Trajectories without quantum uncertainties

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Published in:
Annalen der Physik

DOI:
10.1002/andp.201400099

Publication date:
2015

Document version
Publisher’s PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):

Download date: 29. nov., 2020
Quantum uncertainties set by the Heisenberg uncertainty principle determine fundamental limits on measurement precision. With rapid developments of sensitivity of measurements these limits have been approached in various types of measurements including measurements of fields, time, acceleration, and position. It is commonly accepted that the balance between the amount of information obtained from the measurement and the back action of the measurement can be at best balanced such that they result in the standard quantum limit of the position measurement [1–5]. Ideas for circumventing this limit have been put forward based on frequency-dependent squeezing [6], variational measurement [7], the use of Kerr media [8], dual mechanical resonators [9, 10], the optical spring effect [11], stroboscopic measurements [5], or two-tone measurements [1, 2, 12–14]. However, all those approaches are limited to measurements of a single quadrature operator of a system and hence are intrinsically limited to measurements of a signal in a single quadrature of the field to be measured which implies that the phase of the signal needs to be known in advance. In practice the phase of the signal needs to be measured which implies that the uncertainties of position and its conjugate variable, momentum, have to fulfill at any time $\Delta x \Delta p \geq \hbar / 2$ as a consequence of the canonical commutator $[X, P] = i\hbar$. This does not of course forbid that the position takes on an arbitrarily sharp value at a particular instant time, provided the momentum is totally blurred at the same moment. Such a squeezed state of motion has been demonstrated for a massive harmonic oscillator in the form of a trapped ion [23].

We base our discussion on three principles. First, we state that a trajectory should be defined with respect to some physical origin. Second, we treat this physical origin as a quantum object. Finally, we allow this object to have an effectively negative mass. Under these three conditions the trajectory defined with respect to this origin can be known to arbitrary precision at any time. Besides being of fundamental interest, this approach opens the way towards force and acceleration measurements at new levels of sensitivity.

In this paper we show how using the entangled state of a positive and a negative mass oscillator one can predict the quantum trajectory of the magnetic or mechanical oscillator measured relatively to a specially chosen origin with, in principle, arbitrarily low uncertainty. Our goal is to develop an intuitive physical picture for this new approach towards metrology below the standard quantum limit, and to illustrate it on the basis of the measurements reported in [15].

A new approach to back action cancellation has been demonstrated in Wasilewski et al. [15] where a carefully engineered quantum measurement on two entangled spin systems has led to partial cancelation of the quantum noise of measurement for a sensor of magnetic fields. The basis for this approach has been an experimental demonstration of an Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) state of two atomic spin oscillators [16], one of which has an effective negative mass. Such an entangled EPR state can also be created in a hybrid system involving a nano-mechanical oscillator and an atomic spin ensemble with an effective negative mass [17]. A general theoretical frame for such an approach has been very recently formulated [18, 19]. Following these works, proposals for back action evading measurements employing a Bose-Einstein-condensate [20] or a two-tone drive [21] to realize an oscillator with an effective negative mass have been put forward, and the all-optical implementation suggested in [18, 19] has been studied further [22].

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quantum particle cannot be known to arbitrary precision for arbitrary times, as further explained in Fig. 1.

Fortunately there is a quantum trick which can be played to fight the quantum conspiracy. Note first that the measurement of a position $X$ necessarily is the measurement of a relative distance $X - X_0$ between the particle and the origin at $X_0$. Whereas usually this point of reference is taken to be a classical object, we consider a quantum reference frame [24, 25]. This point of reference is considered as a quantum degree of freedom on equal footing with the variable of the system to be measured, such that $[X_0, P_0] = i\hbar$. That is to say, measurement and knowledge of the position of a particle always implicitly refers to a relative distance $X - X_0$ between two systems. Assume now that this relative position is measured at time $t = 0$. The relative position at future times assuming a free evolution is then given by $X(t) - X_0(t) = X(0) - X_0(0) + i[\{P(0) - P_0(0)\}] / m$. Assume now that the “quantum origin” is a very special sort of particle, namely one with a negative mass, the physics of which will be detailed below. Moreover, let the mass be of equal magnitude as the one of the particle to be measured but of opposite sign, $m_0 = -m$. Under this assumption the free evolution of the relative position is

$$X(t) - X_0(t) = X(0) - X_0(0) + i[\{P(0) - P_0(0)\}] / m. \quad (1)$$

Nota bene, the relative position now couples to the sum of the momenta $P + P_0$. This is an important point because those are commuting quantities, $[X - X_0, P + P_0] = 0$, such that they can be known simultaneously with arbitrary precision. The states which possess negative reduced – or even vanishing – variances of relative position and sum of momenta are entangled states of two systems, and coincide with the states considered in the famous Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen argument on the ostensible incompleteness of quantum theory [26]. In order to simplify notations in the following discussion we will assume that the position and momentum variables $X$, $X_0$ and $P$, $P_0$ can be scaled such as to be dimensionless. Therefore, we assume

a canonical commutator $[X, P] = [X_0, P_0] = i$ which implies that the variance of each of these canonical variables equals $1/2$ for uncorrelated minimum uncertainty states, that is zero point fluctuations. In this convention, the degree of entanglement of an Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen state can be characterized by the so-called EPR variance $\Delta_{EPR} = \text{Var}(X - X_0) + \text{Var}(P + P_0) < 2$ [27, 28]. Making an extra crucial assumption of the negative mass of one of the two EPR entangled particles (serving as a quantum reference frame) allows the relative position to be known to arbitrary precision at all times. Note that generation of an EPR entangled state between a particle and the origin particle with a regular positive effective mass leads to the same uncertainty of the relative position as in the case of a classical origin system (Fig. 1).

We can determine $X - X_0$ in principle but can we actually learn about the relative position without disturbing it? As discussed above, if we measure by some means the relative position $X - X_0$ we will necessarily disturb the conjugate variable, that is $P - P_0$. But this variable does not couple to the relative position at later times in case of the negative mass origin particle, see Eq. (1). The back action effect of the measurement therefore cannot spoil the knowledge we acquired about the relative position. Under the conditions considered here the relative position can thus be known and measured to any desired accuracy at any time. Since a relative position is all we can ask for we conclude that it is possible to have quantum trajectories without quantum uncertainties. Accordingly, any signal (of a field or force) leaving its trace in the position or momentum of either of the two oscillators can in principle be sensed without quantum limits through repeated measurements of
Consider now a repeated or
time-continuous measurement
of the relative position \(X - X_0\).
If the backaction noise is can-
celled the strength of the meter
can be increased indefinitely and
hence the meter noise contribution
can be negligible. In this case the
relative coordinate and moment-
num for the two oscillators can be
measured arbitrarily well. The pre-
cision of this measurement is given
by the entanglement condition
\(\text{Var}(X - X_0) + \text{Var}(P + P_0) < 2\).
The equality achieved for uncorrelated
systems in a pure state corresponds
to two units of vacuum noise
\(\text{Var}(X - X_0) = \text{Var}(P + P_0) = 1\).
This benchmark exactly corresponds to
the optimal performance attain-
able in conventional, back action
non-evading measurement: There
the optimal balance between meter
and back action noise achieved at
the standard quantum limit con-
sists of one unit due to the system
uncertainty, half a unit due to the
meter uncertainty and another half
unit due to the measurement back-
action, that is two units of vacuum
noise in total [29, 30]. In the partic-
ular back-action evading scheme
suggested here a measurement
sensitivity below the SQL implies
entanglement of the two posi-
tive and negative mass oscillators
employed as sensors.

1 Noiseless trajectory for an oscillator
The same logic just discussed for free
particles applies also to oscillators.
The time dynamics of a harmonic
oscillator is given by \(X(t) = X(0)\)
\(\cos(\omega t) + P(0)\sin(\omega t)\) and \(P(t) =
\(P(0)\cos(\omega t) - X(0)\sin(\omega t)\)
where we refer again to dimensionless
position and momentum variables.

Again, exact knowledge of \(X(0)\)
corresponding to the squeezed state
of the oscillator at \(t = 0\) leads to
the trajectory which is very noisy
at \(t \neq 2\pi/\omega, 4\pi/\omega\ldots\) due to
the quantum noise of backaction of
the measurement of \(X(0)\) imposed
on \(P(0)\). As for a free particle, an
entangled EPR state between the
oscillator of interest and a refer-
ence oscillator leads to a noiseless
trajectory provided that the refer-
tence oscillator has an effectively
negative mass. Indeed, in this case
\(X(t) - X_0(t) = [X(0) - X_0(0)]\)
\(\cos(\omega t) + [P(0) + P_0(0)]\sin(\omega t)\).
The commuting operators \(X(0) - X_0(0)\)
and \(P(0) + P_0(0)\) can be known
exactly and hence \(X(t) - X_0(t)\) can
be also known exactly at any given
time.

As a specific example of two en-
tangled oscillators of which one can
exhibit a negative mass we provide
an illustration in terms of mag-
etic oscillators realized in atomic
ensembles. Consider two collec-
tive magnetic moments (spins) of
atomic ensembles [31] in a magnetic
field, see Fig. 2. One of the oscilla-
tors is oriented along the B-field and
hence precesses clockwise when
seen along its own mean orientation
\(J_{\text{ax}} = J_x\) (upwards in the Fig.) at
the Larmor frequency \(\omega\), such that
\(J_{\text{y}1}(t) = J_{\text{y}1}(0)\cos(\omega t) + J_{\text{y}2}(0)\sin(\omega t)\) and
\(J_{\text{y}2}(t) = J_{\text{y}2}(0)\cos(\omega t) -
J_{\text{y}1}(0)\sin(\omega t)\). For atoms with posi-
tive g-factors such rotation corre-
sponds to positive magnetic energy.

The other spin is oriented oppositely
to the B-field and hence precesses
counter-clockwise when seen along
its orientation \(J_{\text{y}2} = -J_y\) (down-
wards in the Fig.), such that \(J_{\text{y}2}(t) =
J_{\text{y}2}(0)\cos(\omega t) - J_{\text{y}2}(0)\sin(\omega t)\) and
\(J_{\text{y}2}(t) = J_{\text{y}2}(0)\cos(\omega t) + J_{\text{y}2}(0)\sin(\omega t)\). Such rotation leads to the negative
magnetic energy and can be for-
mally obtained from the expressions
for the first spin by changing the
sign of the frequency \(\omega\). Physically
both spins precess clockwise when
seen along the common direction of
the B-field, that is in this common
reference frame
\(J_{\text{y}1}(t) + J_{\text{y}2}(t) = [J_{\text{y}1}(0) + J_{\text{y}2}(0)]\)
\(\times \cos(\omega t) + [J_{\text{y}1}(0)
+ J_{\text{y}2}(0)]\sin(\omega t)\)
and
\(J_{\text{y}1}(t) + J_{\text{y}2}(t) = [J_{\text{y}1}(0) + J_{\text{y}2}(0)]\)
\(\times \cos(\omega t) - [J_{\text{y}1}(0)
+ J_{\text{y}2}(0)]\sin(\omega t)\).

From the spin commuta-
tion relations \(J_{\text{y}1}(0), J_{\text{y}2}(0) =
-\{J_{\text{y}2}(0), J_{\text{y}2}(0)\} = 0\).
We approximate \(J_x\), the spin component
along the axis of atomic polarization,
as a classical variable. We infer that
\(J_{\text{y}1}(0) + J_{\text{y}2}(0), J_{\text{y}1}(0) + J_{\text{y}2}(0)\) = 0.

Hence the initial mutual orienta-
tion of the two collective spins can be
measured and known beyond the
standard quantum limit.

The better than the standard
quantum limit correlation of the two
spins can be cast in the language of
the canonical oscillators by intro-
ducing the variables:
\(X_1 = J_{\text{y}1}/\sqrt{J_{\text{z}1}},\)
\(X_2 = -J_{\text{y}2}/\sqrt{J_{\text{z}1}}\) and
\(P_1 = J_{\text{y}1}/\sqrt{J_{\text{z}1}},\)
\(P_2 = J_{\text{y}2}/\sqrt{J_{\text{z}1}}\) which follow
the canonical commutation relation
\([X_{1(2)}, P_{1(2)}] = i\) with variances
\(\text{Var}(X) = \text{Var}(P) = 1/2\) in the
minimal uncertainty state called a coher-
ent spin state (CSS). From the above
equations we obtain
\(X(t) - X_0(t) =
[X(0) - X_0(0)]\cos(\omega t) +
[P(0) + P_0(0)]\sin(\omega t)\).
This relation implies that
if an entangled state of these two os-
cillators with \(\text{Var}[X(0) - X_0(0)] \to 0\)
and \(\text{Var}[P(0) + P_0(0)] \to 0\) is created
at \(t = 0\), the relative canonical
coordinate of one oscillator in the ref-
ence frame of the other one shall
have vanishingly small uncertainty
at all times \(\text{Var}[X(t) - X_0(t)] \to 0\).
2 Experiment with magnetic oscillators

We can illustrate the effect of entanglement enhanced back action evasion using the data obtained in the experiment [15]. Consider two magnetic oscillators as introduced above. Initially the two ensembles are prepared in a minimal uncertainty state with opposite macroscopic spin directions as shown in Fig. 3(a). After that a radio-frequency magnetic field is applied to one of the spin oscillators for a time $\tau$, so that it dynamically evolves following a trajectory indicated with an arrow starting from the initial zero point. The magenta circle shows the standard deviation of the distribution of the results. It is very close to the purple circle which is the calculated standard deviation for the spins in the minimal uncertainty state. These results demonstrate the measurement of the trajectory of an oscillator with the uncertainty being very close to the standard quantum limit.

In the next experiment an entangled state between the two oscillators is created. Figure 3(c) from [15] presents measurements of the EPR variance as a function of time after the state is generated. The horizontal solid line corresponds to coherent state noise or zero-point fluctuations of the spin oscillator. The circles correspond to the entangled state created at $t = 0$ by a measurement on the pulse of light propagating through both ensembles. This prepares the necessary EPR entangled state between the positive and negative mass oscillator. The state has the EPR variance $\Delta_{EPR}/2 = 0.7$ immediately after the state is generated. After that the radio-frequency magnetic field is applied to one of the spin oscillators for a time $\tau$, so that it has the same classical dynamics as in the first experiment. After that the measurement of $X_1 - X_2$ and $P_1 + P_2$ is performed. Figure 3(d) shows the results of this series of trajectory measurements. The standard deviation of the trajectories is 0.84 of the standard deviation defined by the standard quantum limit for the spin, a clear demonstration of back action evading magnetometry catalyzed by entanglement.

As proposed in [17] entanglement can be generated between an atomic spin oscillator with a negative mass described above and a mechanical oscillator coupled to light via radiation pressure. With such an entangled state a trajectory of the mechanical oscillator can be measured with the precision beyond the SQL as has been demonstrated for two spin oscillators.

It is worth noting that due to the entanglement monogamy feature [32] the noiseless trajectory is only observed in a unique reference frame with which the particle is entangled. In all other reference frames the trajectory will be completely undefined. In this sense, different reference frames are not at all equivalent which may present an interesting case from the space-time perspective.
Figure 3 Trajectory beyond the standard quantum limit. (a) Two magnetic oscillators. (b) Results of a series of measurements of 1 msec evolution of one spin in the reference frame of the other spin for uncorrelated spins. (c) The EPR variance of the entangled state of the two oscillators. (d) Same as in (b) but for an entangled state of the two oscillators.

With measurements of fields, time, acceleration and position approaching or reaching the quantum limits of precision strategies to achieve back action evasion gain practical relevance. The considerations laid out above show that it is in principle possible to attain trajectories without quantum uncertainties and measurements of motion beyond standard quantum limits are possible. It is likely that there is another limit to the precision of the measurements described in this paper which is analogous to the Heisenberg limit and hence scales with the number of particles as 1/N. This limit which is far beyond the present technologies for macroscopic objects discussed here will be analyzed elsewhere.

Acknowledgements. We thank K. Jensen for making the Fig. 3. We acknowledge funding by the ERC grant INTERFACE and EU projects SIQS and IQUOEMS.

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