Fine structure of helium and light helium-like ions

Krzysztof Pachucki
Institute of Theoretical Physics, University of Warsaw, Hoża 69, 00–681 Warsaw, Poland

Vladimir A. Yerokhin
Institute of Physics, University of Heidelberg, Philosophenweg 12, D-69120 Heidelberg, Germany and Gesellschaft für Schwerionenforschung, Planckstraße 1, D-64291 Darmstadt, Germany and Center for Advanced Studies, St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University, Polytekhnicheskaya 29, St. Petersburg 195251, Russia

Calculational results are presented for the fine-structure splitting of the $2^3P$ state of helium and helium-like ions with the nuclear charge $Z$ up to 10. Theoretical predictions are in agreement with the latest experimental results for the helium fine-structure intervals as well as with the most of the experimental data available for light helium-like ions. Comparing the theoretical value of the $2^3P_0 - 2^3P_1$ interval in helium with the experimental result [T. Zelevinsky et al. Phys. Rev. Lett. 95, 203001 (2005)], we determine the value of the fine-structure constant $\alpha$ with an accuracy of 31 parts per billion.

PACS numbers: 06.20.Jr, 31.30.jf, 12.20.Ds, 31.15.aj

I. INTRODUCTION

The fine structure splitting of the $2^3P$ state in helium plays a special role in atomic spectroscopy because it can be used for an accurate determination of the fine structure constant $\alpha$. This fact was first pointed out by Schwartz in 1964 [1]. The attractive features of the fine structure splitting in helium as compared to other atomic transitions are, first, the long lifetime of the metastable $2^3P_J$ levels (roughly two orders of magnitude larger than that of the $2p$ state in hydrogen) and, second, the relative simplicity of the theory of the fine structure. Schwartz’s suggestion stimulated a sequence of calculations [2–5], which resulted in a theoretical description of the helium fine structure complete up to order $m\alpha^6$ (or $\alpha^4$ Ry) and a value of $\alpha$ accurate to 0.9 ppm [6].

The present experimental precision for the fine-structure intervals in helium is sufficient for a determination of $\alpha$ with an accuracy of 14 ppb [7, 8]. In order to match this level of accuracy in the theoretical description of the fine structure, the complete calculation of the next-order, $m\alpha^7$ contribution and an estimation of the higher-order effects is needed. The work towards this end started in 1990s and extended over two decades [9–19]. In 2006, the first complete evaluation of the $m\alpha^7$ correction to the helium fine structure was reported [20]. However, the numerical results presented there disagreed with the experimental values by more than 10 standard deviations.

In our recent investigations [21, 22], we recalculated all effects up to order $m\alpha^7$ to the fine structure of helium and performed calculations for helium-like ions with nuclear charges $Z$ up to 10. The calculations were extensively checked by studying the hydrogenic ($Z \to \infty$) limit of individual corrections and by comparing them with the results known from the hydrogen theory. We found several problems in previous studies. As a result, the present theoretical predictions are in agreement with the latest experimental data for the fine-structure intervals in helium, as well as with the most of experimental data available for light helium-like ions. Comparison of our theoretical prediction for the $2^3P_0 - 2^3P_1$ interval in helium (accurate to 57 ppb) with the experimental value [7] (accurate to 24 ppb) determines the value of the fine structure constant $\alpha$ with an accuracy of 31 ppb.

The calculation of the $m\alpha^7$ correction for the fine-structure splitting of light helium-like atoms was reported in our recent Letter [22]. In this paper, we present an extended description of the $m\alpha^7$ correction and a detailed term-by-term comparison of our results with independent calculations by Drake [18] for helium and by Zhang et al. [12] for helium-like ions.

II. THE SPIN-DEPENDENT $m\alpha^7$ CORRECTION

The $m\alpha^7$ correction to the fine-structure splitting of a two-electron atom can be conveniently separated into four parts,

$$E^{(7)} \equiv m\alpha^7 \mathcal{E}^{(7)} = m\alpha^7 \left[ \mathcal{E}_{\text{log}}^{(7)} + \mathcal{E}_{\text{first}}^{(7)} + \mathcal{E}_{\text{sec}}^{(7)} + \mathcal{E}_L^{(7)} \right]. \quad (1)$$
The first term in the brackets above combines all terms with \( \ln Z \) and \( \ln \alpha \) \([10–12, 15, 20]\),

\[
\mathcal{E}^{(7)}_{\text{log}} = \ln[(Z \alpha)^{-2}] \left[ \left( \frac{2Z}{3} i \vec{p}_1 \times \delta^3(r_1) \vec{\sigma}_1 \right) - \left( \frac{1}{4} (\vec{\sigma}_1 \cdot \vec{\nabla}) (\vec{\sigma}_2 \cdot \vec{\nabla}) \delta^3(r) \right) - \left( \frac{3}{2} i \vec{p}_1 \times \delta^3(r) \vec{\sigma}_1 \right) + \frac{8Z}{3} \left( H_{fs}^{(4)} (E_0 - H_0) \right)^2 \delta^3(r_1) + \delta^3(r_2) \right] ,
\]

where \( \vec{r} = \vec{r}_1 - \vec{r}_2 \), \( H_0 \) and \( E_0 \) are the Schrödinger Hamiltonian and its eigenvalue, and \( H_{fs}^{(4)} \) is the spin-dependent part of the Breit-Pauli Hamiltonian,

\[
H_{fs}^{(4)} = \frac{1}{4 r^3} \left[ (\vec{\sigma}_2 + 2 \vec{\sigma}_1) \cdot \vec{r} \times \vec{p}_2 - (\vec{\sigma}_1 + 2 \vec{\sigma}_2) \cdot \vec{r} \times \vec{p}_1 \right] + \frac{Z}{4} \left( \frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \times \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 + \frac{\vec{r}_2}{r_2^3} \times \vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \right) + \frac{1}{4} \left( \frac{\vec{\sigma}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2}{r^3} - 3 \frac{\vec{\sigma}_1 \cdot \vec{r} \vec{\sigma}_2 \cdot \vec{r}}{r^5} \right) .
\]

The second part of \( \mathcal{E}^{(7)} \) is induced by effective Hamiltonians to order \( m a \). They were derived by one of us (K.P.) in Refs. \([20, 21]\). (The previous derivation of this correction by Zhang \([10, 11]\) turned out to be not entirely consistent.) The result is

\[
\mathcal{E}^{(7)}_{\text{first}} = \langle H_Q + H_H + H_{fs,\text{ann}} \rangle .
\]

The Hamiltonian \( H_Q \) is induced by the two-photon exchange between the electrons, the electron self-energy and the vacuum polarization. It is given by \([20]\)

\[
H_Q = \frac{91}{180} \frac{Z}{r^3} i \vec{p}_1 \times \delta^3(r_1) \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 - \frac{1}{2} (\vec{\sigma}_1 \cdot \vec{\nabla}) (\vec{\sigma}_2 \cdot \vec{\nabla}) \delta^3(r) \left[ \frac{83}{30} + \ln Z \right] + 3 i \vec{p}_1 \times \delta^3(r) \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 \left[ \frac{23}{10} - \ln Z \right] - \frac{15}{8 \pi} \frac{1}{r^5} (\vec{\sigma}_1 \cdot \vec{r}) (\vec{\sigma}_2 \cdot \vec{r}) - \frac{3}{4 \pi} i \vec{p}_1 \times \frac{1}{r^3} \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 .
\]

Here, the terms with \( \ln Z \) compensate the logarithmic dependence implicitly present in expectation values of singular operators \( 1/r^3 \) and \( 1/r^5 \), so that matrix elements of \( H_Q \) do not have any logarithms in their \( 1/Z \) expansion. The singular operators are defined though their integrals with the arbitrary smooth function \( f \),

\[
\int d^3r \frac{1}{r^3} f(\vec{r}) \equiv \lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \int d^3r \left[ \frac{1}{r^3} \theta(r - \epsilon) \right. + 4 \pi \delta^3(r) (\gamma + \ln \epsilon) \left. \right] f(\vec{r}) ,
\]

and

\[
\int d^3r \frac{1}{r^3} \left( r^i r^j - \frac{\delta^ij}{3} r^2 \right) f(\vec{r}) \equiv \lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \int d^3r \left[ \frac{1}{r^3} \left( r^i r^j - \frac{\delta^ij}{3} r^2 \right) \theta(r - \epsilon) \right. + 4 \pi \frac{1}{15} \delta^3(r) (\gamma + \ln \epsilon) \left( \partial^i \partial^j - \frac{\delta^ij}{3} \partial^2 \right) \left. \right] f(\vec{r}) ,
\]

where \( \gamma \) is the Euler constant.
The effective Hamiltonian \( H_H \) represents the anomalous magnetic moment (amm) correction to the Douglas-Kroll \( ma^6 \) operators and is given by [20]

\[
H_H = -\frac{Z}{4}\frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \times \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 - \frac{3Z}{4}\frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \times \vec{r} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 (\vec{r} \cdot \vec{p}_2) + \frac{3Z}{4}\frac{\vec{r}}{r^3} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 \frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 + \frac{1}{2r^4} \vec{r} \times \vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 - \frac{3}{4r^6} \vec{r} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 \vec{r} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \\
- \frac{1}{4}\frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \vec{r} \times \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 - \frac{1}{4}\frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \vec{r} \times \vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 - \frac{Z}{4r^4} \frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \times \vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 - \frac{i}{2}\frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \vec{r} \times \vec{p}_2 \vec{r} \times \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 + \frac{3i}{4r^3} \vec{r} \times (\vec{r} \cdot \vec{p}_2) \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 \\
- \frac{3}{8r^5} \vec{r} \times (\vec{r} \times \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1) \vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 - \frac{1}{8r^5} \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 \vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 + \frac{21}{16} \frac{\vec{r}_2}{r_2^5} \frac{1}{r^3} \vec{r} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 \vec{r} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 - \frac{3i}{8} \frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \vec{r} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \\
+ \frac{i}{8}\frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \vec{r} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 + (\vec{r} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1) (\vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2) - \frac{3}{r^2} \vec{r} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 \vec{r} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \vec{r} \cdot \vec{p}_2 - \frac{1}{4}\vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 \vec{p}_1 \times \vec{r} \cdot \vec{p}_2 \\
+ \frac{1}{8}\vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 \left[-\vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \frac{1}{r^3} + 3\vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{r} \frac{\vec{r}}{r^5} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \right].
\]

(8)

The Hamiltonian \( H_{fs}^{(7)} \) is the \( ma^7 \) amm correction to the Breit-Pauli Hamiltonian,

\[
H_{fs}^{(7)} = \frac{1}{2r^3} \left( \vec{\sigma}_1 \cdot \vec{r} \times (\vec{p}_2 - \vec{p}_1) c_3 + \frac{Z}{2r^3} \vec{r}_1 \times \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 + \vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \right) c_3 \\
+ \frac{1}{2r^3} \left( \frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \vec{r}_2 \cdot \vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 - 3 \frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \frac{\vec{r}_2}{r_2^3} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \cdot \vec{r} \right) (c_1c_2 + c_3),
\]

(9)

where \( c_1 = 1/2, c_2 = -0.328478965 \) and \( c_3 = 1.181241456 \) are the expansion coefficients of the free-electron amm in powers of \((\alpha/\pi)\).

The third part of \( \mathcal{E}^{(7)} \) is given by the second-order matrix elements of the form [20]

\[
\mathcal{E}_{\text{osc}}^{(7)} = 2 \left\langle H_{fs}^{(4)} \frac{1}{(E_0 - H_0)^6} H_{\text{holog}}^{(5)} \right\rangle \\
+ 2 \left\langle \left[ H_{fs}^{(4)} + H_{\text{holog}}^{(4)} \right] \frac{1}{(E_0 - H_0)^6} H_{fs}^{(5)} \right\rangle,
\]

(10)

where \( H_{\text{holog}}^{(5)} \) is the effective Hamiltonian responsible for the nonlogarithmic \( ma^5 \) correction to the energy,

\[
H_{\text{holog}}^{(5)} = -\frac{7}{6} \frac{38Z}{45} \left[ \delta^3(r_1) + \delta^3(r_2) \right],
\]

(11)

\( H_{fs}^{(4)} \) is the spin-independent part of the Breit-Pauli Hamiltonian (with the term \( \delta^3(r) \) omitted since it does not contribute in our case),

\[
H_{fs}^{(4)} = -\frac{1}{8} (p_1^4 + p_2^4) + \frac{Z\pi}{2} \left[ \delta^3(r_1) + \delta^3(r_2) \right] \\
- \frac{1}{2} p_1 \left( \frac{\delta^3}{r} + \frac{r_1^4 + r_2^4}{r^3} \right) p_2,
\]

(12)

and \( H_{fs}^{(5)} \) is the \( ma^5 \) amm correction to \( H_{fs}^{(4)} \),

\[
H_{fs}^{(5)} = \frac{1}{4\pi r^4} \left( \vec{\sigma}_1 \cdot \vec{r} \right) \cdot \vec{r} \times (\vec{p}_2 - \vec{p}_1) \\
+ \frac{Z}{4\pi} \left( \frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} \times \vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_1 + \frac{\vec{r}_2}{r_2^3} \times \vec{p}_2 \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \right) \\
+ \frac{1}{4\pi} \left( \frac{\vec{\sigma}_1 \cdot \vec{p}_2}{r^3} - 3 \frac{\vec{p}_1 \cdot \vec{r}}{r^5} \cdot \vec{\sigma}_2 \right).
\]

(13)

The fourth part of \( \mathcal{E}^{(7)} \) is the contribution induced by the emission and reabsorption of virtual photons of low energy. It is denoted as \( \mathcal{E}_L^{(7)} \) and interpreted as the relativistic correction to the Bethe logarithm. The expression for
TABLE I: Summary of individual contributions to the fine-structure intervals in helium, in kHz. The parameters [23] are \( \alpha^{-1} = 137.035 999 679(94) \), \( cR_{\infty} = 3 289 841 960 361(22) \) kHz, and \( m/M = 1.370 933 555 70 \times 10^{-4} \). The values by Drake are taken from Table 3 of Ref. [18]. The label \((+m/M)\) indicates that the corresponding entry comprises both the non-recoil and recoil contributions of the specified order in \( \alpha \). The uncertainty due to the value of \( \alpha \) is not shown.

| Term                  | \( \nu_{01} \)   | \( \nu_{12} \)   | Ref. |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|------|
| \( m\alpha^4(+m/M) \) | 29 563 765.45    | 2 320 241.43     | 18   |
| 29 563 765.23         | 2 320 241.42     | \[18\]           |
| \( m\alpha^5(+m/M) \) | 54 704.04        | -22 545.00       | [18] |
| 54 704.04             | -22 545.01       | [18]             |
| \( m\alpha^6 \)      | -1 607.52(2)     | -6 506.43        | [18] |
| -1 607.61(4)          | -6 506.45(7)     | [18]             |
| \( m\alpha^7m/M \)   | -9.96            | 9.15             | [18] |
| -10.37(5)             | 9.80(11)         | [18]             |
| \( m\alpha^7 \log(Z\alpha) \) | 81.43 | -5.87 | [18] |
| 81.42                 | -5.87b           | [18]             |
| \( m\alpha^7 \), nlog | 18.86            | -14.38           |      |
| \( \alpha \)         | \( \pm 1.7 \)    | \( \pm 1.7 \)    |      |
| Total theory          | 29 696 952.29\( \pm 1.7 \) | 2 291 178.91\( \pm 1.7 \) |      |
| Experiment            | 29 696 951.66(70)\( c \) | 2 291 177.53(35)\( f \) |      |
| 29 696 952.7(10)\( d \) | 2 291 175.59(51)\( e \) |      |
| 29 696 950.9(9)\( e \) | 2 291 175.9(10)\( g \) |      |

\( a \) the original result was scaled to the present value of \( \alpha \).

\( b \) the original result was altered by the substitution \( \ln(\alpha) \rightarrow \ln(Z\alpha) \) in the terms proportional to \( \ln(\alpha) \), in order to comply with the present result for the logarithmic \( m\alpha^7 \) contribution.

\( c \) Ref. [7]. \( d \) Ref. [24]. \( e \) Ref. [25]. \( f \) Ref. [8]. \( g \) Ref. [26].

\( \mathcal{E}^{(7)} \) reads [16]

\[
\mathcal{E}^{(7)} = -\frac{2}{3\pi} \delta \left( \langle \vec{p}_1 + \vec{p}_2 \rangle \cdot (H_0 - E_0) \ln \left[ \frac{2(H_0 - E_0)}{Z^2} \right] \langle \vec{p}_1 + \vec{p}_2 \rangle \right) \\
+ \frac{i Z^2}{3\pi} \left( \langle \vec{r}_1 + \vec{r}_2 \rangle \times \langle \vec{s}_1 + \vec{s}_2 \rangle \right) \ln \left[ \frac{2(H_0 - E_0)}{Z^2} \right] \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{\vec{r}_1}{r_1^3} + \frac{\vec{r}_2}{r_2^3} \right),
\]

where \( \delta \langle \ldots \rangle \) denotes the first-order perturbation of the matrix element \( \langle \ldots \rangle \) by \( H_{5s}^{(4)} \), implying perturbations of the reference-state wave function, the reference-state energy, and the electron Hamiltonian.

### III. RESULTS: HELIUM

The summary of individual contributions to the fine-structure intervals of helium is given in Table I. Numerical results are presented for the large \( \nu_{01} \) and the small \( \nu_{12} \) intervals, defined by

\[
\nu_{01} = \left[ E(2^3P_0) - E(2^3P_1) \right]/h,
\]

\[
\nu_{12} = \left[ E(2^3P_1) - E(2^3P_2) \right]/h.
\]

We note that the style of breaking the total result into separate entries used in Table I differs from that used in the summary tables of the previous papers by K.P. et al. [20, 21]. Particularly, the lower-order terms listed in Table III of Ref. [20] and in Table II of Ref. [21] contained contributions of higher orders, whereas in the present work, the entries in Table I contain only the contributions of the order specified.

A term-by-term comparison with the independent calculation by Drake [18] is made whenever possible. We observe good agreement between the two calculations for the lower-order terms, namely, for the \( m\alpha^4 \), \( m\alpha^5 \), and \( m\alpha^6 \) corrections. However, for the recoil correction to order \( m\alpha^6 \), our results differ from Drake’s ones by about 0.5 kHz for both
TABLE II: Individual contributions to the fine-structure intervals of helium-like atoms, in MHz/Z². The label (+m/M) indicates that the corresponding entry comprises both the non-recoil and recoil contributions of the specified order in α. For Z = 3, 7, and 10, a term-by-term comparison is made with the previous calculation by Zhang et. al. [12]. The results of Ref. [12] for the leading mα⁵ correction were scaled to the present value of α. The deviation for the mα⁷(log) contribution is due to the difference in the expressions for this term.

| Z  | mα⁴(+m/M) | mα⁴(+m/M) | mα⁶ | mα⁶m/M | mα⁷(log) | mα⁷(nlog) | Total | Ref. |
|----|-----------|-----------|------|--------|---------|----------|-------|------|
| ν₀₁ | 2         | 1847.73534| 3.41900| −0.10047| −0.00062| 0.00509  | 0.00118| 1851.05952| (11)|
|     | 3         | 1917.79396| 3.24978| 1.23026| −0.00243| −0.01076| 0.01801| 1922.27811| (59)|
|     |           | 1917.79397| 3.24978| 1.23025| −0.01027|           |        | 1922.262 (2)|
|     | 4         | 1346.96534| 1.94384| 4.56698| −0.00670| −0.02843| 0.04648| 1353.48759| | (39)|
|     |           | 756.88557  | 0.68551| 10.37447| −0.01417| −0.04139| 0.08628| 776.97660 | | (14)|
|     | 5         | 270.38772  | −0.36757| 19.26647| −0.02789| −0.04886| 0.13952| 289.34937 | | (37)|
|     | 7         | −139.08557 | −1.22955| 31.90879| −0.04530| −0.05110| 0.20903| −108.29483| | (83)|
|     |           | −139.08558 | −1.22955| 31.90882| −0.04633|           |        | −108.55 (3) | | | (12)|
|     | 8         | −477.53446 | −1.93791| 48.98880| −0.06879| −0.04855| 0.29785| −430.30 (17)| | |
|     |           | −759.77039 | −2.52632| 71.20390| −0.09396| −0.04163| 0.40916| −690.82 (31)| | |
|     | 9         | −997.72326 | −3.02103| 99.25705| −0.13744| −0.03076| 0.54619| −901.11 (53)| | |
|     |           | −997.72325 | −3.02103| 99.25705| −0.02129|           |        | −901.50 (12)| | |
| ν₀₂ | 2         | 1992.75043 | 2.00994| −0.50712| −0.00005| 0.00472| 0.00028| 1994.25820 | | (11)|
|     | 3         | 1150.27490 | −0.94285| −0.86460| −0.00005| −0.02216| 0.01483| 1148.46074 | | (41)|
|     |           | 1150.27491 | −0.94285| −0.86460| −0.02348|           |        | 1148.444 (2)| | |
|     | 4         | −384.65915 | −4.44824| −1.38963| −0.00006| −0.04539| 0.03204| −390.51042 | | (12)|
|     |           | −173.39253 | −7.32066| −2.39383| −0.00004| −0.05446| 0.04661| −1749.05090 | | (32)|
|     | 6         | −2838.55028 | −9.58033| −3.99545| 0.00001| −0.04868| 0.05688| −2852.11697 | | (77)|
|     |           | −3724.42192 | −11.37060| −6.24532| 0.00008| −0.02903| 0.06215| −3742.00516 | | (16)|
|     | 7         | −3724.42193 | −11.37060| −6.26342| −0.04190|           |        | −3742.113 (3)| | |
|     |           | −4445.63274 | −12.81245| −9.17416| 0.00017| 0.00327| 0.06207| −4667.55431 | | (31)|
|     | 9         | −5041.00923 | −13.99389| −12.79723| 0.00025| 0.04705| 0.05647| −5067.69755 | | (55)|
|     |           | −5539.33827 | −14.97737| −17.12441| 0.00038| 0.10127| 0.04523| −5571.29391 | | (91)|
|     | 10        | −5539.33827 | −14.97738| −17.14516| 0.07567|           |        | −5571.4 (12)| | |

intervals. The reason for this disagreement seems to be different for the large and the small intervals. For the large interval, the deviation is due to the recoil operator part, whereas for the small interval, it is mainly due to the mass polarization part (see discussion in Ref. [21]).

Our estimates of the uncalculated higher-order effects for helium are much larger than those in the previous studies [17, 18]. The previous estimates amounted to significantly less than 1 kHz for both intervals and were based on some logarithmic contributions to order mα⁴ that were identified by analogy with the hydrogen fine structure. We now believe that the dominant mα⁶ contribution might be of relativistic origin. Our estimates of ±1.7 kHz for both intervals were obtained by multiplying the mα⁴ contribution for the sum of ν₀₁ + ν₁₂ by the factor of (Zα)².

Our result for the ν₀₁ interval of helium agrees well with the experimental values [7, 24, 25]. For the ν₁₂ interval, our theory is by about 2σ away from the values obtained in Refs. [7, 26] but in agreement with the latest measurement by Hessels and coworkers [8]. Assuming the validity of the theory, we combine the theoretical prediction for the ν₀₁ interval in helium with the experimental result [7] and obtain the following value of the fine structure constant,

\[
\alpha^{-1}(\text{He}) = 137.036001 \pm (39)_{\text{theo}}(16)_{\text{exp}},
\]

which is accurate to 31 ppb and agrees with the more precise results of Refs. [27–29].

IV. RESULTS: HELIUM-LIKE IONS

Table II gives the summary of individual contributions to the fine-structure intervals of helium-like atoms with the nuclear charge number Z up to 10. We choose to present results for the intervals ν₀₁ and ν₀₂ = ν₀₁ + ν₁₂, and not for ν₀₁ and ν₁₂, as is customary. The reason to consider ν₀₂ is that this interval is free from effects of the 2⁳P₁ − 2¹P₁ mixing, which strongly affect the ν₀₁ and ν₁₂ intervals. As a result of the absence of the mixing effects, all corrections
to $\nu_{02}$ starting with the order of $ma^6$ demonstrate a weaker $Z$ dependence as compared to those to $\nu_{01}$ and $\nu_{12}$. The most drastic difference occurs for the $\alpha^6m^2/M$ correction: for $Z = 10$, this correction for $\nu_{02}$ is by 3 orders of magnitude smaller than that for $\nu_{01}$.

The uncertainty of the theoretical values specified in Table II is solely due to uncalculated higher-order effects. Its estimation for helium was already discussed. For helium-like ions, we obtain the uncertainty by multiplying the $ma^6$ contribution for the corresponding interval by the factor of $(Z\alpha)^2$. So, our error estimates are typically by a factor of $1/Z$ smaller for the $\nu_{02}$ interval than for the $\nu_{01}$ (or, equivalently, $\nu_{12}$) interval.

For $Z = 3, 7, \text{ and } 10$, Table II presents a term-by-term comparison with the previous calculation by Zhang et al. [12]. We observe excellent agreement for the $ma^4$ and $ma^5$ corrections. For the $ma^6$ correction, the agreement is excellent in all cases except for the $\nu_{02}$ interval and $Z = 7$ and 10, where a small deviation is present. The results of the two calculations for the $ma^7$ correction are different, but this is explained by the difference in the expressions for this term. If we use the same expression as in Ref. [12], excellent agreement is found again.

In Fig. 1 we plot our numerical results for the $ma^7$ correction as a function of the nuclear charge number $Z$, together with the fit of the $1/Z$ expansion and with the asymptotical high-$Z$ limit of this correction. The form of the $1/Z$ expansion and the values of the first coefficient(s) are known. For the $\nu_{02}$ interval, the leading term scales as $Z^6$ and is calculated for hydrogen in Ref. [30]. For the $\nu_{12}$ interval, there are additional $Z^7$ and $Z^6$ contributions due to the triplet-singlet mixing, which are obtained by expanding the following expression in $1/Z$,

$$\delta E_{\text{mix}} = \frac{\langle 2^1P_1 | H_6^{(4)} | 2^3P_1 \rangle^2}{E_0(2^3P_1) - E_0(2^1P_1)}.$$  

The resulting asymptotic form of the nonlogarithmic $ma^7$ correction is

$$\xi^{(7, \text{nlog})}(\nu_{01})/Z^7 = 0.004045 - 0.015524/Z + O(1/Z^2),$$

$$\xi^{(7, \text{nlog})}(\nu_{02})/Z^6 = -0.021706 + O(1/Z).$$

By fitting the $1/Z$ expansion of our numerical data for $\xi^{(7, \text{nlog})}$, we were able to reproduce well the values of the coefficients given above, which served as an important check of our calculations.

![FIG. 1: Nonlogarithmic $ma^7$ correction to the fine-structure intervals of helium-like atoms, for the $\nu_{01}$ interval (left) and for the $\nu_{02}$ interval (right). Black dots denote the numerical results, solid line stands for the fit of the $1/Z$ expansion, and the dashed (red) line indicates the asymptotic high-$Z$ results. Note that the results in different graphs are scaled by different factors. It is $Z^7$ for the $\nu_{01}$ interval and $Z^6$, for $\nu_{02}$. The different $Z$ scaling is the consequence of the triplet-singlet mixing effects.](image-url)
TABLE III: Comparison of theoretical and experimental results for the fine-structure intervals of helium-like ions. Units are MHz for Li$^+$ and cm$^{-1}$ for other atoms.

| $Z$ | Present theory | Experiment | Ref. |
|-----|----------------|------------|------|
| $\nu_{01}$ | | | |
| 3 | 155.704.58(48) | 155.704.27(66) | [33] |
| 4 | 11.557.756(33) | 11.558.6(5) | [34] |
| 5 | 16.198.21(29) | 16.203(18) | [35] |
| 7 | $-8.673.1(67)$ | $-8.670.7(7)$ | [31] |
| 8 | $-58.791(23)$ | $-59.2(1.1)$ | [36] |
| 10 | $-300.58(18)$ | $-300.7(2.2)$ | [36] |
| $\nu_{02}$ | | | |
| 9 | $-957.886(79)$ | $-957.873.0(12)$ | [32] |
| $\nu_{12}$ | | | |
| 3 | 93.025.266(34) | 93.025.86(61) | [33] |
| 4 | $-3.334.663(10)$ | $-3.336.4(5)$ | [34] |
| 5 | $-36.463.787(66)$ | $-36.457(16)$ | [35] |
| 8 | $-610.392.3(42)$ | $-611.3(7)$ | [36] |
| 10 | $-1858.383(30)$ | $-1858.3(1.5)$ | [36] |

unfortunate that there are no experimental results with comparable accuracy available for the $\nu_{02}$ interval. Since $\nu_{02}$ is not affected by the triplet-singlet mixing effects, accurate experimental results for this interval in light helium-like ions would yield an improved estimate for the uncalculated higher-order effects in helium, thus increasing accuracy of determination of $\alpha$ from the helium fine structure.

Comparing theoretical and experimental results for the fine structure of helium-like ions, one should keep in mind that the present calculation is carried out for a spinless nucleus, whereas the experimental results listed in Table III were performed for non-zero nuclear spin isotopes. For a nucleus with spin, the hyperfine splitting can usually be evaluated separately and employed for an experimental determination of the fine structure. This procedure, however, ignores the mixing between the hyperfine and the fine splittings. So, more accurate calculations should account for both effects simultaneously.

In summary, the theory of the fine structure of helium and light helium-like ions is now complete up to orders $m \alpha^7$ and $\alpha^8 m^2/M$. Theoretical predictions agree with the latest experimental results for helium, as well as with most of the experimental data for light helium-like ions. A combination of the theoretical and experimental results for the $2^3P_0 - 2^3P_1$ interval in helium yields an independent determination of the fine structure constant $\alpha$ accurate to 31 ppb.

Support by NIST through Precision Measurement Grant PMG 60NANB7D6153 and by the Helmholtz Gemeinschaft (Nachwuchsgruppe VH-NG-421) is gratefully acknowledged.

[1] C. Schwartz, Phys. Rev. 134, A1181 (1964).
[2] M. Douglas and N. Kroll, Ann. Phys. (NY) 82, 89 (1974).
[3] L. Hambro, Phys. Rev. A 5, 2027 (1972).
[4] L. Hambro, Phys. Rev. A 6, 865 (1972).
[5] L. Hambro, Phys. Rev. A 7, 479 (1973).
[6] M. L. Lewis and P. H. Serafini, Phys. Rev. A 18, 867 (1978).
[7] T. Zelevinsky, D. Farkas, and G. Gabrielse, Phys. Rev. Lett. 95, 203001 (2005).
[8] J. S. Borbely, M. C. George, L. D. Lombardi, M. Weel, D. W. Fitzakerley, and E. A. Hessels, Phys. Rev. A 79, 0605030(R) (2009).
[9] Z.-C. Yan and G. W. F. Drake, Phys. Rev. Lett. 74, 4791 (1995).
[10] T. Zhang, Phys. Rev. A 54, 1252 (1996).
[11] T. Zhang, Phys. Rev. A 53, 3896 (1996).
[12] T. Zhang, Z.-C. Yan, and G. W. F. Drake, Phys. Rev. Lett. 77, 1715 (1996).
[13] T. Zhang and G. W. F. Drake, Phys. Rev. A 54, 4882 (1996).
[14] T. Zhang, Phys. Rev. A 56, 270 (1997).
[15] K. Pachucki, J. Phys. B 32, 137 (1999).
K. Pachucki and J. Sapirstein, J. Phys. B 33, 5297 (2000).
K. Pachucki and J. Sapirstein, J. Phys. B 35, 1783 (2002).
G. W. F. Drake, Can. J. Phys. 80, 1195 (2002).
K. Pachucki and J. Sapirstein, J. Phys. B 36, 803 (2003).
K. Pachucki, Phys. Rev. Lett. 97, 013002 (2006).
K. Pachucki and V. A. Yerokhin, Phys. Rev. A 79, 062516 (2009) [ibid. 80, 019902(E) (2009); ibid. 81, 039903(E) (2010)].
K. Pachucki and V. A. Yerokhin, Phys. Rev. Lett. 104, 070403 (2010).
P. J. Mohr, B. N. Taylor, and D. B. Newell, Rev. Mod. Phys. 80, 633 (2008).
G. Giusfredi, P. C. Pastor, P. D. Natale, D. Mazzotti, C. de Mauro, L. Fallani, G. Hagel, V. Krachmalnicoff, and M. Inguscio, Can. J. Phys. 83, 301 (2005).
M. C. George, L. D. Lombardi, and E. A. Hessels, Phys. Rev. Lett. 87, 173002 (2001).
J. Castilleja, D. Livingston, A. Sanders, and D. Shiner, Phys. Rev. Lett. 84, 4321 (2000).
D. Hanneke, S. Fogwell, and G. Gabrielse, Phys. Rev. Lett. 100, 120801 (2008).
M. Cadoret, E. de Mirandes, P. Cladé, S. Guellati-Khélifa, C. Schwob, F. Nez, L. Julien, and F. Biraben, Phys. Rev. Lett. 101, 230801 (2008).
A.-M. Jeffrey, R. E. Elmquist, L. H. Lee, and R. F. Dziuba, IEEE Trans. Inst. Meas. 46, 264 (1997).
U. Jentschura and K. Pachucki, Phys. Rev. A 54, 1853 (1996).
J. K. Thompson, D. J. H. Howie, and E. G. Myers, Phys. Rev. A 57, 180 (1998).
E. G. Myers, H. S. Margolis, J. K. Thompson, M. A. Farmer, J. D. Silver, and M. R. Tarbutt, Phys. Rev. Lett. 82, 4200 (1999).
E. Riis, A. G. Sinclair, O. Poulsen, G. W. F. Drake, W. R. C. Rowley, and A. P. Levick, Phys. Rev. A 49, 207 (1994).
T. J. Scholl, R. Cameron, S. D. Rosner, L. Zhang, R. A. Holt, C. J. Sansonetti, and J. D. Gillaspy, Phys. Rev. Lett. 71, 2188 (1993).
T. P. Dinneen, N. Berrah-Mansour, H. G. Berry, L. Young, and R. C. Pardo, Phys. Rev. Lett. 66, 2859 (1991).
N. J. Peacock, M. F. Stamp, and J. D. Silver, Phys. Scr. T8, 10 (1984).