Chiral anomaly and local polarization effect from quantum kinetic approach

Jian-Hua Gao, Zuo-Tang Liang, Shi Pu, Qun Wang, and Xin-Nian Wang

1 School of Space Science and Physics, Shandong University at Weihai, Weihai 264209, China
2 Interdisciplinary Center for Theoretical Study and Department of Modern Physics, University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei 230026, China
3 School of Physics, Shandong University, Jinan, Shandong 250100, China
4 Key Laboratory of Quark and Lepton Physics (MOE) and Institute of Particle Physics, Central China Normal University, Wuhan, 430079, China
5 Nuclear Science Division, MS 70R0319, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley, California 94720

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Introduction. — Chiral anomaly is an important quantum effect which is absent at the classical level. Recently it has been shown that such a microscopic quantum effect can have a macroscopic impact on the dynamics of relativistic fluids, termed as the chiral magnetic and vortical effect (CME and CVE) \[12\] as manifested in currents induced by magnetic field and vorticity. Such effects and related topics have been investigated within a variety of approaches, such as AdS/CFT duality \[13, 14\], relativistic hydrodynamics \[15, 16\], and quantum field theory \[12, 17\]. However, it is still not clear how CME and CVE can emerge from a microscopic quantum kinetic theory.

In this Letter we make a first attempt to derive both the CME and CVE from a quantum kinetic theory. A power expansion in space-time derivatives and weak external fields is used to determine the Wigner function that satisfies the quantum kinetic equation \[21, 22\] for spin-1/2 fermions,

\[
\hat{W}_{\alpha\beta} = \int \frac{d^3y}{(2\pi)^3} e^{-i\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{y}} \bar{\psi}_\beta(x_+) U(x_+, x_-) \psi_\alpha(x_-),
\]

where \(\psi_\alpha\) and \(\bar{\psi}_\beta\) are Dirac spinor fields, \(x_\pm \equiv x \pm \frac{i}{2} y\) are two space-time points centered at \(x\) with space-time separation \(y\), and the gauge link \(U\),

\[
U(x_+, x_-) \equiv e^{-iQ \int_{x_-}^{x_+} dz^\mu A_\mu(z)},
\]

ensures the gauge invariance of \(\hat{W}_{\alpha\beta}\). Here \(Q\) is the electromagnetic charge of the fermions, and \(A_\mu\) is the electromagnetic vector potential. Note that we use the metric convention \(g^{\mu\nu} = \text{diag}(1, -1, -1, -1)\). To simplify the quantum kinetic equation under a background field we consider a massless and collisionless fermionic system in a constant external electromagnetic field \(F_{\mu\nu}\) in the lab frame. Since we only consider a classical background field, we have dropped the path ordering in the gauge link in Eq. (2). The Wigner function is a matrix in Dirac space and satisfies the quantum kinetic equation \[21, 22\],

\[
\gamma_\mu (p^\mu + i\frac{\gamma^\mu}{2} \nabla^\mu) W(x, p) = 0,
\]

where \(\gamma^\mu\)’s are Dirac matrices and \(\nabla^\mu \equiv \partial^\mu - Q F^{\mu\nu} \partial_\nu\). The Wigner function should contain information about quantum interactions and we will prove that all currents including chiral anomaly can be derived from the above equation. To this end, we decompose the Wigner function in terms of 16 independent generators of the Clifford
algebra,
\[
W(x, p) = \frac{1}{4} \left[ \mathcal{F}(x, p) + i\gamma^5 \mathcal{P}(x, p) + \gamma^\mu \mathcal{V}_\mu(x, p) + \frac{1}{2} \sigma^{\mu\nu} \mathcal{F}_{\mu\nu}(x, p) \right].
\] (4)
Eq. (3) then leads to two decoupled sets of equations, one of which relevant to our study reads,
\[
p^\mu \mathcal{V}_\mu = 0, \quad p^\mu \sigma_\mu = 0,
\]
\[
\nabla^\mu \mathcal{V}_\mu = 0, \quad \nabla^\mu \sigma_\mu = 0,
\]
\[
\epsilon_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \nabla^\rho \sigma_\sigma = -2 (p_\mu \mathcal{V}_\rho - p_\rho \mathcal{V}_\mu),
\]
\[
\epsilon_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \nabla^\rho \mathcal{V}_\sigma = -2 (p_\mu \sigma_\rho - p_\rho \sigma_\mu),
\]
where \(\epsilon^{\mu\nu\sigma\rho}\) is the Levi-Civita anti-symmetric tensor, \(\mathcal{V}_\mu(x, p)\) and \(\sigma_\mu(x, p)\) are the vector and axial-vector component of the Wigner function, which will give rise to the vector and axial-vector current, respectively, after integration over four-momentum.

**Power expansion.** — We assume a system close to local equilibrium under a constant external field \(F^{\mu\nu}\). Therefore, \(\mathcal{V}_\mu(x, p)\) and \(\sigma_\mu(x, p)\) will depend on \(x\) only through fluid four-velocity \(u(x)\), temperature \(T(x)\), chemical potential \(\mu(x)\) and chiral chemical potential \(\mu_5(x)\). We will determine the analytic form of the Wigner function in terms of \(\{p, F^{\mu\nu}, u, T, \mu, \mu_5\}\) from the kinetic equation.

We further assume that the space-time derivative \(\partial_x\) and the field strength \(F^{\mu\nu}\) are small variables of the same order and can be used as parameters in the power expansion of \(\mathcal{V}_\mu\) and \(\sigma_\mu\) (similar to the Knudsen number expansion in hydrodynamics),
\[
\mathcal{V}^\mu = \mathcal{V}_0^\mu + \mathcal{V}_1^\mu + \ldots, \quad \sigma^\mu = \sigma_0^\mu + \sigma_1^\mu + \ldots,
\]
where the subscripts \(0, 1, \ldots\) denote orders of the power expansion. Note that \(\mathcal{V}_n^\mu\) and \(\sigma_n^\mu\) are related to \(\mathcal{V}_{n-1}\) and \(\sigma_{n-1}\) via Eqs. (7S) \((n \geq 1)\). One can therefore use an iterative scheme to solve \(\mathcal{V}_\mu\) and \(\sigma_\mu\) order by order.

Note that the field strengths \(F^{\mu\nu}\) are assumed to be constant in the lab frame. Later, we have to define electromagnetic fields in the local comoving frame of a fluid cell, \(E_\sigma = u^\mu F_{\sigma\rho}, B_\sigma = (1/2)\epsilon_{\sigma\mu\rho\nu} u^\mu F^{\rho\nu}\), which depend on \(x\) via the fluid velocity \(u(x)\). The space-time derivative \(\partial_x\) is then given by
\[
\partial_x^\mu = \partial_\sigma T \frac{\partial}{\partial T} + \partial_\sigma u_\mu \frac{\partial}{\partial u_\mu} + \partial_\sigma \mu \frac{\partial}{\partial \mu} + \partial_\sigma \mu_5 \frac{\partial}{\partial \mu_5}.
\] (10)

**Zeroth-order Wigner function.** — In general, \(\mathcal{V}_0^\mu\) and \(\sigma_0^\mu\) can only have two terms, each proportional to the zeroth-order four-vectors \(p^\mu\) or \(u^\mu\) with a total of four independent coefficients. Since the left-hand sides of Eqs. (7S) are at least of first order, the zeroth-order terms on the right-hand sides must vanish, which set the coefficients of the \(u^\mu\)-terms to be zero. With additional constraints by Eq. (5), \(\mathcal{V}_0^\mu\) and \(\sigma_0^\mu\) have to take the following forms,
\[
\mathcal{V}_0^\mu = p^\mu \delta (p^2) V_0, \quad \sigma_0^\mu = p^\mu \delta (p^2) A_0,
\]
where \(V_0\) and \(A_0\) are the phase space distributions of massless spin-1/2 fermions at the zeroth order and cannot be determined by Eqs. (7S). We assume they take the equilibrium form,
\[
[V_0, A_0] = \sum_{s=\pm 1} \frac{\theta(su \cdot p)}{(2\pi)^3} \frac{1}{e^{s(u-p_\mu)s_\mu} - 1}, \quad (\chi = R, L),
\]
where \(R(L)\) denotes the right (left)-handed fermions and \(\mu_{R,L} = \mu \mp \mu_5\) \([3]\). Note that \(V_0^1\) \((A_0^1)\) is the sum \((\) difference\) of two positive distributions for any values of \(\mu\) and \(\mu_5\). This asymmetry between \(V_0\) and \(A_0\) as inputs to the iterative operation will feed down to the first-order Wigner functions \(V_1^\mu\) and \(A_1^\mu\) and the final vector and axial-vector currents, even though the kinetic equations in Eqs. (7S) are symmetric for \(V^\mu\) and \(A^\mu\).

The zeroth-order Wigner functions should also satisfy Eq. (6), which provides constraints on fluid and thermodynamical variables. Substitute Eqs. (11-12) into Eq. (6), we obtain \(\nabla_\mu V_0^\mu = \nabla_\mu \sigma_0^\mu\) as sums of six independent terms involving the momentum vector \(\hat{p}_\sigma \equiv \Delta_{\sigma\rho} p^\rho\) \((\Delta_{\sigma\rho} \equiv g_{\sigma\rho} - u_\sigma u_\rho\)), tensor \(T_{\sigma\rho}\), scalars \(\vec{p}\) and \(u \cdot p\).

To ensure \(\nabla_\mu V_0^\mu = \nabla_\mu \sigma_0^\mu = 0\) for any values of \(p\), these six terms all have to vanish, resulting in the following constraints at the first order,
\[
\Delta_\sigma \Delta_\sigma^\beta \left( \partial_\alpha u_\beta + \partial_\beta u_\alpha - \frac{2}{3} \Delta_\alpha \Delta_\beta \partial_\rho u_\rho \right) = 0,
\]
\[
T \Delta_\sigma \partial_\mu \frac{\mu}{T} + Q E^\sigma = 0,
\]
\[
u \cdot \partial u^\nu - \Delta_\sigma \partial_\mu T = 0,
\]
\[
\partial_\sigma \frac{\mu_5}{T} = 0, \quad u^\nu \partial_\mu \frac{\mu_5}{T} = 0,
\]
\[
u \cdot \partial T + \frac{1}{3} T \Delta_\sigma \partial_\rho u_\rho = 0.
\]
(13)

Note that we have dropped \(\delta(p_0)\) terms from derivatives of \(\theta(p_0)\) and \(\theta(-p_0)\), which are irrelevant when carrying out the 4-momentum integration due to vanishing phase space at zero momentum. Since we are interested in currents induced by external fields and vorticity, we consider only the static case with a constant temperature. The above constraints are reduced to,
\[
u \cdot \partial u^\nu = 0, \quad \partial_\mu u^\mu = 0, \quad \partial_\mu \mu = -Q E_\sigma,
\]
\[
\mu_5 = \text{const}, \quad \text{for } T = \text{const.}
\]
(14)
which has a simple solution \(\mu = \text{const.} - Q E \cdot x\) and a solenoidal fluid velocity \(u^\sigma (x - ut_{\mu} u^\mu)\) with \(\partial \cdot u = 0\).

**First-order Wigner function.** — With the zeroth-order Wigner functions in Eqs. (11-12) one can determine the
first-order $\mathcal{V}_i^\mu$ and $\mathbf{a}^\mu_i$ from Eqs. (5-15). A general form
linear in the first-order variables $X^\mu = (E^\mu, B^\mu, \omega^\mu)$ and constrained by Eq. (5) can be written as,

$$
\mathcal{Z}_1^\mu = \sum_{X=B,E,\omega} \left[ u_i (g^\mu - \rho p^\mu p^/p^2)^2 \right] X Z_{X1} 
$$

$$
+ X_0 (g^\mu - \rho p^\mu p^/p^2)^2 Z_{X2} 
$$

$$
+ X_0 (g^\mu - \rho p^\mu p^/p^2)^2 Z_{X3} 
$$

$$
+ \epsilon^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} u_{\lambda p} Z_{X4},
$$

(15)

where $\mathcal{Z}_1^\mu = (\mathcal{V}_1^\mu, \mathbf{a}_1^\mu)$ and $\omega^\mu = (1/2) \epsilon_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} u^\nu \partial^\rho \partial^\sigma$ is the fluid vorticity. Note that $X \cdot u = 0$. There are 24 independent coefficients $X_{Xi} = (X_{Vi}, X_{Ai})$ in the above power expansion of the first order. With Eqs. (11) and (13) for the zeroth and first-order Wigner functions, both of Eqs. (7) and (8) at the first-order contain 3 different tensor structures, each consisting of terms linear in the first-order variables $X^\mu = (E^\mu, B^\mu, \omega^\mu)$. Setting these terms to vanish separately gives 18 equations which leave only 6 of the 24 coefficients in Eq. (15) undetermined. Further requiring Eqs. (6) to be satisfied by $\mathcal{V}_1^\mu$ and $\mathbf{a}_1^\mu$, we can obtain the unique forms of $\mathcal{V}_1^\mu$ and $\mathbf{a}_1^\mu$ to the first order,

$$
\mathcal{Z}_2^\mu = \frac{1}{2} \partial_{\delta p^2} + \frac{1}{2} \theta\partial_{\delta p^2} + \theta\partial_{\delta p^2} - Q p_{\nu} B^\nu - Q E^\nu B^\nu Z_{0} \delta (p^2) 
$$

$$
- \frac{1}{2} Q p_{\nu} B^\nu - Q E^\nu B^\nu Z_{0} \delta (p^2) 
$$

$$
+ \epsilon^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} u_{\lambda p} E_{\sigma} Z_{0} \delta (p^2),
$$

(16)

where $\mathcal{Z}_2 = (\mathcal{V}_2^\mu, \mathbf{a}_2^\mu)$, $Z_0 = (V_0, A_0)$ and $Z_0 = (A_0, V_0)$.

*Induced currents, CME and CVE.* — We can derive the vector and axial-vector current from the above Wigner functions up to the first order in power expansion,

$$
\mathcal{J}_1^\mu = \int d^4 p \mathcal{V}_1^\mu = n u^\mu + \xi_5 B^\mu,
$$

(17)

$$
\mathbf{J}_5^\mu = \int d^4 p \mathbf{a}_1^\mu = n_5 u^\mu + \xi_5 \omega^\mu + \xi B_5 B^\mu.
$$

(18)

The energy-momentum tensor $T^{\mu\nu}$ can also be evaluated,

$$
T^{\mu\nu} = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4 p (p^\mu \mathcal{V}_1^\nu + p^\nu \mathcal{V}_1^\mu) 
$$

$$
= (\epsilon + P) u^\mu u^\nu - P g^\mu\nu + n_5 (u^\mu \omega^\nu + \omega^\mu \omega^\nu) 
$$

$$
+ \frac{1}{2} Q \xi (u^\mu B^\nu + u^\nu B^\mu).
$$

(19)

The charge $n$, $n_5$ and energy density $\epsilon$ in equilibrium,

$$
N_0 = 2\pi \int d p_0 p_0 [\theta(p_0) - \theta(-p_0)] Z_{N0},
$$

(20)

are determined from the zeroth-order Wigner functions, where $N_0 = n, n_5, \epsilon$ corresponding to $i = 2, 3, 4$ and $Z_{N0} = V_0, A_0, V_0$, respectively. The pressure is given by $P = \epsilon/3$. Coefficients $\xi$, $\xi_B$, $\xi_5$ and $\xi B_5$ are given by

$$
\Xi = \xi, \xi_B, \xi_5, \xi B_5 \text{ corresponding to } j = 1, 0, 1, 0, \ c = 2, 0, 2, Q, \text{ and } Z_{20} = A_0, A_0, V_0, V_0, \text{ respectively. It is easy to verify following relations: } \xi = (1/2) \partial n / \partial \mu, \ 
$$

$$
\xi_5 = (1/2) \partial n / \partial \mu, \ 
$$

$$
\xi_B = (Q/2) \partial \xi / \partial \mu, \text{ and } \xi B_5 = (Q/2) \partial \xi_5 / \partial \mu.
$$

One can complete the above integrals analytically to obtain coefficients $\xi, \xi_B, \xi_5$ and $\xi B_5$ of the induced currents as functions of $\mu, \mu_5$ and $T$,

$$
\xi = \frac{1}{\pi} \mu_5, \ 
$$

$$
\xi = \frac{1}{\pi} \mu_5, \ 
$$

$$
\xi = \frac{1}{\pi} \mu_5, \text{ and } \xi B_5 = \frac{Q}{2\pi} \mu_5.
$$

(22)

(23)

Thermodynamical quantities $n, n_5$ and $\epsilon$ can be similarly obtained.

The current in Eq. (17) induced by magnetic field and vorticity with coefficients $\xi^B_5$ and $\xi$ in Eq. (22), known as the CME and CVE [2-9], respectively, is a direct consequence of the quantum kinetic equation for the Wigner function. The axial-vector current in Eq. (18) induced by magnetic field and vorticity corresponds to some sort of reversed CME and CVE, respectively. These results are consistent to those obtained from the second law of thermodynamics in Refs. [10] and [24] except a quadratic term in temperature in $\xi_5$ induced by vorticity. It should be noted that Eqs. (22) and (23), including the temperature term in $\xi_5$, have also been obtained independently in Ref. [17] within the Kubo formalism.

Conservation equations for $j^\mu$ and $j_5^\mu$,

$$
\partial_{\mu} j^\mu = 0, \ 
$$

$$
\partial_{\mu} j_5^\mu = -\frac{Q^2}{2\pi^2} E \cdot B,
$$

(24)

can be derived from Eqs. (17) and (18) with constraints on fluid and thermodynamical variables in Eq. (14). The electric field in the chiral anomaly appears through $\partial_{\mu} j^\mu = -Q E_\sigma$ from Eq. (14). Note that we derived the chiral anomaly here without regularization in contrast to the derivation in quantum field theory. This is because the Wigner function contains two fermionic fields separated in space-time (nonlocal) and therefore free of singularities. One can also verify the energy-momentum conservation equation in the background field,

$$
\partial_{\mu} T^{\mu\nu} = Q F^{\mu\rho} j_\rho,
$$

(25)

from Eqs. (17) and (19) with constraints in Eq. (14). It is interesting to observe that constraints in Eq. (14) or (15) require $\omega^\mu \parallel B^\mu \parallel E^\mu$, which is crucial for the energy-momentum conservation in Eq. (25).

It is remarkable that we have derived the quantum kinetic equation not only currents in Eqs. (17) and (18) with their coefficients in Eqs. (22) and (23) but also a complete set of conservation equations with the chiral anomaly in Eqs. (24) and (25) for charge, chiral charge and energy-momentum, respectively. In contrast, these conservation equations are used as inputs to obtain the currents in
induced by vorticity.

Therefore, magnetic fields cannot induce the axial-vector current in a three-flavor quark matter, which can only be illustrated). This results in the local polarization effect. The momentum (spin) parallel to the direction of vorticity implies that the right (left)-handed fermion is parallel (opposite) to its spin, all spins are parallel to the direction of vorticity (see Fig. 1 for illustration). This results in the local polarization effect (LPE) similar to what was proposed in Refs. [18–20] due to spin-orbital coupling. The LPE can be measured via hadron (e.g. hyperon) polarization along the direction of vorticity or the global orbital angular momentum in non-central heavy-ion collisions [18]. Note that ξ5 in Eq. (27) has three quadratic terms in \( T, \mu \) and \( \mu_5 \). Therefore, the LPE should be present in both high and low energy heavy-ion collisions with either low baryonic chemical potential and high temperature or vice versa.

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![FIG. 1: (Color online) The axial current induced by vorticity leads to the local polarization effect. The momentum (spin) direction is in the red-dashed (blue-solid) arrow.](image-url)