

Asymptotic form at large r of a third-order linear homogeneous differential equation for the ground-state electron density of the He atom

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In earlier work a linear differential equation satisfied by the Schwartz ground-state electron density $\varrho(r)$ for (non-relativistic) He-like atomic ions with large atomic number Z has been derived. Here, we utilize the asymptotic expansion at large r given by Amovilli and March for the neutral He atom. We thereby show that a linear differential equation of the same general shape as that satisfied by the Schwartz $\varrho(r)$ again emerges for the neutral He atom itself, in the asymptotic limit of large r . We argue that essential input into the final differential equation for the He ground-state electron density will be the ionization potential plus the atomic polarizability.

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Going back at least to the early work of Hoffmann-Ostenhof and Hoffmann-Ostenhof [1], it is known that the ground-state density $\varrho(r)$ of spherical atoms (e.g., Ne and Ar) falls off at sufficiently large r as

$$\varrho(r) \approx Nr^n \exp(-2\sqrt{2}Ir), \quad r \rightarrow \infty, \quad (1)$$

where I is the ionization potential in atomic units.

Here we shall be concerned with the two-electron He atom ground-state density $\varrho(r)$ and, in particular, with the ongoing search for the differential equation this $\varrho(r)$ satisfies. A first step toward this objective was taken by Gál, March, and Nagy [2]. These authors adopted as their starting point the study of Schwartz [3] who considered (always via the nonrelativistic Schrödinger equation, however) the large atomic number Z limit of two-electron He-like ions of nuclear charge Ze . His result had the form

$$\varrho(r) = \frac{2Z^3}{\pi} \left[1 + \frac{2}{Z}\chi(r) \right] \exp(-2Zr), \quad (2)$$

where $\chi(r)$ was calculated explicitly. The major finding in [2] was that $\varrho(r)$ in Eq. (2) satisfied exactly a third-order linear homogeneous differential equation [see Eq. (3) below].

The motivation for reopening the search for such an exact differential equation for the neutral He atom itself, with $Z=2$, comes from the very recent study by two of us [4] of the long-range asymptotic behavior of $\varrho(r)$ in this case. In particular, we take as the starting point of the present study the asymptotic, large r expansion given in Eqs. (31)–(33) of [4].

We show below that the Amovilli-March (AM) large r form satisfies indeed a third-order linear homogeneous differential equation having precisely the same shape, but of course differs in fine details. As in [2] the form is explicitly

$$P_3(r)\varrho'''(r) + P_2(r)\varrho''(r) + P_1(r)\varrho'(r) + P_0(r)\varrho(r) = 0. \quad (3)$$

Treating the AM asymptotic form as exact, one is then led (see below) to the fact that the $P_i(r)$ in Eq. (3) are polynomials all with the highest power of r^3 . Of course, even if this proves the correct structure of any final differential equation for $\varrho(r)$ for the He itself, the coefficients of the low-order terms will be changed.

Below we present an outline of the derivation of the form (3) from the AM asymptotic large r expansion of $\varrho(r)$ [4] [see especially Eqs. (31)–(34)]. In particular, Eq. (31) yields, at large r ,

$$\exp(2\sqrt{2}Ir)\varrho(r) = g(r) = Ar^k \left[1 + \frac{C_1}{r} + \frac{C_2}{r^2} + \frac{C_3}{r^3} + O\left(\frac{1}{r^4}\right) \right]. \quad (4)$$

Differentiating Eq. (4) three times then leads to the form

$$\varrho g''' = g[\varrho''' + 6\sqrt{2}I\varrho'' + 24I\varrho' + 16I\sqrt{2}I\varrho]. \quad (5)$$

Using expression (4) for g and truncating the expansion at r^{-3} we find the general form of Eq. (3), where the polynomials have the form

$$P_3(r) = C_3 + C_2r + C_1r^2 + r^3, \quad (6)$$

$$P_2(r) = 6\sqrt{2}I[C_3 + C_2r + C_1r^2 + r^3], \quad (7)$$

$$P_1(r) = 24I[C_3 + C_2r + C_1r^2 + r^3], \quad (8)$$

and

$$P_0(r) = [16I\sqrt{2}IC_3 - k(k-1)(k-2) + 16I\sqrt{2}IC_2r + 16I\sqrt{2}IC_1r^2 + 16I\sqrt{2}Ir^3]. \quad (9)$$

Comparing Eq. (4) with Eq. (31) of [4], namely,

$$\sqrt{\varrho(r)} \approx Mr^{\beta-1} \left[1 + \frac{A_1}{r} + \frac{A_2}{r^2} + \frac{A_3}{r^3} \right] \exp(-\sqrt{2I}r), \quad (10)$$

we obtain

$$C_1 = 2A_1, \quad (11)$$

$$C_2 = A_1^2 + 2A_2, \quad (12)$$

and

$$C_3 = 2(A_3 + A_1A_2). \quad (13)$$

It was shown in [4] that for He

$$A_1 = \frac{\beta(\beta-1)}{2[\sqrt{2I}(\beta-1)-1]}, \quad (14)$$

$$A_2 = \frac{A_1(\beta-1)(\beta-2)}{2[\sqrt{2I}(\beta-2)-1]}, \quad (15)$$

$$A_3 = \frac{A_2(\beta-2)(\beta-3)}{2[\sqrt{2I}(\beta-3)-1]} + \frac{\alpha}{2[\sqrt{2I}(\beta-3)-1]}, \quad (16)$$

and

$$\beta = \frac{k}{2} + 1 = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2I}}. \quad (17)$$

Of course, while we expect the highest powers of r in polynomials $P_i(r)$ entering Eq. (3) will be derivable from the result (32) and (33) in [4], we shall not pursue the details further.

What we emphasize here is that such a differential equation as in Eq. (6) will then be characterized by (i) the ionization potential I and (ii) the polarizability α , which enters the AM coefficient A_3 and, consequently, C_3 occurring in Eq. (4).

For the future, should it prove, as we conjecture, that the shape (3) is formally exact for the ground-state electron density of the He atom, then the small r expansion of $\varrho(r)$

should also be invoked to fix the low-order terms in the polynomials $P_i(r)$ entering Eq. (6). In fact, from the study of Nagy and Sen [5], one has a relation between derivatives of $\varrho(r)$ at the origin of the form

$$\bar{\varrho}'''(0) = Z[-5\bar{\varrho}''(0) + 12Z^2\bar{\varrho}'(0) + 4\eta_1(0)]. \quad (18)$$

The spherical average of the density can be written as

$$\bar{\varrho}(r) = \eta_0(r) + \sum_{l>0} r^{2l} \eta_l(r). \quad (19)$$

The last term in Eq. (18) contains not the density itself, but only a part of the density: the part corresponding to $l=1$; that is, there is a contribution only from the “ p electron density” [5]. In this aspect Eq. (18) differs from Eq. (3) that contains only the density and its derivatives.

In summary, the shape (3) of the linear third-order homogeneous differential equation satisfied by the Schwartz limiting density (2) for He-like atomic ions with large atomic number Z also follows from the AM asymptotic large r expansion for the ground state of the He atom itself. Then the AM result indicates that such a differential equation will be characterized by the ionization potential I , which should occasion no surprise due to the exact asymptotic result quoted in Eq. (1), and also by the atomic polarizability α . The origin of the dependence on α can be traced back, through density functional theory, to the large r form of the exchange-correlation potential V_{xc} as $-e^2/r - \alpha/2r^4$ [6,7].

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