(\vec{x})$, where $\varphi(\vec{x})$ obeys

$$\left[-E^2 - \Delta + m^2 + q^2 B^2 x^2 - 2iqBx \frac{\partial}{\partial z} \right] \varphi(\vec{x}) = 0 .$$

Denoting the momentum operator $\vec{P} = -i\vec{\nabla}$ this can be rewritten as an eigenvalue problem,

$$[P_x^2 + P_y^2 + (P_z + qBX)^2] \varphi = (E^2 - m^2)\varphi .$$

As the operator in the left hand side commutes with P_y and P_z we can look for a common eigenvector, i.e. take $\varphi(x, y, z) = e^{ik_y y + ik_z z} \chi(x)$, with

$$\left[P_x^2 + (qB)^2 \left(X + \frac{k_z}{qB} \right)^2 \right] \chi = (E^2 - m^2 - k_y^2) \chi .$$

Dividing by $2m$ we obtain

$$\left[\frac{P_x^2}{2m} + \frac{1}{2}m \left(\frac{qB}{m} \right)^2 \left(X + \frac{k_z}{qB} \right)^2 \right] \chi = \frac{E^2 - m^2 - k_y^2}{2m} \chi .$$

One recognizes a Schrödinger equation for an harmonic oscillator of mass m and frequency $\omega = qB/m$, the location of the center $x_0 = -k_z/(qB)$ of the harmonic well being fixed by k_z . The eigenvalues of this problem are $\omega(n + (1/2))$, with $n = 0, 1, \dots$, hence

$$E(n, k_y) = \sqrt{m^2 + k_y^2 + qB(2n + 1)} , \quad \varphi(\vec{x}) = e^{ik_y y + ik_z z} e^{-\frac{qB}{2}(x + (k_z/qB))^2} H_n(\sqrt{qB}(x + (k_z/qB))) ,$$

with H_n the Hermite polynomials. For each value of n and k_y there is an infinite degeneracy due to the free choice of k_z .

c) Expanding in the large m limit the above expression yields

$$E(n, k_y) = m + \left[\frac{k_y^2}{2m} + \frac{qB}{m} \left(n + \frac{1}{2} \right) \right] - \frac{1}{8m^3} \left(k_y^2 + 2qB \left(n + \frac{1}{2} \right) \right)^2 + \dots$$

The first term is the rest mass energy, the square bracket is the non-relativistic result that would have been obtained with the Schrödinger equation, the last term is the first relativistic correction.

d) The magnetic field is invariant under the transformation $\vec{A} \rightarrow \vec{A} + \vec{\nabla} f$, for an arbitrary function $f(\vec{x})$. The Klein-Gordon equation is invariant if one performs simultaneously the gauge transformation $\phi \rightarrow \phi e^{iqf}$, hence a different choice of vector potential would only add a (space-dependent) phase to the wavefunctions, but does not change the energies of the Landau levels.

5 Weakly relativistic limit of the Dirac equation and spin-orbit coupling

a) In the Dirac representation

$$\gamma^0 = -i \begin{pmatrix} \text{Id} & 0 \\ 0 & -\text{Id} \end{pmatrix} , \quad \gamma^j = -i \begin{pmatrix} 0 & \sigma_j \\ -\sigma_j & 0 \end{pmatrix} .$$

The Dirac equation in presence of an electrostatic potential $V(\vec{x})$ reads

$$\left(\gamma^0 \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial t} + iqV(\vec{x}) \right) + \vec{\gamma} \cdot \vec{\nabla} + m \right) \psi(t, \vec{x}) = 0 .$$

For a wave-function of the form proposed in the text, and using the Dirac representation of the gamma matrices, one obtains the following coupled equations for φ and χ :

$$\begin{cases} (-\epsilon + qV(\vec{x})\varphi(\vec{x}) - i(\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{\nabla})\chi(\vec{x}) = 0 \\ (2m + \epsilon - qV(\vec{x})\chi(\vec{x}) + i(\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{\nabla})\varphi(\vec{x}) = 0 \end{cases}$$

b) With the second equation one gets χ in terms of φ as

$$\chi(\vec{x}) = \frac{1}{2m + \epsilon - qV(\vec{x})} (-i\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{\nabla})\varphi(\vec{x}) .$$

Reinserting in the first equation yields

$$\epsilon\varphi(\vec{x}) = \left[qV(\vec{x}) + (-i\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{\nabla}) \frac{1}{2m + \epsilon - qV(\vec{x})} (-i\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{\nabla}) \right] \varphi(\vec{x}) ,$$

i.e. the form of the text with

$$f(\vec{x}) = qV(\vec{x}) , \quad g(\vec{x}) = \frac{1}{2m + \epsilon - qV(\vec{x})} .$$

c) Expanding at large m one has

$$g(\vec{x}) = \frac{1}{2m} \frac{1}{1 + \frac{\epsilon - qV(\vec{x})}{2m}} = \frac{1}{2m} - \frac{\epsilon - qV(\vec{x})}{4m^2} + O\left(\frac{\epsilon^2}{m^3}\right) ,$$

which yields equation (15) of the text.

d) $(\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{P})^2 = \sigma_i \sigma_j P_i P_j = (\delta_{ij} + i\epsilon_{ijk} \sigma_k) P_i P_j = \vec{P}^2$ as $P_i P_j$ is symmetric and ϵ_{ijk} antisymmetric under the exchange $i \leftrightarrow j$. Moreover

$$[\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{P}, \epsilon - qV(\vec{x})] = -q\vec{\sigma} \cdot [\vec{P}, V(\vec{x})] = iq\vec{\sigma} \cdot (\vec{\nabla}V) .$$

Hence

$$\begin{aligned} H_P &= \frac{\vec{P}^2}{2m} + qV(\vec{x}) - \frac{1}{4m^2} \left[(\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{P})(\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{P})(\epsilon - qV(\vec{x})) - (\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{P})[\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{P}, \epsilon - qV(\vec{x})] \right] \\ &= \frac{\vec{P}^2}{2m} + qV(\vec{x}) - \frac{1}{4m^2} \vec{P}^2 (\epsilon - qV(\vec{x})) + \frac{iq}{4m^2} (\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{P})(\vec{\sigma} \cdot (\vec{\nabla}V)) \end{aligned}$$

The last term is the spin-orbit coupling Hamiltonian ; thanks to the properties of multiplication of the Pauli matrices one has

$$(\vec{\sigma} \cdot \vec{P})(\vec{\sigma} \cdot (\vec{\nabla}V)) = \vec{P} \cdot (\vec{\nabla}V) + i\vec{\sigma} \cdot (\vec{P} \wedge (\vec{\nabla}V))$$

For a spherically symmetric potential $\vec{\nabla}V = \vec{r} \frac{V'(r)}{r}$, which explains the second term in (17) with $b(r) = qV'(r)/(4r)$. Moreover one can check (by applying these operators to arbitrary test functions) that for any spherically symmetric function $f(r)$ one has $\vec{P} \wedge f(r)\vec{r} = f(r)\vec{r} \wedge \vec{P} = f(r)\vec{L}$, hence the first term in (17) with $a(r) = -qV'(r)/(2r)$, the spin operator being $\vec{S} = \vec{\sigma}/2$.

e) At the lowest order the wave function φ obeys $(\epsilon - qV)\varphi = \frac{\vec{P}^2}{2m}\varphi$, one can thus replace in the correction term of H_P

$$-\frac{1}{4m^2} \vec{P}^2 (\epsilon - qV(\vec{x})) = -\frac{(\vec{P}^2)^2}{8m^3} .$$

6 The axial current

a) As γ_5 anticommutes with the γ^μ 's, $(\gamma_5)^p \gamma^\mu = (-1)^p \gamma^\mu (\gamma_5)^p$ for integer values of p ; expanding the exponential in series then shows the identity $e^{i\epsilon\gamma_5} \gamma^\mu = \gamma^\mu e^{-i\epsilon\gamma_5}$. As γ_5 is Hermitian,

$$\bar{\psi}(x) \rightarrow (e^{i\epsilon\gamma_5} \psi)^\dagger i\gamma^0 = \psi^\dagger e^{-i\epsilon\gamma_5} i\gamma^0 = \psi^\dagger i\gamma^0 e^{i\epsilon\gamma_5} = \bar{\psi}(x) e^{i\epsilon\gamma_5}$$

b) Indeed, $\bar{\psi}\psi$ is not invariant under this transformation, whereas $\bar{\psi}\gamma^\mu\psi$ is :

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{\psi}\psi &\rightarrow \bar{\psi} e^{2i\epsilon\gamma_5} \psi \neq \bar{\psi}\psi \\ \bar{\psi}\gamma^\mu\psi &\rightarrow \bar{\psi} e^{i\epsilon\gamma_5} \gamma^\mu e^{i\epsilon\gamma_5} \psi = \bar{\psi}\gamma^\mu e^{-i\epsilon\gamma_5} e^{i\epsilon\gamma_5} \psi = \bar{\psi}\gamma^\mu\psi \end{aligned}$$

Consider the variation of the massless action under an infinitesimal transformation with $\delta\psi = i\epsilon\gamma_5\psi$, $\delta\bar{\psi} = i\epsilon\bar{\psi}\gamma_5$, where ϵ is space dependent :

$$\delta S = \int d^4x \left[\bar{\psi}(-\gamma^\mu\partial_\mu + iq\gamma^\mu A_\mu) i\epsilon\gamma_5\psi + i\epsilon\bar{\psi}\gamma_5(-\gamma^\mu\partial_\mu + iq\gamma^\mu A_\mu)\psi \right] = \int d^4x \left[-i(\partial_\mu\epsilon)\bar{\psi}\gamma^\mu\gamma_5\psi \right] ,$$

the other terms vanishing because γ_5 anticommutes with the γ^μ 's. Integrating by part we see that when the Euler-Lagrange equations are verified $\partial_\mu j_5^\mu = 0$, i.e. the axial current is conserved for a massless Dirac field.

c) The Dirac equations for ψ and $\bar{\psi}$ are

$$(\not{\partial} - iq\not{A} + m)\psi = 0, \quad \bar{\psi}(\overleftarrow{\not{\partial}} + iq\not{A} - m) = 0,$$

where the derivatives in $\overleftarrow{\not{\partial}}$ acts on the left. Hence

$$\begin{aligned} \partial_\mu j_5^\mu &= i\bar{\psi}\gamma_5\gamma^\mu\partial_\mu\psi + i(\partial_\mu\bar{\psi})\gamma_5\gamma^\mu\psi = i\bar{\psi}\gamma_5\not{\partial}\psi - i\bar{\psi}\overleftarrow{\not{\partial}}\gamma_5\psi = i\bar{\psi}[\gamma_5(iq\not{A} - m) - (-iq\not{A} + m)\gamma_5]\psi \\ &= -2im\bar{\psi}\gamma_5\psi \end{aligned}$$

as $\not{A}\gamma_5 = -\gamma_5\not{A}$. We find again that j_5^μ is conserved if and only if $m = 0$.

d) Taking the complex conjugate of the μ -th component of j_5 we obtain

$$(j_5^\mu)^* = -i(\psi^\dagger i\gamma^0\gamma_5\gamma^\mu\psi)^\dagger = i\psi^\dagger(\gamma^\mu)^\dagger(\gamma_5)^\dagger i(\gamma^0)^\dagger\psi = i\psi^\dagger i\gamma^0\gamma^\mu\gamma^0\gamma_5(-\gamma^0)\psi = j_5^\mu,$$

which is thus real. Under a Lorentz transformation $x \rightarrow x' = \Lambda x$ one has

$$\begin{cases} \psi'(x') = D(\Lambda)\psi(x) \\ \bar{\psi}'(x') = \bar{\psi}(x)D(\Lambda)^{-1} \end{cases} \quad \Rightarrow \quad (j_5^\mu)'(x') = i\bar{\psi}(x)D(\Lambda)^{-1}\gamma_5\gamma^\mu D(\Lambda)\psi(x),$$

where $D(\Lambda) = \exp[\frac{1}{4}\omega_{\mu\nu}\gamma^{\mu\nu}]$ expands into terms that contain an even number of γ^μ matrices, hence commutes with γ_5 . As $D(\Lambda)^{-1}\gamma^\mu D(\Lambda) = \Lambda^\mu{}_\nu\gamma^\nu$, one has $(j_5^\mu)'(x') = \Lambda^\mu{}_\nu j_5^\nu(x)$, i.e. j_5 transforms as a four-vector under Lorentz transformations. Under the parity transformation,

$$\begin{cases} \psi'(x') = i\gamma^0\psi(x) \\ \bar{\psi}'(x') = \bar{\psi}(x)i\gamma^0 \end{cases} \quad \Rightarrow \quad (j_5^\mu)'(x') = i\bar{\psi}(x)i\gamma^0\gamma_5\gamma^\mu i\gamma^0\psi(x) = i\bar{\psi}(x)\gamma_5\gamma^0\gamma^\mu\gamma^0\psi(x).$$

As

$$\gamma^0\gamma^\mu\gamma^0 = \begin{cases} -\gamma^\mu & \text{if } \mu = 0 \\ +\gamma^\mu & \text{if } \mu = 1, 2, 3 \end{cases}, \quad (1)$$

one obtains that j_5 is a pseudo-vector.