Lecture 4: Matter-Radiation Decoupling and the Cosmic Microwave Background

- Annihilation (with symmetry breaking)
  - quark soup
- Baryogenesis (quark confinement)
  - neutrons and protons
- Nucleosynthesis
  - Plasma of charged nuclei (75% H 25% He)
    + electrons, photons, neutrinos, traces of Li, Be.
- Recombination
  - Neutral atoms
  - Matter and radiation decouple (Universe transparent)
- Origin of the Cosmic Microwave Background

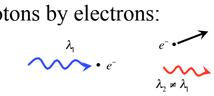
The Plasma Era

After Nucleosynthesis: charge-neutral plasma.

$12\ H^+ + He^{++} + 14\ e^- + 10^9$ photons

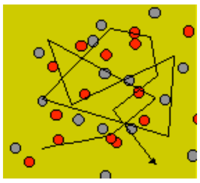
Thompson scattering of photons by electrons:

$$e + \gamma \rightarrow e + \gamma$$



Electrons and photons exchange energy.
Maintains thermal equilibrium and
coupling (same *T*) between radiation and matter.

The Universe is opaque.
Photons cannot travel far
without scattering on electrons.
Photons "random walk".
Like "looking thru fog".

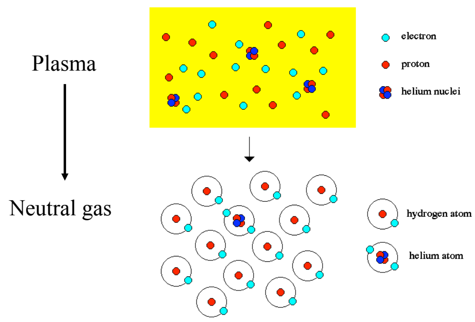


1. matter-radiation equality ($T \sim 30{,}000$ K $t \sim 10^4$ yr)
energy density of photons drops below that of matter

Before: $T \propto \frac{1}{R} \propto \frac{1}{t^{1/2}}$ After: $T \propto \frac{1}{R} \propto \frac{1}{t^{2/3}}$

2. "recombination" ($T \sim 3000$ K $t \sim 3x10^5$ yr)
electrons + nuclei --> neutral atoms

Recombination



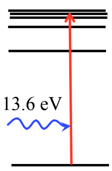
Recombination Temperature

H ionisation potential $I = 13.6$ eV.
Photons with $h\,\nu > I$ can ionise H.

Mean energy of blackbody photons: $\overline{h\,\nu} = 3\,k\,T$

Recombination temperature: $3\,k\,T \sim I$

$$T \sim \frac{I}{3\,k} = \frac{(13.6\ \text{eV})(11600\ \text{K eV}^{-1})}{3} \approx 52{,}000\text{K}$$



$1/k = 11{,}600$ K/eV

Too crude, because:
1) $\sim 10^9$ photons per H atom
(photons in blackbody tail can ionise H)
2) H has bound states (excited electrons)

Refined Calculation

Energy levels: $E_n = -I/n^2$.
Excitation to $n = 1 \rightarrow 2$ needs
$E = E_2 - E_1 = 13.6 \times (1 - 1/2^2) = 10.2$ eV.

Photon/proton ratio: $\frac{N_\gamma}{N_p} \approx 10^9$

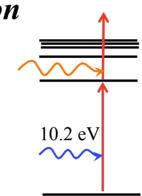
To get ~1 photon (with $h\nu > 10.2$ eV) per proton.

$$N_p = N_\gamma(h\nu > E) \approx N_\gamma \exp(-E/k\,T)$$

$$\frac{E}{k\,T} = \ln\left(\frac{N_\gamma}{N_p}\right) \approx \ln(10^9) \approx 20$$

$$k\,T \approx \frac{10.2\ \text{eV}}{\ln(10^9)} \approx 0.5\ \text{eV}$$

$$T \approx 5700\ \text{K}$$



Ionisation from bound states keeps gas ionised until T drops further.

Detailed calculation gives 3000 K.

At $T < 3000$ K, electrons and nuclei form neutral atoms, not immediately re-ionised by photons.

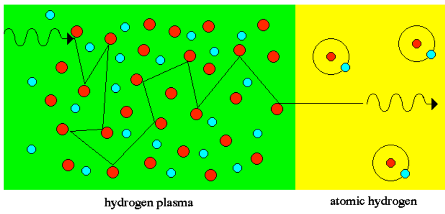
Photons interact strongly with free charges
(i.e. mainly free electrons), but not with neutral atoms.

Photons & matter decouple and no longer interact!

Universe becomes transparent.

Photons now fly uninterrupted across the Universe.
(this is the Cosmic Microwave Background)

Last Scattering Epoch



$T > 3000K$ $T < 3000K$

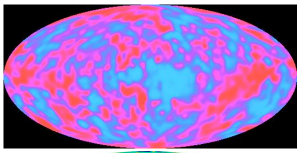
Redshift of Last Scattering

Photons, now free of matter, fly freely in all directions.
Their temperature decreases as the Universe expands.
Today we see these photons from all directions with
$T = 3000$ K / expansion factor = 2.7 K.
expansion factor = (1 + z) = (3000 / 2.7) = 1100.

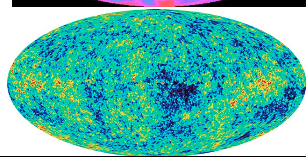
1948. Gamow predicts $T \sim 5$ K.
1965. Penzias & Wilson discover the CMB. $T \sim 2.7$ K.
1995. COBE measures perfect blackbody spectrum. $T = 2.728$ K
2004. WMAP resolves the ripples. $\Delta\theta \sim 1^\circ$ $\frac{\Delta T}{T} \sim 10^{-5}$

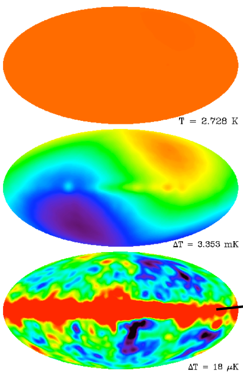
All-sky maps

COBE :



WMAP :





CMB

Almost isotropic

$T = 2.728$ K

Dipole anisotropy

$$\frac{V}{c} = \frac{\Delta\lambda}{\lambda} = \frac{\Delta T}{T} \approx 10^{-3}$$

Our velocity:

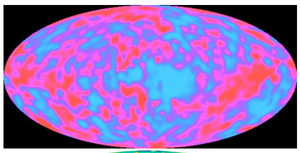
$V \approx 400$ km/s

Milky Way sources

+ anisotropies $\frac{\Delta T}{T} \sim 10^{-5}$

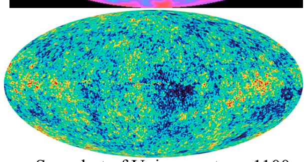
CMB Anisotropies

COBE
1994



$\frac{\Delta T}{T} \sim 10^{-5}$

WMAP
2004



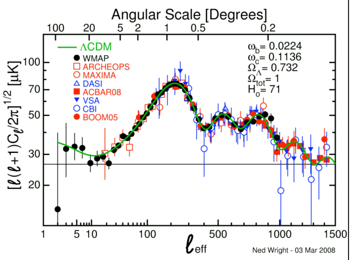
$\Delta\theta \sim 1^\circ$

Snapshot of Universe at z = 1100
Seeds of galaxy formation.

Power Spectrum of CMB anisotropies

Temperature ripple ΔT
vs angular scale
$\theta = 180^o / \ell$

Peak at 1^o scale
=> Flat geometry,
$\Omega_{tot}=1$



"Acoustic Peaks" arise from sound waves in the plasma era. Sound speed is $c/\sqrt{3}$. Peak when the duration of plasma era matches a multiple of half a sound wave oscillation period.

Recap of key physics

Matter: $\varepsilon_M = \rho_M c^2 \propto R^{-3}$

Radiation: $\varepsilon_R = \rho_R c^2 = \alpha\, T^4 \propto R^{-4}$

Observations: $T_{CMB} = 2.7\text{ K} \;\Rightarrow\; \rho_R \approx 10^{-31}\text{ kg m}^{-3}$

$$\rho_M \approx 10^{-28}\text{ kg m}^{-3} \;\Rightarrow\; \frac{\text{photons}}{\text{baryons}} = \frac{N_\gamma}{N_b} \sim 10^9$$

Mean energy of blackbody photons: $\overline{h\nu} = 3kT$

For <1 photon in the blackbody tail per baryon:

$$N_\gamma(h\nu > E) \approx N_\gamma \exp(-E/kT) < N_b$$

$$\Rightarrow\; k\,T < \frac{E}{\ln(N_\gamma/N_b)} = \frac{E}{\ln(10^9)} \approx \frac{E}{20}$$

Sets p/n ratio, hence H/He ratio and T=3000K at recombination.

Key stages in the history of our Universe:

~ 1 TeV	Radiation era (↑↓)	matter-antimatter annihilation
		quark soup
~ 1 GeV		baryogenesis (quark confinement)
		neutron proton soup
~ 0.8 MeV		neutron – proton freeze-out
		neutrons decay
~ 0.1 MeV		nucleosynthesis
		H+He+e Thomson scattering plasma
~ 1 eV	Matter era (↑↓)	Recombination / decoupling
		neutral atoms + CMB photons
		Galaxy Formation
~ 10^{-3} eV		Today

Recollapse or Eternal expansion ?