

6. (Classical Mechanics)

Consider a field $\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t)$; $\mathbf{r} = x, y, z$, which obeys the following equation of motion:

$$\frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial t^2} - c^2 \nabla^2 \Psi = V(z)\Psi - (\operatorname{sech} \Psi) (\tanh \Psi)$$

where $V(z)$ is a real function of z , and c is a constant.

- (a) Write down a Lagrangian density $\mathcal{L}(\Psi)$ whose variation (when set equal to zero) yields the above equation of motion for the field $\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t)$.
- (b) Consider the energy and momentum of the field $\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t)$. Which of these quantities is conserved and why?
- (c) Write down the law for the time development of the energy density for this field theory.

Solution:*Solution by Jonah Hyman (jthyman@g.ucla.edu)*

In general, it is easier to handle classical field theory using the notation of special relativity. For those unfamiliar with that notation, though, we provide two solutions: one in special relativistic notation and one in more elementary notation.

Special relativistic notation:

We use the following conventions:

$$\partial_\mu \equiv \left(\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial}{\partial t}, \nabla \right) \quad \text{and} \quad \eta_{\mu\nu} \equiv \text{diag}(+1, -1, -1, -1) \quad (199)$$

(a) The equation of motion can be written as

$$c^2 \partial^\mu \partial_\mu \Psi = V(z) \Psi - (\text{sech } \Psi) (\tanh \Psi) \quad (200)$$

One way or another, you need to come up with the following ansatz for the Lagrangian density:

$$\mathcal{L} = A \partial^\mu \Psi \partial_\mu \Psi + Q(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \quad (201)$$

where A is an undetermined constant and $Q(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t)$ is an undetermined function. Here is how to come up with this ansatz:

- If you have some experience with the Klein-Gordon Lagrangian, you might already know that a term in the Lagrangian of the form $\partial^\mu \Psi \partial_\mu \Psi$ produces a term in the equation of motion of the form $\partial^\mu \partial_\mu \Psi$.
- If you don't, you might remember the process of finding the equation of motion by taking the variation of the action. That process involves integration by parts, so a term in the Lagrangian of the form $\partial^\mu \Psi \partial_\mu \Psi$ would produce a term in the equation of motion of the form $\partial^\mu \partial_\mu \Psi$.
- Otherwise, you might know the formula for the Euler-Lagrange equation

$$\partial_\mu \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_\mu \Psi)} \right) - \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \Psi} = 0 \quad (202)$$

which clarifies that a term in the Lagrangian of the form $\partial^\mu \Psi \partial_\mu \Psi$ would produce a term in the equation of motion of the form $\partial^\mu \partial_\mu \Psi$.

Now that we have the ansatz (201), we can match the given equation of motion (200) to the Euler-Lagrange equation derived from the ansatz (201) by variation of the action and integration by parts:

$$\begin{aligned} \delta S &= \delta \left(\int d^4x \mathcal{L} \right) \\ &= \delta \left(\int d^4x [A \partial^\mu \Psi \partial_\mu \Psi + Q(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t)] \right) \\ &= \int d^4x [2A \partial^\mu \Psi \partial_\mu (\delta \Psi) + Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \delta \Psi] \quad \text{where } Q' \equiv \frac{\partial Q}{\partial \Psi} \\ &= \int d^4x [-2A \partial^\mu \partial_\mu \Psi \delta \Psi + Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \delta \Psi] + \text{boundary term} \\ &= \int d^4x [-2A \partial^\mu \partial_\mu \Psi + Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t)] \delta \Psi + \text{boundary term} \end{aligned} \quad (203)$$

We may ignore the boundary term. To get the classical solution for Ψ , we set $\delta S = 0$ for all possible values of $\delta \Psi$, which gives us

$$2A \partial^\mu \partial_\mu \Psi = Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \quad \text{where } Q' \equiv \frac{\partial Q}{\partial \Psi} \quad (204)$$

Alternatively, we can use the formula for the Euler-Lagrange equation (202) to get

$$\begin{aligned}\partial_\mu \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_\mu \Psi)} \right) &= \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \Psi} \\ \partial_\mu (2A \partial^\mu \Psi) &= Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \\ 2A \partial^\mu \partial_\mu \Psi &= Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \quad \text{where } Q' \equiv \frac{\partial Q}{\partial \Psi}\end{aligned}\tag{205}$$

Either way, matching the calculated Euler-Lagrange equation to the equation of motion (200), we get

$$A = \frac{c^2}{2} \quad \text{and} \quad Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) = V(z)\Psi - (\operatorname{sech} \Psi)(\tanh \Psi)\tag{206}$$

Taking the antiderivative of Q' to get Q requires knowing that

$$(\sinh x)' = \cosh x \quad \text{and} \quad (\cosh x)' = \sinh x\tag{207}$$

Note that unlike the analogous trigonometric identities, the hyperbolic trigonometric identities don't have a minus sign. We can use this information to write the antiderivative of $(\operatorname{sech} \Psi)(\tanh \Psi)$:

$$(\operatorname{sech} \Psi)(\tanh \Psi) = \frac{\sinh \Psi}{\cosh^2 \Psi} = \left(-\frac{1}{\cosh \Psi} \right)' = (-\operatorname{sech} \Psi)'\tag{208}$$

Thus, ignoring the integration constant, we can write

$$Q = \frac{1}{2}V(z)\Psi^2 + \operatorname{sech} \Psi\tag{209}$$

Therefore, putting everything together using our ansatz (201), we can write one form of the Lagrangian density:

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{c^2}{2} \partial^\mu \Psi \partial_\mu \Psi + \frac{1}{2}V(z)\Psi^2 + \operatorname{sech} \Psi = \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)^2 - \frac{c^2}{2} (\nabla \Psi)^2 + \frac{1}{2}V(z)\Psi^2 + \operatorname{sech} \Psi\tag{210}$$

We can add any total derivative (including a constant) to the Lagrangian density without changing the equation of motion, and we can multiply the Lagrangian density by any constant without changing the equation of motion.

- (b) In the form we have written it, the Lagrangian density has no explicit time dependence. Therefore, the energy of the field $\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t)$ is conserved.

In the form we have written it, the Lagrangian density has no explicit dependence on the coordinates x or y . Therefore, the momentum of the field $\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t)$ in the x -direction and in the y -direction, i.e., P_x and P_y , are conserved.

The Lagrangian density explicitly depends on z because of the potential $V(z)$, and such dependence cannot be eliminated by adding a total derivative to the Lagrangian. Therefore, the momentum of the field $\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t)$ in the z -direction is not conserved.

- (c) You might already know (or have on your formula sheet) the definition of the energy-momentum tensor:

$$T^\mu{}_\nu \equiv \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_\mu \Psi)} \partial_\nu \Psi - \delta^\mu{}_\nu \mathcal{L}\tag{211}$$

Assuming that the Lagrangian density is independent of x_ν , the 4-divergence of this tensor is zero:

$$\partial_\mu T^\mu{}_\nu = 0\tag{212}$$

If you didn't know this result, you could derive it using the following argument: Suppose that \mathcal{L} does not explicitly depend on the coordinate x^ν . Then, the partial derivative of \mathcal{L} with respect to x^ν depends only on the dependence of the fields Ψ and their derivatives on x^ν . Applying the chain rule, we get

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial x^\nu} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_\mu \Psi)} \partial_\nu (\partial_\mu \Psi) + \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \Psi} \partial_\nu \Psi$$

Now, integrating the first term on the right-hand side by parts and keeping the boundary term, we get

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial x^\nu} = \partial_\mu \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_\mu \Psi)} \partial_\nu \Psi \right) - \partial_\mu \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_\mu \Psi)} \right) \partial_\nu \Psi + \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \Psi} \partial_\nu \Psi$$

By the Euler-Lagrange equation, $\partial_\mu \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_\mu \Psi)} \right) - \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \Psi} = 0$, so the last two terms cancel:

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial x^\nu} = \partial_\mu \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_\mu \Psi)} \partial_\nu \Psi \right)$$

Writing $\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial x^\nu} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x^\mu} (\delta^\mu{}_\nu \mathcal{L})$ and simplifying, this becomes

$$\partial_\mu \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_\mu \Psi)} \partial_\nu \Psi - \delta^\mu{}_\nu \mathcal{L} \right) = 0 \quad (213)$$

This is equal to $\partial_\mu T^\mu{}_\nu = 0$ after we apply the definition of the energy-momentum tensor (211). Breaking up $\partial_\mu T^\mu{}_\nu = 0$ into a sum of spatial and time components, we get

$$0 = \partial_\mu T^\mu{}_\nu = \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial T^0{}_\nu}{\partial t} + \sum_{i=1}^3 \partial_i T^i{}_\nu \quad (214)$$

The law for the time dependence of the energy is the component of this equation with $\mu = 0$:

$$0 = \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial T^0{}_0}{\partial t} + \sum_{i=1}^3 \partial_i T^i{}_0 \quad (215)$$

Using the definition (211) and the fact that $\partial_\mu \equiv \left(\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial}{\partial t}, \nabla \right)$, we get that

$$T^0{}_0 = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} - \mathcal{L} \quad \text{and} \quad T^i{}_0 = \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \quad (216)$$

so (215) becomes (after canceling a factor of $1/c$) a continuity equation for the energy density:

$$0 = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \underbrace{\left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} - \mathcal{L} \right)}_{\text{energy density}} + \nabla \cdot \underbrace{\left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)}_{\text{energy current density}} \quad (217)$$

Plugging in our Lagrangian from part (a) (210), we get that the energy density is

$$\begin{aligned} u &\equiv \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} - \mathcal{L} \\ &= \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} - \left(\frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)^2 - \frac{c^2}{2} (\nabla \Psi)^2 + \frac{1}{2} V(z) \Psi^2 + \text{sech } \Psi \right) \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)^2 + \frac{c^2}{2} (\nabla \Psi)^2 - \frac{1}{2} V(z) \Psi^2 - \text{sech } \Psi \end{aligned} \quad (218)$$

and that the energy current density is

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{S} &\equiv \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial(\nabla\Psi)} \frac{\partial\Psi}{\partial t} \\ &= -c^2 \nabla\Psi \frac{\partial\Psi}{\partial t}\end{aligned}$$

Thus, the law for the time development of the energy density u of this theory is

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \left(-c^2 \nabla\Psi \frac{\partial\Psi}{\partial t} \right) = 0 \quad \text{for} \quad u \equiv \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\partial\Psi}{\partial t} \right)^2 + \frac{c^2}{2} (\nabla\Psi)^2 - \frac{1}{2} V(z)\Psi^2 - \text{sech } \Psi \quad (219)$$

Nonrelativistic notation:

(a) The equation of motion is given by

$$\frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial t^2} - c^2 \nabla^2 \Psi = V(z)\Psi - (\text{sech } \Psi) (\tanh \Psi) \quad (220)$$

One way or another, you need to come up with the following ansatz for the Lagrangian density:

$$\mathcal{L} = B \left(\frac{\partial\Psi}{\partial t} \right)^2 + C(\nabla\Psi)^2 + Q(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \quad (221)$$

where B and C are an undetermined constants and $Q(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t)$ is an undetermined function. Here is how to come up with this ansatz:

- You might remember the process of finding the equation of motion by taking the variation of the action. That process involves integration by parts, so a term in the Lagrangian of the form $\left(\frac{\partial\Psi}{\partial t}\right)^2$ would produce a term in the equation of motion of the form $\frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial t^2}$, and a term in the Lagrangian of the form $(\nabla\Psi)^2$ would produced a term in the equation of motion of the form $\nabla^2 \Psi$.
- Otherwise, you might know the formula for the Euler-Lagrange equation

$$\partial_t \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial(\partial_t \Psi)} \right) + \nabla \cdot \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial(\nabla \Psi)} \right) - \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \Psi} = 0 \quad (222)$$

This clarifies that a term in the Lagrangian of the form $\left(\frac{\partial\Psi}{\partial t}\right)^2$ would produce a term in the equation of motion of the form $\frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial t^2}$, and a term in the Lagrangian of the form $(\nabla\Psi)^2$ would produced a term in the equation of motion of the form $\nabla^2 \Psi$.

Now that we have the ansatz (221), we can match the given equation of motion (220) to the Euler-Lagrange equation derived from the ansatz (221) by variation of the action and integration

by parts:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \delta S &= \delta \left(\int d^4x \mathcal{L} \right) \\
 &= \delta \left(\int d^4x \left[B \left(\frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)^2 + C (\nabla \Psi)^2 + Q(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \right] \right) \\
 &= \int d^4x \left[2B \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \frac{\partial}{\partial t} (\delta \Psi) + 2C \nabla \Psi \cdot \nabla (\delta \Psi) + Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \delta \Psi \right] \quad \text{where } Q' \equiv \frac{\partial Q}{\partial \Psi} \\
 &= \int d^4x \left[-2B \frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial t^2} \delta \Psi - 2C \nabla^2 \Psi \delta \Psi + Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \delta \Psi \right] + \text{boundary term} \\
 &= \int d^4x \left[-2B \frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial t^2} - 2C \nabla^2 \Psi + Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \right] \delta \Psi + \text{boundary term} \tag{223}
 \end{aligned}$$

We may ignore the boundary term. To get the classical solution for Ψ , we set $\delta S = 0$ for all possible values of $\delta \Psi$, which gives us

$$2B \frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial t^2} + 2C \nabla^2 \Psi = Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \quad \text{where } Q' \equiv \frac{\partial Q}{\partial \Psi} \tag{224}$$

Alternatively, we can use the formula for the Euler-Lagrange equation (222) to get

$$\begin{aligned}
 \partial_t \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} \right) + \nabla \cdot \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \right) &= \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \Psi} \\
 \partial_t \left(2B \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right) + \nabla \cdot (2C \nabla \Psi) &= Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \\
 2B \frac{\partial^2 \Psi}{\partial t^2} + 2C \nabla^2 \Psi &= Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) \quad \text{where } Q' \equiv \frac{\partial Q}{\partial \Psi} \tag{225}
 \end{aligned}$$

Either way, matching the calculated Euler-Lagrange equation to the equation of motion (220), we get

$$B = \frac{1}{2}; \quad C = -\frac{c^2}{2}; \quad Q'(\Psi, \mathbf{r}, t) = V(z)\Psi - (\text{sech } \Psi)(\tanh \Psi) \tag{226}$$

Taking the antiderivative of Q' to get Q requires knowing that

$$(\sinh x)' = \cosh x \quad \text{and} \quad (\cosh x)' = \sinh x \tag{227}$$

Note that unlike the analogous trigonometric identities, the hyperbolic trigonometric identities don't have a minus sign. We can use this information to write the antiderivative of $(\text{sech } \Psi)(\tanh \Psi)$:

$$(\text{sech } \Psi)(\tanh \Psi) = \frac{\sinh \Psi}{\cosh^2 \Psi} = \left(-\frac{1}{\cosh \Psi} \right)' = (-\text{sech } \Psi)' \tag{228}$$

Thus, ignoring the integration constant, we can write

$$Q = \frac{1}{2} V(z) \Psi^2 + \text{sech } \Psi \tag{229}$$

Therefore, putting everything together using our ansatz (221), we can write one form of the Lagrangian density:

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)^2 - \frac{c^2}{2} (\nabla \Psi)^2 + \frac{1}{2} V(z) \Psi^2 + \text{sech } \Psi \tag{230}$$

We can add any total derivative (including a constant) to the Lagrangian density without changing the equation of motion, and we can multiply the Lagrangian density by any constant without changing the equation of motion.

- (b) In the form we have written it, the Lagrangian density has no explicit time dependence. Therefore, the energy of the field $\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t)$ is conserved.

In the form we have written it, the Lagrangian density has no explicit dependence on the coordinates x or y . Therefore, the momentum of the field $\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t)$ in the x -direction and in the y -direction, i.e., P_x and P_y , are conserved.

The Lagrangian density explicitly depends on z because of the potential $V(z)$, and such dependence cannot be eliminated by adding a total derivative to the Lagrangian. Therefore, the momentum of the field $\Psi(\mathbf{r}, t)$ in the z -direction is not conserved.

- (c) You might already know (or have on your formula sheet) the energy continuity equation:

$$0 = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \underbrace{\left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} - \mathcal{L} \right)}_{\text{energy density}} + \nabla \cdot \underbrace{\left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)}_{\text{energy current density}} \quad (231)$$

If you didn't know this result, you could derive it using the following argument: Suppose that \mathcal{L} does not explicitly depend on the coordinate t . Then, the partial derivative of \mathcal{L} with respect to t depends only on the dependence of the fields Ψ and their derivatives on t . Applying the chain rule, we get

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} \partial_t (\partial_t \Psi) + \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \cdot \nabla (\partial_t \Psi) + \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \Psi} \partial_t \Psi$$

Now, integrating the first two terms on the right-hand side by parts and keeping the boundary term, we get

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} \partial_t \Psi \right) + \nabla \cdot \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \cdot \partial_t \Psi \right) - \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} \right) \partial_t \Psi - \nabla \cdot \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \right) \partial_t \Psi + \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \Psi} \partial_t \Psi$$

By the Euler-Lagrange equation, $\partial_t \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} \right) + \nabla \cdot \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \right) - \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \Psi} = 0$, so the last three terms cancel:

$$\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} \partial_t \Psi \right) + \nabla \cdot \left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \cdot \partial_t \Psi \right)$$

Simplifying, this becomes

$$0 = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \underbrace{\left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} - \mathcal{L} \right)}_{\text{energy density}} + \nabla \cdot \underbrace{\left(\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)}_{\text{energy current density}} \quad (232)$$

Plugging in our Lagrangian from part (a) (230), we get that the energy density is

$$\begin{aligned} u &\equiv \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\partial_t \Psi)} - \mathcal{L} \\ &= \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} - \left(\frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)^2 - \frac{c^2}{2} (\nabla \Psi)^2 + \frac{1}{2} V(z) \Psi^2 + \text{sech } \Psi \right) \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)^2 + \frac{c^2}{2} (\nabla \Psi)^2 - \frac{1}{2} V(z) \Psi^2 - \text{sech } \Psi \end{aligned} \quad (233)$$

and that the energy current density is

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{S} &\equiv \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial (\nabla \Psi)} \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \\ &= -c^2 \nabla \Psi \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t}\end{aligned}$$

Thus, the law for the time development of the energy density u of this theory is

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \left(-c^2 \nabla \Psi \frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right) = 0 \quad \text{for} \quad u \equiv \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial t} \right)^2 + \frac{c^2}{2} (\nabla \Psi)^2 - \frac{1}{2} V(z) \Psi^2 - \text{sech } \Psi \quad (234)$$