

Physics 581: Open Quantum Systems

Optical Bloch Equations - Phenomenological Damping

So far we have considered only "coherent evolution" of a two-level system governed by unitary dynamics. The resulting evolution exhibited a simple sinusoidal time dependence for all time - it is reversible. In real situations, this is never the case. The system will eventually "relax" to some steady state where "memory" of the initial condition is lost. This type of irreversible evolution is a fact of nature. How do we take irreversibility into account in quantum theory whose basic time evolution is given by a unitary map? This is a fundamental problem that we will address in more detail later. For now we will take a phenomenological approach. As an aside, the problem of obtaining effectively irreversible dynamics at the "macroscopic level" when the microscopic laws of physics are time-reverse invariant is a fundamental issue in classical physics as well. How does the second-law of thermodynamics arise from Newton's laws and Maxwell's equations?

Optical Bloch Eqs

Consider a two-level system. There are two kinds of "relaxations"

- Relaxing of the populations ρ_{ee}, ρ_{gg}
- Relaxation of the coherences ρ_{eg}, ρ_{ge}

We have names for these effects that originate from NMR

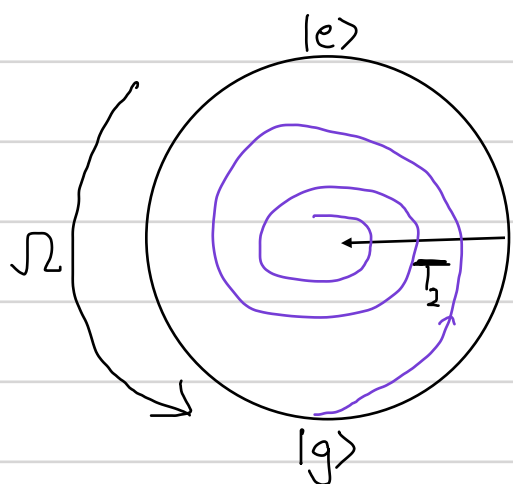
1) $T_1 \equiv$ decay time constant of the population inversion, $w \equiv \rho_{ee} - \rho_{gg}$
(sometimes known as T_{11} : "Longitudinal relaxation")

2) $T_2 \equiv$ decay time constant of the coherences (u, v) : (T_2 : "transverse relaxation")

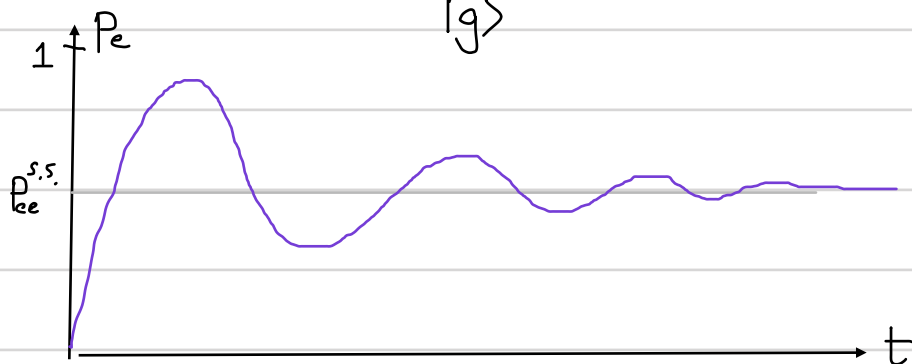
Bloch equations with relaxation

$$\begin{aligned}\dot{u} &= +\Delta v - \frac{1}{T_2} u \\ \dot{v} &= -\Delta u - \Omega w - \frac{1}{T_2} v \\ \dot{w} &= -\frac{1}{T_1} (w - w_{s.s.}) + \Omega v\end{aligned}$$

Trajectory on the Bloch sphere with relaxation



The trajectory moves off the surface of the Bloch sphere and into the interior of the Bloch ball. The state is now longer pure — it is a mixed state.



Damped Rabi oscillations.
The probability to find the atom in the excited level $|e\rangle$ reaches steady state: $P_e^{s.s.}$

" T_1 " vs. " T_2 " and the density matrix

Consider $\hat{\rho} = \sum_j P_j |\psi_j\rangle\langle\psi_j|$ (ensemble decomposition)

$$\Rightarrow \rho_{\alpha\beta} = \sum_j P_j c_{\alpha}^{(j)} c_{\beta}^{(j)*} = \sum_j P_j |c_{\alpha}^{(j)}| |c_{\beta}^{(j)}| e^{i(\phi_{\alpha} - \phi_{\beta})}$$

• Diagonal matrix elements $\rho_{\alpha\alpha} = \sum_j P_j |c_{\alpha}^{(j)}|^2 = \overline{|c_{\alpha}|^2}$ Ensemble average

$\Rightarrow T_1$ involves the average relaxation of the square-magnitude of probabilities amplitudes.

$$\rho_{\alpha\alpha}(t)|_{\text{relax}} = e^{-\Gamma_{\alpha} t} \rho_{\alpha\alpha}(0)$$

$$\Rightarrow \Gamma_{\alpha} \text{ is the rate of decay of } \overline{|c_{\alpha}|^2} \Rightarrow \overline{|c_{\alpha}|}(t) = \overline{|c_{\alpha}|}(0) e^{-\Gamma_{\alpha} t/2}$$

• Off-diagonal elements: Consider a case where $|c_{\alpha}^{(j)}|$ is the same for all j

$$\rho_{\alpha\beta}(t) = |c_{\alpha}(0)| |c_{\beta}(0)| e^{-(\frac{\Gamma_{\alpha} + \Gamma_{\beta}}{2})t} \sum_j P_j e^{i(\phi_{\alpha}^{(j)} - \phi_{\beta}^{(j)})}$$

Consider a process of "dephasing": $\phi_{\alpha}^{(j)} - \phi_{\beta}^{(j)} = (\delta\omega_{\alpha\beta}^{(j)})t$ (Random phase kicks between $\alpha + \beta$)

$$\sum_j P_j e^{i(\delta\omega_{\alpha\beta}^{(j)})t} = e^{-\beta_{\alpha\beta} t} \Rightarrow \frac{1}{T_2} = \frac{\Gamma_{\alpha} + \Gamma_{\beta}}{2} + \beta_{\alpha\beta} : T_2 \text{ involves both population decay as well as dephasing}$$

Sources of relaxation - Perturbation by the "environment"

E.g. Collisions of the atoms with "environmental" atoms: Elastic $\Rightarrow$ dephasing
Inelastic $\Rightarrow$ Population change

Generally $T_2 \ll T_1$: Small changes in phase occur more easily than pop. change

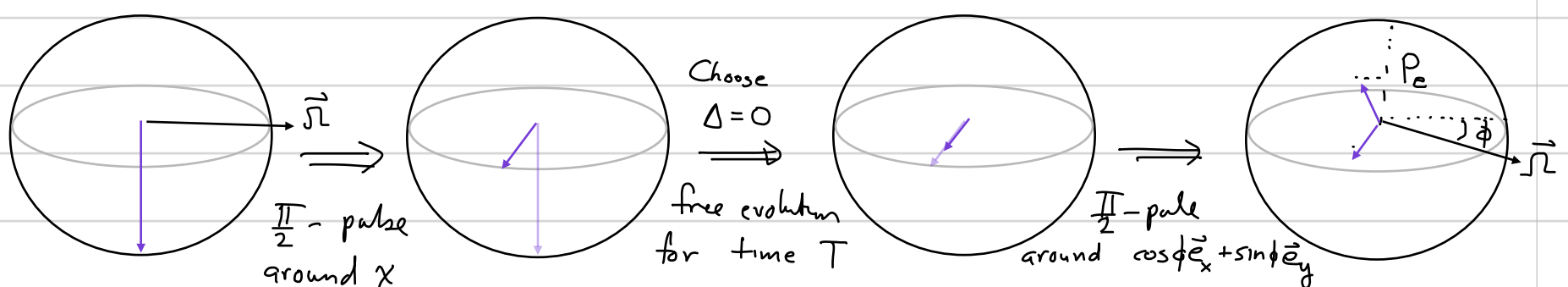
Note: If we have an ensemble of different unknown environments, then dephasing can occur due to inhomogeneities (see problem set)

Then $\frac{1}{T_2} = \frac{1}{T_2'} + \frac{1}{T_2^*}$, where $T_2^* = \text{decay due to inhomogeneities}$
 $T_2' = \text{decay for homogeneous sample}$

The decay due to inhomogeneity does not correspond to true irreversibility - each particle in the ensemble undergoes unitary evolution, but with a slightly different Hamiltonian. The result can be that all the different state vectors get out of phase, but they can be "rephased" with a spin echo (see problem set).

To measure the "coherence time" one employs a "Ramsay interferometer" (the two-level quantum version of the two-path Mach-Zehnder interferometer).

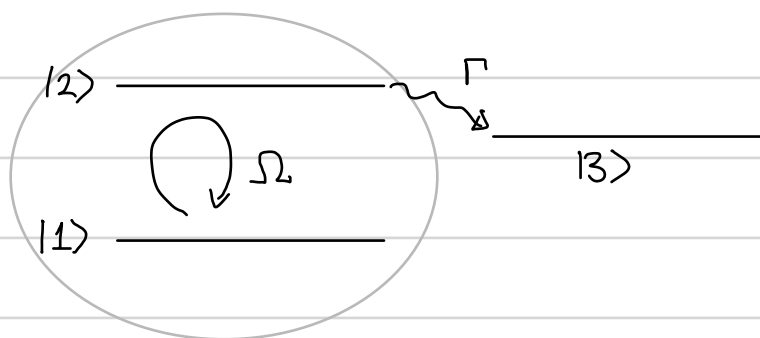
Consider the simplest case without inhomogeneous broadening (we can always add a spin-echo).



Let us suppose that after the free evolution the state is $\hat{\rho}(T)$. We apply a $\frac{\pi}{2}$ pulse with the phase shift ϕ from the first pulse and then measure the fraction of times we find $|e\rangle$ (this should converge to P_e after many trials).

(see Problem Set)

Nonunitary Schrödinger Evolution:



Two-level system with decay to a third

The dynamics in the $\{|1\rangle, |2\rangle\}$ subspace is governed by a non-Hermitian Hamiltonian, to account for the irreversible behavior.

We add an imaginary part to the excited state energy eigenvalue E_2 .

$$\hat{H}_{\text{eff}} = E_1 |1\rangle\langle 1| + (E_2 - i\frac{\hbar\Gamma}{2}) |2\rangle\langle 2|$$

In the absence of any other interaction, if at time $t=0$ $|\psi(0)\rangle = c_1|1\rangle + c_2|2\rangle$ then at a latter time,

$$|\psi(t)\rangle = e^{-i\frac{\hat{H}_{\text{eff}}t}{\hbar}} |\psi(0)\rangle = c_1 e^{-i\frac{E_1 t}{\hbar}} |1\rangle + c_2 e^{-i\frac{E_2 t}{\hbar}} e^{-\frac{\Gamma t}{2}} |2\rangle$$

$$\Rightarrow P_2(t) = |\langle 2|\psi(t)\rangle|^2 = |c_2|^2 e^{-\Gamma t}$$

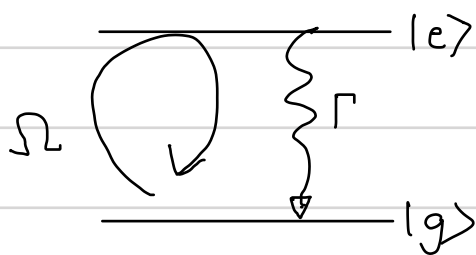
(Note: In this evolution $\|\psi(t)\|$ is not conserved because we are not accounting for the population in $|3\rangle$)

More generally, if $|1\rangle$ & $|2\rangle$ are coupled by an interaction Hamiltonian, then the evolution is described by the Schrödinger eqn. with a non-Hermitian Hamiltonian

$$\frac{\hbar}{i} \frac{\partial}{\partial t} |\psi\rangle = \hat{H}_{\text{eff}} |\psi\rangle \Rightarrow \left. \begin{aligned} \dot{c}_1 &= -i\frac{E_1}{\hbar} c_1 - i\frac{H_{12}}{\hbar} c_2 \\ \dot{c}_2 &= \left(i\frac{E_2}{\hbar} - \frac{\Gamma}{2}\right) c_2 - i\frac{H_{21}}{\hbar} c_1 \end{aligned} \right\} \begin{array}{l} \text{Simple Schrödinger evolution} \\ \text{with decay} \end{array}$$

Decay in a Closed Two-level System

Consider now a two-level "closed transition," with decay from $|e\rangle \rightarrow |g\rangle$



Here, the population is fed from $|e\rangle \rightarrow |g\rangle$. The total population is constant.

For such a case it is impossible to describe the dynamics by a Schrödinger equation for a wave function. We must turn to density matrix and a Liouville-type evolution. We will return later to explain the deeper reasons why. For now, just note that if we set $c_e(t) = c_e(0) e^{-\frac{\Gamma}{2}t}$ and $|c_g(t)|^2 + |c_e(t)|^2 = 1$, there is no $\hat{H}_{\text{eff}}$ whose solution is $|c_g(t)|^2 = 1 - |c_e(0)|^2 e^{-\Gamma t}$ independent of $c_g(0)$.

Master Equation for a Two-level Atom

Consider a closed two-level system, with decay from $|e\rangle \rightarrow |g\rangle$ due to spontaneous emission (and no other source of dephasing or decay/relaxation).

$$\Gamma = \frac{1}{\tau} = \text{"Einstein A-coefficient"} = \frac{4}{3\hbar} |\langle e | \vec{d} | g \rangle|^2 \left(\frac{\omega_{eg}}{c} \right)^3$$

τ = Natural Lifetime

$$\dot{\rho}_{ee}|_{\text{relax}} = \frac{d}{dt} \overline{|c_e|^2} |_{\text{relax}} = -\Gamma \rho_{ee}, \quad \dot{\rho}_{eg}|_{\text{relax}} = \frac{d}{dt} \overline{c_e c_g^*} |_{\text{relax}} = -\frac{\Gamma}{2} \rho_{eg}$$

$$\text{Since } \rho_{ee} + \rho_{gg} = 1 \Rightarrow \dot{\rho}_{gg}|_{\text{relax}} = -\dot{\rho}_{ee}|_{\text{relax}} = +\Gamma \rho_{ee} \quad (T_1 = \frac{1}{\Gamma}, \quad T_2 = \frac{2}{\Gamma})$$

Coherent evolution in rotating frame

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{c}_g &= -i\frac{\Delta}{2} c_g - i\frac{\Omega}{2} c_e \\ \dot{c}_e &= i\frac{\Delta}{2} c_e - i\frac{\Omega}{2} c_g \end{aligned}$$

$$\Rightarrow \frac{d}{dt} \rho_{ee}|_{\text{coherent}} = \dot{c}_e c_e^* + c_e \dot{c}_e^* = -i\frac{\Omega}{2} (\rho_{ge} - \rho_{eg})$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} \rho_{ge}|_{\text{coherent}} = \dot{c}_g c_e^* + c_g \dot{c}_e^* = -i\Delta \rho_{ge} - i\frac{\Omega}{2} (\rho_{ee} - \rho_{gg})$$

⇒ Master equation for two-level atom with spontaneous emission

$$\frac{d}{dt} \rho_{ee} = -\Gamma \rho_{ee} - \frac{i}{2} \Omega (\rho_{ge} - \rho_{eg}) = -\frac{d}{dt} \rho_{gg} \quad (\text{since } \rho_{ee} + \rho_{gg} = 1 \quad \forall t)$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} \rho_{ge} = (-i\Delta - \frac{\Gamma}{2}) \rho_{ge} - \frac{i}{2} \Omega (\rho_{ee} - \rho_{gg}) = \frac{d}{dt} \rho_{eg}^*$$

These equations are the elements of the following operation equation:

$$\frac{d}{dt} \hat{\rho} = \underbrace{-\frac{i}{\hbar} [\hat{H}, \hat{\rho}]}_{\text{Hamiltonian evolution}} + \underbrace{\mathcal{L}_{\text{diss}}[\hat{\rho}]}_{\text{dissipative evolution}} \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{"Master equation"} \\ \text{(Liouville equation)} \end{array}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}_{\text{diss}}[\hat{\rho}] &= -\frac{\Gamma}{2} (\hat{\sigma}_+ \hat{\sigma}_- \hat{\rho} + \hat{\rho} \hat{\sigma}_+ \hat{\sigma}_-) + \Gamma \hat{\sigma}_- \hat{\rho} \hat{\sigma}_+ \quad : \quad \text{Lindblad form} \\ &= -\frac{i}{\hbar} \left\{ \underbrace{-\frac{\hbar\Gamma}{2} |e\rangle\langle e|}_{\text{anti-commutator}}, \hat{\rho} \right\}_+ + \Gamma \rho_{ee} |g\rangle\langle g| \end{aligned}$$

The Lindblad form decomposes as

$$\frac{d\rho}{dt} = \underbrace{-\frac{i}{\hbar} (\hat{H}_{\text{eff}} \hat{\rho} - \hat{\rho} \hat{H}_{\text{eff}}^\dagger)}_{\text{decay}} + \underbrace{\Gamma \hat{\sigma}_- \hat{\rho} \hat{\sigma}_+}_{\text{re-feeding}}$$

$$\hat{H}_{\text{eff}} = \hat{H} - i\frac{\hbar\Gamma}{2} |e\rangle\langle e| \quad : \quad \text{Non-Hermitian Hamiltonian}$$

We will return to this decomposition next semester when we study open quantum systems in much more detail. This is the foundation of the so-called "quantum trajectory" picture, involving deterministic (but non-unitary) evolution, punctuated by random jumps. The jumps here involve spontaneous jumps from excited to ground states.