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## L<sup>p</sup>-INEQUALITIES FOR THE LAPLACIAN AND UNIQUE CONTINUATION

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### 1. Introduction.

Unique continuation properties for solutions of partial differential equations or inequalities have been studied by various authors (see Hörmander [7], Chapter 8 for references). Let  $P, Q_1, \dots, Q_\nu$  be partial differential operators in  $\mathbf{R}^n$  with constant coefficients, each of order less than or equal to  $m$ , and  $\Omega$  an open connected subset of  $\mathbf{R}^n$ . We say that the differential inequality

$$|Pf(x)| \leq \sum_{j=1}^{\nu} |v_j(x)| |Q_j f(x)| \quad (1)$$

has (i) the unique continuation property in the class  $H_{loc}^{m,p}(\Omega)$  if, whenever  $f \in H_{loc}^{m,p}(\Omega)$  satisfies (1) (in the sense of distributions) and  $f(x) = 0$  in some open, non-empty subset of  $\Omega$ , one has  $f \equiv 0$  on  $\Omega$ , (ii) the weak unique continuation property if, whenever  $f \in H^{m,p}(\Omega)$  satisfies (1) and  $f(x) = 0$  in the complement of some compact subset of  $\Omega$ , one has  $f \equiv 0$ . An important application of the weak unique continuation property concerns the proof of the non-existence of positive eigenvalues of self-adjoint Schrödinger operators, i.e. of partial differential operators of the form  $-\Delta + v(x)$  in  $L^2(\mathbf{R}^n)$ ,  $n \geq 2$ . We refer to [2,4] for details on this application.

Until very recently the coefficients  $v_j$  appearing in the differential inequalities under investigation were required to be locally in  $L^\infty$ . For second order operators this restriction has been relaxed in three recent papers by Berthier [2], Georgescu [4] and Schechter

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and Simon [8] to a condition of the type  $v_j \in L_{loc}^w(\mathbb{R}^n)$  for suitable  $w < \infty$ . Berthier [2] uses analytic Fredholm theory in Hilbert space to obtain weak unique continuation for solutions of the Schrödinger equation with  $v \in L_{loc}^w(\mathbb{R}^n)$  for  $w > \max(n-2, n/2)$ . Georgescu [4] proves generalizations of Hörmander inequalities between weighted Sobolev spaces; these imply unique continuation if the coefficients  $v_j$  of the first order derivatives are in  $L_{loc}^{2n-1}(\mathbb{R}^n)$  and the coefficient  $v$  of the zero order term is in  $L_{loc}^w(\mathbb{R}^n)$  with  $w \geq \max(2, (2n-1)/3)$  (the second order term is  $-\Delta$ ); the method is applicable to higher order operators. Schechter and Simon [8] use an inequality of the type

$$\| |x|^k f \|_p \leq c \| |x|^k \Delta f \|_q \quad (k = 0, \pm 1, \pm 2, \dots). \quad (2)$$

This is obtained by reduction to a corresponding one-dimensional inequality by expanding  $f$  in surface spherical harmonics, as was done in earlier publications where, however, only the case  $p = q = 2$  was considered (e.g. Heinz [6]). The inequality (2) obtained in [8] implies unique continuation for Schrödinger operators if  $v \in L_{loc}^w(\mathbb{R}^n)$  with  $w > 1$  for  $n = 1, 2$ ,  $w > (2n-1)/3$  for  $n = 3, 4, 5$  and  $w \geq n-2$  for  $n \geq 6$ .

In the present paper we adopt the method of Schechter and Simon. Our principal result is a generalization of their basic inequality indicated above (Theorem 1.1 of [8], Theorem 1 and its Corollary in this paper). When applied to the problem of unique continuation for Schrödinger operators, our result improves those of [4] and [8] in 3 and 4 dimensions, in which we obtain the condition that is expected to be optimal; our condition for unique continuation is  $v \in L_{loc}^w(\mathbb{R}^n)$  with  $w > \max(n-2, n/2)$  ( $w = n-2$  if  $n \geq 5$ ).

The following lemma illustrates the relation between an inequality of the type (2) and unique continuation. Its proof will be indicated in Section 4. We denote by  $B(R, x)$  the ball

$$B(R, x) = \{y \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid |y - x| < R\}.$$

**LEMMA 1.** — *Let  $P, Q_1, \dots, Q_\nu$  be partial differential operators with constant coefficients in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ , each of order less than or equal to  $m$ , and such that: if  $G \subset \mathbb{R}^n$  is any open connected set,  $f \in C^\infty(G)$ ,  $Q_1 f = \dots = Q_\nu f = 0$  on  $G$  and  $f$  vanishes on an open, non-empty subset of  $G$ , then  $f \equiv 0$ . Suppose that there exist*

- i) a constant  $c < \infty$ , a number  $R \in (0, \infty)$  and a subset  $\Gamma$  of  $\mathbf{R}$  having  $+\infty$  as an accumulation point,
- ii) numbers  $q, p_1, \dots, p_\nu \in [1, \infty]$  with  $q \leq p_j$  for all  $j$ ,
- iii) a continuous, radial, strictly decreasing function  $\varphi : B(R, 0) \setminus \{0\} \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$  such that, for all  $f \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R}^n)$  having compact support in  $B(R, 0) \setminus \{0\}$  and all  $\kappa \in \Gamma$ ,

$$\sum_{j=1}^{\nu} \|e^{\kappa\varphi} Q_j f\|_{L^{p_j}(\mathbf{R}^n)} \leq c \|e^{\kappa\varphi} P f\|_{L^q(\mathbf{R}^n)}. \tag{3}$$

Let  $\Omega$  be an open connected subset of  $\mathbf{R}^n$  and assume that  $v_j \in L_{loc}^{w_j}(\Omega)$  ( $j = 1, \dots, \nu$ ), where  $1/w_j = 1/q - 1/p_j$ . Then the differential inequality (1) has the unique continuation property in the class  $H_{loc}^{m,q}(\Omega)$ .

The organization of our paper is as follows. In Section 2 we deduce our basic inequality (Theorem 1) by reduction to a one-dimensional inequality. The latter will be proven in Section 3, and applications to unique continuation are given in Section 4. The following notations will be used :  $\mathbf{R}_+ = (0, \infty)$  is the positive real half line,  $\Delta$  the Laplacian in  $\mathbf{R}^n$  ( $n \geq 2$ ) and  $D = -id/dr$  (acting on functions of a real variable  $r \in \mathbf{R}_+$ ). For  $q \in [1, \infty]$ , we denote by  $q' = q/(q - 1)$  the conjugate exponent.  $L^p(\Omega, \mathcal{B}; d\mu)$  denotes the  $L^p$ -space of functions from  $\Omega$  to the Banach space  $\mathcal{B}$ . If  $\mathcal{B} = \mathbf{C}$ , we write  $L^p(\Omega; d\mu)$ , and if  $d\mu$  is just Lebesgue measure, we write  $L^p(\Omega, \mathcal{B})$ .  $H^{2,p}(\Omega)$  are the Sobolev spaces (in the terminology of Adams [1]), and  $H_c^{2,p}(\Omega)$  is the subspace of  $H^{2,p}(\Omega)$  of functions having compact support in  $\Omega$ .

## 2. Some inequalities in $L^p$ -spaces.

In this section we derive inequalities of the type (3) for the case where  $P$  is the Laplacian and  $Q_j$  the identity operator. As pointed out, the problem will be reduced to obtaining a similar inequality in one variable by expanding functions defined on  $\mathbf{R}^n$  ( $n \geq 2$ ) in a series of surface spherical harmonics.

2.1. We first recall some facts about spherical coordinates in  $\mathbf{R}^n$ . Let  $S^{n-1}$  be the unit sphere in  $\mathbf{R}^n$ ,  $\sigma_{n-1}$  its surface and  $\Delta_S$  the

spherical Laplacian. We denote by the letter  $\omega$  the points on  $S^{n-1}$  and by  $d\omega$  the usual invariant measure on  $S^{n-1}$  induced by Lebesgue measure on  $\mathbf{R}^n$ ; the spaces  $L^p(S^{n-1})$  are constructed with this measure. The restriction of  $-\Delta_S$  to  $C^\infty(S^{n-1})$  is essentially self-adjoint in  $L^2(S^{n-1})$ , and its closure  $-\bar{\Delta}_S$  is a positive operator with purely discrete spectrum equal to  $\{\ell(\ell + n - 2) \mid \ell = 0, 1, 2, \dots\}$ . The dimension  $a_\ell$  of the eigenprojection  $P_\ell$  associated with the  $\ell$ -th eigenvalue satisfies

$$c_n^{-1}(\ell + 1)^{n-2} \leq a_\ell \leq c_n(\ell + 1)^{n-2} \tag{4}$$

for some constant  $c_n$ . The elements of  $P_\ell L^2(S^{n-1})$  coincide with the spherical harmonics of degree  $\ell$  [9; p.138 ff.]. For each  $\ell = 0, 1, 2, \dots$ , we fix an orthonormal basis  $\{Y_{\ell m}\}_{m=1}^{a_\ell}$  of the space  $P_\ell L^2(S^{n-1})$ .

Let  $f : \mathbf{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{C}$ . We denote by  $Uf$  the function defined on  $\mathbf{R}_+ \times S^{n-1}$  by

$$(Uf)(r, \omega) = r^{1/2(n-1)} f(r\omega). \tag{5}$$

For sufficiently regular  $f$  one has

$$[U(-\Delta f)](r, \omega) = \left[ -\frac{d^2}{dr^2} + r^{-2} \left( \frac{1}{4}(n-1)(n-3) - \Delta_S \right) \right] (Uf)(r, \omega). \tag{6}$$

For  $f \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R}^n \setminus \{0\})$ , we set

$$f_{\ell m}(r) = r^{1/2(n-1)} \int_S d\omega \overline{Y_{\ell m}(\omega)} f(r\omega), \quad r \in \mathbf{R}_+. \tag{7}$$

For fixed  $r$  and  $\ell$ , we view the sequence

$$f_\ell(r) = \{f_{\ell 1}(r), f_{\ell 2}(r), \dots, f_{\ell a_\ell}(r), 0, 0, \dots\}$$

as a vector in the infinite-dimensional Hilbert space  $\mathcal{H}_+^2 \equiv \mathcal{H}^2(\mathbf{Z}_+)$ , and similarly for  $Y_\ell(\omega) = \{Y_{\ell 1}(\omega), \dots, Y_{\ell a_\ell}(\omega), 0, 0, \dots\}$ . The norm in  $\mathcal{H}_+^2$  will be denoted by  $\|\cdot\|$  and the scalar product between two vectors  $g_1$  and  $g_2$  in  $\mathcal{H}_+^2$  by  $g_1 \cdot g_2$ . In this notation we then have

$$(Uf)(r, \omega) = \sum_{\ell=0}^\infty f_\ell(r) \cdot Y_\ell(\omega) \tag{8}$$

and

$$[U(-\Delta f)](r, \omega) = \sum_{\ell=0}^\infty [D^2 + \tilde{\ell}(\tilde{\ell} + 1)r^{-2}] f_\ell(r) \cdot Y_\ell(\omega), \tag{9}$$

where  $\tilde{\ell} = \ell + \frac{1}{2}(n - 3)$  and the series are convergent at least in the  $L^2(S^{n-1})$  sense for each  $r \in \mathbf{R}_+$ . The norm of  $Y_\ell(\omega)$  in  $\mathfrak{L}_+^2$  is independent of  $\omega$  and given by (see [9 ; Cor. IV.2.9])

$$\|Y_\ell(\omega)\| = a_\ell^{1/2} \sigma_{n-1}^{-1/2}. \tag{10}$$

2.2. Next we recall some inequalities proved by Schechter and Simon [8]. To each  $g \in L^2(S^{n-1})$  we may associate as above a sequence  $\{g_{\ell m}\}_{\ell=0}^\infty$  of vectors in  $\mathfrak{L}_+^2$  such that  $g_{\ell m} = 0$  for  $m > a_\ell$  and

$$g_{\ell m} = \int_{S^{(n-1)}} d\omega \overline{Y_{\ell m}(\omega)} g(\omega). \quad (1 \leq m \leq a_\ell). \tag{11}$$

Clearly

$$\|g\|_{L^2(S^{n-1})}^2 = \sum_{\ell=0}^\infty \|g_\ell\|^2 = \sum_{\ell=0}^\infty \|a_\ell^{-1/2} g_\ell\|^2 a_\ell. \tag{12}$$

Also, (10) implies that

$$\sup_{\ell > 0} a_\ell^{-1/2} \|g_\ell\| \leq \sigma_{n-1}^{-1/2} \|g\|_{L^1(S^{n-1})}. \tag{13}$$

By using a vector-valued form of the Stein-Weiss interpolation theorem (e.g. [10 ; Ch. 1.18]) one obtains from (12) and (13) by interpolation that [8]

$$\left( \sum_{\ell=0}^\infty \|a_\ell^{-1/2} g_\ell\|^{q'} a_\ell \right)^{1/q'} \leq \sigma_{n-1}^{1/2-1/q} \|g\|_{L^q(S^{n-1})} \tag{14}$$

for any  $q \in [1, 2]$  and each  $g \in L^q(S^{n-1})$ , and that

$$\|h\|_{L^p(S^{n-1})} \leq \sigma_{n-1}^{1/p-1/2} \left( \sum_{\ell=0}^\infty \|a_\ell^{1/p'-1/2} h_\ell\|^{p'} \right)^{1/p'} \tag{15}$$

for any  $p \in [2, \infty]$  and each  $h \in L^p(S^{n-1})$ .

2.3. We now show how an inequality of the type (3) in  $n$  dimensions can be obtained from a corresponding one-dimensional inequality. We set  $S(a, b) = \{x \in \mathbf{R}^n \mid 0 \leq a < |x| < b \leq \infty\}$  and notice that

$$\|f\|_{L^p(S(a,b))} = \|r^{(n-1)/p} f\|_{L^p((a,b), L^p(S^{n-1}))}. \tag{16}$$

LEMMA 2. — Let  $0 \leq a < b \leq \infty$ ,  $1 \leq q \leq 2 \leq p < \infty$ ,  $w = (1/q - 1/p)^{-1}$  and  $\varphi, \psi : (a, b) \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$  continuous. Assume there is a sequence  $\{\theta_\ell\}_{\ell=0}^\infty$  of non-negative numbers such that

$\Theta \equiv \left( \sum_{\ell=0}^{\infty} a_{\ell} \theta_{\ell}^w \right)^{1/w} < \infty$  and such that, for each  $g : (a, b) \rightarrow \mathbf{C}^{a_{\ell}}$  of class  $C_0^{\infty}$  and each  $\ell$  :

$$\begin{aligned} & \| r^{(n-1)(1/p-1/2)} e^{\psi} g \|_{L^p((a,b), \mathbf{C}^{a_{\ell}})} \\ & \leq \theta_{\ell} \| r^{(n-1)(1/q-1/2)} e^{\psi} [D^2 + \tilde{\ell}(\tilde{\ell} + 1)r^{-2}] g \|_{L^q((a,b), \mathbf{C}^{a_{\ell}})}, \end{aligned} \tag{17}$$

where  $\tilde{\ell} = \ell + \frac{1}{2}(n - 3)$ . Then one has for each  $f \in H_c^{2,q}(S(a, b))$  :

$$\| e^{\psi} f \|_{L^p(\mathbf{R}^n)} \leq \sigma_{n-1}^{-1/w} \Theta \| e^{\psi} \Delta f \|_{L^q(\mathbf{R}^n)}. \tag{18}$$

*Proof.* – We set  $L_s = D^2 + s(s + 1)r^{-2}$  and first assume that  $f \in C_0^{\infty}(S(a, b))$ . Then (18) is obtained by the following sequence of six inequalities, where we use successively: (1) the inequality (15), (2) Jessen’s inequality ([3 ; VI.11.14] ; notice that  $p' < p$ ), (3) the hypothesis (17), (4) the Hölder inequality (notice that  $1/p' = 1/w + 1/q'$ ), (5) Jessen’s inequality ( $q' > q$ ) and (6) the inequality (14):

$$\begin{aligned} \| e^{\psi} f \|_p &= \| r^{(n-1)(1/p-1/2)} e^{\psi} \sum_{\ell=0}^{\infty} f_{\ell} \cdot Y_{\ell} \|_{L^p((a,b), L^p(S^{n-1}))} \\ &\leq \sigma_{n-1}^{1/p-1/2} \left\| \left( \sum_{\ell=0}^{\infty} \| a_{\ell}^{1/p'-1/2} r^{(n-1)(1/p-1/2)} e^{\psi} f_{\ell} \|^p \right)^{1/p'} \right\|_{L^p(a,b)} \\ &\leq \sigma_{n-1}^{1/p-1/2} \left( \sum_{\ell=0}^{\infty} \| a_{\ell}^{1/p'-1/2} r^{(n-1)(1/p-1/2)} e^{\psi} f_{\ell} \|_{L^p((a,b), \mathbb{R}_+^2)} \right)^{1/p'} \\ &\leq \sigma_{n-1}^{1/p-1/2} \left( \sum_{\ell=0}^{\infty} \| \theta_{\ell} a_{\ell}^{1/p'-1/2} r^{(n-1)(1/q-1/2)} e^{\psi} L_{\tilde{\ell}} f_{\ell} \|_{L^q((a,b), \mathbb{R}_+^2)} \right)^{1/p'} \\ &\leq \sigma_{n-1}^{1/p-1/2} \left( \sum_{\ell=0}^{\infty} a_{\ell} \theta_{\ell}^w \right)^{1/w} \left( \sum_{\ell=0}^{\infty} \| a_{\ell}^{1/p'-1/2-1/w} r^{(n-1)(1/q-1/2)} e^{\psi} L_{\tilde{\ell}} f_{\ell} \|_{L^q((a,b), \mathbb{R}_+^2)} \right)^{1/q'} \\ &\leq \sigma_{n-1}^{1/q-1/2-1/w} \Theta \left\| \left( \sum_{\ell=0}^{\infty} \| a_{\ell}^{1/q'-1/2} r^{(n-1)(1/q-1/2)} e^{\psi} L_{\tilde{\ell}} f_{\ell} \|^q \right)^{1/q'} \right\|_{L^q(a,b)} \\ &\leq \sigma_{n-1}^{-1/w} \Theta \| r^{(n-1)(1/q-1/2)} e^{\psi} \sum_{\ell=0}^{\infty} L_{\tilde{\ell}} f_{\ell} \cdot Y_{\ell} \|_{L^q((a,b), L^q(S^{n-1}))} \\ &= \sigma_{n-1}^{-1/w} \Theta \| e^{\psi} \Delta f \|_q. \end{aligned}$$

The inequality (18) can now be extended from  $C_0^{\infty}(S(a, b))$  to  $H_c^{2,q}(S(a, b))$  by a density argument, which is given in a more general context in part (i) of the proof of Lemma 1 (Section 4).  $\square$

2.4. The one-dimensional inequality (17) in Lemma 2 becomes particularly simple if one chooses  $\varphi$  of the form  $\varphi(r) = \alpha \log r$ , since then  $\exp \varphi(r) = r^\alpha$ . We therefore consider inequalities of the type

$$\|r^t f\|_{L^p(\mathbb{R}_+, \ell_+^2)} \leq c(s, t, \epsilon) \|r^{t+\epsilon} [D^2 + s(s+1)r^{-2}] f\|_{L^q(\mathbb{R}_+, \ell_+^2)},$$

where  $f$  is a  $\ell_+^2$ -valued function of class  $C_0^\infty$ . Our result on this is contained in the following proposition, the proof of which will be given in Section 3.

PROPOSITION 1. — Let  $1 \leq q \leq p \leq \infty$ ,  $1/w = 1/q - 1/p$  and  $\epsilon = 2 - 1/w$ . Let  $\mathcal{H}$  be a separable Hilbert space. Then for any  $s, t \in \mathbb{R}$ ,  $f: \mathbb{R}_+ \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$  of class  $C_0^\infty(\mathbb{R}_+, \mathcal{H})$  we have

$$\|r^t f\|_{L^p(\mathbb{R}_+, \mathcal{H})} \leq (w')^{-1/w'} |2s + 1|^{-1/w} |t - s + 1/p|^{-1/w'} \cdot |t + s + 1 + 1/p|^{-1/w'} \|r^{t+\epsilon} [D^2 + s(s+1)r^{-2}] f\|_{L^q(\mathbb{R}_+, \mathcal{H})}. \quad (19)$$

For  $s = -1/2$  one alternatively has

$$\|r^t f\|_{L^p(\mathbb{R}_+, \mathcal{H})} \leq 2^\epsilon e^{-1} (w')^{-1/w'} |t + 1/2 + 1/p|^{-\epsilon} \cdot \|r^{t+\epsilon} [D^2 + s(s+1)r^{-2}] f\|_{L^q(\mathbb{R}_+, \mathcal{H})}. \quad (20)$$

We now give the principal result of our paper.

THEOREM 1. — Let  $1 \leq q \leq 2 \leq p < \infty$ ,  $1/w = 1/q - 1/p$ ,  $\mu = 2 - n/w$  and assume that  $w > n/2$  (i.e.  $\mu > 0$ ). Then one has for any  $\tau \in \mathbb{R}$  and all  $f \in H_c^{2,q}(\mathbb{R}^n \setminus \{0\})$ :

$$\| |x|^\tau f \|_{L^p(\mathbb{R}^n)} \leq c(\tau) \| |x|^{\tau+\mu} \Delta f \|_{L^q(\mathbb{R}^n)}. \quad (21)$$

The constant  $c(\tau)$  is finite provided that

$$(\tau - \ell + 2 - n/p') \cdot (\tau + \ell + n/p) \neq 0$$

for each  $\ell = 0, 1, 2, \dots$ , and it is given by

$$c(\tau) = \sigma_{n-1}^{-1/w} (w')^{-1/w'} \left[ \sum_{\ell=0}^{\infty} \frac{a_\ell}{2\ell + n - 2} |(\tau - \ell + 2 - n/p')(\tau + \ell + n/p)|^{-w+1} \right]^{1/w}. \quad (22)$$

(For  $n = 2$ , the first term in the series (22) (i.e.  $\ell = 0$  is infinite and must be replaced by  $2^{2w-1} e^{-1} |\tau + 2/p|^{-2w+1}$ . If  $w = \infty$  (i.e.  $p = q = 2$ ), one has instead of (22)

$$c(\tau) = \sup_{\ell > 0} |(\tau - \ell + 2 - n/2)(\tau + \ell + n/2)|^{-1}.$$



*Proof.* — This follows immediately from Lemma 2 and Proposition 1 by taking  $\varphi(r) = \tau \log r$ ,  $\psi(r) = (\tau + \mu) \log r$ ,

$$t = \tau + (n - 1)(1/p - 1/2), \epsilon = 2 - 1/w, s = \tilde{\chi} = \ell + 1/2(n - 3)$$

and noticing that  $w/w' = w - 1$ . The convergence of the series defining  $c(\tau)$  follows from the estimate (4) for  $a_q$  and the condition  $w > n/2$  which implies that  $w - 1 > 1/2(n - 2)$ .  $\square$

**COROLLARY.** — Let  $1 \leq q \leq 2 \leq p < \infty$ ,  $1/w = 1/q - 1/p$ , and assume  $w > n/2$ . Let  $R < \infty$  and let  $B(R, 0)$  be the ball  $\{x \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid |x| < R\}$ . Then one has for any  $\tau \in \mathbb{R}$  and all  $f \in H_c^{2,q}(B(R, 0) \setminus \{0\})$ :

$$\| |x|^\tau f \|_{L^p(B(R,0))} \leq c(\tau) R^{2-n/w} \| |x|^\tau \Delta f \|_{L^q(B(R,0))}. \tag{23}$$

### 3. Proof of proposition 1.

In this section we prove Proposition 1. We begin with a preliminary result which is a slight extension of a lemma given in Hardy, Littlewood and Polya [5 ; No 319].

**LEMMA 3.** — Let  $K : \mathbb{R}_+ \times \mathbb{R}_+ \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$  be a homogeneous function of degree  $-1/w'$ , where  $1 \leq w \leq \infty$  and  $w' = w/(w - 1)$ . Let  $\mathcal{H}$  be a Hilbert space and denote also by  $K$  the integral operator from  $L^q(\mathbb{R}_+, \mathcal{H})$  to  $L^p(\mathbb{R}_+, \mathcal{H})$  defined by

$$(Kf)(r) = \int_0^\infty K(r, u) f(u) du \quad (r \in \mathbb{R}_+). \tag{24}$$

If  $1 \leq q \leq p \leq \infty$  and  $q^{-1} - p^{-1} = w^{-1}$ , then the norm of the operator  $K$  satisfies the inequality

$$\|K\|_{q \rightarrow p} \leq \left( \int_0^\infty r^{-1+w'/p} |K(r, 1)|^{w'} dr \right)^{1/w'}. \tag{25}$$

*Proof.* — If  $G$  is a locally compact abelian group,  $d\gamma$  the Haar measure on  $G$ , then Young's inequality states that, if  $1 \leq p, q, m \leq \infty$  and  $p^{-1} = q^{-1} + m^{-1} - 1$ ,

$$\|k * g\|_{L^p(G, \mathcal{H}; d\gamma)} \leq \|k\|_{L^m(G; d\gamma)} \|g\|_{L^q(G, \mathcal{H}; d\gamma)}, \tag{26}$$

where

$$(k * g)(\gamma) = \int_G k(\gamma\gamma'^{-1})g(\gamma')d\gamma' \quad (\gamma, \gamma' \in G). \quad (27)$$

We apply this for the multiplicative group  $\mathbf{R}_+$ , with Haar measure  $r^{-1}dr$  ( $dr =$  Lebesgue measure) and  $k(r) = r^{1/p}K(r, 1)$ . We obtain from (27) that

$$\begin{aligned} r^{1/p}(Kf)(r) &= r^{1/p} \int_0^\infty K(r, u)f(u)du \\ &= r^{1/p} \int_0^\infty u^{-1/w'}K\left(\frac{r}{u}, 1\right)f(u)du \\ &= r^{1/p} \int_0^\infty u^{1/w'}\left(\frac{u}{r}\right)^{1/p}k(ru^{-1})f(u)\frac{du}{u} \\ &= [k * (u^{1/q}f)](r). \end{aligned} \quad (28)$$

Since  $\|g\|_{L^p(\mathbf{R}_+, \mathscr{A}; dr)} = \|r^{1/p}g\|_{L^p(\mathbf{R}_+, \mathscr{A}; dr/r)}$ , (28) and (26) imply that

$$\|Kf\|_{L^p(\mathbf{R}_+, \mathscr{A}; dr)} \leq \|k\|_{L^m(\mathbf{R}_+; dr/r)} \|f\|_{L^q(\mathbf{R}_+, \mathscr{A}; dr)},$$

with  $m^{-1} = p^{-1} - q^{-1} + 1 = w'^{-1}$ , i.e.  $m = w'$ . Inserting the definition of  $k(r)$ , we obtain (25).  $\square$

*Proof of Proposition 1.* — Let  $f \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R}_+, \mathscr{A})$ . We define  $\hat{f}$  by  $\hat{f}(r) = L_s f(r) = [D^2 + s(s + 1)r^{-2}]f(r)$ . Integrating by parts, one finds that

$$-(2s + 1)f(r) = r^{s+1} \int_0^r u^{-s} \hat{f}(u) du + r^{-s} \int_r^\infty u^{s+1} \hat{f}(u) du. \quad (29)$$

Also, since  $[D^2 + s(s + 1)r^{-2}]r^{-s} = [D^2 + s(s + 1)r^{-2}]r^{s+1} = 0$ , one has

$$\int_0^\infty u^{-s} \hat{f}(u) du = \int_0^\infty u^{s+1} \hat{f}(u) du = 0. \quad (30)$$

We denote by  $\chi_\Delta$  the characteristic function of the set  $\Delta \subset \mathbf{R}_+$  and introduce the following notations:  $\kappa_+ = +1$ ,  $\kappa_- = -1$ ,  $\chi_+ = \chi_{[1, \infty)}$ ,  $\chi_- = \chi_{(0, 1)}$  and

$$K_{\alpha\beta}(r, u) = \left(\frac{r}{u}\right)^{t+s+1} u^{1-\epsilon} \left[ \kappa_\alpha \chi_\alpha \left(\frac{r}{u}\right) - \kappa_\beta \left(\frac{r}{u}\right)^{-2s-1} \chi_\beta \left(\frac{r}{u}\right) \right] \quad (31)$$

for  $\alpha, \beta = +$  or  $-$ . In this notation, we find from (29) and (30) that  $r^t f(r)$  may be expressed in either of the four following ways ( $\alpha, \beta = +$  or  $-$ ,  $s \neq -1/2$ ).

$$r^t f(r) = - (2s + 1)^{-1} \int_0^\infty K_{\alpha\beta}(r, u) u^{t+\epsilon} \hat{f}(u) du. \quad (32)$$

Hence

$$\|r^t f\|_{L^p(\mathbb{R}_+, \mathcal{E})} \leq |2s + 1|^{-1} \|K_{\alpha\beta}\|_{q \rightarrow p} \|r^{t+\epsilon} \hat{f}\|_{L^q(\mathbb{R}_+, \mathcal{E})}. \quad (33)$$

In order to prove (19), it suffices to choose one of the four representations for  $r^t f$  given in (32) (the choice will depend on the values of  $s, t$  and  $p$ ) and to estimate the corresponding norm  $\|K_{\alpha\beta}\|_{q \rightarrow p}$ .

Each  $K_{\alpha\beta}$  is homogeneous of degree  $1 - \epsilon = -1 + 1/w = -1/w'$ . One therefore gets from Lemma 3 that

$$\begin{aligned} & \|K_{\alpha\beta}\|_{q \rightarrow p} \\ & \leq \left( \int_0^\infty r^{w'(t+s+1+1/p)-1} |\kappa_\alpha \chi_\alpha(r) - \kappa_\beta r^{-2s-1} \chi_\beta(r)|^{w'} dr \right)^{1/w'}. \end{aligned} \quad (34)$$

A slightly weaker but more convenient inequality is obtained by using the fact that

$$|\kappa_\alpha \chi_\alpha(r) - \kappa_\beta r^{-2s-1} \chi_\beta(r)|^{w'} \leq |\chi_\alpha(r) - r^{-w'(2s+1)} \chi_\beta(r)| \quad (35)$$

(if  $\alpha \neq \beta$ , then  $\chi_\alpha(r) \neq 0 \iff \chi_\beta(r) = 0$ , so that (35) is evident; if  $\alpha = \beta$ , (35) follows from the inequality  $|1 - \gamma|^\rho \leq |1 - \gamma^\rho|$  valid for  $\gamma \geq 0, \rho \geq 1$ ). We then get

$$\begin{aligned} & \|K_{\alpha\beta}\|_{q \rightarrow p} \\ & \leq \left( \int_0^\infty |r^{w'(t+s+1+1/p)-1} \chi_\alpha(r) - r^{w'(t-s+1/p)-1} \chi_\beta(r)| dr \right)^{1/w'}. \end{aligned} \quad (36)$$

We now indicate how  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  must be chosen for given  $s, t$  and  $p$  in the order for the integral in (36) to be finite :

- i) if  $t + 1/p < s$  and  $t + 1/p < -s - 1$  :  $\alpha = \beta = +$ ,
- ii) if  $t + 1/p < s$  and  $t + 1/p > -s - 1$  :  $\alpha = -, \beta = +$ ,
- iii) if  $t + 1/p > s$  and  $t + 1/p < -s - 1$  :  $\alpha = +, \beta = -$ ,
- iv) if  $t + 1/p > s$  and  $t + 1/p > -s - 1$  :  $\alpha = \beta = -$ .

The integral on the *r.h.s.* of (36) is easy to calculate. In all four cases (i) – (iv) one finds that it is equal to

$$(w')^{-1/w'} |2s + 1|^{1/w'} |t - s + 1/p|^{-1/w'} |t + s + 1 + 1/p|^{-1/w'}. \tag{37}$$

Inserting the estimate thus obtained for  $\|K_{\alpha\beta}\|_{q \rightarrow p}$  into (33) and noticing that  $-1 + 1/w' = -1/w$ , one obtains (19).

The proof of (20) follows the same lines. Here one uses

$$-f(r) = r^{1/2} \log r \int_0^r u^{1/2} \hat{f}(u) du + r^{1/2} \int_r^\infty u^{1/2} \log u \hat{f}(u) du$$

and  $(D^2 - r^{-2}/4) r^{1/2} = (D^2 - r^{-2}/4) r^{1/2} \log r = 0$ . Since  $s = -s - 1$ , only the cases (i) and (iv), i.e.  $\alpha = \beta$ , are possible. The expression for  $K_{\alpha\alpha}$  is now

$$K_{\alpha\alpha}(r, u) = \kappa_\alpha \left(\frac{r}{u}\right)^{t+1/2} u^{1-\epsilon} \log\left(\frac{r}{u}\right) \chi_\alpha\left(\frac{r}{u}\right).$$

By using the inequality  $|\log z| \leq (e\delta)^{-1} z^{\pm\delta}$  for  $z \leq 1$  respectively and any  $\delta > 0$  and taking  $\delta = 1/2 |t + 1/2 + 1/p|$  in the estimate of  $\|K_{\alpha\alpha}\|_{q \rightarrow p}$ , one arrives at (20).  $\square$

*Remark.* – One may ask if the determination of the constants appearing in front of the norms on the *r.h.s.* of (19) and (21) is optimal. We have the following results about this: (a) if  $1 \leq p = q < \infty$  (i.e.  $w = \infty$  and  $\epsilon = 2$ ),  $s \neq -1/2$  and

$$(t - s + 1/p)(t + s + 1 + 1/p) \neq 0,$$

then the constant in (19) is optimal. This can be shown by using a result given in [9; § I.4.2]. (b) if  $p = q = 2$ , then the constant  $c(\tau)$  in (21) is also optimal.

#### 4. The unique continuation property.

We first give the proof of Lemma 1 and then a result about unique continuation for Schrödinger operators.

*Proof of Lemma 1.* – (i) We first show that the inequality (3) holds for each  $f$  in  $H_c^{m,q}(B(R, 0) \setminus \{0\})$ . By [1; Lemma 3.15], there is a  $a \in (0, R)$  and a sequence  $\{f_k\}$  in  $C_0^\infty(S(a, R))$  converging to  $f$  in  $H^{m,q}(\mathbb{R}^n)$ . Then, by (3),

$$\begin{aligned}
\sum_{j=1}^{\nu} \|Q_j(f_i - f_k)\|_{L^{p_j}(\mathbb{R}^n)} &\leq e^{-\kappa\varphi(\mathbb{R})} \sum_{j=1}^{\nu} \|e^{\kappa\varphi} Q_j(f_i - f_k)\|_{L^{p_j}(\mathbb{R}^n)} \\
&\leq e^{-\kappa\varphi(\mathbb{R})} e^{\kappa\varphi(a)} \|P(f_i - f_k)\|_{L^q(\mathbb{R}^n)} \\
&\leq e^{\kappa\varphi(a) - \kappa\varphi(\mathbb{R})} \|f_i - f_k\|_{H^{m,q}(\mathbb{R}^n)}.
\end{aligned}$$

Hence, for each  $j$ ,  $\{Q_j f_k\}_k$  is a Cauchy sequence in  $L^{p_j}(\mathbb{R}^n)$ . Its limit is  $Q_j f$  (since  $f_k \rightarrow f$  also in  $\mathfrak{S}'(\mathbb{R}^n)$ , hence  $Q_j f_k \rightarrow Q_j f$  in  $\mathfrak{S}'(\mathbb{R}^n)$ ). If one now writes the inequality (3) for  $f_k$  and lets  $k$  tend to infinity, one obtains (3) for the limit function  $f$ , since  $e^{\kappa\varphi}$  is bounded on  $S(a, b)$ .

(ii) Assume that  $f \in H_{\text{loc}}^{m,q}(\Omega)$  vanishes in an open neighbourhood  $U$  of some point  $x_0 \in \Omega$ . Denote by  $B_a$  the ball  $B_a = B(a, x_0)$ . Choose  $\rho$  such that  $0 < \rho < R$ ,  $\overline{B_\rho} \subset \Omega$  and  $c \|v_j\|_{L^{w_j}(B_\rho)} < 1$ , where  $c$  is the constant appearing in (3). Let

$\delta \in (0, 1/2\rho)$  be such that  $B_{2\delta} \subseteq U$ . We claim that the hypotheses of the lemma imply that  $f = 0$  on  $B_{\rho-\delta}$ . By connecting an arbitrary point  $x \in \Omega$  with  $x_0$  by a smooth curve in  $\Omega$ , one can then deduce by a simple argument that  $f(x) = 0$  at each  $x \in \Omega$ .

To verify our claim, let  $\eta \in C_0^\infty(\Omega \cap B_R)$  be such that  $\eta(x) = 1$  for  $x \in B_\rho$ , and set  $g = \eta f$ . We have  $g \in H_c^{m,q}(B_R \setminus \{x_0\})$ . Define  $\varphi_0$  by  $\varphi_0(x) = \varphi(x - x_0)$ . By a change of variables, one deduces from the hypothesis (3) and (i) above that

$$\sum_{j=1}^{\nu} \|e^{\kappa\varphi_0} Q_j h\|_{L^{p_j}(\mathbb{R}^n)} \leq c \|e^{\kappa\varphi_0} P h\|_{L^q(\mathbb{R}^n)} \quad (38)$$

for all  $h \in H_c^{m,q}(B_R \setminus \{x_0\})$ , in particular for  $h = g$ .

From (38), (1) and the Hölder inequality we now obtain that

$$\begin{aligned}
\sum_{j=1}^{\nu} \|e^{\kappa\varphi_0} Q_j f\|_{L^{p_j}(B_\rho)} &\leq \sum_{j=1}^{\nu} \|e^{\kappa\varphi_0} Q_j g\|_{L^{p_j}(\Omega)} \\
&\leq c \|e^{\kappa\varphi_0} P g\|_{L^q(\Omega)} \\
&\leq c \|e^{\kappa\varphi_0} P f\|_{L^q(B_\rho)} + c \|e^{\kappa\varphi_0} P g\|_{L^q(\Omega \setminus B_\rho)}
\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} &\leq c \sum_{j=1}^{\nu} \|v_j e^{\kappa\varphi_0} Q_j f\|_{L^q(B_\rho)} \\ &\qquad\qquad\qquad + c \|e^{\kappa\varphi_0} Pg\|_{L^q(\Omega \setminus B_\rho)} \\ &\leq c \sum_{j=1}^{\nu} \|v_j\|_{L^{w_j}(B_\rho)} \|e^{\kappa\varphi_0} Q_j f\|_{L^{p_j}(B_\rho)} \\ &\qquad\qquad\qquad + c \|e^{\kappa\varphi_0} Pg\|_{L^q(\Omega \setminus B_\rho)}. \end{aligned} \tag{39}$$

Let  $\alpha_j = 1 - c \|v_j\|_{L^{w_j}(B_\rho)}$ . Since  $\varphi$  is strictly decreasing, we obtain from (39) that

$$\sum_{j=1}^{\nu} \alpha_j \left\| \left( \frac{\exp \varphi_0}{\exp \varphi(\rho)} \right)^\kappa Q_j f \right\|_{L^{p_j}(B_\rho)} \leq c \|Pg\|_{L^q(\Omega \setminus B_\rho)} < \infty.$$

Since  $\alpha_j > 0$  and  $[\exp \varphi(x)/\exp \varphi(\rho)]^\kappa \rightarrow +\infty$  for each  $x \in B_\rho$  as  $\kappa \rightarrow \infty$  in  $\Gamma$ , we must have  $Q_j f = 0$  on  $B_\rho$  for each  $j = 1, \dots, \nu$ .

Now choose  $\varphi \in C_0^\infty(B(1, 0))$  such that  $\int \varphi(x) dx = 1$  and put  $\varphi_\epsilon(x) = \epsilon^{-n} \varphi(\epsilon^{-1} x)$ . For  $0 < \epsilon < \delta$ , consider the distribution  $f_\epsilon$  on  $B_{\rho-\delta}$  given by  $f_\epsilon = \varphi_\epsilon * f$ . Clearly  $f_\epsilon \in C^\infty(B_{\rho-\delta})$ ,  $f_\epsilon \rightarrow f$  in  $\mathcal{D}'(B_{\rho-\delta})$  as  $\epsilon \rightarrow 0$  and  $f_{\epsilon|B_\delta} = 0$ . Also  $Q_j f_\epsilon = \varphi_\epsilon * Q_j f = 0$  on  $B_{\rho-\delta}$  for each  $j = 1, \dots, \nu$ . It follows that  $f_\epsilon = 0$  on  $B_{\rho-\delta}$  by one of the hypotheses of the lemma, whence  $f = 0$  on  $B_{\rho-\delta}$ .  $\square$

**THEOREM 2.** — *Let  $\Omega$  be an open connected subset of  $\mathbb{R}^n$  and  $v \in L_{loc}^w(\Omega)$  with  $w > n/2$  if  $n = 2, 3, 4$  and  $w \geq n - 2$  if  $n \geq 5$ . Then the differential inequality  $|\Delta f(x)| \leq |v(x)| |f(x)|$  has the unique continuation property in  $H_{loc}^{2,q}(\Omega)$ , where  $q = 1$  if  $w \leq 2$  and  $q = 2w/(w + 2)$  if  $w \geq 2$ .*

*Proof.* — We use Lemma 1 with  $\varphi(r) = -\log r$ ,  $q = 1$  if  $w \leq 2$ ,  $q = 2w/(w + 2)$  if  $w \geq 2$  and  $p = (1/q - 1/w)^{-1}$ . We take  $\kappa$  of the form  $\kappa = \kappa_m = n/p + 1/2 + m$ ,  $m = 1, 2, 3, \dots$ . The inequality (3) can be verified by using (23), with  $\tau = -\kappa_m$ . (23) requires that  $w > n/2$ . Furthermore, the constant  $c$  in (3) must

be independent of  $\kappa$ . Thus  $w$  must be such that  $c(-\kappa_m) \leq c_0 < \infty$  for all  $m$ , where  $c(\kappa)$  is given by (22). A necessary condition for this to hold is that  $w \geq n - 2$ , since terms with  $\ell$  close to  $\kappa_m - n/p$  in (22) are of the order  $O(m^{(n-2-w)/w})$  as  $m \rightarrow \infty$ .

That the conditions  $w \geq n - 2$  and  $w > n/2$  are also sufficient may be seen by comparing the series in (22) to an integral. Indeed, using the inequality (4), one finds that

$$\begin{aligned} & \sum_{\ell=2}^{\infty} \frac{a_{\ell}}{2\ell + n - 2} |(-\kappa_m - \ell + 2 - n/p) (-\kappa_m + \ell + n/p)|^{-w+1} \\ & \leq k \int_{\Delta_1 \cup \Delta_2} u^{n-3} |(m + u + n - 1)(m - u)|^{-w+1} du \\ & = km^{n-2w} \int_{\Delta'_1 \cup \Delta'_2} y^{n-3} |(1 + y + (n - 1)/m)(1 - y)|^{-w+1} dy, \end{aligned} \tag{40}$$

where  $k$  is a constant which is independent of  $m$ ,

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta_1 &= [1/2, m - 1/2], \quad \Delta_2 = [m + 1/2, \infty), \\ \Delta'_1 &= [1/(2m), 1 - 1/(2m)] \quad \text{and} \quad \Delta'_2 = [1 + 1/(2m), \infty). \end{aligned}$$

For  $w \neq 2$ , the term on the *r.h.s.* of (40) is bounded by

$$km^{n-2w} c_{n,w} (1 + m^{w-2} + \delta_{n_2} \log m),$$

which is  $O(1)$  as  $m \rightarrow \infty$  provided that  $w > n/2$  and  $n - w - 2 \leq 0$ . The terms with  $\ell = 0$  and  $\ell = 1$  in the series (22) are  $O(1)$  or  $o(1)$  for each  $w \geq 1$ .  $\square$

*Remark.* – In the case  $n = 3$ , Theorem 2 says that the inequality  $|\Delta f| \leq |v| |f|$  has the unique continuation property in the class  $H_{loc}^{2,1}(\Omega)$  if  $v \in L_{loc}^w(\Omega)$  for some  $w > 3/2$ . It is important that we succeeded to prove this in the class  $H_{loc}^{2,1}$  and not only in  $H_{loc}^{2,2}$  for example. In fact, suppose  $v$  is in  $L_{loc}^w(\mathbb{R}^3)$  with  $w > 3/2$  and satisfies suitable conditions at infinity. Then one can define the self-adjoint operator  $-\Delta + v$  in  $L^2(\mathbb{R}^3)$  as a sum of quadratic forms. If  $f \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^3)$  is an eigenvector of this self-adjoint operator, then one will have  $f \in H^{1,2}(\mathbb{R}^3)$ , and nothing more in general ( $H^{1,2}$  is identical with the form domain of  $-\Delta + v$ ). By Sobolev inequalities,  $H^{1,2}(\mathbb{R}^3) \subset L^6(\mathbb{R}^3)$ , so that  $f \in L^6(\mathbb{R}^3)$ . Then, by the Hölder inequality,  $vf \in L_{loc}^q(\mathbb{R}^3)$  for some  $q > 6/5$ , and  $q \rightarrow 6/5$  when  $w \rightarrow 3/2$ . It follows that  $\Delta f \in L_{loc}^q(\mathbb{R}^3)$

(because  $(-\Delta + v)f = \lambda f$ ,  $\lambda \in \mathbf{R}$ , implies that  $|\Delta f| = |(v - \lambda)f|$ ). Hence  $f \in H_{\text{loc}}^{2,q}(\mathbf{R}^3)$  for some  $q > 6/5$ , and, if  $w \rightarrow 3/2$ , then  $q \rightarrow 6/5$ . This shows that one cannot suppose more than  $f \in H_{\text{loc}}^{2,6/5}(\mathbf{R}^3)$ . In conclusion, if one wants to apply a unique continuation property to the problem of non-existence of positive eigenvalues of  $-\Delta + v$  in  $n = 3$  dimensions, one must have this property at least in the class  $H_{\text{loc}}^{2,6/5}(\mathbf{R}^3)$ .

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