

High Energy Theoretical Astroparticle Physics

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Pasquale Blasi gives this part of the course. He might ask us to do exercises at the blackboard.

Introduction

This is a theory course, but the professor wants to have lots of connections to the physical interpretation.

In general, in order to produce high-energy particles we need *acceleration* and *transport* mechanisms.

The particles we observe are *non-thermal*: the spectra from these phenomena seem to be powerlaws, not the exponentially suppressed tail of a Maxwellian.

Therefore, the system must be, to a first approximation, collisionless: if things happen *faster* than the collisions between the particles, they do not have enough time to thermalize.

We typically see charged particles making up cosmic rays, and the (interstellar, intergalactic) medium they move in is mostly ionized. Thus, they will move under the action of electromagnetic fields. Each of these charged particles also produces EM fields of its own: they all “feel what the others are doing”.

There is a deep connection between the micro and the macro physics. David N. Schramm called this an “inner world — outer world” connection.

In order to understand the behaviour of cosmic rays, we need both particle physics and plasma physics!

Electroscope discharge: a brief history of the discovery of cosmic rays

What follows is a brief history lesson, roughly based on the work of de Angelis [[dAng14](#)].

In the late 1700s Coulomb discovered that an electroscope, left on its own, will discharge. This phenomenon seemed to decrease in speed as the pressure decreased: the air was being ionized, but by what?

In the late 1800s, after the discovery of the emission of charged particles by radioisotopes (which definitely managed to discharge electroscopes), ambient radioactivity was blamed for the phenomenon as a whole.

Domenico Pacini explored the variation of the rate of ionization as one moved underwater: it was decreasing. So, it seemed likely that the origin was extraterrestrial!

Later explorations, especially on balloons, showed a slight decrease followed by a sharp increase as altitude went above a couple kilometers. It took a while for the scientific community to accept this, but the origin of the discharge of electroscopes was not Earth-bound: it was cosmic.

Millikan thought they might be the “birth cry” of elements: γ rays with energies corresponding to the mass defects of certain nuclides. He used Dirac’s theory of Compton scattering. He was wrong, but he was also the first to use the term “cosmic rays”.

Bruno Rossi put lead blocks between Geiger counters: these are not γ rays, since they would be absorbed.

They have to be charged: their flux is influenced by the Earth’s magnetic field, so the one from the East and the West is different.

In the 1930s there started a boom of discoveries. At the end of the 30s Auger measured 100 TeV cosmic rays.

At the end of the 60s the CMB was discovered: therefore, in the cosmic ray spectrum there should be a cutoff around 10^{20} eV: the **GZK feature** [Alo+18, sec. 5.1]. This is because the cosmic ray “sees” CMB photons as γ rays, so it can undergo production of pions, losing a lot of energy, in a process like:

$$N + \gamma \rightarrow N + \pi^0. \quad (0.1)$$

Specifically, the average CMB photon has an energy of $E \sim 2.7 K \approx 245 \mu\text{eV}$; in order for it to be blueshifted up to the mass of a pion, $m_{\pi^+} \approx 140 \text{ MeV}$ it needs a γ factor of about $\gamma \sim 6 \times 10^{11}$; this is achieved when a proton has an energy of $E_p \approx 6 \times 10^{11} \text{ GeV}$.¹

The threshold for pair production, $\sim 1 \text{ MeV}$, is lower: “only” $E_p \approx 4 \times 10^9 \text{ GeV}$. These are not hard thresholds: they are computed from the average temperature of CMB photons, but these are distributed according to a thermal distribution, so there is a tail at high energies, albeit exponentially suppressed.

There are peaks in the spectral power of the discovery of fossils: a 62 Myr period corresponds to the period of the oscillation of the Solar system with respect to the galactic disk.

There’s lots of hydrogen and helium in the interstellar medium, almost no Beryllium, Boron and Lithium, while elements heavier than Carbon, which are formed in stars, are found in decent amounts.

On the other hand, in cosmic rays there is a much higher amount of Be, B, Li. This is due to *spallation*, or *x*-process nucleosynthesis: a process by which a cosmic ray hits a nucleus, thereby splitting it into lighter components. The cross-section for spallation is $\sigma \sim 45 A^{2/3} \text{ mb}$, where A is the mass number of the nuclide.

The motion needs to be “diffusive”. If this is happening, the timescale is quadratic in the distance, and matches with our observations; if the motion was “ballistic” (straight on, basically) the timescale would be linear in the distance travelled.

¹ A proper calculation shows that the expression also depends on the angle at which the particles interact, and specifically the threshold for the formation of a particle x by the interaction of a high energy cosmic ray with Lorentz factor γ with a CMB photon with energy ϵ is $\gamma \geq m_x / 2\epsilon(1 - \cos\theta)$, where θ is the interaction angle.

Such “ballistic” trajectories would contradict observations, since they would not be able to produce enough spallation product.

But, it cannot be collisions, otherwise the distribution would be thermal! So, what is it? Magnetic fields.

There is Balmer emission in the shockwave from SNe.

The Larmor radius is in general given by

$$r_{\text{Larmor}} \approx \frac{\gamma m v_{\perp}}{|q| |B|}, \quad (0.2)$$

where the magnitude of the galactic B -field is of the order of 100 pT.

Is this a typical value, an underestimate maybe?

This means that even at knee-level, $E \sim 3 \times 10^{15}$ eV, the gyroradius is on the order of 3 pc: extremely *small*, in terms of the scale of the galaxy, 10 kpc or more.

The loss length for radiation decreases with energy: first we can do pair production when a proton interacts with a CMB photon, and then pion production can start.

The *goal of the course* is to understand the behaviour of charged particles in a magnetic field they generate themselves.

Diffusive transport takes into account charged particles, as well as ordered and turbulent B fields, but plasma instabilities are what happen when charged particles interact with a turbulent magnetic field.

There are many experiments measuring this kind of stuff!

Course outline

The plan is to discuss:

1. basics of plasma physics;
2. basics of MHD;
3. basics of transport of charged particles;
4. basic aspects of the supernova paradigm for cosmic rays;
5. test particle theory of diffusive shock acceleration;
6. cosmic ray transport in the galaxy;
7. some non-linear aspects of particle transport;
8. a taste of advanced topics: recent findings, positrons, end of galactic CR, UHECR...

Regarding books, the course is a synthesis of several topics, so many books cover them but they also include lots of other material.

For plasma physics, “Plasma physics for astrophysics” by Russel M. Kulsrud.

For transport, “Astrophysics of cosmic rays”.

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1 Basics of plasma physics

From the microphysical point of view, cosmic rays are just electric charges moving in a plasma, which they in turn affect.

Loosely, a plasma is ionized gas; however the interstellar medium is also at temperatures of 10^4 K to 10^6 K, this is also true for the intergalactic medium, which has a much lower density and similar temperatures,

This also applies to the medium in clusters, which has a higher temperature, of the order of 10^8 K but lower densities, 10^{-3} cm^{-3} .

Magnetic fields are sourced by currents, which cosmic rays affect. Electric fields, on the other hand, are “short-circuited” since the conductivity is very large.

If it is difficult to have an electric field, how can particles be accelerated? We will simply assume that cosmic rays, which are non-thermal, exist.

First, though, we will try to understand how the plasma works, then we will look at the non-thermal particles, and finally we will put them together.

For simplicity, let us consider a plasma made of protons (with density n_i) and electrons (with density n_e). Maxwell’ equations will read

$$\vec{\nabla} \cdot \vec{E} = 4\pi\zeta \quad (1.1a)$$

$$\vec{\nabla} \cdot \vec{B} = 0 \quad (1.1b)$$

$$\vec{\nabla} \times \vec{E} = -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{B}}{\partial t} \quad (1.1c)$$

$$\vec{\nabla} \times \vec{B} = \frac{4\pi}{c} \vec{J} + \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{E}}{\partial t}, \quad (1.1d)$$

where $\zeta = n_i e - n_e e$, while the current reads $\vec{J} = n_i e \vec{v}_i - n_e e \vec{v}_e$.

The interactions between these will be Coulomb ones. At thermal equilibrium, we will have charge neutrality, so $n_i = n_e = n_0$.

Screening Suppose we add a positive charge in a neutral medium, at $\vec{r} = 0$. Then, the divergence of \vec{E} will be

$$\vec{\nabla} \cdot \vec{E} = 4\pi n_i e - 4\pi n_e e + 4\pi e \delta(\vec{r}), \quad (1.2)$$

where the tilde means that the densities are perturbed.

We will assume that the perturbation induced by this is small. The potential energy drop of a particle at a distance d from another is e^2/d , so if we assume $e^2/d \ll k_B T$ the thermal background remains fixed, and is not “broken” by Coulomb interactions. The typical distance between particles will be $d \sim n_0^{-1/3}$, so the weak perturbation condition will read $e^2 n_0^{1/3} \ll k_B T$.

What we want to do now is to solve this equation (1.2) for the electric field.

In order to do so, we need to discuss the dependence of the phase space distribution on the energy of each particle, which we call ϵ . At zeroth order, we will have

$$\tilde{n}_i = n_0 \exp\left(-\frac{\epsilon}{k_B T}\right), \quad (1.3)$$

which we assume, on mesoscopic scales, to average out to $\langle e^{-\epsilon/k_B T} \rangle = 1$. In the following discussion we apply this mesoscopic approximation by setting $\epsilon \equiv k_B T$, but we do leave in the external perturbation to the potential.

The external potential will perturb the energy ϵ by $e\varphi$ where φ is the electric potential, so

$$\tilde{n}_i = n_0 \exp\left(\frac{-\epsilon + e\varphi}{k_B T}\right) \quad (1.4a)$$

$$\tilde{n}_e = n_0 \exp\left(\frac{-\epsilon - e\varphi}{k_B T}\right), \quad (1.4b)$$

and we can use $\vec{E} = -\vec{\nabla}\varphi$: then, for $r \neq 0$ we will have

$$\vec{\nabla}^2 \varphi = -4\pi e n_0 \exp\left(-\frac{\epsilon}{k_B T}\right) \exp\left(-\frac{e\varphi}{k_B T}\right) + 4\pi e n_0 \exp\left(-\frac{\epsilon}{k_B T}\right) \exp\left(\frac{e\varphi}{k_B T}\right), \quad (1.5)$$

which we can expand up to linear order:

$$\vec{\nabla}^2 \varphi = -4\pi e n_0 \exp\left(-\frac{\epsilon}{k_B T}\right) \left(\exp\left(-\frac{e\varphi}{k_B T}\right) - \exp\left(\frac{e\varphi}{k_B T}\right) \right) \quad (1.6a)$$

$$\approx -4\pi e n_0 \exp\left(-\frac{\epsilon}{k_B T}\right) \left(1 - \frac{e\varphi}{k_B T} - 1 - \frac{e\varphi}{k_B T} \right) \quad (1.6b)$$

$$= \underbrace{8\pi e n_0 \exp\left(-\frac{\epsilon}{k_B T}\right)}_{=n_0} \frac{e}{k_B T} \varphi. \quad (1.6c)$$

The prefactor has the dimensions of an inverse square length; further, we include the exponential $e^{-\epsilon/k_B T}$ into the unperturbed density n_0 .

We are being a bit cavalier in the distinction between the phase space density $f(\vec{x}, \vec{p})$ and the spatial number density $n(\vec{x})$.

Roughly speaking, the first is defined so that its integral over all of $d^3x d^3p$ yields the total number of particles, while for the second the integral need only be done over d^3x . We can recover the number density by integrating the phase space density: specifically, the correct normalization in natural units reads

$$n(\vec{x}) = \frac{g}{(2\pi)^3} \int f(\vec{x}, \vec{p}) d^3p, \quad (1.7)$$

where g is the number of helicity states of the particle at hand.

The isotropic Maxwellian phase space distribution (which approximates both the Bose-Einstein and Fermi ones) reads $f(\vec{x}, \vec{p}) = \exp(-\epsilon(\vec{p})/k_B T)$, where $\epsilon(\vec{p}) = \sqrt{m^2 + \vec{p}^2}$ is the energy corresponding to the momentum \vec{p} .

The way the specific integral is computed for this density does not really matter (and is actually rather complicated in general), but we call the result n_0 — it is independent of \vec{x} , since the phase space density is as well.

Now, we insert an external potential energy term to the *phase space* density, mapping $\epsilon \rightarrow \epsilon + U(\vec{x})$ (which for us will be $U(\vec{x}) = -e\phi(\vec{x})$). The integral then reads

$$n(\vec{x}) = \frac{g}{(2\pi)^3} \int \exp\left(-\frac{\epsilon}{k_B T}\right) \exp\left(-\frac{U(\vec{x})}{k_B T}\right) d^3 p = n_0 \exp\left(-\frac{U(\vec{x})}{k_B T}\right). \quad (1.8)$$

We define the **Debye length**

$$\lambda_D = \left(\frac{k_B T}{8\pi n_0 e^2}\right)^{1/2}, \quad (1.9)$$

in terms of which (with the assumption of spherical symmetry for our problem) the equation reads

$$\nabla^2 \phi = \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} \left(r^2 \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial r} \right) = \frac{1}{\lambda_D^2} \phi, \quad (1.10)$$

which is solved by looking at $f = r\phi$: then,

$$\frac{d^2 f}{dr^2} = \frac{f}{\lambda_D^2}, \quad (1.11)$$

which means $f = A \exp(-r/\lambda_D)$ (we discard the unphysical, exponentially diverging solution). Inserting back our particle boundary condition to fix A , we get

$$\phi = \frac{e}{r} \exp\left(-\frac{r}{\lambda_D}\right). \quad (1.12)$$

This is physically meaningful: there is a **screening effect** on charges, on length scales of λ_D .

For this to happen, however, we need to have enough charges to screen the inserted one: the number of particles in the Debye volume, $\sim n_0 \lambda_D^3$, must be much larger than 1. In a way, this is also a mesoscopic statistical requirement.

This can be written as

$$n_0 \frac{(k_B T)^{3/2}}{(8\pi e^2)^{3/2} n_0^{3/2}} = \frac{(k_B T)^{3/2}}{(8\pi e^2)^{3/2} n_0^{1/2}} \gg 1, \quad (1.13)$$

which shows that, counter-intuitively, this condition is easier to fulfill for under-dense plasmas.

The path length for Coulomb scattering, λ_C , should be much larger than both $\Delta r \approx n^{-1/3}$ (the separation between particles) and λ_D .

It can be estimated by

$$\lambda_C = \frac{1}{n_0 \sigma_C} = \frac{(k_B T)^2}{n_0 e^4} \gg n^{-1/3}, \quad (1.14)$$

where $e^2/b = k_B T$ gives us a limit for the Coulomb interaction length, therefore $\sigma_C \approx b^2 \approx (e^2/k_B T)^2$.

It can be shown that $\lambda_C \gg \lambda_D$ is equivalent to the condition that many particles should be contained in a single Debye length: the condition reads

$$\lambda_C = \frac{(k_B T)^2}{n_0 e^4} \gg \sqrt{\frac{k_B T}{8\pi n_0 e^2}} = \lambda_D \quad (1.15)$$

$$(8\pi)^2 n_0 \left(\frac{k_B T}{8\pi n_0 e^2} \right)^2 \gg \left(\frac{k_B T}{8\pi n_0 e^2} \right)^{1/2} \quad (1.16)$$

$$\lambda_D^3 \gg \frac{1}{(8\pi)^2 n_0} . \quad (1.17)$$

Collective effects dominate the dynamics of a plasma, while the effect of a single charge quickly becomes negligible.

Propagation modes in a plasma We will now do an exercise in perturbation theory: which perturbations are allowed, beyond electromagnetic waves? Certain modes are “allowed”, in that they do not die out.

A lot of interesting physics come from the fact that each particle interacts with the collection of all the others.

Perturbations which are unstable are interesting, but they break our perturbative approach.

The fields in Maxwell’s equations (1.1) are assumed to start out at zero in the unperturbed configuration.

The current J is given by the Generalized Ohm’s law:

$$J_r = \sigma_{rs} E_s , \quad (1.18)$$

where the proportionality constant σ_{rs} is the *conductivity tensor* (whose components are, roughly, 1 over resistance).

It is also convenient to define the displacement current \vec{D} by:

$$\frac{4\pi \vec{J}}{c} + \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{E}}{\partial t} = \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{D}}{\partial t} , \quad (1.19)$$

which means that the current can be recovered by

$$\vec{J} = \frac{1}{4\pi} \left(\frac{\partial \vec{D}}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial \vec{E}}{\partial t} \right) . \quad (1.20)$$

The idea is to decompose the perturbation in Fourier modes:

$$\vec{E} \rightarrow \tilde{E}_k(\vec{k}, \omega) \exp(-i\omega t + i\vec{k} \cdot \vec{r}) . \quad (1.21)$$

The full expression for the electric field is a superposition of these modes, but we can look at them just one at a time. This simplifies things: time derivatives become $i\omega$, curls become $\vec{k} \times$ and so on.

The current reads, with this as well as Ohm's law,

$$\tilde{J}_r = \frac{-i\omega}{4\pi} (\tilde{D}_r - \tilde{E}_r) = \sigma_{rs} E_s. \quad (1.22)$$

The displacement field is therefore

$$\tilde{D}_r = \frac{4\pi}{i\omega} \left(\frac{i\omega}{4\pi} \tilde{E}_r - \sigma_{rs} E_s \right) = \tilde{E}_r + i \frac{4\pi}{\omega} \sigma_{rs} \tilde{E}_s = \mathbb{K}_{rs} \tilde{E}_s, \quad (1.23)$$

where $\mathbb{K}_{rs} = \delta_{rs} + (4\pi i/\omega) \sigma_{rs}$ is called the **Dielectric tensor**.

What we are trying to do is to write a *dispersion relation*, $F(\vec{k}, \omega)E = 0$.

Now we move to Lenz's law: we take another curl, to get

$$\vec{\nabla} \times (\vec{\nabla} \times \vec{E}) = -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial}{\partial t} (\vec{\nabla} \times \vec{B}) \quad (1.24a)$$

$$= -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \left(\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{D}}{\partial t} \right) \quad (1.24b)$$

$$= -\frac{1}{c^2} \frac{\partial^2 \vec{D}}{\partial t^2} \quad (1.24c)$$

$$[-\vec{k} \times (\vec{k} \times \tilde{E})]_r = +\frac{\omega^2}{c^2} \tilde{D}_r = \frac{\omega^2}{c^2} \mathbb{K}_{rs} \tilde{E}_s. \quad (1.24d)$$

We are almost done: the only issue here is that \mathbb{K}_{rs} contains the conductivity tensor σ_{rs} . Supposing for simplicity that our plasma is non-relativistic, we have the EoM

$$m_e \frac{dv_e}{dt} = -eE \implies -i\omega m_e \tilde{v}_e = -e\tilde{E}, \quad (1.25)$$

but the current \vec{J} is $\vec{J} = -en_e \vec{v}_e$, so $\tilde{J}_r = -(ne^2/\omega m_e) \tilde{E}_r$, therefore the conductivity reads

$$\sigma_{rs} = \frac{ine^2}{\omega m_e} \delta_{rs}, \quad (1.26)$$

so we can write out the dielectric tensor explicitly:

$$\mathbb{K}_{rs} = \delta_{rs} \left[1 - \left(\frac{\omega_p}{\omega} \right)^2 \right] \quad \text{where} \quad \omega_p = \sqrt{\frac{4\pi n_e e^2}{m_e}} \quad (1.27)$$

is called the plasma frequency.

We have found our dispersion relation:

$$\vec{k} \times (\vec{k} \times \vec{E}) + \left(\frac{\omega^2 - \omega_p^2}{c^2} \right) \vec{E} = 0. \quad (1.28)$$

Let us separate out *longitudinal perturbations*, which have $\vec{k} \propto \vec{E}$, from *transverse* ones, since we are always able to write $\vec{E} = \vec{E}_{\parallel} + \vec{E}_{\perp}$.

In the **longitudinal case**,

$$(\omega^2 - \omega_p^2)E_{\parallel} = 0, \quad (1.29)$$

which means that the propagation must happen exactly at the plasma frequency: these are called **Langmir waves**, or plasma waves. In the transverse case, we get

$$\left[-k^2 c^2 + (\omega^2 - \omega_p^2)\right]E_{\perp} = 0. \quad (1.30)$$

The pulsation must be

$$\omega^2 = \omega_p^2 + c^2 k^2 \quad \text{or} \quad k^2 = \frac{\omega^2 - \omega_p^2}{c^2}. \quad (1.31)$$

If $\omega > \omega_p$, then $k^2 > 0$: these are allowed perturbations, which indeed exhibit oscillatory behavior.

Actually, we can compute their group velocity

$$v_g = \frac{\partial \omega}{\partial k} = c \left(1 - \frac{\omega_p^2}{\omega^2}\right)^{1/2}, \quad (1.32)$$

which shows that if $\omega \gg \omega_p$ the speed is close to c .

If $\omega < \omega_p$, on the other hand, k is imaginary. The solution corresponding to exponential growth is unphysical (for one, there is no mechanism providing the energy for the magnitude of the oscillation to exponentially grow), so we only look at the exponentially damped solutions.

They are exponentially damped over a scale $|\vec{k}|^{-1} = c/\omega_p$. This is the **skin depth** of the plasma, the largest distance a perturbation can penetrate in the plasma if it oscillates too slowly.

This characteristic wavelength's ratio to the Debye length reads

$$\frac{\lambda_{\text{skin depth}}}{\lambda_{\text{Debye}}} = \sqrt{\frac{m_e c^2}{4\pi n_e e^2} \frac{8\pi n_e e^2}{k_B T}} = \sqrt{\frac{2m_e c^2}{k_B T}} \gg 1, \quad (1.33)$$

since the plasmas we are considering are typically non-relativistic.

An example: fast radio bursts Fast radio bursts are like γ -ray bursts in the radio band. These are relatively high-frequency, around 1.4 GHz. We do not really know what their sources are; some were false positives due to microwave ovens making lunch, but others were certified to be true detections.

We know of one which came from a galaxy $L \sim 1$ Gpc away, and which had a dispersion of about $\Delta\omega \sim 300$ MHz.

Photons of different frequencies arrived at different times, with a spread of about 300 ms.

We are in the second case ($\vec{k} \perp \vec{E}$) since they are EM waves. The group velocity is, again

$$v_g = c \left[1 - \left(\frac{\omega_p}{\omega}\right)^2\right]^{1/2}, \quad (1.34)$$

and we can assume (we will check *a posteriori*) that $\omega \gg \omega_p$.

The time difference will be

$$\Delta t = \frac{L}{v_g(\omega)} - \frac{L}{v_g(\omega + \Delta\omega)} \approx \frac{L}{v_g(\omega)} \frac{1}{v_g(\omega)} \frac{\partial v_g}{\partial \omega} \Delta\omega \quad (1.35a)$$

$$\approx \frac{L}{c^2} \underbrace{\frac{\omega_p^2}{c \omega^3}}_{\approx \partial v_g / \partial \omega} \Delta\omega \quad (1.35b)$$

$$\omega_p \approx \sqrt{\frac{c \omega^3 \Delta t}{L \Delta \omega}}, \quad (1.35c)$$

but we know that

$$\omega_p^2 = \frac{4\pi n_e e^2}{m_e}. \quad (1.36)$$

This allows us to measure $\omega_p \sim 5.2$ Hz, and therefore also the density, which comes out to be $n_e \sim 8.2 \times 10^{-9} \text{ cm}^{-3}$.

How well does this match the baryon density computed from the CMB? The computation goes

$$\underbrace{\frac{\omega_p^2 m_e}{4\pi e^2} m_p}_{\rho_{\text{plasma}}} \times \frac{1}{\Omega_{0b} \rho_c} \approx 0.03. \quad (1.37)$$

Therefore, from this observation we can estimate that about 3 % of baryonic matter is in the ISM.

This can be generalized a bit: maybe, not all the path L from the source to here had this much plasma in it. Suppose, for simplicity's sake, that a fraction α of the path was constituted by uniform-density plasma.

Then, our estimate for ω_p will be multiplied by a factor $\alpha^{-1/2}$, while our estimate for n_e will be multiplied by α^{-1} . On the other hand, in the estimate for ρ_{plasma} , averaged over the whole universe, will need to be shifted by some factor.

If the path we were looking at is a fair sample for the population (not a given, but let's approximate as such), then about a fraction α of the universe is filled with this plasma — this precisely cancels the correction to our estimate, so it all works out.

This is done in a better way through the measurement of several pulsars for which we have more accurate distance measurements.

Check: the frequency given was ν , not ω !

1.1 Statistical descriptions of plasmas

If the length scales we consider are larger than the Debye length, we can safely neglect the effect of the Coulomb potential of each individual particle. This does not mean that there are no electric fields, but the electric fields are mesoscopic or larger.

This is “desirable”, in that we’d like to use statistical descriptions of the plasma. Such a statistical description will necessarily work in phase space.

Let us start out in the nonrelativistic approximation: if we only have one particle, we can write its phase space distribution function as

$$N(\vec{x}, \vec{v}, t) = \delta(\vec{x} - \vec{X}(t))\delta(\vec{v} - \vec{V}(t)). \quad (1.38)$$

If we have several particles, this can be readily generalized:

$$N(\vec{x}, \vec{v}, t) = \sum_i \delta(\vec{x} - \vec{X}_i(t))\delta(\vec{v} - \vec{V}_i(t)), \quad (1.39)$$

but this only describes a single particle species: we know that at the very least we will have electrons and protons, in order to preserve charge neutrality. So, let us call the quantity defined above N_s , where s is an index spanning $\{e, i\}$ for electrons and ions respectively.

We want to describe the evolution of this quantity: its **total** time derivative can be computed through the chain rule, and if we set it to zero we find that $dN_s/dt = 0$ is equivalent to:

$$\frac{\partial N_s}{\partial t} = - \sum_i \vec{X} \cdot \nabla_x \delta(\vec{x} - \vec{X}_i(t))\delta(\vec{v} - \vec{V}_i(t)) - \sum_i \delta(\vec{x} - \vec{X}_i(t))\vec{V}_i(t) \cdot \nabla_v \delta(\vec{v} - \vec{V}_i(t)). \quad (1.40)$$

Now, these charges will evolve under the actions of the electric and magnetic fields: but we also need to describe what is the source of these fields.

The action of these fields on a particle with velocity \vec{V}_i will be described by the Lorentz force,

$$m_s \vec{V}_i(t) = q_s \vec{E}^{\text{microscopic}}(\vec{x}) + \frac{q_s}{c} \vec{V}_i \times \vec{B}^{\text{microscopic}}(\vec{x}, t). \quad (1.41)$$

This acceleration term will then be put into the aforementioned evolution equation. We can already understand why this problem will be hard: the fields acting on a particle will be sourced by all the others.

The microscopic EM fields will satisfy Maxwell’s equations:

$$\vec{\nabla} \cdot \vec{E}^{\text{micro}}(\vec{x}, t) = 4\pi\zeta^{\text{micro}} \quad (1.42)$$

$$\vec{\nabla} \cdot \vec{B}^{\text{micro}} = 0 \quad (1.43)$$

$$\vec{\nabla} \times \vec{E}^{\text{micro}} = -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{B}^{\text{micro}}}{\partial t} \quad (1.44)$$

$$\vec{\nabla} \times \vec{B}^{\text{micro}} = \frac{4\pi}{c} \vec{j}^{\text{micro}} + \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{E}^{\text{micro}}}{\partial t}, \quad (1.45)$$

where the density and current density read

$$\zeta^{\text{micro}}(\vec{x}, t) = \sum_{s=i,e} q_s \int d^3\vec{v} N_s(\vec{x}, \vec{v}, t) \quad (1.46)$$

$$\vec{j}^{\text{micro}} = \sum_{s=i,e} q_s \int d^3\vec{v} \vec{v} N_s(\vec{x}, \vec{v}, t). \quad (1.47)$$

The Boltzmann equation plus the Lorentz one can be more compactly written as

$$\frac{\partial N_s}{\partial t} = -\vec{v} \cdot \vec{\nabla}_x N_s - \sum_{i=1}^N \frac{q_s}{m_s} \left[\vec{E}^{\text{micro}} + \frac{1}{c} \vec{v} \times \vec{B}^{\text{micro}} \right] \cdot \vec{\nabla}_v \left[\delta(\vec{v} - \vec{X}_i(t)) \right] \delta(\vec{x} - \vec{X}_i(t)). \quad (1.48)$$

The EM fields are *a priori* computed at the position and velocity of the i -th particle, (\vec{X}_i, \vec{V}_i) , but because of the δ -functions at each point we can substitute this position for the generic one (\vec{x}, \vec{v}) .

The equation then becomes

$$\frac{\partial N_s}{\partial t} + \vec{v} \cdot \vec{\nabla}_x N_s = -\frac{q_s}{m_s} \left[\vec{E}^{\text{micro}} + \frac{\vec{v} \times \vec{B}^{\text{micro}}}{c} \right] \cdot \nabla_v N_s. \quad (1.49)$$

This equation is called the Klimontovich-Dupree equation.²

This equation, however, is basically useless, unless we do a mean-field approximation.

Let us introduce the quantity $f_s(\vec{x}, \vec{v}, t)$, which we want to compute through average on mesoscopic scales:

$$f_s(\vec{x}, \vec{v}, t) = \langle N_s(\vec{x}, \vec{v}, t) \rangle_{\Delta V}. \quad (1.50)$$

The true phase space density will then be

$$N_s(\vec{x}, \vec{v}, t) = f_s(\vec{x}, \vec{v}, t) + \delta f_s, \quad (1.51)$$

where the fluctuations are assumed to average to zero. We can write a similar expression for the electric and magnetic fields:

$$\vec{E}^{\text{micro}} = \vec{E} + \delta \vec{E} \quad (1.52)$$

$$\vec{B}^{\text{micro}} = \vec{B} + \delta \vec{B}. \quad (1.53)$$

The averaged KD equation then becomes:

$$\frac{df_s}{dt} + \vec{v} \cdot \nabla_x f_s + \frac{q_s}{m_s} \left[\vec{E} + \frac{1}{c} \vec{v} \times \vec{B} \right] \cdot \vec{\nabla}_v f_s = -\frac{q_s}{m_s} \left\langle \left(\delta \vec{E} + \frac{1}{c} \vec{v} \times \delta \vec{B} \right) \cdot \vec{\nabla}_v \delta f_s \right\rangle. \quad (1.54)$$

The interaction and collision terms are *quadratic* in the fluctuations. If we neglect this term (which is typically called a “correlation” term), we get the **Vlasov** equation:

$$\frac{\partial f_s}{\partial t} + \vec{v} \cdot \vec{\nabla}_x f_s + \frac{q_s}{m_s} \cdot \left[\vec{E} + \frac{\vec{v} \times \vec{B}}{c} \right] \cdot \vec{\nabla}_v f_s = 0. \quad (1.55)$$

² As many things done during the Cold War, it was developed by military personnel independently in the two blocks.

We can do the same thing to the Maxwell equations, using an averaged version of the charge and current densities.

We will need to generalize to the relativistic case: we move to (\vec{x}, \vec{p}) phase space. For relativistic particles, the Lorentz force reads

$$\vec{\dot{p}} = q_s \left[\vec{E} + \frac{\vec{v} \times \vec{B}}{c} \right]. \quad (1.56)$$

The source terms in the Maxwell equations will be integrated in d^3p , but for the charge current we will have an integral $\int d^3p \vec{v} f_s$.

The relativistic Vlasov equation is then readily derived with minor modifications, and reads

$$\frac{\partial f_s}{\partial t} + \vec{v} \cdot \vec{\nabla}_x f_s + q_s \left[\vec{E} + \frac{\vec{v} \times \vec{B}}{c} \right] \cdot \vec{\nabla}_p f_s = 0. \quad (1.57)$$

Let us now move to the nonrelativistic plasma again, and assume we are at zero temperature. We will then make a small perturbation: the ions will be stationary in first approximation. Will the Vlasov equation contain the plasma waves we derived earlier?

We only write it for electrons, so

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial t} + \vec{v} \cdot \vec{\nabla}_x f_s - \frac{e}{m_e} \left[\vec{E} + \frac{\vec{v} \times \vec{B}}{c} \right] \cdot \vec{\nabla}_v f = 0, \quad (1.58)$$

where in the second term we are adopting the Einstein convention, summing over α .

We will assume that there is no magnetic field perturbation: this is the same thing we did in the plasma waves, specifically in assuming that \mathbb{K} is diagonal.

is this correct?

In the stationary configuration there is $\vec{E} = 0$. To linear order, the perturbed equation will read

$$\frac{\partial \delta f}{\partial t} + \vec{v} \cdot \nabla \delta f + \frac{e}{m_e} \nabla \varphi \frac{\partial f}{\partial v_\alpha} = 0. \quad (1.59)$$

But isn't $f = \text{const}$ at zeroth order?

We want to assume that the plasma is cold!

The electric potential φ will satisfy

$$-\nabla^2 \varphi = -4\pi e \int d^3v \delta f. \quad (1.60)$$

We then move to Fourier space:

$$-i\omega \widetilde{\delta f} + i\vec{k} \cdot \vec{v} \widetilde{\delta f} + \frac{e}{m_e} i k_\alpha \widetilde{\varphi} \frac{\partial f}{\partial v_\alpha} = 0, \quad (1.61)$$

but the electric potential will satisfy

$$k^2 \tilde{\varphi} = -4\pi e \int d^3v \tilde{\delta f}, \quad (1.62)$$

so we get

$$\tilde{\delta f} \left[i\vec{k} \cdot \vec{v} - i\omega \right] = -\frac{e}{m_e} \tilde{\varphi} k_\alpha \frac{\partial f}{\partial v_\alpha} \quad (1.63)$$

$$\tilde{\delta f} = -\frac{e}{m_e} \tilde{\varphi} \frac{k_\alpha}{\vec{k} \cdot \vec{v} - \omega} \frac{\partial f}{\partial v_\alpha}, \quad (1.64)$$

which we substitute into the integral for $\tilde{\varphi}$:

$$\tilde{\varphi} = \frac{4\pi e^2}{k^2 m_e} \tilde{\varphi} k_\alpha \int d^3v \frac{\partial f}{\partial v_\alpha} \frac{1}{\vec{k} \cdot \vec{v} - \omega}, \quad (1.65)$$

so the allowed perturbations are those which make this equation true (for arbitrary φ). For now we have not assumed that the electrons are cold: this will enter in how we write the unperturbed f .

The assumptions of the electrons being cold can be modelled as $f = n_0 \delta(\vec{v})$: therefore, we need to integrate by parts.

Suppose that the z axis is along k : then, the integrand reads

$$\int dv_x dv_y dv_z \frac{\partial f}{\partial v_\alpha} \frac{1}{kv_z - \omega} = \int dv_x dv_y dv_z f \frac{1}{(kv_z - \omega)^2} \quad (1.66)$$

$$= \int dv_x dv_y \delta(v_x) \delta(v_y) n_0 \frac{k}{\omega^2} = \frac{n_0 k}{\omega^2}, \quad (1.67)$$

so the equation just reads

$$1 - \frac{4\pi e^2 n_0}{k^2 m_e} \frac{k^2}{\omega^2} \implies \omega^2 = \frac{4\pi e^2 n_0}{m_e} = \omega_p^2. \quad (1.68)$$

At the very least, this more complicated approach allows us to recover the results we expected.

2 Alfvén waves

Next time, we will add one complication: a global, ordered magnetic field.

We know that this happens, for example, in spiral galaxies like our own: we observe large-scale magnetic fields.

Much of the physics of the transport of non-thermal particles will be affected by these magnetic fields.

The perturbation of the two coupled Vlasov equations under the effect of this external \vec{B} field will yield what are called **Alfvén waves**.

Wednesday
2021-11-24

Each of the particle species in our plasma satisfy a Vlasov equation,

$$\frac{\partial f_\alpha}{\partial t} + \vec{v} \cdot \nabla_x f_\alpha + q_\alpha \left[\vec{E} + \frac{\vec{v}}{c} \times \vec{B} \right]_\beta \frac{\partial f_\alpha}{\partial p_\beta} = 0, \quad (2.1)$$

where α runs over electrons, ions, cosmic rays and so on: any collisionless particles; while the index β is a spatial index, to be interpreted in the Einstein summation convention.

The \vec{E} and \vec{B} fields do *not* have an index α : they are produced by all the components of the plasma.

An astrophysically significant situation is one in which there is a “baseline” magnetic field, which adds to the one generated within the plasma.

We align our axes so that $\vec{B}_0 = B_0 \hat{z}$. The baseline electric field is $\vec{E}_0 = 0$.

1. We ask that \vec{B}_0 is ordered: its variations should be on much larger scales than the scales of the plasma.
2. The equilibrium phase space density, $f_{0,\alpha}$, is assumed to be known: it could, for example, be a Maxwellian, or a delta-function on $\vec{v} = 0$.

Again, we will perturb this system in order to find a dispersion relation $F(k, \omega)\delta = 0$, where δ is our perturbation.

Perturbing the Vlasov equation The perturbed components in our fields will read

$$f_\alpha = f_{0,\alpha} + \delta f_\alpha \quad (2.2)$$

$$\vec{B} = \vec{B}_0 + \delta \vec{B} \quad (2.3)$$

$$\vec{E} = \delta \vec{E}. \quad (2.4)$$

The perturbed equation, to first order, reads

$$\frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial t} + \vec{v} \cdot \vec{\nabla} \delta f_\alpha + q_\alpha \delta \vec{E}_\beta \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\beta} + q_\alpha \left(\frac{\vec{v}}{c} \times \vec{B}_0 \right)_\beta \frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial p_\beta} + q_\alpha \left(\frac{\vec{v}}{c} \times \delta \vec{B} \right)_\beta \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\beta} = 0, \quad (2.5)$$

and, as usual, we will move to Fourier space, without tildes for simplicity:

$$-i\omega \delta f_\alpha + i\vec{k} \cdot \vec{v} \delta f_\alpha + q_\alpha \delta \vec{E}_\beta \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\beta} + q_\alpha \left(\frac{\vec{v}}{c} \times \vec{B}_0 \right)_\beta \frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial p_\beta} + q_\alpha \left(\frac{\vec{v}}{c} \times \delta \vec{B} \right)_\beta \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\beta} = 0. \quad (2.6)$$

Perturbed Maxwell equations The divergence of the electric field perturbation reads

$$\vec{\nabla} \cdot \delta \vec{E} = 4\pi \zeta = 4\pi \sum_\alpha q_\alpha \int d^3p \delta f_\alpha, \quad (2.7)$$

where ζ denotes the charge density (which is purely a perturbation, since its unperturbed value is zero due to charge neutrality).

The divergence of \vec{B} vanishes, but so does the divergence of the constant \vec{B}_0 , so we have $\vec{\nabla} \cdot \delta \vec{B} = 0$ as well.

The other two equations read

$$\vec{\nabla} \times \delta \vec{E} = -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \delta \vec{B}}{\partial t} \quad (2.8)$$

$$\vec{\nabla} \times \delta \vec{B} = \frac{4\pi \vec{J}}{c} + \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \delta \vec{E}}{\partial t}. \quad (2.9)$$

In Fourier space, these read

$$i\vec{k} \cdot \delta \vec{E} = 4\pi q_\alpha \int d^3p \delta f_\alpha \quad (2.10)$$

$$i\vec{k} \cdot \delta \vec{B} = 0 \quad (2.11)$$

$$i\vec{k} \times \delta \vec{E} = \frac{i\omega}{c} \delta \vec{B} \quad (2.12)$$

$$i\vec{k} \times \delta \vec{B} = \frac{4\pi}{c} \sum_\alpha q_\alpha \int d^3p \vec{v} \delta f_\alpha - \frac{i\omega}{c} \delta \vec{E}. \quad (2.13)$$

We are now in a position to make a further simplifying assumption.

3. We restrict ourselves to perturbations moving parallel to the magnetic field, $\vec{k} \parallel \vec{B}_0$.

Boron, Beryllium and Lithium are absent in the ISM but present in cosmic rays: there must be spallation, but for them to have significant interaction chances they must move very slowly. Something must be deflecting them.

Since $\vec{k} \cdot \delta \vec{B} = 0$, the magnetic field perturbation must be in the form $\delta \vec{B} = (\delta B_x, \delta B_y, 0)$. From Faraday's law, we find $\omega \delta \vec{B} = c \vec{k} \times \delta \vec{E}$:

$$\frac{\omega}{c} \begin{bmatrix} \delta B_x \\ \delta B_y \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} = \det \begin{bmatrix} \hat{x} & \hat{y} & \hat{z} \\ 0 & 0 & k \\ \delta E_x & \delta E_y & \delta E_z \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} -k\delta E_y \\ k\delta E_x \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}. \quad (2.14)$$

Therefore, $\delta B_x = -(kc/\omega)\delta E_y$ and $\delta B_y = (kc/\omega)\delta E_x$.

Manipulating the Lorentz terms in Vlasov Let us now try to simplify the last three terms in the perturbed, Fourier space Vlasov equation (2.6): they read

$$q_\alpha \delta \vec{E}_\beta \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\beta} + q_\alpha \left(\frac{\vec{v}}{c} \times \vec{B}_0 \right)_\beta \frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial p_\beta} + q_\alpha \left(\frac{\vec{v}}{c} \times \delta \vec{B} \right)_\beta \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\beta}, \quad (2.15)$$

so, explicitly:

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{q_\alpha}{c} \det \begin{bmatrix} \hat{x} & \hat{y} & \hat{z} \\ v_x & v_y & v_z \\ \delta B_x & \delta B_y & 0 \end{bmatrix}_\beta \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\beta} \\ & + \frac{q_\alpha}{c} \det \begin{bmatrix} \hat{x} & \hat{y} & \hat{z} \\ v_x & v_y & v_z \\ 0 & 0 & B_0 \end{bmatrix}_\beta \frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial p_\beta} + q_\alpha \left(\delta E_x \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_x} + \delta E_y \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_y} \right) = \end{aligned} \quad (2.16)$$

$$\begin{aligned}
&= \frac{q_\alpha}{c} \left(-v_z \delta B_y \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_x} + v_z \delta B_x \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_y} + (v_x \delta B_y - v_y \delta B_x) \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_z} \right) \\
&+ \frac{q_\alpha}{c} \left(v_y B_0 \frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial p_x} - v_x B_0 \frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial p_y} \right) + q_\alpha \left(\delta E_x \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_x} + \delta E_y \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_y} \right).
\end{aligned} \tag{2.17}$$

Moving to a circular polarization basis We can always do the calculations for a perturbation in terms of circularly polarized waves, and then add them together. We will write this as $\delta E_y = \pm i \delta E_x$. The idea is then to rewrite everything in terms of δE_x , which we can then just denote as δE . Thanks to this, we get:

$$\delta E_x = \delta E \quad \delta E_y = \pm i \delta E \tag{2.18}$$

$$\delta B_x = \mp \frac{kc}{\omega} \delta E \quad \delta B_y = \frac{kc}{\omega} \delta E. \tag{2.19}$$

With these substitutions, the three terms read

$$\begin{aligned}
&\frac{q_\alpha}{c} \left(-v_z \frac{kc}{\omega} \delta E \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_x} - v_z i \frac{kc}{\omega} \delta E \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_y} + \left[v_x \frac{ck}{\omega} \delta E \pm i v_y \frac{ck}{\omega} \delta E \right] \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_z} \right) + \\
&+ q_\alpha \delta E \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_x} \pm q_\alpha i \delta E \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_y} + \frac{q_\alpha}{c} B_0 \left[v_y \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_x} - v_x \frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial p_y} \right].
\end{aligned} \tag{2.20}$$

Moving to cylindrical coordinates The unperturbed distribution function $f_{0\alpha}$ cannot depend on the angle around the direction of the magnetic field \vec{B}_0 because of the cylindrical symmetry: it will be written like $f_{0\alpha} = f_{0\alpha}(p_\parallel, p_\perp)$, therefore it is useful to move to cylindrical coordinates.

From p_x, p_y, p_z we move to $p_\parallel, p_\perp, \varphi$, where

$$p_x = p_\perp \cos \varphi \tag{2.21}$$

$$p_y = p_\perp \sin \varphi \tag{2.22}$$

$$p_z = p_\parallel. \tag{2.23}$$

One can invert the Jacobian in order to get

$$dp_\perp = \cos \varphi dp_x + \sin \varphi dp_z \tag{2.24}$$

$$d\varphi = -\frac{1}{p_\perp} \sin \varphi dp_x + \frac{1}{p_z} \cos \varphi dp_z \tag{2.25}$$

$$dp_\parallel = dp_z. \tag{2.26}$$

Therefore,

$$\frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_x} = \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\perp} \cos \varphi \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_y} = \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\perp} \sin \varphi, \tag{2.27}$$

since the term containing a derivative with respect to φ vanishes.

With this, the term reads

$$\frac{q_\alpha}{c} v_z \frac{ck}{\omega} \delta E \left(\frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\perp} \cos \varphi \pm i \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\perp} \sin \varphi \right) + \frac{q_\alpha}{c} \frac{ck}{\omega} \delta E (v_\perp \cos \varphi \pm i v_\perp \sin \varphi) \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\parallel} \quad (2.28)$$

$$+ q_\alpha \delta E \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\perp} (\cos \varphi \pm i \sin \varphi) - \frac{q_\alpha}{c} B_0 \frac{v_\perp}{p_\perp} \frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial \varphi} \\ = \frac{q_\alpha}{c} v_z \frac{ck}{\omega} \delta E \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\perp} e^{\pm i\varphi} + \frac{q_\alpha}{c} \frac{ck}{\omega} \delta E v_\perp e^{\pm i\varphi} \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\parallel} + q_\alpha \delta E \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\perp} e^{\pm i\varphi} - \frac{q_\alpha}{c} B_0 \frac{v_\perp}{p_\perp} \frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial \varphi}. \quad (2.29)$$

Recombining the Vlasov equation Now we just need to add in the two remaining terms of the Vlasov equation:

$$-i\omega \delta f_\alpha + i\vec{k} \cdot \vec{v} \delta f_\alpha + \frac{q_\alpha}{c} v_z \frac{ck}{\omega} \delta E \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\perp} e^{\pm i\varphi} + \frac{q_\alpha}{c} \frac{ck}{\omega} \delta E v_\perp e^{\pm i\varphi} \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\parallel} + q_\alpha \delta E \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\perp} e^{\pm i\varphi} \\ - \frac{q_\alpha}{c} B_0 \frac{v_\perp}{p_\perp} \frac{\partial \delta f_\alpha}{\partial \varphi} = 0. \quad (2.30)$$

The last term includes a factor in which we can recognize the cyclotron frequency corresponding to particle species α moving in the magnetic field \vec{B}_0 :

$$\frac{q_\alpha}{c} B_0 \frac{v_\perp}{p_\perp} = \frac{q_\alpha B_0}{c} \frac{v_\perp}{m_\alpha v_\perp \gamma} = \Omega_{\text{gyr}, \alpha}. \quad (2.31)$$

Making a rotating ansatz If δf_α was in the form $\delta g_\alpha e^{\pm i\varphi}$, then the equation would automatically be satisfied, if g_α does not depend on the phase, since in that case the last derivative would read $\mp i \delta g_\alpha e^{\pm i\varphi}$.

With this substitution all the phase factors would cancel, and we would find

$$\delta g_\alpha = \frac{\frac{q_\alpha}{c} \delta E \left[v_z \frac{ck}{\omega} \frac{\partial f_0}{\partial p_\perp} - v_\perp \frac{ck}{\omega} \frac{\partial f_0}{\partial p_\perp} - \frac{\partial f_0}{\partial p_\perp} \right]}{-i\omega + ikv_z \mp i\Omega_{\text{gyr}}}. \quad (2.32)$$

Closing the system with the Ampère-Maxwell law We have one step left in order to close the system: we need a relation between δf_α and δE ; we know that

$$i\vec{k} \times \delta \vec{B} = \frac{4\pi}{c} \sum_\alpha q_\alpha \int d^3p \vec{v} \delta f_\alpha - i \frac{\omega}{c} \delta \vec{E}. \quad (2.33)$$

However, we already know how to connect $\delta \vec{B}$ and $\delta \vec{E}$:

$$-ik \frac{ck}{\omega} \delta E = \frac{4\pi}{c} \sum_\alpha q_\alpha \int dp_\perp p_\perp \int dp_\parallel \int d\varphi v_\perp \cos \varphi - i \frac{\omega}{c} \delta E, \quad (2.34)$$

where we are considering the x component only, which was what we called δE .

If we decompose $\delta f_\alpha = \delta g_\alpha e^{\pm i\varphi}$, the integral in φ reads

$$\int_0^{2\pi} d\varphi \cos \varphi e^{\pm i\varphi} = \pi, \quad (2.35)$$

so we get, substituting in what we know for δg_α :

$$-\frac{k^2 c^2}{\omega} \delta E = \frac{4\pi}{c} \sum_\alpha q_\alpha \int dp_\perp p_\perp v_\perp \int dp_\parallel \frac{\frac{q_\alpha}{c} \delta E \left[v_z \frac{ck}{\omega} \frac{\partial f_0}{\partial p_\perp} - v_\perp \frac{ck}{\omega} \frac{\partial f_0}{\partial p_\perp} - \frac{\partial f_0}{\partial p_\perp} \right]}{-i\omega + ikv_z \mp i\Omega_{\text{gyr}, \alpha}} - i\frac{\omega}{c} \delta E, \quad (2.36)$$

which looks like a dispersion relation: we just need to collect the generic δE , to get

$$\frac{k^2 c^2}{\omega^2} = 1 - \sum_\alpha \frac{4\pi^2 q_\alpha^2}{\omega} \int dp_\parallel \int dp_\perp \left(p_\perp v_\perp \left(\frac{v_\parallel k}{\omega} - 1 \right) \frac{\partial p_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\perp} - \frac{kv_\perp}{\omega} \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p_\parallel} \right) \left[\omega - kv_\parallel \pm \Omega_\alpha \right]^{-1}. \quad (2.37)$$

We can write an alternative version of this using $v_\parallel = v\mu$ and $v_\perp(1 - \mu^2)^{1/2}v$, where $\mu = \cos \theta$:

$$\frac{k^2 c^2}{\omega^2} = 1 - \sum_\alpha \frac{4\pi^2 q_\alpha^2}{\omega} \int dp \int d\mu \frac{p^2 v(1 - \mu^2)}{\omega - kv\mu \pm \Omega_\alpha} \left[-\frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial p} + \frac{1}{p} \frac{\partial f_{0\alpha}}{\partial \mu} \left(\mu - \frac{kv}{\omega} \right) \right]. \quad (2.38)$$

Application: a cold electron-proton plasma This is very general, and we can specify it to the case in which we only have electrons and protons, at $T = 0$.

This means that $f_{0\alpha} = \delta(p)n_\alpha/4\pi p^2$ for some constant. This way, we have

$$\int_0^\infty dp 4\pi p^2 \frac{n_\alpha}{4\pi p^2} \delta(p) = n_\alpha. \quad (2.39)$$

This will be true for both protons and electrons, and their densities will be equal to preserve neutrality: $n_e = n_p$. There is no dependence on μ , so we are left with

$$\frac{k^2 c^2}{\omega^2} = 1 - \sum_\alpha \frac{4\pi^2 q_\alpha^2}{\omega} \int dp \int d\mu \frac{p^2 v(1 - \mu^2)}{\omega - kv\mu \pm \Omega_\alpha} \left(-\frac{\partial}{\partial p} \frac{n_\alpha \delta(p)}{4\pi p^2} \right) \quad (2.40)$$

$$= 1 - \frac{4\pi e^2 n}{\omega} \int dp d\mu \frac{\delta(p)}{4\pi p^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial p} \left[\frac{p^2 v(1 - \mu^2)}{\omega - kv\mu \pm \Omega_\alpha} \right]. \quad (2.41)$$

Let us look at the integral with respect to momentum, using $p = m_\alpha v$:

$$\begin{aligned} & \int dp d\mu \frac{\delta(p)}{4\pi p^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial p} \left[\frac{p^2 v(1 - \mu^2)}{\omega - kv\mu \pm \Omega_\alpha} \right] = \\ & = \int dp \frac{\delta(p)}{4\pi p^2} \left(\frac{3p^2}{m_\alpha} (\omega - kv\mu \pm \Omega_\alpha) + \frac{k_\mu}{m_\alpha} \frac{p^3}{m_\alpha} \right) (\omega - kv\mu \pm \Omega_\alpha)^{-1} \end{aligned} \quad (2.42)$$

$$= \frac{3}{4\pi m_\alpha} \frac{1}{\omega \pm \Omega_\alpha}. \quad (2.43)$$

The integral in μ is just $\int_{-1}^1 d\mu (1 - \mu^2) = 4/3$. This finally yields

$$\frac{k^2 c^2}{\omega^2} = 1 - \frac{4\pi e^2 n}{\omega m_p} \frac{1}{\omega \pm eB_0/m_p c} - \frac{4\pi e^2 n}{\omega m_e} \frac{1}{\omega \mp eB_0/m_e c} \quad (2.44)$$

$$= 1 \mp \frac{4\pi e^2 n}{\omega m_p} \frac{m_p c}{eB_0} \frac{1}{1 \pm \omega/\Omega_p} \pm \frac{4\pi e^2 n}{\omega m_e} \frac{m_e c}{eB_0} \frac{1}{1 \mp \omega/|\Omega_e|}, \quad (2.45)$$

We can replace m_e/m_e by m_p/m_p .

so if we consider the case in which $\omega \ll \Omega_p \ll |\Omega_e|$, we get

$$\frac{k^2 c^2}{\omega^2} = 1 \mp \frac{4\pi e^2 n}{\omega m_p} \frac{m_p c}{eB_0} \left(1 \mp \frac{\omega}{\Omega_p}\right) \pm \frac{4\pi e^2 n}{\omega m_p} \frac{1}{\Omega_p} \quad (2.46)$$

$$= 1 + \frac{4\pi e^2 n}{\omega m_p} \frac{\omega}{\Omega_p^2} \quad (2.47)$$

$$= 1 + \frac{4\pi e^2 n}{m_p} \frac{m_p^2 c^2}{e^2 B_0^2} \quad (2.48)$$

$$= 1 + 4\pi \underbrace{nm_p}_{\rho} \frac{c^2}{B_0^2} \quad (2.49)$$

$$= 1 + 4\pi \rho \frac{c^2}{B_0^2} = 1 + \left(\frac{c}{v_A}\right)^2, \quad (2.50)$$

where we introduced

$$v_A = \frac{B_0}{\sqrt{4\pi\rho}}, \quad (2.51)$$

so in the galaxy, where $B_0 \sim \mu\text{G}$ and $\rho \sim m_p/\text{cm}^3$, we have $v_A \sim 2\text{ km/s}$.

This means that

$$\frac{k^2 c^2}{\omega^2} = \frac{c^2}{v_A^2} \implies \pm k v_A = \omega. \quad (2.52)$$

These perturbations travel very slowly! They are called Alfvén waves. They move with \vec{k} along \vec{B}_0 (well, we assumed so), and they have oscillating electric and magnetic fields, both perpendicular to the driving magnetic fields.

Without these, cosmic rays would be basically travelling at the speed of light all the time. They also create a small, induction-generated electric field, which is interesting!

3 Magneto-HydroDynamics

We are going to briefly treat a topic which is often discussed in whole books.

The Vlasov equation has a large amount of information in it, way more than what we can actually measure for astrophysical plasmas.

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So, we would like to treat our plasma like a magnetized fluid. Further, we know that astrophysical plasmas are extremely conductive. Therefore, the only significant electric field we can have is the one associated with induction.

Still, we must retain a kinetic description (with the full phase space distribution) for anything which is not the background plasma, like the nonthermal particles. We only want to simplify the treatment of the background.

We always start with the Vlasov equation, which we can write in index notation:

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial t} + \vec{v} \cdot \vec{\nabla} f + \frac{q}{m} \left[\vec{E} + \frac{\vec{v}}{c} \times \vec{B} \right] \cdot \vec{\nabla}_v f = 0 \quad (3.1)$$

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial t} + v_r \frac{\partial f}{\partial x_r} + \frac{q}{m} \left[E_r + \frac{1}{c} \epsilon_{rst} v_s B_t \right] \frac{\partial f}{\partial v_r} = 0. \quad (3.2)$$

Now, we need to define local mean values with respect to the phase space distribution of any function:

$$\langle \varphi \rangle = \frac{\int d^3v \varphi f}{\int d^3v f} = \frac{1}{n} \int d^3v \varphi f. \quad (3.3)$$

Suppose the function we are averaging is only dependent on the velocity, which we denote as $\psi(\vec{v})$, we can multiply it by the Vlasov equation and integrate over d^3v : the various terms become

$$\int \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \psi(\vec{v}) f d^3v = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \int d^3v \psi f = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} [n \langle \psi \rangle] \quad (3.4)$$

$$\int d^3v \psi(\vec{v}) v_r \frac{\partial f}{\partial x_r} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x_r} \int d^3v \psi v_r f = \frac{\partial}{\partial x_r} [n \langle \psi v_r \rangle] \quad (3.5)$$

$$\frac{q}{m} \int d^3v E_r \psi(\vec{v}) \frac{\partial f}{\partial v_r} = -\frac{q}{m} \int d^3v f \frac{d\psi}{dv_r} E_r = -\frac{q}{m} E_r n \left\langle \frac{d\psi}{dv_r} \right\rangle \quad (3.6)$$

We integrate by parts, and at the boundary $|v| \rightarrow \infty$ all quantities vanish.

$$\frac{q}{mc} \int d^3v \psi \epsilon_{rst} v_s B_t \frac{\partial f}{\partial v_r} = -\frac{q}{mc} \int d^3v f \epsilon_{rst} B_t \frac{\partial}{\partial v_r} (v_s \psi) \quad (3.7)$$

$$= -\frac{q}{mc} \epsilon_{rst} B_t n \left\langle v_s \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial v_r} \right\rangle. \quad (3.8)$$

We brought v_s outside the derivative since the term it yields is symmetric but contracted with the Levi-Civita symbol.

If we take $\psi \equiv 1$, we get

$$\frac{dn}{dt} + \frac{\partial}{\partial x_r} (n \langle v_r \rangle) = 0, \quad (3.9)$$

since all the derivatives of ψ vanish. We found the continuity equation! Keep in mind that for now this only holds for one component of the fluid.

Let us take $\psi = v_r$. We then get

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} [n \langle v_r \rangle] + \frac{\partial}{\partial x_s} [n \langle v_r v_s \rangle] - \frac{q}{m} E_r n - \frac{q}{mc} n \epsilon_{rst} B_t \langle v_s \rangle = 0. \quad (3.10)$$

If the fluid is *at rest* in our frame its mean velocity is zero. Let us be more general than this: suppose there is a bulk motion $u_r = \langle v_r \rangle$. Then, the equation reads

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}[nu_r] + \frac{\partial}{\partial x_s}[n \langle v_r v_s \rangle] - \frac{q}{m}E_r n - \frac{q}{mc}n\epsilon_{rst}B_t u_s = 0. \quad (3.11)$$

We have one of these equations for the electrons and one for the protons. We have a few component masses in the denominator, but if we multiply through by m the densities in the first two terms just become mass densities.

Let us define the total density $\rho = n_p m_p + n_e m_e$. The density of charges will read $\zeta = (n_p - n_e)e$,

For now, the bulk motions of electrons and protons may differ, so we will have $u_{p,r}$ and $u_{e,r}$. The current density will then read

$$J_r = (n_p u_{p,r} - n_e u_{e,r})e. \quad (3.12)$$

We can define a global, mass-averaged bulk velocity:

$$U_r = \frac{n_p m_p u_{p,r} + n_e m_e u_{e,r}}{\rho}. \quad (3.13)$$

We still need to describe internal energy through fluctuations over this mean: the peculiar velocity will read

$$w_{p,r} = v_{p,r} - U_r \quad (3.14)$$

$$w_{e,r} = v_{e,r} - U_r. \quad (3.15)$$

Let us now multiply the continuity equation for protons by the proton mass, and similarly for the electrons:

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial}{\partial x_r} (n_p m_p u_{p,r}) = 0 \quad (3.16)$$

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial}{\partial x_r} (n_e m_e u_{e,r}) = 0, \quad (3.17)$$

which we can add together: we get a global mass conservation equation

$$\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial}{\partial x_r} (\rho U_r) = 0. \quad (3.18)$$

Applying a similar procedure to the $\psi = v_r$ equation we find

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} (n_p m_p u_r) + \frac{\partial}{\partial x_s} (n_p m_p \langle v_r v_s \rangle) - e E_r n_p - \frac{e}{c} n_p \epsilon_{rst} B_t n_s = 0, \quad (3.19)$$

which we can add to the corresponding equation for the electrons. First, though, let us look at the $\langle v_r v_s \rangle$ term:

$$\langle v_r v_s \rangle = \langle (w_r + U_r)(w_s + U_s) \rangle \quad (3.20)$$

$$= \langle w_r w_s \rangle + \langle w_r \rangle U_s + \langle w_s \rangle U_r + U_r U_s \quad (3.21)$$

$$= \langle w_r w_s \rangle + (u_r - U_r) U_s + (u_s - U_s) U_r + U_r U_s \quad (3.22)$$

$$= \langle w_r w_s \rangle + u_r U_s + u_s U_r - U_r U_s. \quad (3.23)$$

Let us now introduce a stress (pressure) tensor:

$$P_{rs,p} = m_p \int d^3v f w_{p,r} w_{p,s} = n m_p \langle w_{p,r} w_{p,s} \rangle, \quad (3.24)$$

which yields

$$\langle v_r v_s \rangle = \frac{P_{rs}}{mn} + u_r U_s + u_s U_r - U_r U_s. \quad (3.25)$$

We can now sum the two components:

$$\begin{aligned} & n_p m_p \left[\frac{P_{rs,p}}{m_p n_p} + u_{r,p} U_s + u_{s,p} U_r - U_r U_s \right] + n_e m_e \left[\frac{P_{rs,e}}{m_e n_e} + u_{r,e} U_s + u_{s,e} U_r - U_r U_s \right] = \\ & = P_{rs} + \rho U_r U_s + \rho U_r U_s - \rho U_r U_s = P_{rs} + \rho U_r U_s. \end{aligned} \quad (3.26)$$

The full equation now looks like:

$$\frac{d}{dt}(\rho U_r) + \frac{\partial}{\partial x_s} [P_{rs} + \rho U_r U_s] - \zeta E_r - \frac{1}{c} \epsilon_{rst} J_s B_t = 0. \quad (3.27)$$

We can expand the derivatives to get something which looks more like an equation of motion, and simplify through the continuity equation:

$$\underbrace{\frac{\partial \rho}{\partial t} U_r}_{U_r \times \text{continuity}} + \rho \frac{dU_r}{dt} + \frac{\partial P_{rs}}{\partial x_s} + \underbrace{\frac{\partial}{\partial x_s} (\rho U_s) U_r + \frac{\partial}{\partial x_s} (\rho U_r) U_s}_{U_r \times \text{continuity}} + \dots, \quad (3.28)$$

so the equation reads

$$\underbrace{\rho \frac{\partial U_r}{\partial t} + \rho U_s \frac{\partial U_r}{\partial x_s}}_{\rho D_t U} = - \frac{\partial P_{rs}}{\partial x_s} + \zeta E_r + \frac{1}{c} \epsilon_{rst} J_s B_t. \quad (3.29)$$

Now this system does not know about protons and electrons anymore: it is just a fluid. In vector terms,

$$\rho \left[\frac{\partial \vec{U}}{\partial t} + \vec{U} \cdot \vec{\nabla} U \right] = - \vec{\nabla} P + \zeta \vec{E} + \frac{1}{c} \vec{J} \times \vec{B}. \quad (3.30)$$

We haven't done the energy conservation equation since it will not be useful for our purposes, while being very lengthy. Still, in principle we should use it.

We will now make the **ideal MHD approximation**, in which the conductivity is assumed to be very high. Still, there are situations in which the resistivity becomes high locally. This can happen through a phenomenon called *reconnection*, for example.

Suppose we have an electric field in the lab frame: in the frame comoving with the plasma, it will look like $\vec{E} \rightarrow \vec{E} + \vec{U} \times \vec{B}/c$.

This can be described by Ohm's law,

$$\vec{E} + \frac{1}{c} \vec{U} \times \vec{B} = \eta \vec{J}. \quad (3.31)$$

Using the Ampère-Maxwell equation we get that the current reads

$$\vec{J} = \frac{c}{4\pi} \left[\vec{\nabla} \times \vec{B} - \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{E}}{\partial t} \right]. \quad (3.32)$$

We assume that η is very small. In the $\eta = 0$ case, in the lab reference frame we get

$$\vec{E} = -\frac{1}{c} \vec{U} \times \vec{B}. \quad (3.33)$$

What is the order of magnitude of $\vec{J} \times \vec{B}/c$?

$$\frac{1}{4\pi} \left[\vec{\nabla} \times \vec{B} - \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \vec{E}}{\partial t} \right] \times \vec{B} \sim \frac{B^2}{UT} + \frac{U}{c^2} \frac{B^2}{T}, \quad (3.34)$$

The first term has scale B^2/L , the second has scale $(U/c^2)(B^2/T)$.

We can then see that under this low-resistivity assumption the second term can be neglected.

Then, the equation just reads

$$\rho \left[\frac{\partial \vec{U}}{\partial t} + \vec{U} \cdot \vec{\nabla} \vec{U} \right] = -\vec{\nabla} P + \frac{1}{4\pi} (\vec{\nabla} \times \vec{B}) \times \vec{B}. \quad (3.35)$$

There is an interesting implication to this equation known as **flux freezing**.

The assumption of ideal MHD is that there is no dissipation: the field lines cannot cross; we can “squeeze” them, but the flux will be preserved.

Let us take a surface S_0 , and compute the magnetic field flux across it at $t = t_0$:

$$\Phi_0 = \int d\vec{S}_0 \vec{B}(\vec{x}, t_0), \quad (3.36)$$

which we want to compare to the flux across the same surface, transported along the fluid motion:

$$\Phi_1 = \int dS_1 \vec{B}(\vec{x} + \vec{v} dt, t_0 + dt) \quad (3.37)$$

$$= \int dS_1 \left[\vec{B}(\vec{x} + \vec{v} dt, t_0) + \frac{\partial \vec{B}}{\partial t} dt \right]. \quad (3.38)$$

If we include S_0 , S_1 as well as the boundary S_2 we will get a closed surface. The integral over $S = -S_0 + S_1 + S_2$ will be

$$\oint_S \vec{B} \cdot d\vec{S} = 0, \quad (3.39)$$

where we write $-S_0$ since the normal to that surface must be oriented outward.

From this equation we get that

$$\Phi_0 = \int dS_1 B + \int dS_2 B. \quad (3.40)$$

What is dS_2 ? It can be written as $d\vec{\ell} \wedge \vec{v} dt$, since we are asking that we move along the flux lines of the fluid.

We know that

$$\Phi_1 = \Phi_0 - \int d\vec{S}_1 \cdot \vec{B} + dt \int d\vec{S}_1 \frac{\partial \vec{B}}{\partial t} \quad (3.41)$$

$$= \Phi_0 - dt \int (d\vec{\ell} \times \vec{v}) \cdot \vec{B} + dt \int d\vec{S}_1 \frac{\partial \vec{B}}{\partial t} \quad (3.42)$$

$$= \Phi_0 - \int dt (\vec{v} \times \vec{B}) \cdot d\vec{\ell} + dt \int \frac{\partial \vec{B}}{\partial t} dS \quad (3.43)$$

$$= \Phi_0 - dt \int dS \left[\vec{\nabla} \times (\vec{v} \times \vec{B}) + \frac{\partial \vec{B}}{\partial t} \right], \quad (3.44)$$

but since

$$\vec{E} = -\frac{1}{c} \vec{v} \times \vec{B} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\partial \vec{B}}{\partial t} = -c \vec{\nabla} \times \vec{E}, \quad (3.45)$$

we get that the integrand vanishes.

Check this derivation, something seems fishy. We should compute everything at the same time!

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