Evolution of Wave Function in a Dissipative System

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Abstract

For a dissipative system with Ohmic friction, we obtain a simple and exact solution for
the wave function of the system plus the bath. It is described by the direct product in two
independent Hilbert space. One of them is described by an effective Hamiltonian, the other
represents the effect of the bath, i.e., the Brownian motion, thus clarifying the structure of the
wave function of the system whose energy is dissipated by its interaction with the bath. No
path integral technology is needed in this treatment. The derivation of the Weisskopf-Wigner
line width theory follows easily.

The simplest example of a dissipative system, an harmonic oscillator coupled to the environ-
ment, which is a bath of harmonic oscillators, has been the subject of extensive studies[1-15].
We shall show in the present paper that in a special case, the Ohmic case (to be defined later),
the dissipative system can be exactly treated both classically and quantum mechanically, thereby
clarifying the sense in which the wave function is describable by an effective Hamiltonian. In this
treatment path integral technology is not needed, and our presentation is self-contained.

We consider the problem discussed by Caldeira and Leggett (CL)[1], an harmonic oscillator
system (the dissipative system) with coordinate q, mass M, and frequency \(\omega^2 + \Delta \omega^2\)^1/2, inter-
acting with a bath of N harmonic oscillators of coordinates \(x_j\), mass \(m_j\), and frequency \(\omega_j\), where
\(\Delta \omega^2\) is a shift induced by the coupling already discussed by CL. The Hamiltonian of the system
and the bath is:

\[
H = \frac{p^2}{2M} + \frac{1}{2} M(\omega^2 + \Delta \omega^2)q^2 + q \sum_j c_j x_j + \sum_j \left( \frac{p_j^2}{2m_j} + \frac{1}{2} m_j \omega_j^2 x_j^2 \right)
\]  

(1)

The dynamic equation for operators in the Heisenberg representation leads to the following set
of equations of motions:

\[
M \ddot{q} = -M \omega_0^2 q - M \Delta \omega^2 q - \sum_j c_j x_j ,
\]

(2)

\[
m_j \ddot{x}_j = -m_j \omega_j^2 x_j - c_j q \quad (j = 1, 2, \ldots, N).
\]

(3)

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Now, applying the Laplace transform[2] (the bars are our notations for the Laplace transform, s is the Laplace transform of time t), equations (2), (3) can be used to eliminate bath variables \( \hat{x}_j \) to obtain the equation for \( \hat{q} \)

\[
M(s^2\hat{q} - s\hat{q}_0 - \hat{q}_0) = -M\omega_0^2\hat{q} - M\Delta\omega^2\hat{q} - \sum_j c_j \frac{s\hat{x}_j + \hat{x}_j}{s^2 + \omega_j^2} - \sum_j \frac{c_j^2}{m_j(s^2 + \omega_j^2)}\hat{q},
\]

(4)

where \( \hat{q}_0, \hat{q}_0, x_{j0}, \hat{x}_{j0} \) are the initial values of the respective operators in the Heisenberg representation. Assuming the number of bath oscillators is large enough so that we can replace the sum over \( j \) by an integration over \( \omega_j \), the coefficient of the last term can then be separated into two terms:

\[
\int_0^\infty \frac{\rho(\omega_j)c_j^2 d\omega_j}{m_j\omega_j^2} - s^2 \int_0^\infty \frac{\rho(\omega_j)c_j^2 d\omega_j}{m_j\omega_j^2(s^2 + \omega_j^2)},
\]

(5)

where \( \rho(\omega_j) \) is the bath oscillator density. Following an argument similar to the one pointed out by CL[1], the requirement that the system becomes a damped oscillator with frequency \( \omega_0 \) and damping rate \( \eta \) in the classical limit, known as the “Ohmic friction” condition, leads to the following constraint:

\[
\rho(\omega_j) = \frac{2\eta M m_j\omega_j^2}{\pi c_j^2}.
\]

(6)

By observing eq.(4) and eq.(5), it can be shown that the second term of eq.(5) leads to damping with the damping constant \( \eta \), while the first term of eq.(5) represents a frequency shift. If the frequency renormalization constant \( \Delta\omega^2 \) is chosen to satisfy:

\[
M\Delta\omega^2 = \int_0^\infty \frac{\rho(\omega_j)c_j^2 d\omega_j}{m_j\omega_j^2},
\]

(7)

the frequency is shifted to \( \omega_0 \). Then equation (4) is simplified, and its inverse Laplace transform gives the quantum Langevin equation, valid at time \( t >= 0+ \):

\[
\ddot{q} + \eta\dot{q} + \omega_0^2q = f(t),
\]

(8)

with the Brownian motion driving force:

\[
f(t) = -\sum_j c_j(x_{j0}\cos\omega_j t + \dot{x}_{j0}\frac{\sin\omega_j t}{\omega_j}).
\]

(9)

During the derivation, in order to carry out the integral in eq.(5), we used the requirement of the inverse Laplace transform that \( s \) must pass all the singular points from right of the complex plane, and hence \( \text{real}(s) > 0 \).

Equation (8) and (9) are the equations of a driven damped harmonic oscillator, the solution of which is well known as a linear combination of the initial values at \( q_0, \dot{q}_0, x_{j0}, \) and \( \dot{x}_{j0} \):

\[
q(t) = a_1(t)q_0 + a_2(t)\dot{q}_0 + \sum_j (b_{j1}(t)x_{j0} + b_{j2}(t)\dot{x}_{j0}),
\]

(10)

\[
x_i(t) = \alpha_{i1}(t)q_0 + \alpha_{i2}(t)\dot{q}_0 + \sum_j (\beta_{ij1}(t)x_{j0} + \beta_{ij2}(t)\dot{x}_{j0}), \text{ with}
\]

(11)
\begin{align}
a_1(t) &= \frac{\nu e^{-\mu t} - \mu e^{-\nu t}}{\nu - \mu}, \quad a_2(t) = \frac{e^{-\mu t} - e^{-\nu t}}{\nu - \mu}, \\
\mu &= \frac{\eta}{2} + \omega i, \quad \text{and} \quad \nu = \frac{\eta}{2} - \omega i,
\end{align}

and here \( \omega = (\omega_0^2 - \eta^2/4)^{1/2} \) is the frequency shifted by damping. (All formulae are correct whether \( \omega \) is real or imaginary. To avoid a minor detail of the initial value problem, we have redefined the initial time as \( t=0+ \).

The explicit expression for \( b_{j1}, b_{j2}, \alpha_{i1}, \alpha_{i2}, \beta_{j1}, \) and \( \beta_{j2} \) are well known in freshmen physics.

We emphasize that the use of the Laplace transform instead of the Fourier transform allows us to express \( q(t) \) and \( x_j(t) \) explicitly in terms of the initial values, as in eq.(10) and eq.(11).

The equations (10) and (11) serve as the starting point of subsequent discussions. We will proceed to find the Green's function of the full system, and hence the solution of the wave function in Schrödinger representation. The result tells us in what sense the damped oscillator is described by an effective Hamiltonian without the bath variables and gives its specific form, it also shows that under this condition, the wave function can be factorized, and the main factor relevant to the damped oscillator is a solution of the Schrödinger equation with an effective Hamiltonian.

Equations (10) and (11) are correct both in classical mechanics and in quantum mechanics in the Heisenberg representation. We notice that \( q(t) \) and \( x_j(t) \) are both linear superpositions of \( q_0, \dot{q}_0, x_{j0}, \dot{x}_{j0} \) with c-number coefficients. The commutation rules between \( q(t), \dot{q}(t), x_j(t), \dot{x}_j(t) \) are \([q(t), \dot{q}(t)] = \frac{i\hbar}{M}, [x_j(t), \dot{x}_j(t)] = \frac{i\hbar}{m_j}\), and operators \( q(t) \) and \( \dot{q}(t) \) commute with \( x_j(t) \) and \( \dot{x}_j(t) \). One can prove these commutation rules by two ways: (a). By direct computation, using the fact that at \( t=0 \), they are correct. (b). By the general principle that \( q(t), \dot{q}(t), x_j(t), \dot{x}_j(t) \) are related by a unitary transformation to \( q_0, \dot{q}_0, x_{j0}, \dot{x}_{j0} \).

Equation (10) and (11) show that the operators \( q(t) \) and \( x_j(t) \) can each be written as a sum of two terms:
\begin{align}
q(t) &= Q(t) + \sum_j \xi_j(t), \\
x_j(t) &= \zeta_i(t) + \sum_j X_{ij}(t),
\end{align}

where \( Q(t) \) and \( \zeta_i(t) \) are linear in \( q_0 \) and \( \dot{q}_0 \) and independent of \( x_{j0} \) and \( \dot{x}_{j0} \), and \( \xi_j \) and \( X_{ij}(t) \) are linear in \( x_{j0} \) and \( \dot{x}_{j0} \), and independent of \( q_0 \) and \( \dot{q}_0 \). Thus \( Q(t) \) and \( \zeta_i(t) \) are operators in one Hilbert space \( S_Q \), while \( \xi_j(t) \) and \( X_{ij}(t) \) are in an independent Hilbert space \( S_X \), and the full Hilbert space is a direct product \( S_Q \otimes S_X \).

We shall first analyze the structure of \( S_Q \). We write that:
\begin{align}
Q(t) &= a_1 Q_0 + a_2 \dot{Q}_0 = a_1 Q_0 - a_2 \frac{i\hbar}{M} \frac{\partial}{\partial Q_0}.
\end{align}

To explicitly show that we are discussing the \( S_Q \) space, we define \( Q_0 \equiv q_0 \), \( \dot{Q}_0 \equiv \dot{q}_0 \). The eigenfunction of \( Q(t) \) with an eigenvalue denoted by \( Q_1 \), in the \( Q_0 \) representation, is easily calculated to be:
\begin{align}
u_{Q_1}(Q_0, t) = \left( \frac{M \omega e^{i\pi t}}{2\pi \hbar \sin \omega t} \right)^{1/2} \exp \left[ -\frac{i\hbar}{2\hbar a_2} \left( a_1 Q_0^2 - 2Q_0 Q_1 + \phi(Q_1, t) \right) \right],
\end{align}

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with $\phi$ as an arbitrary phase, i.e., a real number. This eigenfunction is related to the Green's function $G(Q_1, Q_0; t, 0) \equiv < Q_1 | U_Q(t) | Q_0 >$, by $u_{Q_1}(Q_0, t) = < Q_0 | U_Q^\dagger(t) | Q_1 > = < Q_0 | U_Q(t) | Q_1 > = G^*(Q_1, Q_0; t, 0)$, where we denote the evolution operator by $U(t)$, which is unitary when we choose the eigenvectors of $Q(t)$ to be orthonormal. Thus we have:

$$G(Q_1, Q_0; t, 0) = \left( \frac{M \omega e^{\frac{it}{\hbar}}}{2\pi \hbar \sin \omega t} \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \exp \left[ \frac{iM}{2\hbar a_2} \left( a_1 Q_0^2 - 2Q_0 Q_1 + \phi(Q_1, t) \right) \right]. \tag{18}$$

Next, we shall determine the arbitrary phase $\phi(Q_1, t)$, which is the phase of the eigenvectors of $Q(t)$. Using eq.(16), we find the commutation rule for $Q$ and $\dot{Q}$:

$$[Q, \dot{Q}] = (a_1 \dot{a}_2 - a_1 a_2)|Q_0, \dot{Q}_0| = e^{-\eta t}|Q_0, \dot{Q}_0| = \frac{e^{-\eta t}}{M} i\hbar. \tag{19}$$

Thus we define the canonical momentum $P(t)$ as:

$$P(t) = Me^{\eta t} \dot{Q}(t) = M e^{\eta t}(\dot{a}_1 Q_0 + \dot{a}_2 \dot{Q}_0) = \dot{a}_1 Q_0 - \dot{a}_2 \frac{i\hbar}{M} \frac{\partial}{\partial Q_0}, \tag{20}$$

and get the commutation rule: $[Q(t), P(t)] = i\hbar$. The eigenfunction of $P(t)$ can be calculated in two ways: (a) We can calculate the eigenvector of $P(t)$ in the $Q_0$ representation using eq. (20) and then use the Green's function eq.(18) to transform it into the $Q(t)$ representation; (b) The commutation rule $[Q(t), P(t)] = i\hbar$ requires that $P(t) = -i\hbar \frac{\partial}{\partial Q}$, so the eigenfunction of $P(t)$ with eigenvalue $P_1$ is $exp[i\frac{P_1}{\hbar} Q]$. By comparing these two solutions, the arbitrary phase $\phi(Q_1, t)$ in the Green's function is determined to within a phase $\phi(t)$, which is independent of $Q_1$. $\phi(t)$ is an arbitrary real function of time, except that $\phi(0) = 0$ so that it satisfies the condition that at $t=0$, the Green's function becomes $\delta(Q_1 - Q_0)$. Thus we obtain the Green's function in the $S_Q$ space:

$$G(Q_1, Q_0; t, 0) = \left( \frac{M \omega e^{\frac{it}{\hbar}}}{2\pi \hbar \sin \omega t} \right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \exp \left[ \frac{iM}{2\hbar a_2} \left( a_1 Q_0^2 + \dot{a}_2 e^{\eta t} Q_1^2 - 2Q_0 Q_1 \right) - \frac{i\phi(t)}{\hbar} \right]. \tag{21}$$

It is then straightforward to derive the Hamiltonian $H_Q$ using the following relation:

$$H_Q = i\hbar \frac{\partial U_Q}{\partial t} U_Q^{-1}, \tag{22}$$

and remembering that the matrix elements of $U_Q$ and $U_Q^{-1}$ are the Green's function and its conjugate. The result is:

$$H_Q = e^{-\eta t} \frac{P_1^2}{2M} + \frac{1}{2} M \omega^2 e^{\eta t} Q^2 + \dot{\phi}(t). \tag{23}$$

Since $\phi$ is arbitrary except that $\phi(0) = 0$, we can take $\phi(t) = 0$. Therefore we have derived the well known effective Hamiltonian for the dissipative system. We emphasize that the expression for $H_Q$ is here derived, while in usual literature it is introduced by more or less heuristic arguments.

Next, we shall analyze the effect of the bath. Similar to eq. (17) we obtain the eigenfunctions $\theta_{\xi_j}(x_j, t)$ for $\xi_j$. Using Dirac's notation we have: $Q | u_{ Qi } >= Q_1 | u_{ Qi } >$, $\xi_j | \theta_{\xi_j } >= \xi_j | \theta_{\xi_j } >$. 

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Thus \( |u_Q > = \prod_j \otimes |\theta_{\xi_j} > \) is an eigenvector of \( q(t) \), with eigenvalue of \( Q + \sum_j \xi_j \). In other words, the eigenvector of \( q(t) \) with eigenvalue \( q \) is \( |q, \{ \xi_j \} > = |u_Q > - \sum_j \xi_j > \prod_j \otimes |\theta_{\xi_j} > \).

If initially the wave function is \( |\Psi_0 > = |\psi_0 > = \prod_j \otimes |\chi_j0 > \), to calculate the wave function at time \( t \), we should expand \( \Psi_0 \) in terms of the eigenvectors \( |q, \{ \xi_j \} > \), i.e., we should calculate

\[
\psi(Q, t) \equiv < u_Q |\psi_0 > = \int u_Q^*(q_0)\psi_0(q_0) dq_0 ,
\]

\[
\chi_j(\xi_j, t) \equiv < \theta_{\xi_j} |\chi_j0 > = \int \theta_{\xi_j}^*(x_j0)\chi_j0(x_j0) dx_j0 .
\]

Then the wave function in the Schrödinger representation at time \( t \) is

\[
\Psi(q, \{ \xi_j \}, t) = \langle q, \{ \xi_j \} |\Psi_0 > = \psi(q - \sum_j \xi_j, t) \prod_j \chi_j(\xi_j, t) .
\]

Notice that \( \psi(Q, t) \) of eq.(24) is the wave function in the Schrödinger representation with the effective Hamiltonian eq.(23). Hence we have connected the effective Hamiltonian approach to the dissipative system problem with the other approaches that take both the system and the bath into account. We also notice that even though our \( \Psi(q, \{ \xi_j \}, t) \) is in a different representation from that of \( \Psi(q, \{ x_j \}, t) \), the usual probability interpretation is still valid: \( \int \int \int |\Psi(q, \{ \xi_j \}, t)|^2 \prod_j d\xi_j \) is the probability density of finding the particle at \( q \). Since this solution is very simple, it provides a simple way to analyze other complicated problems, e.g., study the influence of Brownian motion on interference, which we shall not elaborate because of space.

Under certain conditions, e.g., at low temperature and when the system \( q \) is in highly excited states so the range of \( q \) is large enough that for all the values of \( \xi_j \) which do not have vanishingly small probability, \( q \gg |\sum \xi_j| \), we can approximately write: \( \Psi(q, \{ \xi_j \}, t) \approx \psi(q, t) \prod_j \chi_j(\xi_j, t) \).

That is, the wave function is factorized, the dissipative system \( q \) can be described by the wave function \( \psi(q, t) \) only, and the Brownian motion can be ignored. Therefore it is interesting to examine the width of the argument of the wave function \( \psi \), due to the Brownian motion, i.e., the mean value of \( (\sum \xi_j)^2 \) at time \( t \). It can be calculated using its expression in the Heisenberg representation as introduced by (10) and (18). At temperature \( T \), this width is

\[
< (\sum_j \xi_j(t))^2 > = \sum_j \frac{\hbar}{2m_j\omega_j} (|b_{j1}(t)|^2 + \omega_j^2 |b_{j2}(t)|^2) cot \left( \frac{\hbar \omega_j}{2kT} \right) .
\]

This width is zero initially, then approaches its final equilibrium value in a time interval of the order of \( 1/\eta \). At low temperature limit, the equilibrium width is simplified to:

\[
\sigma^2(t = \infty) = \frac{\hbar}{2\pi m \omega} \left[ \frac{\pi}{2} + \arctan \left( \frac{\omega_0^2}{\eta \omega} \right) \right] .
\]

If the damping rate \( \eta \) is much smaller than the frequency of the oscillator \( \omega_0 \), this width happens to become the same as the width of the ground state of the system \( \hbar/(2m\omega) \).
Finally, it is interesting to see the distribution of the dissipated energy of the harmonic oscillator in the bath, and check if it agrees with the Weisskopf-Wigner line width theory[16]. For simplicity, we assume zero temperature. To calculate the energy dissipated by the system into the j'th bath oscillator, we use eq.(11) and its derivative to obtain the expression of $x_j(t)$ and $p_j = m_j \dot{x}_j(t)$, which are then substituted into the expression of the energy of the j'th oscillator: $h_j = \frac{p_j^2}{2m_j} + \frac{1}{2}m_j\omega_j^2 x_j^2$. We then calculate the expectation value of $h_j$, assuming initially the system is in the n'th excited state, and the bath oscillators in the ground state. We calculate the contribution to the expectation value of $h_j$ from the system, by keeping only terms which depend on $q_0$, and $\dot{q}_0$. The result is then the energy dissipation by the system into the j'th oscillator. When multiplied by the density of states $\rho(\omega_j)$ eq.(6), it gives the dissipated energy spectrum. It is a function of $\omega_j$, with a narrow peak near the resonance $\omega_j = \omega$, if the damping is small, i.e., if $\eta \ll \omega$. It is oscillatory with a frequency of $2\omega_j$. Its time average over a period is:

$$E_j = (n + \frac{1}{2})\hbar \omega \frac{\eta}{\pi} \frac{1}{\eta^2 + (\omega - \omega_j)^2} A(\omega_j), \quad (29)$$

where $A(\omega_j)$ varies slowly near the resonance, i.e., over the width $\eta/2$ of the peak it changes very little. Therefore, we can replace $\omega_j$ by $\omega$ near the peak, and the result is simplified to: $A(\omega) \approx 1$. Thus eq.(29) shows that the dissipated energy has a Lorenzian distribution near the resonance, in agreement with the Weisskopf-Wigner line width theory.

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