Field Theoretic Thrust of an Accelerating Frame

Kevin Player*

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> The Unruh effect tells us that what we call particles is really just a matter of perspective.

Lee Smolin

Abstract

We analyze the quantum field theoretic framework where Unruh radiation was first described, interpreting thrust as a driving source field. The driving modes in the Rindler frame exhibit a smeared-out frequency spectrum due to red-blue shifting and thermodynamic ignorance, resulting in a thermalized response. To refine this picture, we construct an interpolation between these long-lived modes and more localized wave packets with a peaked Fourier transform, which do not exhibit this smeared-out property.

1 Introduction

We first present some notation and review the Unruh effect. We then introduce a source field that exactly captures the Bogoliubov operator particle creation for Rindler modes extended to Minkowski spave. Then we interpolate between the eternal Rindler mode source to a more localized wace packet version.

2 Unruh Effect Review and Notation

We draw notation and standard results from Frodden and Valdés [2].

Let $\hbar = c = 1$. Consider a uniform linear acceleration in $1 + 1$ dimensional spacetime and use metric signature $(-1, 1)$. The full $1 + 3$ dimensional case does not add anything to the discussion, so without loss of generality we stick to the dimensions time t and space x where the boost is taking place. Also, for clarity sake, we stick to the simplest case where ϕ is a free massless scalar field. Even in this simple toy case, we can present our argument.

Consider the free scalar massless Lagrangian

$$\mathcal{L} = -\frac{1}{2}\partial^\mu \phi \partial_\mu \phi. \tag{1}$$

We consider positive frequency modes with dispersion relation $\omega_k = |k| > 0$ as solutions to the resulting Klein-Gordon equation

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*kplaye@gmail.com

$$\Box\phi = \frac{\partial^2\phi}{\partial t^2} - \frac{\partial^2\phi}{\partial x^2} = 0, \tag{2}$$

where we expand ϕ as usual in terms of ladder operators $a_k, a_k^\dagger$

$$\int \mathrm{d}k\, a_k \varphi_k(x,t) + h.c. \tag{3}$$

where

$$\varphi(x,t) = \frac{1}{4\pi\omega_k} e^{i(kx-\omega_k t)}. \tag{4}$$

are positive frequency modes normalized with respect to the Klien-Gordon inner product at time $t = 0$

$$\langle f, g\rangle_{KG} = i\int \mathrm{d}x(f^*\partial_t g - \partial_t f^* g) \tag{5}$$

Consider the $x > |t|$ Rindler "wedge" with coordinates

$$t = \frac{1}{a}e^{a\xi}\sinh(a\eta) \tag{6}$$

$$x = \frac{1}{a}e^{a\xi}\cosh(a\eta) \tag{7}$$

where $a > 0$ is an acceleration parameter (see I in Figure 1). These are hyperbolic polar coordinates with an exponential "radius".
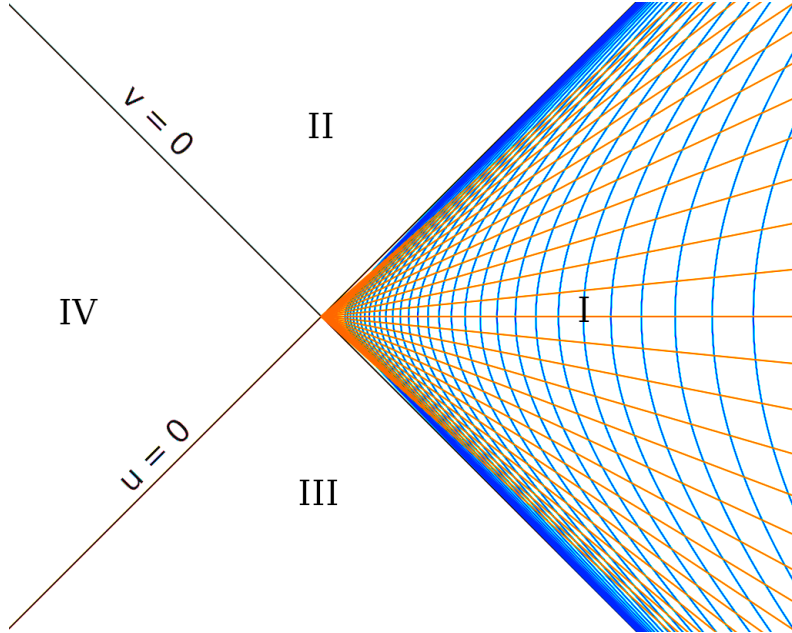

Figure 1: Rindler wedge I on the right.

The massless Klein-Gordon equation in Rindler coordinates is

$$\Box\phi = e^{-2a\xi}(-\partial_\eta^2 + \partial_\xi^2)\phi = 0 \tag{8}$$

which being the same as equation (2) up to a conformal factor, has a basis of solutions with the same form as equation (4)

$$r_k(\eta,\xi) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{4\pi\omega_k}}e^{-i(\omega_k\eta - k\xi)} + h.c. \tag{9}$$

for each wave number k and positive frequency $\omega_k = |k| > 0$. These "Rindler modes" are in terms of η and ξ and are thus confined to the Rindler wedge I.

Let $u = -t + x$ and $v = -t - x$ be light cone coordinates. Each r_k can be extended non-uniquely to the entire (t, x)-plane as

$$\sqrt{4\pi\omega_k}\, r_k(x, t) = \begin{cases} g_k^{(1)} h_k^{(1)}(u) & = (au)^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}} & = e^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}(\log(-1) + \log(au))} \\ g_k^{(2)} h_k^{(2)}(v) & = (av)^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}} & = e^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}(\log(-1) + \log(av))} \end{cases} \tag{10}$$

where there is a choice of two branches of the log for each of the two forms of extensions $h_k^{(1)}$ and $h_k^{(2)}$ and the $g_k^{(1)}$ and $g_k^{(2)}$ are normalization factors to be discussed critically shortly. These extensions are functions of u and v respectively, and so are solutions to equation (2). We choose $\log(-1) = -i\pi$ following [2], and then $h_k^{(1)}$ and $h_k^{(2)}$ are positive frequency modes which once normalized form an alternative basis to the usual $\varphi_k(x, t)$. We then expand

$$\phi = \int dk (c_k^{(1)} h_k^{(1)} + c_k^{(2)} h_k^{(2)}) + h.c. \tag{11}$$

for alternate Minkowski ladder operators $c_k^{(1)}$, $c_k^{(2)}$, $c_k^{(1)\dagger}$, and $c_k^{(2)\dagger}$. See Figure 2 for a picture and summary of these types of modes.

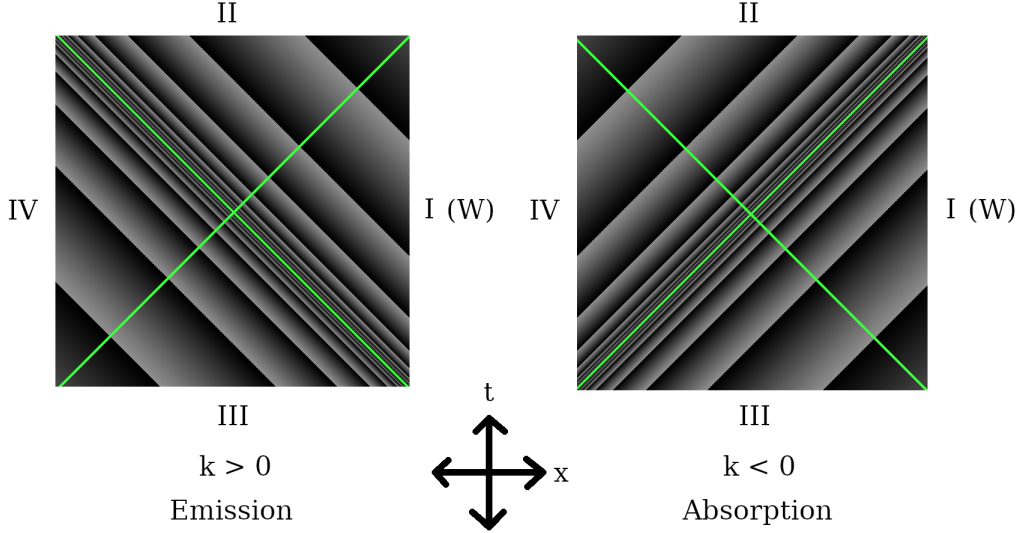Figure 2: Phase of a Rindler mode r_k analytically extended to the whole (t, x)-plane. For $k > 0$, r_k is a function of u, the future horizon of I which corrosponds to emission. Wedges I and II are off by a factor of $e^{\pm\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}}$ from wedges III and IV analytically continued around the singular $u = 0$. A similar situation exists for $k < 0$, absorption with v, and I, III vs. II, IV.

The $\log(-1)$ converts what would otherwise be a pure phase into an exponential factor $e^{\pm\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}}$ a Wick-like rotation. To be more specific for $k > 0$, let $f_k^{(1)} = g_k^{(1)} h_k^{(1)}\big|_I$ and $f_k^{(2)} = g_k^{(2)} h_k^{(2)}\big|_{IV}$ be the restrictions to the right and left wedges respectively so that $\left|f_k^{(1)}\right| = \left|f_k^{(2)}\right| = 1$ and one can show that

$$\begin{aligned} g_k^{(1)} h_k^{(1)}\big|_{I\cup IV} &= f_k^{(1)} + e^{-\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}} f_{-k}^{(2)} \\ g_k^{(2)} h_k^{(2)}\big|_{I\cup IV} &= f_k^{(2)} + e^{-\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}} f_{-k}^{(1)} \end{aligned} \tag{12}$$

Finally, we turn our attention to the normalization factors g_k and notice that the Klien-Gordan dot product on full Minskowsi space is the sum of the dot product on the

left and right Rinder wedges. A negative sign also appears in the sum since $\mathrm{d}x \to -\mathrm{d}x$ from right to left wedges:

$$
\begin{aligned}
\langle r_k, r_k \rangle_{KG} &= \langle r_k, r_k \rangle_I + \langle r_k, r_k \rangle_{IV} \\
&= \langle r_k, r_k \rangle_I - e^{-\frac{2\pi\omega_k}{a}} \langle r_k, r_k \rangle_I \\
&= e^{-\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}} (2\sinh\tfrac{\pi\omega}{a}) \langle r_k, r_k \rangle_I
\end{aligned}
\tag{13}
$$

So r_k is normalized differently on $I \cup IV$ than on I and IV. This sets h_k as

$$
\begin{aligned}
h_k^{(1)} &= \frac{e^{\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}}}{\sqrt{2\sinh\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}}} r_k \\
h_k^{(2)} &= \frac{e^{\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}}}{\sqrt{2\sinh\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}}} r_k
\end{aligned}
\tag{14}
$$

This normalization issue is the root cause for Unruh radiation since we pick up a sinh factor in the cross term in the Bogoliubov transform

$$
b_k = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\sinh\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}}} \left(e^{\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}} c_k^{(1)} + e^{\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}} c_{-k}^{(2)\dagger} \right)
\tag{15}
$$

for

$$
\int \mathrm{d}k\, b_k r_k(\xi, \eta) + h.c.
\tag{16}
$$

in the Rindler wedge.

Then the number of particles that an accelerating Rindler observer will see in the Minkowski vacuum $|0_M\rangle$ is seen to be

$$
\begin{aligned}
\langle n \rangle &= \langle 0_M| b_k^\dagger b_k |0_M\rangle \\
&= \frac{e^{-\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}}}{2\sinh\frac{\pi i\omega_k}{a}} \langle 0_M| c_{-k}^{(2)} c_{-k}^{(2)\dagger} |0_M\rangle \\
&= \frac{1}{e^{\frac{2\pi\omega_k}{a}} - 1}
\end{aligned}
\tag{17}
$$

which is interpreted as Unruh radiation.

3 Driving Sources

We can ask **"What exactly is accelerating the observer?"**. So far we have not tried to answer this question. In our ignorance, we have recovered, in the math, that something is going on in normalization when restricting from Minkowski space to Rindler space that causes a cross term in the Bogoliubov transform. If we provide an answer to this question, than we will see that the radiation term shifts away, back into the source field. The math is the same, but the interpretation changes.

To that end, consider a driving source field J in the sense of Schwinger [5]

$$
J(k) = c_{-k}^{(2)\dagger} \frac{e^{\frac{-\pi\omega_k}{2a}}}{\sqrt{2\sinh\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}}} r_k(x, t)\theta(T - t)\theta(T + t)
\tag{18}
$$

using an extended Rindler mode r_k. It is active for some finite amount of time $-T \le t \le T$ and is crafted to exactly compensate for the cross term in equation (15) as we aim to see. The form of J is invariant under right or left shift as functions of u or v so that the Klein Gordon dot product will be invariant also.

We add the source term to the Lagrangian

$$
\mathcal{L} = -\frac{1}{2}\partial^\mu\phi\partial_\mu\phi + J\phi
\tag{19}
$$

4

The Euler-Lagrange equation leads to an inhomogeneous Klein-Gordon equation

$$\Box\phi = J \tag{20}$$

Let $a_k = a_k^{in}$ be the annihilation operator for $t < -T$ and let $a_k^{(out)}$ be the annihilation operator for time $t > T$. Then one can find using the retarded Green's function, as in [3] for instance, that $a_k^{out} = a_k^{in} + iJ(k)$.

BREAK BREAK BREAK

Consider these multiples of Rindler modes on the entire (t, x)-plane

$$f_k(u) = \frac{e^{\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}}(au)^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}}}{\sqrt{2\sinh\left(\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}\right)}} \tag{21}$$

$$g_k(v) = \frac{e^{\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}}(av)^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}}}{\sqrt{2\sinh\left(\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}\right)}} \tag{22}$$

Let ϕ be a free scalar field in the flat $1 + 1$ dimensional Minkowski spacetime. We will consider $f_k(u)$ and $g_k(v)$ as driving sources

$$\rho(u, v) = \alpha f_k(u) + \beta g_k(v). \tag{23}$$

with non-negative real convex combination $\alpha + \beta = 1$. The drivers f_k and g_k are functions of u, the future I-horizon and of v, the past I-horizon respectively. Both generate excitations, which we identify with emission and absorption thrusts respectively.

The sources can originate from a coupling term, $\rho\phi$, added to the free scalar Lagrangian. We also add in a $i\epsilon$ term so that our integrals converge.

$$\mathcal{L} = -\frac{1}{2}\partial^\mu\phi\partial_\mu\phi + \rho\phi + \frac{i\epsilon}{2}\phi^2 \tag{24}$$

The Euler-Lagrange equation leads to an inhomogeneous Klein-Gordon equation

$$\Box\phi = \rho + i\epsilon\phi \tag{25}$$

as presented in [3]. In [3] it is assumed that the source is only active for a finite amount of time. We let ρ be active for all time. The argument in [3] seems to be adaptable to ρ.

We will want to integrate ρ on shell in momentum space, which for a massless source is the positive energy part of the massless shell. The two positive energy "horizons" border $p_u \leq 0$ and $p_v \leq 0$, see Figure 3. Proceeding to take the Fourier transform of the function $f_k(u)$. WLOG since $g_k(v)$ is of the same form. We will continue to assume that ω_k and a are positive. Define the kernel

$$A = e^{-ip_u u}(au)^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}}du \tag{26}$$

and then we have

$$\hat{f}_k(p_u) = \frac{e^{\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}}}{\sqrt{2\sinh\left(\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}\right)}}\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} A \tag{27}$$

where $L = \int_{-\infty}^{0} A$ and $R = \int_{0}^{\infty} A$ are the left and right sides of the total integral $L + R$.
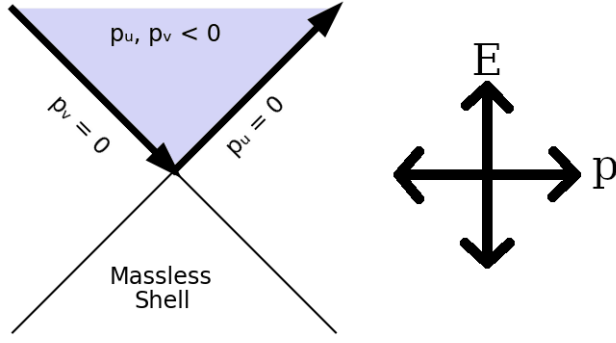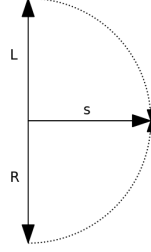
Figure 3: Massless shell is when $p_u = p_v = 0$

Figure 4: Using contours with large radius we convert the L integral that goes to $i\infty$, and the R integral that goes to $-i\infty$, to integrals with s going to real ∞.

We rewrite the integrals using a complex changes of variables, $s = ip_u u$, and contour integrals. The L integral for real $p_u < 0$ is

$$
\begin{aligned}
L(p_u) &= -\int_0^{i\infty} e^{-s} \left(\frac{ias}{-p_u} \right)^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}} \left(\frac{i}{-p_u} \right) ds \\
&= \frac{-i}{a} \left(\frac{a}{-p_u} \right)^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}+1} \int_0^{\infty} (is)^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}} e^{-s} ds \\
&= \frac{-i}{a} \left(\frac{a}{-p_u} \right)^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}+1} \Gamma \left(\frac{i\omega_k}{a} + 1 \right) e^{-\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}} \\
&= \frac{1}{2} \Gamma \left(\frac{i\omega_k}{a} + 1 \right) e^{-\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}} B(p_u)
\end{aligned}
\tag{28}
$$

where

$$
B(p_u) = \frac{-2i}{a} \left(\frac{a}{-p_u} \right)^{\frac{i\omega_k}{a}+1}
\tag{29}
$$

The change of $i\infty$ to ∞ is made by using a large radius contour which rotates the endpoint 90 degrees clockwise. The term e^{-s} goes to zero around the large radius circle.

The same calculation for R is done using a counter-clockwise contour this time.

$$
R(p_u) = \frac{1}{2} \Gamma \left(\frac{i\omega_k}{a} + 1 \right) e^{-\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}} B(p_u)
\tag{30}
$$

We get back to $f_k(u)$ and apply the normalization from equation (27)

$$
\widehat{f}_k(p_u) = \frac{e^{\frac{\pi\omega_k}{2a}}}{\sqrt{2 \sinh \left(\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a} \right)}} (L(p_u) + R(p_u))
\tag{31}
$$

So

$$\widehat{f}_k(p_u) = \frac{\Gamma\left(\frac{i\omega_k}{a} + 1\right)}{\sqrt{2\sinh\left(\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}\right)}} B(p_u)$$

$$\widehat{g}_k(p_v) = \frac{\Gamma\left(\frac{i\omega_k}{a} + 1\right)}{\sqrt{2\sinh\left(\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}\right)}} B(p_v)$$

(32)

4   Interpretation

The driving source ρ, with mixed absorption and emission thrusts $\alpha + \beta = 1$, contribute excitations to the scalar field ϕ. Equations (23) and (32) let us write down the expected change of energy

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathbb{E}[\Delta E] &= \frac{1}{4\pi} \int |\rho(p)|^2 dp \\
&= \frac{\alpha}{4\pi} \int \left|\widehat{f}_k(p_u)\right|^2 dp_u + \frac{\beta}{4\pi} \int |\widehat{g}_k(p_v)|^2 dp_v \\
&= \frac{\left|\Gamma\left(\frac{i\omega_k}{a} + 1\right)\right|^2}{2\sinh\left(\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}\right)} \frac{1}{4\pi} \int |B(p)|^2 dp \\
&= \frac{\left|\Gamma\left(\frac{i\omega_k}{a} + 1\right)\right|^2}{2\pi a \sinh\left(\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}\right)} \int a/|p|^2 dp \\
&= I(\omega_k) P
\end{aligned}$$

(33)

where the integrals are on the positive energy massless shell with contributions from p_u on the left piece and p_v on the right piece. We factored out $P = \int a/|p|^2$ with a remaining p independent positive real coefficient $I(\omega_k)$.

Without being more careful we end up with inferred problems — The integrals do not converge at zero, where P explodes. But this infinity cancels when we compare the spectral radiances to each other, $I(\omega_{k_1})/I(\omega_{k_2})$.

The magnitude of our Gamma function has known asymptotics [6, Eq. 5.11.9]

$$\left|\Gamma\left(\frac{i\omega_k}{a} + 1\right)\right|^2 \sim \left(\frac{2\pi\omega_k}{a}\right) e^{-\frac{\pi\omega_k}{a}}$$

(34)

Plugging this into equation (33) we find the average energy of the mode, the $1 + 1$ dimensional Planck distribution function, and thus recover the Unruh's radiation spectrum from a thrust driven field.

$$\frac{1}{P}\mathbb{E}[\Delta E] = I(\omega_k) \sim \frac{\omega_k}{e^{\frac{2\pi\omega_k}{a}} - 1}$$

(35)

Compare this to equation (17) and references [4] and [2].

5   Other Types of Driving Sources

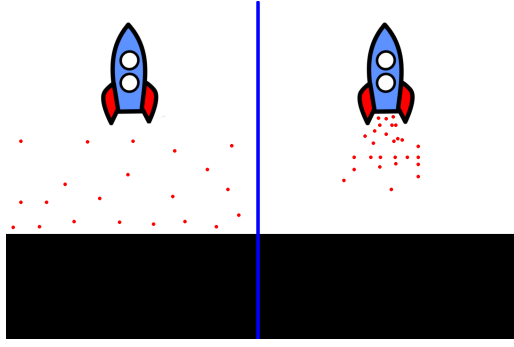TODO

6   Ricci Scalar as a Driving Source

TODO

Figure 5: Unruh picture of an event horizon radiating in accelerating frame radiating on the left. Our picture of a rocket under inertial acceleration thrusting on the right.

7 Fields with Interaction

TODO

8 Conclusion and Prediction

If the thrust required to accelerate a detector is not explicitly accounted for, it manifests instead as an apparent thermal feature of the vacuum—Unruh radiation. However, as demonstrated in this paper, Unruh radiation can be directly explained as a consequence of thrust. This perspective leads to the prediction that neither Unruh radiation nor Hawking-Bekenstein radiation should appear independently of the thrust that drives the system.
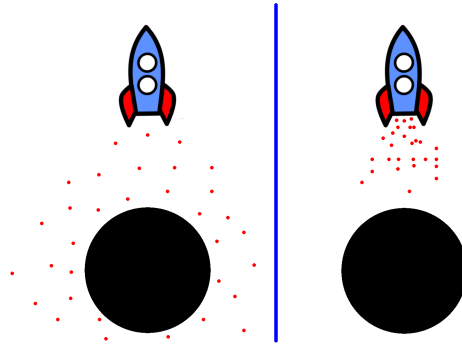

Figure 6: Hawking picture of black hole radiating on the left. Our picture of a rocket thrusting on the right.

9 Acknowledgments

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