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Julien Lesgourgues, Gianpiero Mangano, Gennaro Miele and Sergio Pastor

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NEUTRINO COSMOLOGY

The role that neutrinos have played in the evolution of the Universe is one of the most fascinating research areas that has stemmed from the interplays between cosmology, astrophysics and particle physics. In this self-contained book, the authors bring together all aspects of the role of neutrinos in cosmology, spanning from leptogenesis to primordial nucleosynthesis, and from their role in CMB and structure formation to the problem of their direct detection.

The book starts by guiding the reader through aspects of fundamental neutrino physics, the standard cosmological model and statistical mechanics in the expanding Universe, before discussing the history of neutrinos in chronological order from the very early stages until today. This timely book will interest graduate students and researchers in astrophysics, cosmology and particle physics, who work with either a theoretical or experimental focus.

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Contents

	<i>page ix</i>
<i>Preface</i>	
1 The basics of neutrino physics	1
1.1 The electroweak Standard Model	2
1.2 Spontaneous symmetry breaking and fermion masses	5
1.3 The basic properties of neutrinos: interactions, masses and oscillations	9
1.3.1 Neutrino interactions in the low energy limit	9
1.3.2 Dirac and Majorana masses	16
1.3.3 The seesaw mechanism	22
1.3.4 Flavour oscillations in vacuum	25
1.3.5 Flavour oscillations in matter	30
1.4 Neutrino experiments	35
1.4.1 Oscillation experiments and three-neutrino mixing	35
1.4.2 Oscillation experiments and sterile neutrinos	40
1.4.3 Neutrino mass scale experiments	42
1.4.4 Dirac or Majorana? Neutrinoless double- β decay	46
1.5 Nonstandard neutrino–electron interactions	50
2 Overview of the Standard Cosmological Model	53
2.1 The homogeneous and isotropic universe	55
2.1.1 The dynamics of expansion	55
2.1.2 Distances in the universe	65
2.2 Statistical mechanics in the expanding universe	70
2.2.1 The relativistic Boltzmann equation	70
2.2.2 When equilibrium holds	80
2.3 The expansion stages	83
2.3.1 Inflation	83

vi	<i>Contents</i>	
	2.3.2 Radiation and matter domination	87
	2.3.3 Λ (or dark energy) domination	92
2.4	A first look at photon and neutrino backgrounds	95
	2.4.1 Photon decoupling and the formation of the cosmic microwave background	95
	2.4.2 The cosmic neutrino background	98
3	Neutrinos in the early ages	106
	3.1 The baryon number of the universe	107
	3.2 Sakharov conditions	109
	3.3 C, CP, B , out of equilibrium and all that	112
	3.3.1 C and CP violation	112
	3.3.2 Baryon and lepton number violation	113
	3.3.3 Relating baryon and lepton numbers	119
	3.3.4 The out-of-equilibrium decay scenario	121
	3.4 Basics of leptogenesis	125
	3.4.1 Standard leptogenesis and Majorana neutrinos	126
	3.4.2 Leptogenesis and neutrino oscillation: Two right-handed neutrinos	131
4	Neutrinos in the MeV age	134
	4.1 Neutrino decoupling	135
	4.2 Neutrino oscillations in the expanding universe	143
	4.2.1 Effective matter potentials	143
	4.2.2 Density matrix formalism	145
	4.2.3 Flavour oscillations and relic neutrino distortions	152
	4.2.4 Flavour oscillations and relic neutrino asymmetries	154
	4.2.5 Active–sterile oscillations	160
	4.3 Big Bang nucleosynthesis	166
	4.3.1 Neutron–proton chemical equilibrium	170
	4.3.2 The nuclear network	173
	4.3.3 Light-element observations	176
	4.3.4 Theory vs. data	180
	4.4 Bounds on neutrino properties from Big Bang nucleosynthesis	181
	4.4.1 Extra relativistic degrees of freedom	183
	4.4.2 Relic neutrino asymmetries	185
	4.4.3 Nonstandard neutrino electromagnetic properties and interactions	189
	4.4.4 Sterile neutrinos and Big Bang nucleosynthesis	193

Contents

vii

5	Neutrinos in the cosmic microwave background epoch	198
5.1	Cosmic microwave background anisotropies	199
5.1.1	Overview	199
5.1.2	Perturbation equations	201
5.1.3	Adiabatic and isocurvature modes	208
5.1.4	Power spectra and transfer functions	211
5.1.5	Acoustic oscillations	213
5.1.6	Temperature anisotropies	220
5.1.7	Polarization anisotropies	233
5.1.8	Tensor perturbations	234
5.2	Neutrino perturbations	236
5.2.1	Perturbation equations	236
5.2.2	Neutrino isocurvature modes	240
5.2.3	Adiabatic mode in the presence of neutrinos	242
5.2.4	Free-streaming length	244
5.2.5	Linear evolution of neutrino perturbations	248
5.2.6	Practical implementation and approximations	249
5.3	Effects of neutrinos on primary cosmic microwave background anisotropies	253
5.3.1	How can decoupled species affect the cosmic microwave background?	253
5.3.2	Effects of massless neutrinos	255
5.3.3	Effects of massive neutrinos	262
5.3.4	Effects of interacting neutrinos	266
5.4	Bounds on neutrinos from primary cosmic-microwave-background anisotropies	267
5.4.1	Cosmic microwave background and homogeneous cosmology data sets	267
5.4.2	Neutrino abundance	268
5.4.3	Neutrino masses	271
6	Recent times: neutrinos and structure formation	273
6.1	Linear matter power spectrum	274
6.1.1	Neutrinoless universe with cold dark matter	275
6.1.2	Neutrinoless universe with cold dark matter and baryons	284
6.1.3	Impact of massless neutrinos	290
6.1.4	Impact of hot dark matter	293
6.1.5	Impact of warm dark matter	312

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
6.2	Nonlinear matter power spectrum	317
6.2.1	N -body simulations	317
6.2.2	Analytic approaches	323
6.3	Impact of neutrinos on secondary cosmic microwave background anisotropies	324
6.3.1	Late integrated Sachs–Wolfe effect	324
6.3.2	Cosmic microwave background lensing	327
6.4	Observing the large-scale structure	328
6.4.1	Galaxy and cluster power spectrum	329
6.4.2	Cluster mass function	331
6.4.3	Galaxy weak lensing	332
6.4.4	Cosmic microwave background lensing	334
6.4.5	Lyman alpha forests	334
6.4.6	21-cm surveys	335
6.5	Large-scale structure bounds on neutrino properties	335
6.5.1	Active neutrino masses	335
6.5.2	Neutrino abundance and light sterile neutrinos	339
6.5.3	Nonstandard properties of active neutrinos	342
6.5.4	Heavy sterile neutrinos (warm dark matter)	344
7	Cosmological neutrinos today	348
7.1	The ultimate dream: detecting cosmological neutrinos	349
7.1.1	Scatterings: G_F^2 effects are too small	349
7.1.2	The order G_F interactions and the Stodolsky effect	350
7.1.3	Massive neutrinos and β -decaying nuclei	354
7.2	Beyond the ultimate dream: neutrino anisotropies in the sky	359
7.2.1	Neutrino last scattering surface	359
7.2.2	Massless neutrinos	359
7.2.3	Massive neutrinos	360
	<i>References</i>	362
	<i>Index</i>	375

Preface

To Arianna, Carmen, Isabelle, and María José

When neutrinos first came on the scene in 1930, their father, Wolfgang Pauli, confessed to his colleague, the astronomer Walter Baade, that to save energy conservation in β -decays (quoted in Hoyle, 1967),

I have done a terrible thing today, something which no theoretical physicist should ever do. I have suggested something that can never be verified experimentally.

This was perhaps the only time Pauli was mistaken. Less than 30 years later, neutrinos were discovered by Reines and Cowan.

Since then, we have learned so many things about neutrinos that Pauli himself would be very surprised. More than this, understanding neutrino properties has always brought new insights into the whole field of fundamental interactions, and new theoretical paradigms.

Today we know quite accurately how to describe their feeble interactions with matter, from the very first attempts of Fermi to the successful Standard Model of electroweak interactions. Many pieces of information have been collected in laboratory experiments, the traditional setting of particle physics. The study of neutrino interactions has been pursued at accelerators and reactors and, more recently, by sending neutrino beams produced at accelerators to underground laboratories. Accelerator experiments have also confirmed that there are only three generations of light neutrinos which are weakly interacting.

The main breakthrough in neutrino physics over the last few decades came from a different environment: astrophysics. The solar neutrino problem – an observed deficit of neutrino flux from the sun – along with the atmospheric neutrino anomaly, has led to the discovery that neutrinos are massive particles. We do not understand their mass spectrum yet, nor why they are such light particles. On the experimental side, remarkable improvements are expected in the next few years, both in

measuring the neutrino mass scale using tritium β -decay, and in understanding the real *nature* of neutrinos as Dirac or Majorana particles. At the same time, intense theoretical activity is going on, addressing the neutrino mass problem, which is seen as a possible clue to unveiling the behaviour of fundamental interactions at high energy scales.

The most spectacular property of neutrinos is deeply rooted in quantum mechanics. As first suggested by Bruno Pontecorvo, neutrinos exhibit oscillations among different flavours during their time evolution, leading to an incredibly rich phenomenology. The parameters characterizing this oscillatory behaviour are currently quite well known, because of the interplay of a variety of different experimental techniques and neutrino sources of both terrestrial and astrophysical origin. Just at the time of writing this book, the last missing piece of the puzzle, one of the neutrino mixing angles, was measured with good precision. No doubt neutrino oscillation physics will represent a leading research line in the coming years.

Since the early works on the synthesis of light nuclei in the Big Bang model in the late forties, it was clear that neutrinos are not simply passive spectators during the expansion of the universe. Through their weak interactions with other particles, as well as their *gravity*, they influence a wide variety of phenomena which took place in the early stages of the life of the universe, till very recent epochs. This means that using observations of astrophysical quantities, related to specific phases of the expansion history, we have a further way to constrain neutrino properties at different energy, time and length scales, which in some cases are not accessible to laboratory experiments. Just to give a few examples, some constraints on the number of light weakly interacting neutrinos and on their mass scale were obtained using observations of primordial ^4He and of the total energy density of the universe well before laboratory experiments could provide comparable information.

This vast arena in which to test neutrino properties is usually referred to as *neutrino cosmology*, and that is what this book is about. By its very nature, it is a multidisciplinary research field, where the different expertises and backgrounds of theoretical and experimental particle physicists, astrophysicists and cosmologists find a meeting point and a common language. It is a branch of an even broader scientific activity, commonly called *astroparticle physics*, aimed at understanding fundamental interactions by exploiting observations of very large objects, such as astrophysical sources, or the universe as a whole.

In the last two decades, we have witnessed a big boost along this research line, due to outstanding improvements in the number and quality of astrophysical observations. Large galaxy surveys, detailed maps of the cosmic microwave background, observations of primordial nuclear abundances and new ways to trace the expansion history of the universe are just a few examples of this experimental effort. Whereas only 20 years ago neutrino cosmology was in its infancy, and theoretical physicists

were typically satisfied by order-of-magnitude calculations made on the back of the envelope, the situation has changed rapidly since then. Observations currently require a much more detailed analysis, and provide several new tests of theoretical models.

This book is a summary of the history of the universe from a neutrino perspective. The first two chapters introduce the three important theoretical tools that will be widely used in the following: the basics of neutrino interactions and properties in the framework of the Standard Model of particle physics, the homogeneous and isotropic cosmological model, and some concepts of kinetic theory. We have done our best to present a pedagogical and self-contained discussion of these topics, and we are not sure that we have succeeded in this respect. Indeed, the subject of this book is intrinsically multidisciplinary, and covering all topics in a detailed and self-consistent manner – while keeping the number of pages reasonable – was a major challenge. Readers who are not familiar with, say, quantum field theory, general relativity, gauge issues in cosmology or the theory of inflation will need further reading in more specialized books or reviews. In any case, we tried at least to introduce all the concepts that are necessary for understanding the remaining chapters. We hope that this part may also trigger the reader's interest in further studying the topics he or she might be unfamiliar with. To this end, we give a long list of possible references.

The remaining chapters are devoted to different aspects of the role of neutrinos in cosmology, in *chronological order*, as they intervene in the evolution of the universe, from the very early stages till today. Chapter 3 addresses the issue of baryogenesis, the dynamical production of the baryon asymmetry observed in our universe, and in particular a scenario deeply related to neutrino properties, called leptogenesis. Chapter 4 deals with the dynamics of neutrino oscillations in a cosmological setting, and also with primordial nucleosynthesis, one of the main pillars of the cosmological model, providing a lot of information about neutrino physics. Chapter 5 explains the properties of cosmic microwave background anisotropies, which contain a huge quantity of information about the whole history of the universe, and shows how they are impacted by neutrinos. Chapter 6 describes the dynamics of structure formation on very large scales – those of galaxies, clusters, etc. – which is crucially affected by the abundance, mass and properties of neutrinos. Finally, Chapter 7 presents a summary of the methods which have been proposed so far to detect the relic neutrino background in the laboratory, and a brief discussion of the anisotropies that such detectors would see if they could ever become operational. As we will see, this is a very challenging task, the ultimate dream of a *neutrino cosmologist*.

In this book we will adopt the signature $(- + + +)$, except in Chapters 1 and 4, which are more particle physics oriented, where we adopt the more widely used $(+ - - -)$. Unless otherwise mentioned, we use natural units.

If we look into some of the available Web archives for scientific papers related to both neutrinos and cosmology, the query will return a number of publications of the order of several thousands. This gives an idea of how intense the activity is in this research field. In the following pages, the reader will not find a complete analysis of all possible models and ideas proposed so far. Some alternatives to the mainstream scenarios – sometimes extremely interesting and intriguing – have not been considered in our discussion, and are cited in our (rather long) list of references. We apologize for all omissions. However, in writing this book, our guideline has been to try to present the main physical aspects of the phenomena neutrinos are involved in, rather than to go through all their possible variations. In a sense, what we have mainly considered is a *standard* neutrino cosmology, describing what is currently well established on solid theoretical and experimental bases. We hope this might be helpful for students and researchers who are interested in approaching this fascinating research field, starting from different cultural backgrounds. If this ambitious goal is achieved even partially, we will be happy with our contribution to a process that is well on the way, namely, the emergence of a homogeneous community of theoretical and experimental particle physicists, cosmologists and astrophysicists.

This book is the result of the authors' friendship over many years. However, it would not have been written were not for enlightening discussions and collaborations with many of our colleagues. Several topics that the reader hopefully will find interesting in the following pages are the outcome of their work and enthusiasm, and of their sharing with us their knowledge and experience.

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