AXIONS AND OTHER VERY LIGHT BOSONS: PART II (ASTROPHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS)

(by G.G. Raffelt)

Low-mass weakly-interacting particles (neutrinos, gravitons, axions, baryonic or leptonic gauge bosons, *etc.*) are produced in hot plasmas and thus represent an energy-loss channel for stars. The strength of the interaction with photons, electrons, and nucleons can be constrained from the requirement that stellar-evolution time scales are not modified beyond observational limits. For detailed reviews see Refs. [1,2].

The energy-loss rates are steeply increasing functions of temperature T and density ρ. Because the new channel has to compete with the standard neutrino losses which tend to increase even faster, the best limits arise from low-mass stars, notably from horizontal-branch (HB) stars which have a helium-burning core of about 0.5 solar masses at $\langle\rho\rangle \approx 0.6\times10^4\,\mathrm{g\,cm^{-3}}$ and $\langle T\rangle \approx 0.7\times10^8\,\mathrm{K}$. The new energy-loss rate must not exceed about $10\,\mathrm{ergs\,g^{-1}\,s^{-1}}$ to avoid a conflict with the observed number ratio of HB stars in globular clusters. Likewise the ignition of helium in the degenerate cores of the preceding red-giant phase is delayed too much unless the same constraint holds at $\langle\rho\rangle \approx 2\times10^5\,\mathrm{g\,cm^{-3}}$ and $\langle T\rangle \approx 1\times10^8\,\mathrm{K}$. The white-dwarf luminosity function also yields useful bounds.

The new bosons X^0 interact with electrons and nucleons with a dimensionless strength g. For scalars it is a Yukawa coupling, for new gauge bosons (*e.g.*, from a baryonic or leptonic gauge symmetry) a gauge coupling. Axion-like pseudoscalars couple derivatively as $f^{-1}\bar\psi\gamma_\mu\gamma_5\psi\,\partial^\mu\phi_X$ with f an energy scale. Usually this is equivalent to $(2m/f)\bar\psi\gamma_5\psi\,\phi_X$ with m the mass of the fermion ψ so that $g = 2m/f$. For the coupling to electrons, globular-cluster stars yield the constraint

$$g_{Xe} \lesssim \begin{cases} 0.5\times10^{-12} & \text{for pseudoscalars [3]} \ , \\ 1.3\times10^{-14} & \text{for scalars [4]} \ , \end{cases} \tag{1}$$

if $m_X \lesssim 10\,\mathrm{keV}$. The Compton process $\gamma + {}^4\mathrm{He} \to {}^4\mathrm{He} + X^0$ limits the coupling to nucleons to $g_{XN} \lesssim 0.4\times10^{-10}$ [4].

Scalar and vector bosons mediate long-range forces which are severely constrained by "fifth-force" experiments [5]. In the massless case the best limits come from tests of the equivalence principle in the solar system, leading to

$$g_{B,L} \lesssim 10^{-23} \tag{2}$$

for a baryonic or leptonic gauge coupling [6].

In analogy to neutral pions, axions A^0 couple to photons as $g_{A\gamma}\mathbf{E}\cdot\mathbf{B}\,\phi_A$ which allows for the Primakoff conversion $\gamma \leftrightarrow A^0$ in external electromagnetic fields. The most restrictive limit arises from globular-cluster stars [2]

$$g_{A\gamma} \lesssim 0.6 \times 10^{-10}\,\mathrm{GeV}^{-1}\ . \tag{3}$$

The often-quoted "red-giant limit" [7] is slightly weaker.

The duration of the SN 1987A neutrino signal of a few seconds proves that the newborn neutron star cooled mostly by neutrinos rather than through an "invisible channel" such as right-handed (sterile) neutrinos or axions [8]. Therefore,

$$3 \times 10^{-10} \lesssim g_{AN} \lesssim 3 \times 10^{-7} \tag{4}$$

is excluded for the pseudoscalar Yukawa coupling to nucleons [2]. The "strong" coupling side is allowed because axions then escape only by diffusion, quenching their efficiency as an energy-loss channel [9]. Even then the range

$$10^{-6} \lesssim g_{AN} \lesssim 10^{-3} \tag{5}$$

is excluded to avoid excess counts in the water Cherenkov detectors which registered the SN 1987A neutrino signal [11].

In terms of the Peccei-Quinn scale f_A, the axion couplings to nucleons and photons are $g_{AN} = C_N m_N/f_A$ ($N = n$ or p) and $g_{A\gamma} = (\alpha/2\pi f_A)\,(E/N - 1.92)$ where C_N and E/N are model-dependent numerical parameters of order unity. With $m_A = 0.62\,\mathrm{eV}\,(10^7\,\mathrm{GeV}/f_A)$, Eq. (3) yields $m_A \lesssim 0.4\,\mathrm{eV}$ for $E/N = 8/3$ as in GUT models or the DFSZ model. The SN 1987A limit is $m_A \lesssim 0.008\,\mathrm{eV}$ for KSVZ axions while it varies between about 0.004 and 0.012 eV for DFSZ axions, depending on the angle β which measures the ratio of two Higgs vacuum expectation values [10]. In view of the large uncertainties it is good enough to remember $m_A \lesssim 0.01\,\mathrm{eV}$ as a generic limit (Fig. 1).

In the early universe, axions come into thermal equilibrium only if $f_A \lesssim 10^8\,\mathrm{GeV}$ [12]. Some fraction of the relic axions end up in galaxies and galaxy clusters. Their decay $a \to 2\gamma$ contributes to the cosmic extragalactic background light and to line emissions from galactic dark-matter haloes and galaxy clusters. An unsuccessful "telescope search" for such features yields $m_a < 3.5\,\mathrm{eV}$ [13]. For $m_a \gtrsim 30\,\mathrm{eV}$, the axion lifetime is shorter than the age of the universe.

For $f_A \gtrsim 10^8$ GeV cosmic axions are produced nonthermally. If inflation occurred after the Peccei-Quinn symmetry breaking or if $T_{\mathrm{reheat}} < f_A$, the "misalignment mechanism" [14] leads to a contribution to the cosmic critical density of

$$\Omega_A h^2 \approx 1.9 \times 3^{\pm 1}\,(1\,\mu\mathrm{eV}/m_A)^{1.175}\,\Theta_{\mathrm{i}}^2 F(\Theta_{\mathrm{i}}) \tag{6}$$

where h is the Hubble constant in units of $100\,\mathrm{km\,s^{-1}\,Mpc^{-1}}$. The stated range reflects recognized uncertainties of the cosmic conditions at the QCD phase transition and of the temperature-dependent axion mass. The function $F(\Theta)$ with $F(0) = 1$ and $F(\pi) = \infty$ accounts for anharmonic corrections to the axion potential. Because the initial misalignment angle Θ_{i} can be very small or very close to π, there is no real prediction for the mass of dark-matter axions even though one would expect $\Theta_{\mathrm{i}}^2 F(\Theta_{\mathrm{i}}) \sim 1$ to avoid fine-tuning the initial conditions.

A possible fine-tuning of Θ_{i} is limited by inflation-induced quantum fluctuations which in turn lead to temperature fluctuations of the cosmic microwave background [15,16]. In a broad class of inflationary models one thus finds an upper limit to m_A where axions could be the dark matter. According to the most recent discussion [16] it is about 10^{-3} eV (Fig. 1).

If inflation did not occur at all or if it occurred before the Peccei-Quinn symmetry breaking with $T_{\mathrm{reheat}} > f_A$, cosmic axion strings form by the Kibble mechanism [17]. Their motion is damped primarily by axion emission rather than gravitational waves. After axions acquire a mass at the QCD phase transition they quickly become nonrelativistic and thus form a cold dark matter component. Battye and Shellard [18] found that the

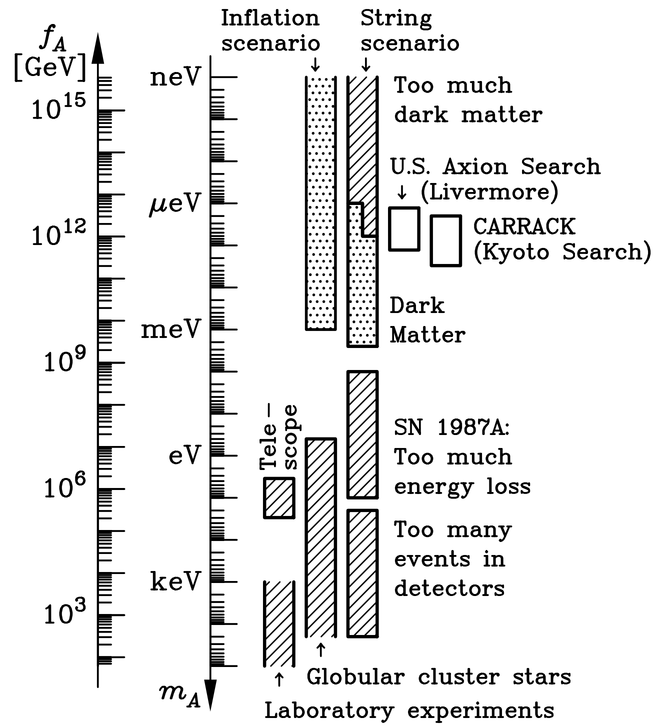

Figure 1: Astrophysical and cosmological exclusion regions (hatched) for the axion mass m_A or equivalently, the Peccei-Quinn scale f_A. An "open end" of an exclusion bar means that it represents a rough estimate; its exact location has not been established or it depends on detailed model assumptions. The globular cluster limit depends on the axion-photon coupling; it was assumed that $E/N = 8/3$ as in GUT models or the DFSZ model. The SN 1987A limits depend on the axion-nucleon couplings; the shown case corresponds to the KSVZ model and approximately to the DFSZ model. The dotted "inclusion regions" indicate where axions could plausibly be the cosmic dark matter. Most of the allowed range in the inflation scenario requires fine-tuned initial conditions. In the string scenario the plausible dark-matter range is controversial as indicated by the step in the low-mass end of the "inclusion bar" (see main text for a discussion). Also shown is the projected sensitivity range of the search experiments for galactic dark-matter axions.

dominant source of axion radiation are string loops rather than long strings. At a cosmic time t the average loop creation size is parametrized as $\langle \ell \rangle = \alpha t$ while the radiation power is $P = \kappa\mu$ with μ the renormalized string tension. The loop contribution to the cosmic axion density is [18]

$$\Omega_A h^2 \approx 88 \times 3^{\pm 1} \left[(1+\alpha/\kappa)^{3/2} - 1 \right] \, (1\,\mu\mathrm{eV}/m_A)^{1.175} \ , \quad (7)$$

where the stated nominal uncertainty has the same source as in Eq. (6). The values of α and κ are not known, but probably $0.1 < \alpha/\kappa < 1.0$ [18], taking the expression in square brackets to 0.15–1.83. If axions are the dark matter, we have

$$0.05 \lesssim \Omega_A h^2 \lesssim 0.50 \ , \quad (8)$$

where it was assumed that the universe is older than 10 Gyr, that the dark-matter density is dominated by axions with $\Omega_A \gtrsim 0.2$, and that $h \gtrsim 0.5$. This implies $m_A =$ 6–2500 μeV for the plausible mass range of dark-matter axions (Fig. 1).

Contrary to Ref. 18, Sikivie *et al.* [19] find that the motion of global strings is strongly damped, leading to a flat axion spectrum. In Battye and Shellard's treatment the axion radiation is strongly peaked at wavelengths of order the loop size. In Sikivie *et al.*'s picture more of the string radiation goes into kinetic axion energy which is redshifted so that ultimately there are fewer axions. In this scenario the contributions from string decay and vacuum realignment are of the same order of magnitude; they are both given by Eq. (6) with Θ_i of order one. As a consequence, Sikivie *et al.* allow for a plausible range of dark-matter axions which reaches to smaller masses as indicated in Fig. 1.

The work of both groups implies that the low-mass end of the plausible mass interval in the string scenario overlaps with the projected sensitivity range of the U.S. search experiment for galactic dark-matter axions (Livermore) [20] and of the Kyoto search experiment CARRACK [21] as indicated in Fig. 1. (See also Part III of this Review by Hagmann, van Bibber, and Rosenberg.)

In summary, a variety of robust astrophysical arguments and laboratory experiments (Fig. 1) indicate that $m_A \lesssim 10^{-2}$ eV.

The exact value of this limit may change with a more sophisticated treatment of supernova physics and/or the observation of the neutrino signal from a future galactic supernova, but a dramatic modification is not expected unless someone puts forth a completely new argument. The stellar-evolution limits shown in Fig. 1 depend on the axion couplings to various particles and thus can be irrelevant in fine-tuned models where, for example, the axion-photon coupling strictly vanishes. For nearly any m_A in the range generically allowed by stellar evolution, axions could be the cosmic dark matter, depending on the cosmological scenario realized in nature. It appears that our only practical chance to discover these "invisible" particles rests with the ongoing or future search experiments for galactic dark-matter.

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