

Physics 212C QM Spring 2023 Assignment 4 – Solutions

Due 11:00am Wednesday, May 3, 2023

1. **Commutation relations of creation operators for general one-particle states.** Show that

$$\mathbf{a}(\varphi_1)\mathbf{a}^\dagger(\varphi_2) - \zeta\mathbf{a}^\dagger(\varphi_2)\mathbf{a}(\varphi_1) = \langle\varphi_2|\varphi_1\rangle,$$

where these objects are as defined in the lecture notes.

$$[\mathbf{a}(\varphi_1), \mathbf{a}^\dagger(\varphi_2)]_\zeta = \sum_{k_1, k_2} [\mathbf{a}_{k_1}, \mathbf{a}_{k_2}]_\zeta \varphi_1(k_1)\varphi_2(k_2)^* = \sum_k \varphi_1(k)\varphi_2(k)^* = \langle\varphi_2|\varphi_1\rangle.$$

2. **Fermion creation and annihilation algebra.**

Consider a single fermion mode \mathbf{c} . We showed in lecture that the associated Hilbert space is two-dimensional, and is spanned by

$$|0\rangle, \quad \text{with } \mathbf{c}|0\rangle = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad |1\rangle = \mathbf{c}^\dagger|0\rangle.$$

- (a) Check that the two states are orthogonal.

$$\langle 1|0\rangle = \langle 0|\mathbf{c}|0\rangle = 0.$$

- (b) Show that acting on this Hilbert space it is indeed true that

$$\mathbf{c}^\dagger\mathbf{c} + \mathbf{c}\mathbf{c}^\dagger = \mathbb{1},$$

as long as $\langle 1|1\rangle = \langle 0|0\rangle$.

A resolution of the identity is the sum of projectors $|0\rangle\langle 0| + |1\rangle\langle 1| = \mathbb{1}$. $\mathbf{c}^\dagger\mathbf{c}$ gives zero when acting on $|0\rangle$, and gives back $|1\rangle$ when acting on $|1\rangle$. Therefore it acts as the projector

$$\mathbf{c}^\dagger\mathbf{c} = |1\rangle\langle 1|.$$

Similarly, $\mathbf{c}\mathbf{c}^\dagger$ gives zero when acting on $|1\rangle$, and gives back $|0\rangle$ when acting on $|0\rangle$. Therefore it acts as

$$\mathbf{c}\mathbf{c}^\dagger = |0\rangle\langle 0|.$$

Therefore

$$\mathbf{c}^\dagger\mathbf{c} + \mathbf{c}\mathbf{c}^\dagger = |0\rangle\langle 0| + |1\rangle\langle 1| = \mathbb{1}.$$

Actually, we haven't specified the overall normalization of \mathbf{c} so far, that is, $\mathbf{c}' = z\mathbf{c}$ for $z \in \mathbb{C}$ would also satisfy these demands. This would give

$$\mathbf{c}'^\dagger\mathbf{c}' + \mathbf{c}'\mathbf{c}'^\dagger = |z|^2|0\rangle\langle 0| + |z|^2|1\rangle\langle 1| = |z|^2\mathbb{1}.$$

But now consider

$$\langle 1|1\rangle = \langle 0|\mathbf{c}\mathbf{c}^\dagger|0\rangle = \langle 0|(|z|^2\mathbb{1} - \mathbf{c}^\dagger\mathbf{c})|0\rangle = |z|^2\langle 0|0\rangle.$$

So we must have $|z| = 1$. The overall phase of \mathbf{c} is ambiguous.

(c) Check that

$$[\mathbf{N}, \mathbf{c}] = -\mathbf{c}, \quad [\mathbf{N}, \mathbf{c}^\dagger] = \mathbf{c}^\dagger$$

where $\mathbf{N} = \mathbf{c}^\dagger\mathbf{c}$ is the number operator. Notice that this is the same algebra satisfied by bosonic modes.

There is a useful fermionic version of the Leibniz rule for commutators ($[AB, C] = A[B, C] + [A, C]B$), namely

$$\{AB, C\} = A\{B, C\} - \{A, C\}B.$$

Check: $ABC + CAB = ABC + ACB - ACB - CAB$.

Applying this here, we get

$$[\mathbf{N}, \mathbf{c}] = [\mathbf{c}^\dagger\mathbf{c}, \mathbf{c}] = \mathbf{c}^\dagger\{\mathbf{c}, \mathbf{c}\} - \{\mathbf{c}^\dagger, \mathbf{c}\}\mathbf{c} = -\mathbf{c}$$

while

$$[\mathbf{N}, \mathbf{c}^\dagger] = \mathbf{c}^\dagger\{\mathbf{c}, \mathbf{c}^\dagger\} - \{\mathbf{c}^\dagger, \mathbf{c}^\dagger\}\mathbf{c} = +\mathbf{c}^\dagger.$$

3. **Majorana modes.** Given a collection of fermionic operators \mathbf{c}_A , satisfying the fermionic creation-annihilation algebra

$$\{\mathbf{c}_A, \mathbf{c}_B^\dagger\} = \delta_{AB}\mathbb{1} \quad \text{and} \quad \{\mathbf{c}_A, \mathbf{c}_B\} = 0,$$

we can decompose them into their real and imaginary parts

$$\gamma_{A1} \equiv \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{c}_A + \mathbf{c}_A^\dagger), \quad \gamma_{A2} \equiv \frac{1}{2i}(\mathbf{c}_A - \mathbf{c}_A^\dagger).$$

These are called *Majorana modes*.

(a) Show that the Majorana modes satisfy the algebra

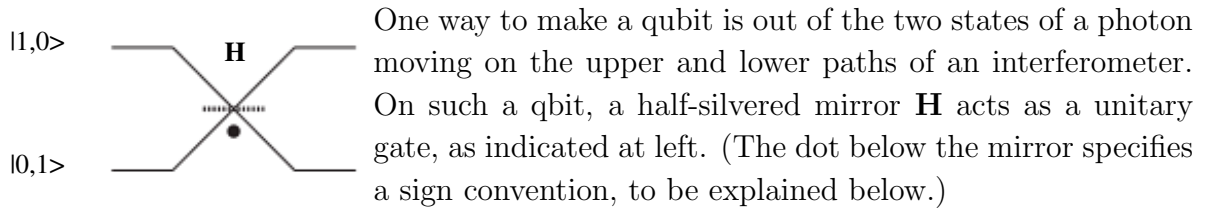
$$\{\gamma_a, \gamma_b\} = 2\Upsilon\delta_{ab}\mathbb{1},$$

where here a is a multi-index running over both A and $\alpha = 1, 2$. In particular, notice that $\gamma_a^2 = \Upsilon\mathbb{1}$. Find the constant Υ .

(b) Write the number operator $\mathbf{c}_A^\dagger \mathbf{c}_A$ in terms of the Majorana modes. Show that it is hermitian.

For each complex mode, $c^\dagger c = \mathbf{i}\gamma_1\gamma_2$. This is hermitian because $(\mathbf{i}\gamma_1\gamma_2)^\dagger = -\mathbf{i}\gamma_2\gamma_1 = +\mathbf{i}\gamma_1\gamma_2$.

4. Multiple photons on paths of an interferometer.



On the other hand, photons are bosons. This means that if

$$\mathbf{a}^\dagger |0, 0\rangle \equiv |1, 0\rangle \text{ is a state with one photon on the upper path}$$

of the interferometer, then

$$\frac{(\mathbf{a}^\dagger)^n}{\sqrt{n!}} |0, 0\rangle \equiv |n, 0\rangle \text{ is a state with } n \text{ photons on the upper path.}$$

Similarly, define

$$\frac{(\mathbf{b}^\dagger)^n}{\sqrt{n!}} |0, 0\rangle \equiv |0, n\rangle \text{ to be a state with } n \text{ photons on the lower path}$$

of the interferometer. (Note that $[\mathbf{a}, \mathbf{b}] = 0 = [\mathbf{a}, \mathbf{b}^\dagger]$ – they are independent modes.)

Now suppose we direct these two paths through a half-silvered mirror, as in the figure. A half-silvered mirror acts as a Hadamard gate

$$\mathbf{H} \equiv \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (\boldsymbol{\sigma}^x + \boldsymbol{\sigma}^z) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 1 & -1 \end{pmatrix}$$

on the qubit made from the one-photon states. (The dot tells us where to put the negative entry.)

Some warm-up questions:

- (a) What is the state $|0, 0\rangle$? How does \mathbf{H} act on $|0, 0\rangle$?
 All answers below part d.
- (b) How does \mathbf{H} act on $|2, 0\rangle$ and $|0, 2\rangle$?
- (c) How does \mathbf{H} act on the operators \mathbf{a}^\dagger and \mathbf{b}^\dagger (in order that the above relations are realized)?

Here's a more interesting question:

- (d) A coherent state is a good cartoon of the state of light in a laser beam. What is the state which results upon sending a coherent state of photons

$$|\alpha, \beta\rangle \equiv \mathcal{N}_\alpha \mathcal{N}_\beta e^{\alpha \mathbf{a}^\dagger + \beta \mathbf{b}^\dagger} |0, 0\rangle$$

through a half-silvered mirror? ($\mathcal{N}_\alpha \equiv e^{-|\alpha|^2/2}$ is a normalization constant.)
 [Hint: it may be useful to insert $\mathbb{1} = \mathbf{H}^2$ in between the $e^{\alpha \mathbf{a}^\dagger + \beta \mathbf{b}^\dagger}$ and the $|0, 0\rangle$.]

The hilbert space under discussion here is that of two harmonic oscillators, and above we have defined $|n, m\rangle$ to be the state where the respective number operators $\mathbf{a}^\dagger \mathbf{a}$ and $\mathbf{b}^\dagger \mathbf{b}$ have eigenvalues n, m respectively. From the definition of the photon-path-as-qbit, we have:

$$\mathbf{H}|1, 0\rangle = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (|1, 0\rangle + |0, 1\rangle) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (\mathbf{a}^\dagger + \mathbf{b}^\dagger) |0, 0\rangle,$$

$$\mathbf{H}|0, 1\rangle = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (|1, 0\rangle - |0, 1\rangle) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (\mathbf{a}^\dagger - \mathbf{b}^\dagger) |0, 0\rangle.$$

Now $|0, 0\rangle$ is a state with $n = 0$ photons on the upper path and $n = 0$ photons on the lower path. No photons at all. So we have $\mathbf{H}|0, 0\rangle = |0, 0\rangle$ since a mirror does nothing to no photons! (It just sits there.) This is a Zen koan: what does a mirror do to no photons. Actually there could be a phase; it would not affect any of the answers below.

This means further that \mathbf{H} acts on the creation operators by

$$\mathbf{H} \mathbf{a}^\dagger \mathbf{H} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (\mathbf{a}^\dagger + \mathbf{b}^\dagger), \quad \mathbf{H} \mathbf{b}^\dagger \mathbf{H} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (\mathbf{a}^\dagger - \mathbf{b}^\dagger),$$

in order to be consistent with the action on the one-photon states. So we can conclude that

$$\mathbf{H}|2, 0\rangle = \mathbf{H} \frac{(\mathbf{a}^\dagger)^2}{\sqrt{2!}} |0, 0\rangle = (\mathbf{H} \mathbf{a}^\dagger \mathbf{H})^2 \frac{1}{\sqrt{2!}} |0, 0\rangle = \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (\mathbf{a}^\dagger + \mathbf{b}^\dagger)^2 |0, 0\rangle = \frac{1}{2} (|2, 0\rangle + \sqrt{2} |1, 1\rangle + |0, 2\rangle)$$

$$\mathbf{H}|0, 2\rangle = \mathbf{H} \frac{(\mathbf{b}^\dagger)^2}{\sqrt{2!}} |0, 0\rangle = (\mathbf{H}\mathbf{b}^\dagger\mathbf{H})^2 \frac{1}{\sqrt{2!}} |0, 0\rangle = \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (\mathbf{a}^\dagger - \mathbf{b}^\dagger)^2 |0, 0\rangle = \frac{1}{2} (|2, 0\rangle - \sqrt{2}|1, 1\rangle + |0, 2\rangle)$$

And finally,

$$\mathbf{H}e^{\alpha\mathbf{a}^\dagger + \beta\mathbf{b}^\dagger} |0, 0\rangle = e^{\alpha\mathbf{H}\mathbf{a}^\dagger\mathbf{H} + \beta\mathbf{H}\mathbf{b}^\dagger\mathbf{H}} |0, 0\rangle = e^{\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}(\alpha(\mathbf{a}^\dagger + \mathbf{b}^\dagger) + \beta(\mathbf{a}^\dagger - \mathbf{b}^\dagger))} |0, 0\rangle = e^{\frac{\alpha+\beta}{\sqrt{2}}\mathbf{a}^\dagger + \frac{\alpha-\beta}{\sqrt{2}}\mathbf{b}^\dagger} |0, 0\rangle$$

It acts on the coherent state labels just like it does on the quantum amplitudes.

These coherent state labels are the data that label the lightwave in *e.g.* a laser.

The half-silvered mirror is a special case of the more general notion called a beam-splitter. Suppose instead that the action on the mode operators were¹

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{U}^\dagger(\theta)\mathbf{a}\mathbf{U}(\theta) &= \mathbf{a} \cos \theta + \mathbf{i}\mathbf{b} \sin \theta \\ \mathbf{U}^\dagger(\theta)\mathbf{b}\mathbf{U}(\theta) &= \mathbf{b} \cos \theta + \mathbf{i}\mathbf{a} \sin \theta . \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

(e) Show that $\mathbf{U}(\theta)$ can be written as an evolution operator, in the form:

$$\mathbf{U}(\theta) = e^{i\theta G}, \quad G = \mathbf{a}^\dagger\mathbf{b} + \mathbf{b}^\dagger\mathbf{a}. \quad (2)$$

Write

$$\mathbf{U}^\dagger\mathbf{a}\mathbf{U} = e^{-i\theta G}\mathbf{a}e^{i\theta G} = e^{-i\theta \text{ad}_G}\mathbf{a} \quad (3)$$

where ad_G is defined to be the *adjoint action* of G , that is,

$$\text{ad}_G\mathcal{O} \equiv [G, \mathcal{O}].$$

The expression (3) follows by Taylor expansion. So we just need to figure out $\text{ad}_G(\mathbf{a})$, $\text{ad}_G^2(\mathbf{a})$ etc... But this is very simple:

$$\text{ad}_G(\mathbf{a}) = [G, \mathbf{a}] = [\mathbf{a}^\dagger\mathbf{b}, \mathbf{a}] = -\mathbf{b}.$$

This means

$$\text{ad}_G^2(\mathbf{a}) = [G, [G, \mathbf{a}]] = [G, -\mathbf{b}] = [\mathbf{b}^\dagger\mathbf{a}, -\mathbf{b}] = +\mathbf{a}.$$

And therefore the exponential series $e^{-i\theta \text{ad}_G}\mathbf{a}$ is just

$$e^{-i\theta \text{ad}_G}\mathbf{a} = \mathbf{a} + \frac{(-i\theta)^2}{2!}\mathbf{a} + \frac{(-i\theta)^4}{4!}\mathbf{a} + \dots - i\theta(-\mathbf{b}) + \frac{(-i\theta)^3}{3!}(-\mathbf{b}) + \dots = \cos \theta \mathbf{a} + \mathbf{i} \sin \theta \mathbf{b}.$$

Similarly,

$$e^{-i\theta \text{ad}_G}\mathbf{b} = \cos \theta \mathbf{b} + \mathbf{i} \sin \theta \mathbf{a}.$$

¹The operation H in the previous parts is not $\mathbf{U}(\theta)$ for some θ ; it is similar. I apologize for any confusion this caused. To get H we would have to write $\mathbf{U}'(\theta) = e^{i\theta G'}$, with $G' \equiv \mathbf{i}\mathbf{a}^\dagger\mathbf{b} - \mathbf{i}\mathbf{b}^\dagger\mathbf{a}$, and set $\theta = \pi/2$.

- (f) Show that when $\theta = \pi/4$ this beam-splitter takes the state $|1, 1\rangle$ with one boson in each mode to the state

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (|2, 0\rangle + |0, 2\rangle).$$

The beam-splitter takes the state to

$$\mathbf{U}^\dagger |1, 1\rangle = \mathbf{U}^\dagger \mathbf{a}^\dagger \mathbf{U} \mathbf{U}^\dagger \mathbf{b}^\dagger \mathbf{U} \mathbf{U}^\dagger |0\rangle \quad (4)$$

$$= (\cos \theta \mathbf{a}^\dagger - \mathbf{i} \sin \theta \mathbf{b}^\dagger) (\cos \theta \mathbf{b}^\dagger - \mathbf{i} \sin \theta \mathbf{a}^\dagger) |0\rangle \quad (5)$$

$$\stackrel{\theta=\pi/4}{=} \left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}\right)^2 \left(\mathbf{a}^\dagger \mathbf{b}^\dagger (1-1) - \mathbf{i} (\mathbf{a}^\dagger)^2 - \mathbf{i} (\mathbf{b}^\dagger)^2\right) |0\rangle = -\mathbf{i} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (|2, 0\rangle + |0, 2\rangle). \quad (6)$$

This is sometimes called the *Hong-Ou-Mandel effect*.

- (g) What if the operators \mathbf{a} and \mathbf{b} were instead fermionic operators? That is, suppose we send fermionic particles through the same beam-splitter, defined by (1). What is

$$\mathbf{U}_F(\theta = \pi/4)^\dagger |1, 1\rangle$$

in this case? Hint: the form of the generator is different

$$\mathbf{U}_F(\theta) = e^{\mathbf{i}\theta G_F}, \quad G_F = \mathbf{a}^\dagger \mathbf{b} - \mathbf{a} \mathbf{b}^\dagger.$$

(Notice that G_F is still hermitian.)

[I got this last part of the problem from Le Bellac.]

The hermitian conjugate is

$$G_F^\dagger = (\mathbf{a}^\dagger \mathbf{b} - \mathbf{a} \mathbf{b}^\dagger)^\dagger = \mathbf{b}^\dagger \mathbf{a} - \mathbf{b} \mathbf{a}^\dagger = -\mathbf{a} \mathbf{b}^\dagger + \mathbf{a}^\dagger \mathbf{b} = G_F.$$

In this case, using the identity $[AB, C] = A\{B, C\} - \{A, C\}B$

$$[G_F, \mathbf{a}] = -\{\mathbf{a}^\dagger, \mathbf{a}\} \mathbf{b} = -\mathbf{b}, \quad [G_F, \mathbf{b}] = -\mathbf{a} \{\mathbf{b}^\dagger, \mathbf{b}\} = -\mathbf{a}.$$

So the series is again

$$e^{-\mathbf{i}\theta \text{ad}_{G_F}} \mathbf{a} = \mathbf{a} + \mathbf{i}\theta \mathbf{b} + \frac{(-\mathbf{i}\theta)^2}{2!} \mathbf{a} - \frac{(-\mathbf{i}\theta)^3}{3!} \mathbf{b} + \dots = \cos \theta \mathbf{a} + \mathbf{i} \sin \theta \mathbf{b}.$$

Notice that even though \mathbf{a} and \mathbf{b} are fermionic operators (*e.g.*, $\mathbf{a}^2 = 0$), the exponential $e^{-\mathbf{i}\theta G_F}$ is still an infinite series, because it contains terms which alternate between \mathbf{a} and \mathbf{a}^\dagger .

So actually the whole calculation is the same up to the last step:

$$\mathbf{U}_F^\dagger |1, 1\rangle = \mathbf{U}^\dagger \mathbf{a}^\dagger \mathbf{U} \mathbf{U}^\dagger \mathbf{b}^\dagger \mathbf{U} \mathbf{U}^\dagger |0\rangle \quad (7)$$

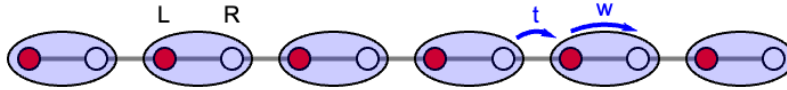
$$= (\cos \theta \mathbf{a}^\dagger - \mathbf{i} \sin \theta \mathbf{b}^\dagger) (\cos \theta \mathbf{b}^\dagger - \mathbf{i} \sin \theta \mathbf{a}^\dagger) |0\rangle \quad (8)$$

$$\stackrel{\theta=\frac{\pi}{4}}{=} \left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}\right)^2 \left(\mathbf{a}^\dagger \mathbf{b}^\dagger - \mathbf{b}^\dagger \mathbf{a}^\dagger - \mathbf{i} (\mathbf{a}^\dagger)^2 - \mathbf{i} (\mathbf{b}^\dagger)^2\right) |0\rangle = |1, 1\rangle \quad (9)$$

since $\{\mathbf{a}^\dagger, \mathbf{b}^\dagger\} = 0$. In the case of Fermions, the state is taken to itself by this beamsplitter.

5. Slightly more interesting bandstructure.

Consider a particle hopping on a chain of sites where each site involves two orbitals, one on the left and one on the right.



So the single-particle hamiltonian is

$$\mathbf{H} = \sum_n t (|n, R\rangle \langle n+1, L| + |n+1, L\rangle \langle n, R|) + (w|n, L\rangle \langle n, R| + h.c.), \quad (10)$$

where w, t are two quantities with dimensions of energy.

- (a) Write down the many-body hamiltonian in terms of annihilation $\mathbf{c}_{n,\alpha}$ and creation $\mathbf{c}_{n,\alpha}^\dagger$ operators.

$$\mathbf{H} = \sum_n \left(t \mathbf{c}_{R,n}^\dagger \mathbf{c}_{L,n+1} + h.c. + w \mathbf{c}_{L,n}^\dagger \mathbf{c}_{R,n} + h.c. \right). \quad (11)$$

- (b) Suppose there are N sites and N fermions and suppose $w > t$ (for simplicity take w real). Is it a metal or an insulator? Find the energy difference between the groundstate and the first excited state in the thermodynamic ($N \rightarrow \infty$) limit.

Since it is translation-invariant and an eigenvalue problem is linear, the single-particle hamiltonian can be diagonalized by going to momentum space. Acting on $|k, \alpha\rangle$, it acts as the matrix

$$h(k) = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & te^{-ik} + w \\ w^* + te^{ik} & 0 \end{pmatrix} = (t \cos k + w_1)X + (t \sin k + w_2)Y \quad (12)$$

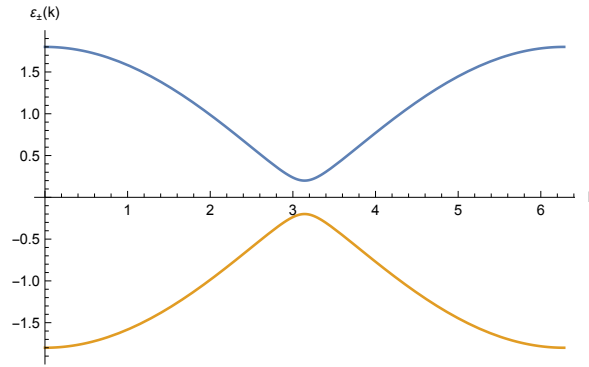
where $w = w_1 + iw_2$ and $X \equiv \sigma^x, Y \equiv \sigma^y$. That is, using $\mathbb{1} = \int_0^{2\pi/a} \sum_{\alpha=L,R} dk |k, \alpha\rangle\langle k, \alpha|$,

$$\mathbf{H} = \mathbf{H} \int_0^{2\pi/a} dk \sum_{\alpha} |k, \alpha\rangle\langle k, \alpha| = \int_0^{2\pi/a} dk |k, \alpha\rangle\langle k, \beta| h(k)_{\alpha\beta}. \quad (13)$$

Taking w real, the spectrum of the matrix $h(k)$ is

$$\epsilon_{\pm}(k) = \pm \sqrt{t^2 + |w|^2 + 2w \cos k}, \quad (14)$$

which looks like this for $|w| \neq t$.

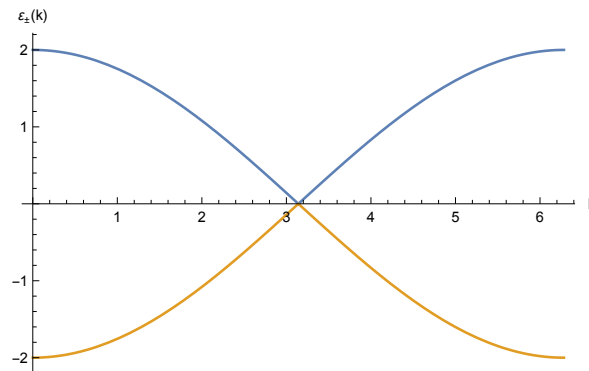


The system is an insulator, since we fill the bottom band, and then the energy cost to excite an electron in the upper band is

$$\min_k (\epsilon_+(k) - \epsilon_-(k)) = 2|t - w|. \quad (15)$$

(c) What happens when $w = t$?

In this case the problem is really just a chain of sites with translation symmetry under a single step. The bandstructure looks like this



which is the single band $\epsilon(k) = 2 \cos 2k$ folded on itself into the smaller Brillouin zone. In this case, the system is a metal, since we must fill up half the band.

6. **Normalization.** Check that if $\Psi(r_1 \cdots r_n)$ is a normalized and (anti)symmetric wavefunction on n particles, then

$$|\Psi\rangle \equiv \sum_{r_1 \cdots r_n} \Psi(r_1 \cdots r_n) |r_1 \cdots r_n\rangle \quad (16)$$

is normalized, $\langle \Psi | \Psi \rangle = 1$.

(Interpret the sum over r as an integral if you like.)

The overlap is

$$\langle \Psi | \Psi \rangle = \sum_{r_1 \cdots r_n} \sum_{r'_1 \cdots r'_n} \Psi(r_1 \cdots r_n)^* \underbrace{\langle r_1 \cdots r_n | r'_1 \cdots r'_n \rangle}_{= \frac{1}{n!} \sum_{\pi} s^{\pi} \delta_{r_1 r'_{\pi(1)} \cdots r_n r'_{\pi(n)}}} \Psi(r'_1 \cdots r'_n) \quad (17)$$

$$= \sum_r |\Psi(r_1 \cdots r_n)|^2 = 1. \quad (18)$$

where the last equation is the normalization condition for Ψ . In the first step, we used only the definition (16) (twice).