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page 149

ON UNITARY REPRESENTATIONS OF THE INHOMOGENEOUS LORENTZ GROUP*

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1. ORIGIN AND CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PROBLEM

It is perhaps the most fundamental principle of Quantum Mechanics that the system of states forms a *linear manifold*,[1] in which a unitary *scalar product* is defined.[2] The states are generally represented by wave functions[3] in such a way that φ and constant multiples of φ represent the same physical state. It is possible, therefore, to normalize the wave function, i.e., to multiply it by a constant factor such that its scalar product with itself becomes 1. Then, only a constant factor of modulus 1, the so-called phase, will be left undetermined in the wave function. The linear character of the wave function is called the superposition principle. The square of the modulus of the unitary scalar product (ψ, φ) of two normalized wave functions ψ and φ is called the transition probability from the state ψ into φ, or conversely. This is supposed to give the probability that an experiment performed on a system in the state φ, to see whether or not the state is ψ, gives the result that it is ψ. If there are two or more different experiments to decide this (e.g., essentially the same experiment,

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[1] The possibility of a future non linear character of the quantum mechanics must be admitted, of course. An indication in this direction is given by the theory of the positron, as developed by P. A. M. Dirac (Proc. Camb. Phil. Soc. *30*, 150, 1934, cf. also W. Heisenberg, Zeits. f. Phys. *90*, 209, 1934; *92*, 623, 1934; W. Heisenberg and H. Euler, ibid. *98*, 714, 1936 and R. Serber, Phys. Rev. *48*, 49, 1935; *49*, 545, 1936) which does not use wave functions and is a non linear theory.

[2] Cf. P. A. M. Dirac, *The Principles of Quantum Mechanics*, Oxford 1935, Chapters I and II; J. v. Neumann, *Mathematische Grundlagen der Quantenmechanik*, Berlin 1932, pages 19–24.

[3] The wave functions represent throughout this paper states in the sense of the "Heisenberg picture," i.e. a single wave function represents the state for all past and future. On the other hand, the operator which refers to a measurement at a certain time t contains this t as a parameter. (Cf. e.g. Dirac, l.c. ref. 2, pages 115–123). One obtains the wave function $\varphi_s(t)$ of the Schrödinger picture from the wave function φ_H of the Heisenberg picture by $\varphi_s(t) = \exp(-iHt/\hbar)\varphi_H$ The operator of the Heisenberg picture is $Q(t) = \exp(iHt/\hbar)\,Q\exp(-iHt/\hbar)$, where Q is the operator in the Schrödinger picture which does not depend on time. Cf. also E. Schrödinger, Sitz. d. Kön. Preuss. Akad. p. 418, 1930.

The wave functions are complex quantities and the undetermined factors in them are complex also. Recently attempts have been made toward a theory with real wave functions. Cf. E. Majorana, Nuovo Cim. *14*, 171, 1937 and P. A. M. Dirac, in print.