What is the \((\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{exp}}\) Telling Us?

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Abstract

Nature might be kinder than previously thought as far as \(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon\) is concerned. We show that the recently obtained experimental value for \(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon\) does not require sizeable \(1/N\) and isospin-breaking corrections. We propose to display the theoretical results for \(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon\) in a \((P^{1/2}, P^{3/2})\) plane in which the experimental result is represented by a \((\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{exp}}\)-path. This should allow to exhibit transparently the role of \(1/N\) and isospin-breaking corrections in different calculations of \(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon\). From now on theorists are allowed to walk only along this \((\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{exp}}\)-path.
1 Introduction

The totally unexpected observation [1] of a sizeable CP-violation in the $K^0 - \bar{K}^0$ oscillations immediately triggered theoretical speculations about a new superweak interaction [2] obeying the strict $|\Delta S| = 2$ selection rule. The large value of the associated $\varepsilon$-parameter was then justified by the huge amplification due to the tiny $K_L - K_S$ mass difference. Following this rather simple picture, it was absolutely unlikely that CP-violation would show up somewhere else in weak processes.

Almost exactly 37 years later, we know that superweak models have been definitively ruled out by the new generation of high-precision experiments on the $|\Delta S| = 1$ neutral $K$-decays. Indeed, the most recent measurements of the associated $\varepsilon'$-parameter that allows us to distinguish between $\pi^+\pi^-$ and $\pi^0\pi^0$ final states in $K_L$ decays give

$$\text{Re}(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon) = \begin{cases} (15.3 \pm 2.6) \cdot 10^{-4} & \text{(NA48) [3]}, \\ (20.7 \pm 2.8) \cdot 10^{-4} & \text{(KTeV) [4]}. \end{cases}$$

Combining these results with earlier measurements by NA31 collaboration at CERN ($(23.0 \pm 6.5) \cdot 10^{-4}$) [5] and by the E731 experiment at Fermilab ($(7.4 \pm 5.9) \cdot 10^{-4}$) [6] gives the grand average

$$\text{Re}(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon) = (17.2 \pm 1.8) \cdot 10^{-4}. \quad (2)$$

The Standard Model for electroweak and strong gauge interactions accomodates, in principle, both $\varepsilon$ and $\varepsilon'$-parameters in terms of a single CP-violating phase. Rather early theoretical attempts [7] have predicted $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$ between $10^{-2}$ and $10^{-4}$. During the last decade a considerable progress in calculating $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$ has been done by several groups. These papers are reviewed in [8] where all relevant references can be found. The short distance contributions to $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$ are fully under control [9] but the presence of considerable long distance hadronic uncertainties precludes a precise value of $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$ in the Standard Model at present. Consequently, while theorists were able to predict the sign and the order of magnitude of $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$, the range

$$(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{th}} = (5 \text{ to } 30) \cdot 10^{-4} \quad (3)$$
shows that the present status of \((\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{th}}\) cannot match the experimental one.

Though really expected this time, the non-vanishing value of a second CP-violating parameter has once again been determined by our experimental colleagues. However, one should not forget the tremendous efforts made by theorists to calculate \(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon\) in the Cabibbo-Kobayashi-Maskawa paradigm [10] of the Standard Model. Simultaneously, one should not give up the hope that one day theorists will be able to calculate \(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon\) precisely. It is therefore important to have a transparent presentation of different theoretical estimates of \(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon\) in order to be able to identify the patterns of various contributions. On the other hand, having for the first time the definite precise number for \((\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\exp}\) it is crucial to learn what Nature is trying to tell us about theory. In this note, we intend to make first steps in both directions.

2 Basic Formulae

The standard parametrization for the hadronic \(K\)-decays into two pions:

\[
A(K^0 \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-) = A_0 e^{i\delta} + \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} A_2
\]

\[
A(K^0 \rightarrow \pi^0\pi^0) = A_0 e^{i\delta} - \sqrt{2} A_2
\]

\[
A(K^+ \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^0) = \frac{3}{2} A_2
\]

contains the necessary ingredients to produce non-vanishing asymmetries. For illustration consider

\[
a_{CP} \equiv \frac{\Gamma(K^0 \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-) - \Gamma(\bar{K}^0 \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-)}{\Gamma(K^0 \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-) + \Gamma(\bar{K}^0 \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-)}
\]

\[
= \frac{\sqrt{2} \sin \delta}{(1 + \sqrt{2} \omega \cos \delta + \omega^2/2)} \text{Im} \left( \frac{A_2}{A_0} \right)
\]

where

\[
\omega \equiv \frac{\text{Re } A_2}{\text{Re } A_0}.
\]

In order that \(a_{CP}\) is non-vanishing the two partial isospin amplitudes \(A_0\) and \(A_2\) must have a relative CP-conserving phase (extracted from \(\pi\pi\) scattering) which
turns out to be roughly equal to the phase of the $\varepsilon$-parameter:

$$\delta \approx \phi_\varepsilon \approx \pi/4$$  \hspace{1cm} (7)

and a relative CP-violating phase

$$\text{Im} \left( \frac{A_2}{A_0} \right) \neq 0.$$  \hspace{1cm} (8)

These phases are nicely factorized in the physical parameter measuring direct CP-violation in hadronic $K$-decays

$$\varepsilon' = \frac{i}{\sqrt{2}} e^{-i\delta} \text{Im} \left( \frac{A_2}{A_0} \right)$$  \hspace{1cm} (9)

if one defines

$$\eta_{+-} \equiv \frac{A(K_L \to \pi^+\pi^-)}{A(K_S \to \pi^+\pi^-)} \equiv \varepsilon + \frac{\varepsilon'}{1 + \frac{\omega}{\sqrt{2}} e^{-i\delta}}$$  \hspace{1cm} (10)

$$\eta_{00} \equiv \frac{A(K_L \to \pi^0\pi^0)}{A(K_S \to \pi^0\pi^0)} \equiv \varepsilon - \frac{2\varepsilon'}{1 - \sqrt{2}\omega e^{-i\delta}}.$$

This allows to measure $\text{Re}(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)$ through

$$\text{Re}(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon) = \frac{1}{6} \left( 1 - \frac{\omega}{\sqrt{2}} \cos \delta \right) \left( 1 - \frac{\eta_{00}}{\eta_{+-}} \right)^2$$  \hspace{1cm} (11)

where we have kept the small $O(\omega)$ correction usually dropped by experimentalists but kept by theorists in the evaluation of $\varepsilon'$ using (9). Notice that the coincidence displayed in (7) implies an almost real $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$ so that, already at this level, Nature is kind to us.

In the Standard Model, CP-violation only arises from the arbitrary quark mass matrices. A straightforward diagonalization shifts then the unique physical phase into the Cabibbo-Kobayashi-Maskawa (CKM) unitary mixing matrix $V$ associated with the $V - A$ hadronic charged current

$$J^{ab}_\mu = \bar{q}^a\gamma_\mu(1 - \gamma_5)q^b \equiv (\bar{q}^a q^b).$$  \hspace{1cm} (12)
In this physical basis, we therefore have to start with the classical current-current
\( \Delta S = 1 \) Hamiltonian
\[
\mathcal{H}^{\Delta S = 1} = \frac{1}{\sum q = u, c, t} \lambda_q J^{q}_{\mu} J^{\mu}_{qd} \quad (\lambda_q \equiv V^*_{qs} V_{qd})
\]

\[
= \lambda_u [(\bar{s}u)(\bar{u}d) - (\bar{c}s)(\bar{c}d)]_{\Delta I = 1/2, 3/2}
+ \lambda_l [(\bar{t}t)(\bar{t}d) - (\bar{c}s)(\bar{c}d)]_{\Delta I = 1/2}
\]
(13)

to estimate the \( A_0 \) and \( A_2 \) partial decay amplitudes.

The \( \Delta I = 1/2, 3/2 \) current-current operator involving only the light \( u, d \) and \( s \) quarks is just proportional to \( \lambda_u \). A tree-level hadronization into \( K \) and \( \pi \) mesons fields would therefore imply \( A_0 = \sqrt{2} A_2 \), i.e. a vanishing \( \varepsilon' \)-parameter (see (9)). In other words, a non-zero \( \varepsilon' \)-parameter is a pure quantum-loop effect in the Standard Model. Notice that these loop effects are also welcome to explain the empirical \( \Delta I = 1/2 \) rule:

\[
\omega_{\exp} \approx \frac{1}{22} \ll \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}.
\]
(14)

The quantum transmutation of the heavy \( t\bar{t} \) and \( c\bar{c} \) quark pairs into light \( u\bar{u} \) and \( d\bar{d} \) ones which, eventually, hadronize into final pion states allows now the pure \( \Delta I = 1/2 \) current-current operator proportional to \( \lambda_t \) to contribute to the \( \Delta S = 1 \) \( K \)-decays. In the most convenient CKM phase convention, we have

\[
\text{Im} \lambda_u = 0
\]
(15)
such that CP-violation only appears in the \( A_0 \) partial amplitude as long as isospin is strictly respected in the “heavy-to-light” transmutation process. But in the Standard Model, neutral transmutations are possible through heavy quark annihilations into gluons, \( Z^0 \) or photon that are represented by the so-called penguin diagrams. While the latter electroweak contributions obviously break isospin symmetry, the former may also do so by producing first an off-shell iso-singlet mesonic state (mainly \( \eta \) or \( \eta' \)) which then turns into an iso-triplet pion. These isospin-breaking (IB) effects respectively induced by the electric charge difference \( \Delta e = e_u - e_d \) and the mass
splitting $\Delta m = m_u - m_d$ between the up and the down quarks are usually expected to show up at the percent level in weak decays. However, a CP-violating $\Delta I = 3/2$ amplitude turns out to be enhanced by the famous $\Delta I = 1/2$ rule factor $\omega^{-1}$ since

$$\text{Im} \left( \frac{A_2}{A_0} \right) = -\frac{\omega}{\text{Re} A_0} (\text{Im} A_0 - \frac{1}{\omega} \text{Im} A_2).$$

(16)

From these quite general considerations, one concludes that

$$(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{th}} = \text{Im} \lambda_t \left[ P^{1/2} - \frac{1}{\omega} P^{3/2} \right]$$

(17)

with $P^{1/2}$ and $P^{3/2}$, two separately measurable quantities defined with respect to the CKM phase convention defined in (15). Formally, $P^{1/2}$ and $P^{3/2}$ are given in terms of short distance Wilson coefficients $y_i$ and the corresponding hadronic matrix elements as follows

$$P^{1/2} = r \sum y_i \langle Q_i \rangle_0,$$

(18)

$$P^{3/2} = r \sum y_i \left[ \langle Q_i \rangle_0^{\Delta e} + \omega^{\Delta m} \langle Q_i \rangle_0 \right]$$

(19)

where $r$ is a numerical constant and

$$\omega^{\Delta m} = \frac{(\text{Im} A_2)^{\Delta m}}{\text{Im} A_0}.$$ 

(20)

3 The $(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{exp}}$-Path

Having all these formulae at hand, we can ask ourselves what the result in (2) is telling us. The answer is simple. It allows us to walk only along a straight path in the $(P^{1/2}, P^{3/2})$ plane, as illustrated in Fig.4. The standard unitarity triangle analyses [11] give typically

$$\text{Im} \lambda_t = (1.2 \pm 0.2) \times 10^{-4}$$

(21)

and, combined with (4), already allow us to draw a rather thin $(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{exp}}$-path in the $(P^{1/2}, P^{3/2})$ plane (see Fig.4). This path crosses the $P^{1/2}$-axis at $(P^{1/2})_0 = 14.3 \pm 2.8.$
We are of course still far away from such a precise calculation of $P^{1/2}$ and $P^{3/2}$. These two factors are dominated by the so-called strong $Q_6$ and electroweak $Q_8$ penguin operators. The short-distance Wilson coefficients $y_6$ and $y_8$ of these well-known density-density operators are under excellent control [9]. In particular, the $\Delta I = 3/2$ $Z^0$-exchange contribution to $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$ exhibits a quadratic dependence on the top quark mass which makes it to compete with the $\Delta I = 1/2$ gluon-exchange one. Unfortunately, the resulting destructive interference between $P^{1/2}$ and $P^{3/2}$ strongly depends on the various hadronic matrix elements. Long-distance effects are therefore at the source of the large theoretical uncertainties illustrated by (3). Consequently, we advocate to adopt (temporarily) a different strategy to learn something from the new precise measurements of $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$. The proposed exposition of $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$ in the $(P^{1/2}, P^{3/2})$ plane turns out to be useful in this context.

![Figure 1: \( (\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{exp}} \)-path in the \((P^{1/2}, P^{3/2})\) plane.](image)
4 A simple observation

It is well-known that isospin-symmetry and large-$N$ limit represent two powerful approximations to study long-distance hadronic physics. Here, these well-defined approximations would allow us to neglect $P_{3/2}$ and to express the hadronic matrix elements of the surviving strong penguin operators responsible for $P_{1/2}$ in terms of measured form factors. Earlier attempts \[12\] to go beyond such a zero-order approximation provided us already with some insight about the sign of the $1/N$ and IB corrections to $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$. Recent works including further $1/N$ \[13\] and IB \[14\] corrections confirm their tendency to increase $P_{1/2}$ and $P_{3/2}$ respectively. We illustrate these generic trends

\[
(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{th}} = (\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{0}\left\{1 + \mathcal{O}(1/N) - \frac{1}{\omega}\mathcal{O}(IB)\right\}.
\]

as $(1/N)$ and (IB) arrows in Fig. 1. A systematic calculation of all $1/N$ and IB corrections is not yet available, but a direct comparison between the measured value $(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\exp}$ and the zero-order approximation $(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{0}$ should already tell us something about their magnitudes within the Standard Model. Indeed, if the experimental value quoted in (2) is larger than the zero-order theoretical approximation, one needs $1/N$ corrections along the $P_{1/2}$ axis:

\[
(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\exp} > (\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{0} \Rightarrow 1/N \text{ corrections}. \tag{23}
\]

On the other hand, an experimental value smaller than the zero-order approximation would be an indication for sizeable IB corrections along the $P_{3/2}$ axis:

\[
(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\exp} < (\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{0} \Rightarrow IB \text{ corrections}. \tag{24}
\]

And here comes the surprise! It turns out that $(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{0}$ lies on the $(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\exp}$-path in Fig. 1. It is the crossing of this path with the $P_{1/2}$ axis.

Indeed $(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{0}$ can easily be estimated. In the large-N limit, the non-perturbative parameter $\hat{B}_K$ relevant for the usual analysis of the unitarity triangle equals $3/4$ \[13\]. This implies

\[
\text{Im}\lambda_t = (1.24 \pm 0.06) \cdot 10^{-4} \tag{25}
\]
to be compared with (21) that uses $B_K = 0.85 \pm 0.15$. Moreover, in the large-N limit the hadronic matrix element of the strong penguin density-density operator $Q_6$ factorizes ($B_6 = 1$). A simple dependence on the inverse of the strange quark mass squared arises then to cancel the scale dependence of $y_6$ [16]. Taking the central values of the strange quark mass $m_s(2GeV) = 110$ MeV and of the QCD coupling $\alpha_s(M_Z) = 0.119$ relevant for $y_6$, we obtain

$$\left(\frac{\epsilon'}{\epsilon}\right)_0 = (17.4 \pm 0.7) \times 10^{-4}$$

(26)

where the error results from the error in Im$\lambda_t$. In obtaining (26) we have taken also into account the contribution of the other ($Q_4$) surviving QCD penguin operator in the large-N limit. Without this contribution we would find $18.4 \pm 0.7$, still within the $\left(\frac{\epsilon'}{\epsilon}\right)_{\exp}$-path. Clearly, as $\left(\frac{\epsilon'}{\epsilon}\right)_0$ is roughly proportional to $(\Lambda_{\overline{MS}}^{(4)})^{0.8}/m_s^2$ with $\Lambda_{\overline{MS}}^{(4)} = 340 \pm 40$ MeV and $m_s(2GeV) = (110 \pm 20)$ MeV, improvements on these input parameters are mandatory.

Although this rather intriguing coincidence between (2) and (26) seems to indicate small $1/N$ and IB corrections, one cannot rule out a somewhat accidental conspiracy between sizeable corrections canceling each other

$$\mathcal{O}(1/N) - \frac{1}{\omega}\mathcal{O}(IB) \approx 0 .$$

(27)

The latter equation describes the walking along the $\left(\frac{\epsilon'}{\epsilon}\right)_{\exp}$-path.

At this point, it is also worth noticing that CP-violation in the simplest extensions of the Standard Model, the models with minimal flavour-violation, might behave just like an IB correction along the $P^{3/2}$ axis. The reason is that the $Z^0$-penguin maximally violates the decoupling theorem. Consequently, it depends quadratically on the top quark mass and is also quite sensitive to new physics [17]. If such is the case, one will have a hard time to disentangle new sources of CP-violation beyond the Standard Model from ordinary IB corrections.

Finally the $\left(\frac{\epsilon'}{\epsilon}\right)_{\exp}$-path can be shifted vertically in the $(P^{1/2}, P^{3/2})$ plane by new physics contributions to the quantities used for the determination of Im$\lambda_t$ but this is a different story.
5 Conclusion

Nature might be kinder than previously thought as far as $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$ is concerned. Indeed, present data do not require sizeable $1/N$ and IB corrections. Improvements on the input parameters $\alpha_s(M_Z)$ and $m_s$ leading to our estimate of $(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_0$ are mandatory. We have proposed to display the theoretical results in a $(P_1^{1/2}, P_3^{3/2})$ plane in which the experimental result is represented by a $(\varepsilon'/\varepsilon)_{\text{exp}}$ path. This plot should allow to exhibit transparently the role of $1/N$ and isospin-breaking corrections in different theoretical results for $\varepsilon'/\varepsilon$.

Acknowledgments

J.-M. G. appreciates the kind hospitality of the Max-Planck-Institute for Physics in Munich where this work has been initiated.
This work has been supported in part by the German Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung under the contract 05HT1WOA3.
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