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矢量光场与碱金属原子介质相互作用的研究进展(特邀)

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摘 要: 偏振在光与物质相互作用中扮演着重要的角色。过去几十年里,绝大多数研究工作都基于偏振单一且均匀分布的标量光场。近年来,随着光场产生与操控技术的不断发展,空间偏振非均匀分布的矢量光场逐渐引起人们的关注。矢量光场具有多维可调控的自由度以及独特的焦场属性,在经典与量子通讯、光学操控和显微成像等领域具有重要的研究价值与广泛的应用前景。矢量光场与物质相互作用的研究不仅丰富了人们对光场矢量特性的认识,也推动了基于不同介质实现光场调控的新发展。原子介质对光场偏振具有较高的敏感性,容易形成原子极化,并且具有更多的调控自由度,是探索矢量光场特性与实现矢量光场调控的理想平台。本文回顾了近年来矢量光场与原子介质相互作用的研究进展,重点介绍了原子介质与矢量光场在空间极化调控、相干调控、频率转换和非线性传输等研究领域的相关工作,并对该领域的未来发展趋势进行了展望。

关键词: 矢量光场;原子介质;各向异性;量子相干;四波混频

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0 引言

人类对光的本质及其与物质相互作用的研究从很早以前就开始了,由于物质独特的光学性质,可以在不同程度上改变光的行为,通过对入射和出射光束的观察,唯象地建立起光与物质相互作用的初步模型。但是早期的研究主要是对实验现象的归纳与总结,并未涉及基本的物理过程和建立合理的理论框架。19世纪以前人们通过对光的探索,逐步建立起经典的几何光学与波动光学^[1-2]。直至20世纪初,光子的波粒二象性以及光与物质相互作用的量子理论才逐渐被建立起来^[3,4]。

1960年,梅曼在实验室成功产生人类历史上第一束激光,验证了1916年爱因斯坦关于激光的理论,并成为推动现代科学发展的最伟大成就之一^[5-8]。在此之后,几乎所有光学相关的诺贝尔奖都与激光有着千丝万缕的关系^[9-11];1981年激光光谱仪的开发,改善了原有光谱技术在灵敏度和分辨率方面的不足;1997年原子的冷却与捕获,推动了科研人员在冷原子领域取得新的进展;2018年激光光镊的发明,促进了人们实现操纵原子、分子和生物细胞的发展。具体而言,光与物质的相互作用,实质上是组成物质的微观粒子吸收或辐射光子,同时改变自身相关属性的表现。在现代物理体系中,光通常是指具有高相干特性与单色性的激光。自激光问世以来,如何实现对光场振幅、相位、偏振等不同自由度的灵活调控,成为相关领域的研究重点,有助于促进光与物质相互作用过程中新现象的发现及新应用的发展。值得注意的是,振幅与相位描述的是光

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场传播中波阵面上可用标量数值所表示的信息,而偏振则是垂直于光场传播方向上用矢量所表示的信息(电场矢量的振动轨迹)。熟知的光场模式,例如厄米高斯模式^[12]、拉盖尔高斯模式^[13]以及因斯高斯模式^[14],都是通过对标量亥姆霍兹方程求解得来,且拥有特殊的空间振幅及相位分布。同时,它们具有一个共同的特点即偏振状态在空间分布上是均匀的,可以通过光学元件转换为线性偏振、圆偏振或椭圆偏振等任意均匀的偏振态。相对于标量光场,1961年,SNITZER E从理论上提出了一种空间偏振分布不均匀的电磁场模式^[15],即矢量光场(Vector Beams, VBs),同时也是满足矢量亥姆霍兹方程的解^[16]。1972年,POHL D与MUSHIAKE Y等分别在实验上产生了两种具有特殊空间偏振分布的柱对称矢量光场:角向偏振矢量光场^[17]与径向偏振矢量光场^[18]。然而,由于相关技术发展的局限性和对这类特殊光场的特性认识不足,此后近三十年的时间里,关于矢量光场相关研究的进展非常缓慢^[19-24]。

进入21世纪,有关矢量光场的研究才逐步展开。科研人员在研究矢量光场的聚焦特性时发现,非均匀偏振分布的矢量光场在焦场能够产生很强的纵向电场分量^[25-28]以及结构化的横向电场分量^[29-31],同时还可以得到更小的聚焦光斑^[32]。同时,科研人员意识到矢量光场作为偏振态与轨道角动量(Orbital Angular Momentum, OAM)的不可分离态^[33],是理解和类比量子纠缠的有效工具^[34],也是编码高维信息的理想载体^[35-37]。综上所述,矢量光场在经典与量子通讯^[38, 39]、光学操控^[40, 41]和显微成像^[42, 43]等领域具有重要的研究价值与广泛的应用前景。除此之外,在以往的光与物质相互作用的研究中,所涉及的大多是偏振均匀分布的标量光场,而矢量光场的非均匀偏振特性为光与物质相互作用提供了更多的自由度,进而丰富了光与物质相互作用的全面性和多样性。得益于科技进步,矢量光场的产生方法目前已经相对成熟,极大地促进了矢量光场与物质相互作用这一新兴研究领域的发展^[44, 45]。碱金属元素作为一类光学活性介质,其原子极化与光场的偏振状态密切相关,是研究矢量光场与物质相互作用的平台。当光场与原子介质相互作用时,不但可以实现光场结构的调控,而且会导致原子介质光学性质(或极化率)的改变,有效地使光场与原子介质关联在一起,而这些独特的性质在量子计算^[46]、量子通讯^[47, 48]和量子精密测量^[49-51]等领域都有着潜在的应用价值。本文回顾并总结了近年来矢量光场与碱金属原子介质相互作用的研究进展,首先简单介绍了矢量光场的性质,之后分别对矢量光场与原子介质相互作用中的各向异性、量子相干性以及非线性效应的相关工作进行了概述与总结,最后对这一新兴领域未来的发展进行了展望。

1 矢量光场

矢量光场主要相对于标量光场提出,其作为矢量亥姆霍兹方程的特解展示出了丰富的偏振信息以及特殊的焦场特性,在新型结构光场构建与调控、光与物质相互作用领域有非常重要的应用。矢量光场可以表示为两个偏振正交且携带不同OAM的两个基矢的相干叠加。为了清楚表征矢量光场,研究人员基于Jones矩阵表示法、Stokes参量法以及庞加莱球表示等多种通用方式分别对矢量光场进行数学和几何描述。

Jones矩阵采用列向量实现光场偏振的描述,传统的柱矢量光场可以表示为携带不同OAM的左旋与右旋圆偏振光的相干叠加,即

$$J = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ i \end{bmatrix} \exp(i l \varphi) + \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ -i \end{bmatrix} \exp(-i l \varphi)$$

式中, l 表示OAM的拓扑荷数, φ 表示极角。若两光场的相对相位差不固定,则 $J = \begin{bmatrix} \cos(l\varphi + \varphi_0) \\ \sin(l\varphi + \varphi_0) \end{bmatrix}$ 。图1展

示的是当 $l=1$ 时,不同相对相位差下光场的偏振分布。近年来,随着矢量光场的深入研究,科研人员发现可以灵活调节两相干光场的振幅、相位以及OAM的大小等参量实现各类矢量光场的产生。

Stokes参量主要指实验中光场偏振探测的可观测量 S_0 、 S_1 、 S_2 以及 S_3 ,其中 S_0 表示光场的总体强度分布; S_1 表示光场竖直和水平偏振分量之差; S_2 表示对角和反对角偏振分量之差; S_3 表示左右旋偏振分量之差。实际实验中,通过三个斯托克斯参量可以重构任意光场的偏振分布。

1892年,PITZGERALD G M提出利用球面表征光场偏振的方法^[52],该方法可以直观地描述标量光场的偏振态以及偏振态之间的转化。近年来,研究人员通过类比标量庞加莱光场,发展并完善了描述矢量光场的高阶庞加莱球^[53-54]。相比于标量庞加莱球,高阶庞加莱球由偏振正交且携带OAM的左右旋圆偏振基

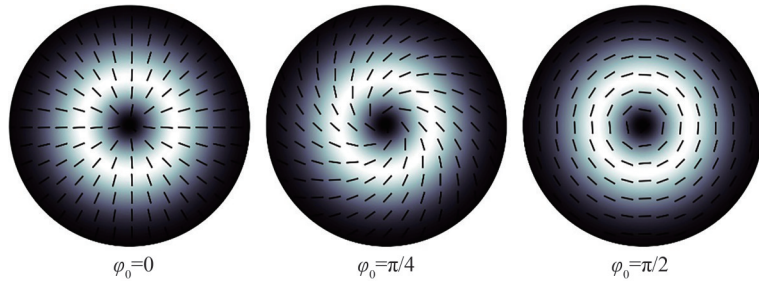


图1 不同相位差下矢量光场的偏振分布

Fig. 1 Polarization distribution of VBs with different phase

矢构成。图2表示的是 $l=\pm 1$ 的情况。两正交基矢之间的相位差沿赤道逐渐变化,由该基矢组叠加而成的矢量光场偏振态也随着赤道方向发生改变。

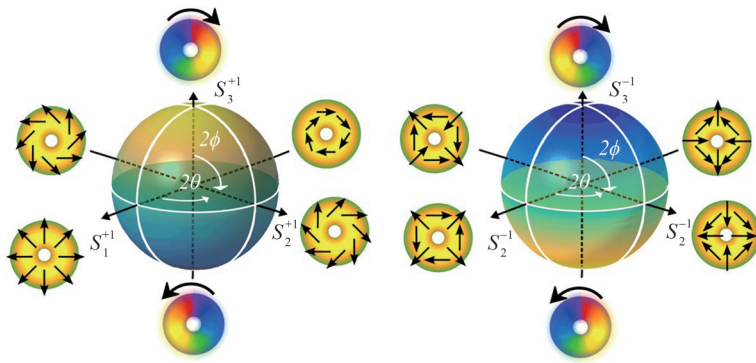


图2 矢量光场的庞加莱球表示^[53]

Fig. 2 Poincaré sphere representation for VBs^[53]

自矢量光场问世以来,多数研究小组致力于其生成方式的研究,典型的生成方案主要有主动和被动法两种。主动产生方案指通过选择合适腔镜以及双折射晶体,在激光器内部通过模式选择促使激光器以矢量模式输出,该方式具有稳定、高效等特点,但是不够灵活,不易产生任意可调的矢量光场。被动生成方案指在激光腔外对基模高斯光进行调制,通过在光路中加载偏振调制器或者搭建干涉仪实现矢量光场的产生。该方案的产生效率依赖于光学元件,但是灵活多变,原理上可以得到任意空间偏振分布的矢量光束。

主动生成方案:1972年,POHL D等采用方解石晶体,通过搭建望远镜系统以及光阑实现激光腔内模式萃取,如图3(a)所示^[18],通过调Q开关最终实现了径向矢量光场的输出。2005年,KOZAWA Y通过在激光腔内插入Brewster镜实现镜像矢量光场模式输出^[55],如图3(b)所示。2007年,AHMED M A小组采用多层圆形偏振光栅实现矢量光场的输出,如图3(c)^[56]。2016年,NAIDOO D等基于激光腔实现了高阶矢量光场的高纯度输出^[57]。如图3(d)所示,该小组利用激光腔内部的几何相位并将光子偏振映射到OAM,从而证明标准激光腔可产生高纯度的矢量涡旋光场。除此之外相关研究小组通过激光腔内部搭建干涉仪实现矢量光场的直接输出,如图3(e)所示^[58]。

被动生成方案:在光学谐振腔外,通过搭建干涉光路、加载涡旋半波片(Q-plate),利用空间光调制器、数字显微镜以及超表面材料等方式实现矢量模式的输出。Q-plate是生成矢量光场的常用器件之一,它是一种快轴随空间角向变化的光学元件^[59],该器件多采用光刻技术或液晶聚合物等微纳加工技术实现。图4(a)为单一偏振光场经过快轴周期性空间变化的Q-plate后产生矢量光场。除此之外,Q-plate也可以作为光子自旋角动量(Spin Angular Momentum, SAM)到OAM的转换器件。干涉法主要针对矢量光场两个相干基矢进行操作,是指给两路偏振正交的相干光束加载螺旋相位最终干涉生成矢量光场。2011年,南京大学王慧田教授团队采用空间光调制器产生OAM光场模式,通过搭建双路径干涉实现了矢量光场的产生^[60]。同年,MORENO I等通过平行排列的空间光调制器实现了任意空间偏振变化的光场^[61]。2013年,MALUENDA D团队通过搭建Mach-Zehnder配置光路实现了任意光强分布以及任意偏振分布的矢量光场^[62]。同年,詹其

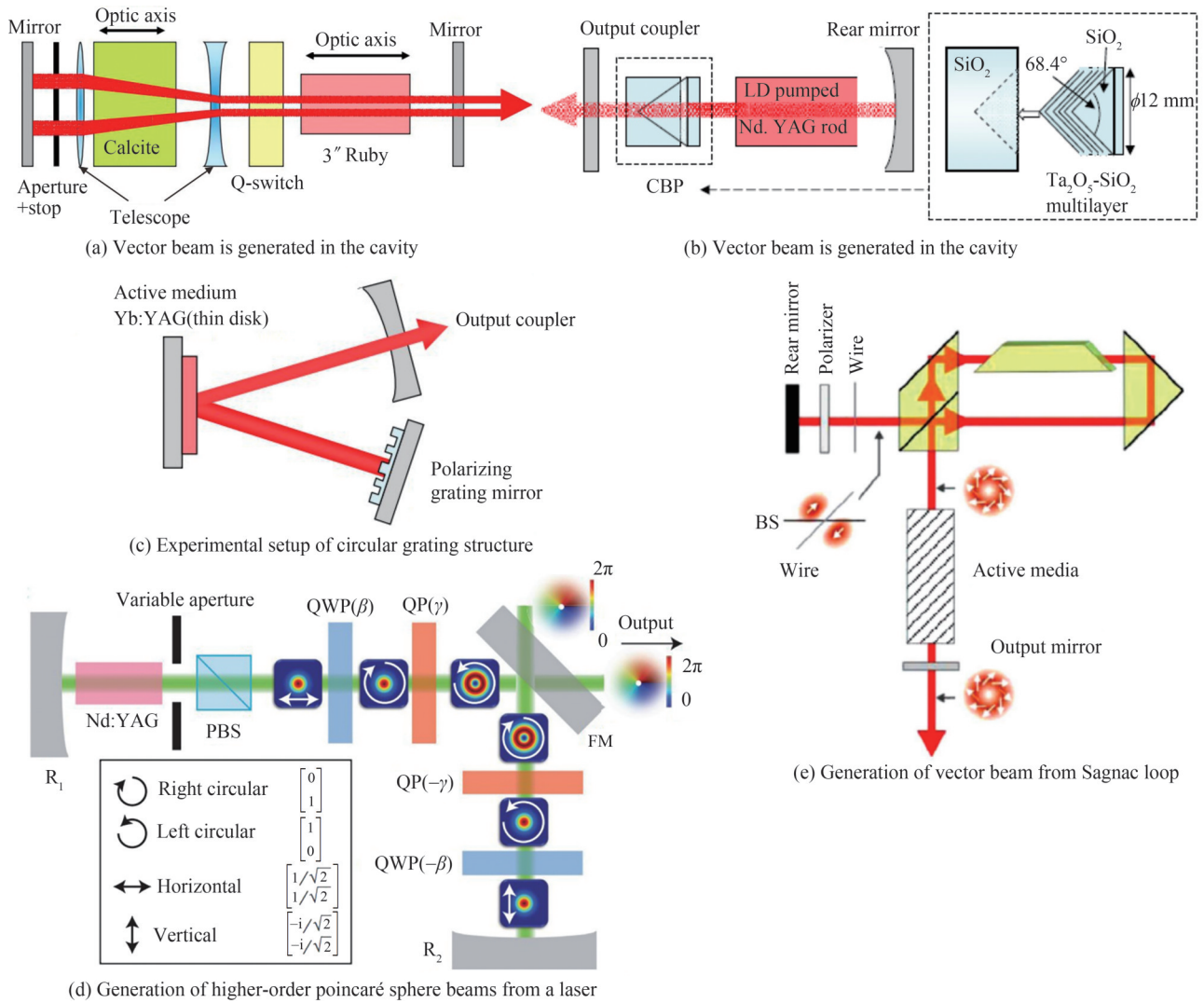


图3 矢量光主动生成方案^[18, 55-58]
Fig. 3 Generation of VBs through the active methods^[18, 55-58]

文教授团队利用空间光调制器实现了任意矢量光场的产生,并且产生该光场的任意像素点都独立可控^[63]。2018年,赵建林教授研究团队基于分屏思想实现了任意矢量光场的高效产生^[64]。通过干涉法产生任意矢量结构光场的研究不胜枚举,近年来,随着新一代信息技术革新,空间矢量结构光场带来的新机遇与新挑战使多数研究者致力于探索更为优越的矢量光场生成方案。例如,基于分屏思想的高效矢量光场生成方案,如图4(d)所示^[65];基于具有集成潜力的超表面的矢量光场产生方式^[66]。矢量光场的测量技术作为检测光场的关键技术具有重要研究意义,实验上通常采用斯托克斯参量法实现矢量光场偏振分量的测量^[67-69]。多种产生以及测量方式的不断演进促使矢量光场在未来新技术的应用领域彰显重大应用前景^[70-71]。

矢量光场具有自旋-轨道角动量耦合的内禀结构以及独特的焦场属性,已在多个领域展现出巨大的应用潜力。2009年,SZOPLIK T研究小组利用矢量光场验证其在表面等离子激元方面的应用潜力^[72]。2010年,王慧田教授研究团队将具有空间偏振分布的矢量光场应用于光场微调,并在实验上验证了矢量光场在粒子捕获方面的独特优势^[73]。2011年,HNATOVSKY C等利用矢量光场在焦场的特殊极化分布,并通过矢量脉冲验证了结构性纵向电场对材料进行微加工的可能性^[74]。2010年,KWIAT P G等通过双折射晶体产生单光子源,并将单光子态编码至光子SAM和OAM,最后通过量子层析验证了单光子高维编码的可能性^[75]。关于矢量光场的产生方法、基本属性和相关应用,有兴趣的读者还可以参考其他较为全面的综述文章^[76-89]以及综述中所引用的相关文献。

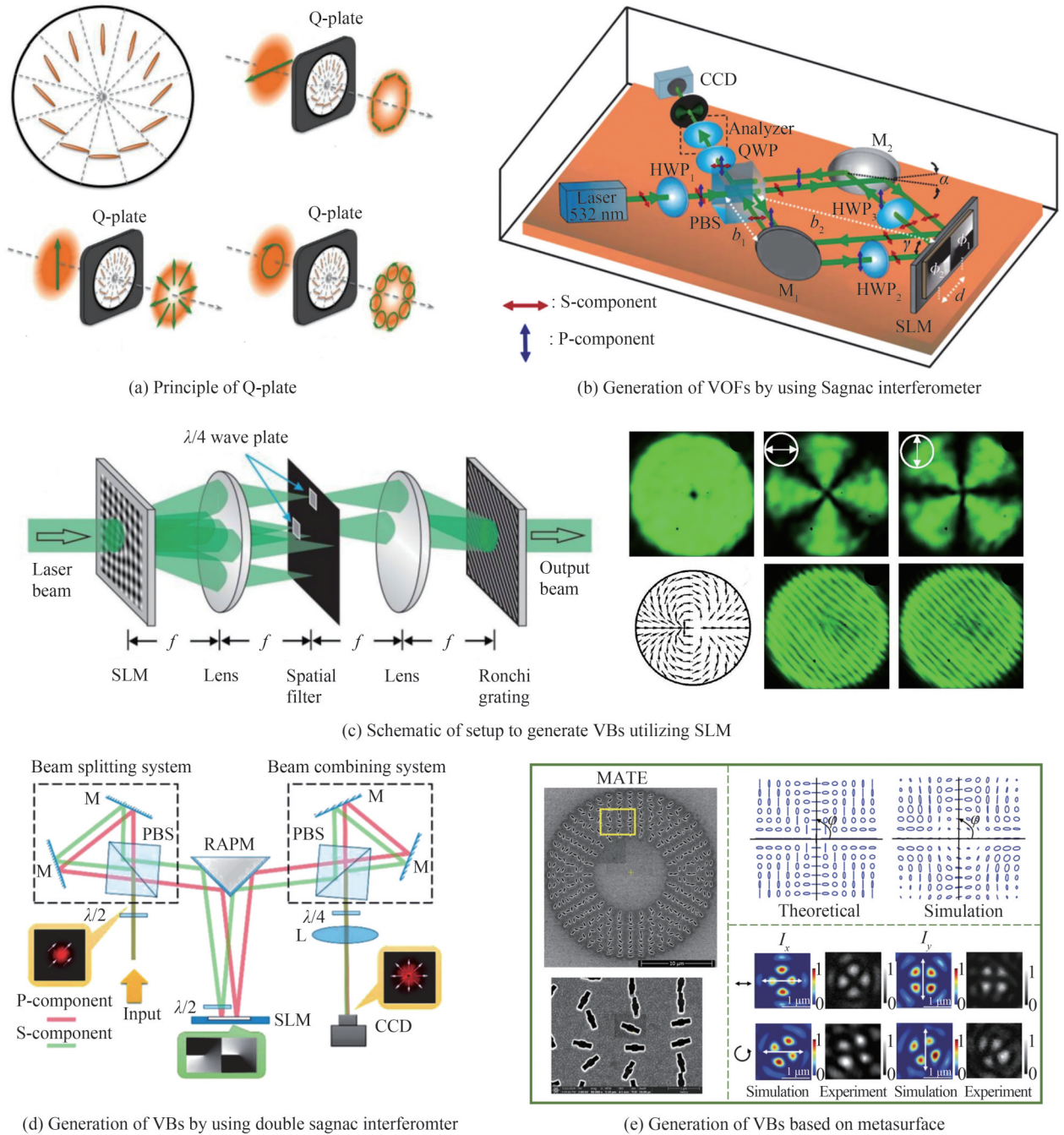


图4 矢量光场被动生成方案^[59-60,64-66]

Fig. 4 Generation of VBs through the passive methods^[59-60,64-66]

2 调控原子介质的空间各向异性

原子介质在无外场作用下表现出各向同性,这里的外场是指光场、磁场或者微波场等。在外场的作用下,原子在不同能级的粒子数布居或不同原子的极化状态会发生改变,从而诱导原子介质各向异性的发生,具体表现在对光场偏振依赖的吸收(二向色性)以及偏振依赖的色散(双折射性)。其中典型的效应有磁光效应与光泵浦效应,目前也已被广泛应用到了原子磁力计^[90-92]和偏振选择吸收光谱^[93-95]等相关研究领域。值得注意的是,绝大多数的研究都是基于单一(均匀)的偏振光场与原子介质相互作用,在时间频率维度上探索介质吸收或色散的变化。然而,当引入空间偏振分布不均匀的矢量光场与原子介质相互作用时,便可以从空间维度上探索介质的各向异性,实现空间分布的原子极化。

在利用光场改变原子介质各向异性的工作中,最常用的是泵浦探测技术^[96-98]。一束功率较强的泵浦光场诱导原子介质的粒子数布居或自旋排列,同时利用同向或者反向传播的探测光场(功率相比于泵浦光较弱)对介质的各向异性进行探测。需要说明的是,泵浦光场的偏振状态决定了相互作用中的量子化轴,对应着原子的自旋排列,从而影响探测光场与原子介质的相互作用,具体而言就是能级跃迁的选择。此外,同向传播的两束光场之间的多普勒频移可以相互抵消,然而在反向传播中则需要考虑原子介质不同运动方向下所引起的多普勒频移,这将导致多个能级共同参与到相互作用中。这也是所有原子相关实验中,人们利用泵浦探测技术获得原子介质的饱和吸收光谱,从而实现激光频率锁定的常用方式^[98-101]。因此,对于不同偏振组合、不同传播方向的泵浦光场与探测光场,探测到时间与空间的响应也有所不同。目前,关于利用单一偏振光场诱导原子介质各向异性的研究已经非常成熟,感兴趣的读者可以参考相关书籍^[102-103]。接下来,本文将重点介绍近年来利用矢量光场调控原子介质空间各向异性的相关工作进展。

2011年,FATEMI F K等利用矢量光场在⁸⁵Rb原子介质中基于反向传播的泵浦探测技术探索了圆偏振依赖的空间二向色性^[104]。实验中将激光频率调节到相对于原子共振频率红失谐300 MHz处,以消除多普勒运动下其他超精细能级的影响,从而实现近似二能级结构的原子跃迁通道。当较强泵浦光场的圆偏振分量将对应空间位置处的原子布居到相应的塞曼子能级上时,会导致对不同圆偏振探测光场的吸收或透射。正交的圆偏振光场具有相反的电矢量螺旋性,意味着光子携带相反的SAM。因此,在光泵浦效应下的原子介质展示出空间依赖的圆偏振二向色性,这一工作为实现基于原子介质的圆偏振器件提供了有效参考。但该工作仅对透射光场的强度分布进行了分析,对透射光场在其他自由度上所携带的信息仍然未知。此外,类似的偏振依赖二向色性也可以在更复杂的开放能级结构中实现:通过利用原子运动下的多普勒效应,泵浦光场与探测光场将分别耦合不同的原子跃迁能级^[105]。基于这项原理,本课题组在⁸⁷Rb原子介质中通过引入矢量光场并将激光频率锁定于交叉峰,在泵浦探测配置下分别实现了空间依赖的圆偏二向色性与线偏二向色性的探索^[106-107],实验装置如图5(a)所示。实验结果表明,从原子介质中透射的探测光场不仅仅在强度分布上发生改变,而且其整体偏振也正交于泵浦光场的偏振状态。即与泵浦光场偏振相同的探测光场分量会被各向异性的原子介质所吸收,而与泵浦光场偏振正交的部分则会无吸收地透过,该效应被称为偏振依赖吸收。基于原子介质中的偏振依赖关系,可以在原子介质中利用泵浦探测技术模拟波片和偏振器组合,实现斯托克斯参量的测量^[108],实验结果如图5(b)所示。这种方法不同于利用偏振器件的测量方案,从原子介质中透射出的探测光场将保留所期望的偏振分布,这一点是无法直接在偏振器件中实现的。实验结果如图5(c)所示,利用这种基于原子介质的测量方法对矢量光场的偏振基矢进行提取时,不仅能够保留基矢的螺旋相位,同时还能确保其SAM不被破坏^[109]。此外,空间各向异性还能够应用于空间信息的有效筛选与过滤中,并且具有较高的消光比^[110],实验结果如图5(d)所示。

磁致旋光效应是利用磁场诱导原子介质产生各向异性,从而实现了对光场偏振的调制^[111]。当一束功率较强的线偏振光在原子介质中传播时,在平行于光场的传播方向上施加一纵向磁场,则光场偏振的方向将发生旋转,旋转角度与磁场强度以及相互作用长度成正比。同时,光场偏振的旋转方向取决于原子介质的折射率与施加磁场的方向。具体而言,由于纵向磁场引起简并塞曼子能级的能级劈裂,造成了原子介质对左右旋圆偏振分量随光场频率的非对称吸收,同时也改变了左右旋圆偏振分量的折射率并引入相位差,最终导致线偏振光场的偏振方向改变。

2015年,中国科学技术大学史保森教授课题组利用矢量光场在⁸⁷Rb原子介质中实现了对纵向磁场的测量,并且提供了相应的理论描述^[112],实验光路与结果如图6(a)所示。实验中所使用的矢量光场在空间分布上为不同偏振角度的线偏振,因此在与原子介质的相互作用中,可以分解为携带不同OAM的左右旋圆偏振分量并分别与对应的原子塞曼子能级相互作用。由于空间整体的线偏振发生了相同角度的旋转,在投影测量下相应的干涉图案也会发生旋转,最终实验结果表明测量的精度为0.8 mG,有利于对弱磁场的有效检测。2016年,LEVY U等在⁸⁵Rb原子介质中探索了偏振分布更为复杂的混合矢量光场在磁场作用下的磁光效应^[113]。实验中不仅在激光频率共振情况下对圆偏双折射性进行了研究,同时也在激光频率正负失谐处,研究了圆偏二向色性与圆偏双折射性对矢量光场的共同作用,实验原理与结果如图6(b)所示。除此之外,本课题组也在⁸⁷Rb原子介质中利用磁光效应实现了对矢量光场的操控,特别是研究了动态磁场下实现矢量光

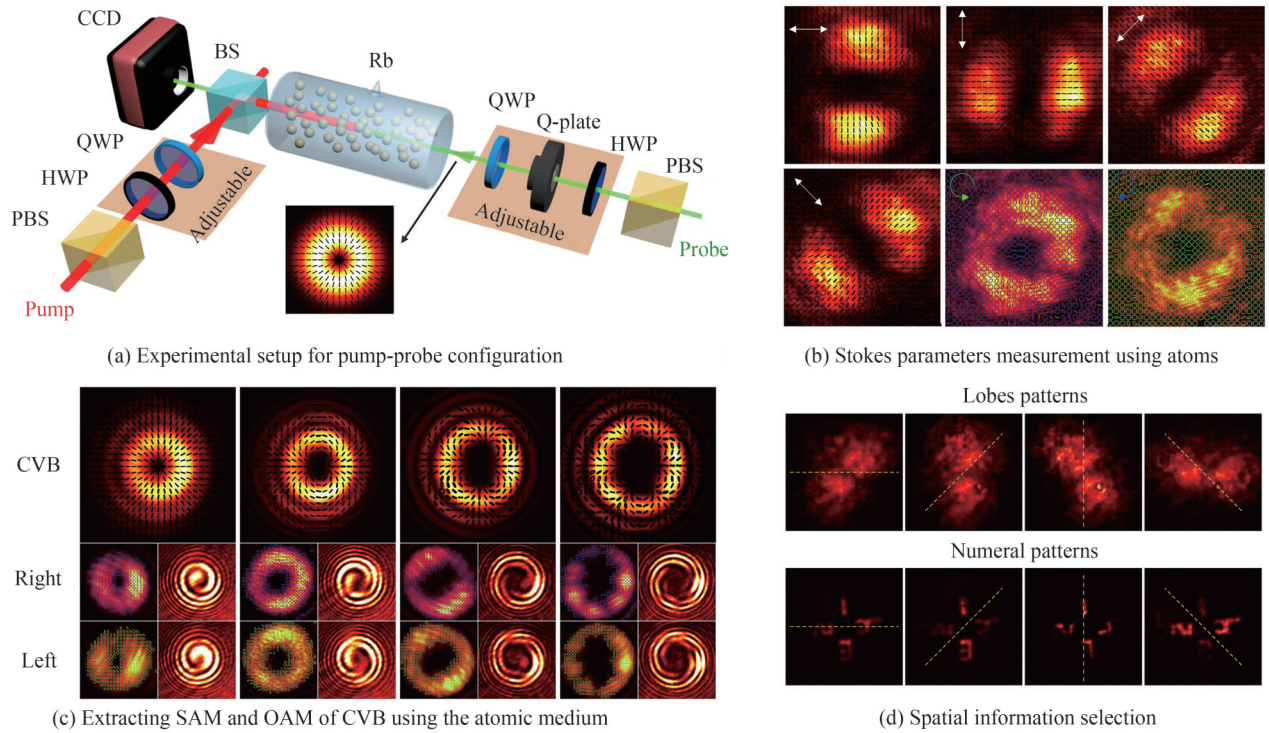


图5 利用矢量光场在原子介质中实现空间各向异性的调控^[108-110]
 Fig. 5 Modulating spatial anisotropy of the atomic medium using VBs^[108-110]

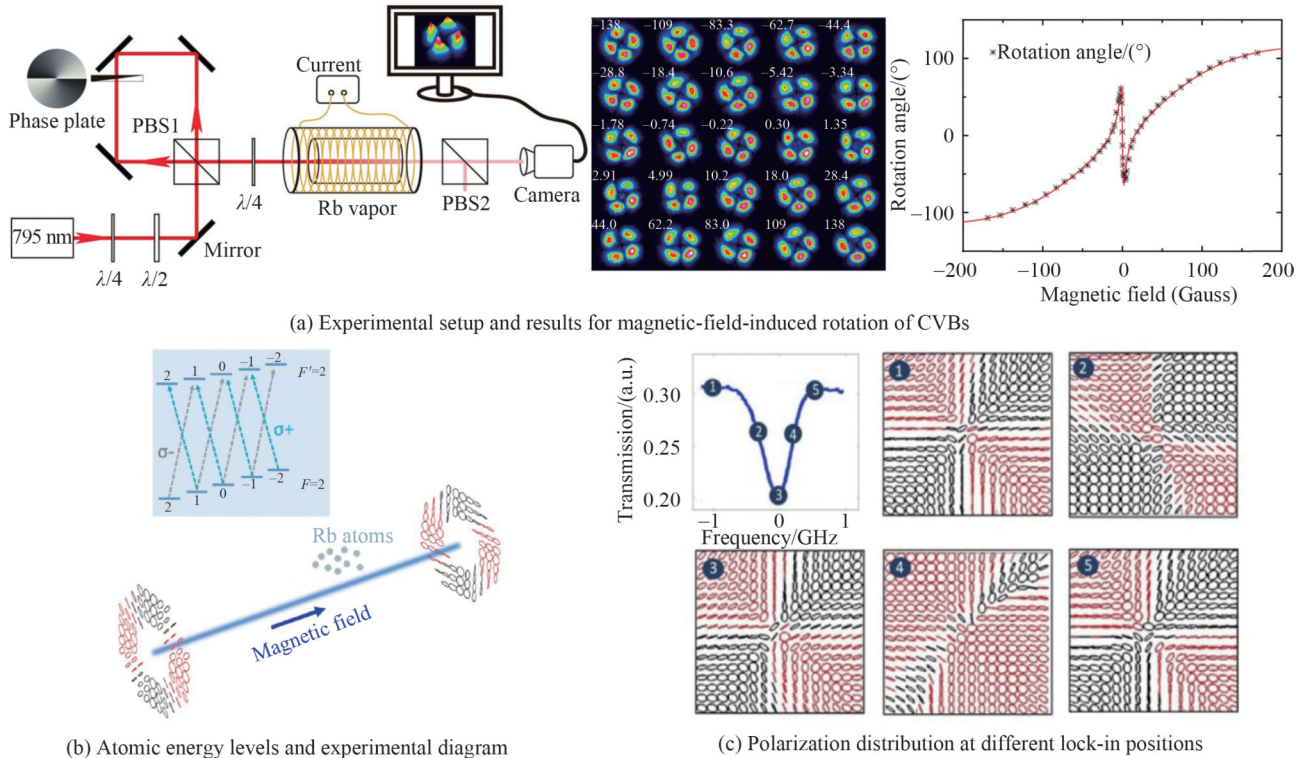


图6 利用纵向磁场在原子介质中实现矢量光场的调控^[109-110]
 Fig. 6 Modulation of VBs in the atomic medium under a longitudinal magnetic field^[109-110]

场的快速调控^[114]。相关实验小组也利用其它碱金属原子实现了原子光谱特性的探测以及原子极化的调制。2003年,ALHASAN A M等利用双色激光场耦合钠原子并成功观测到电磁诱导透明光谱,研究发现透射光谱位置不依赖于耦合场和信号场的强度^[115];2011年,PSRADHAN S研究小组利用泵浦探测机制实现了铯

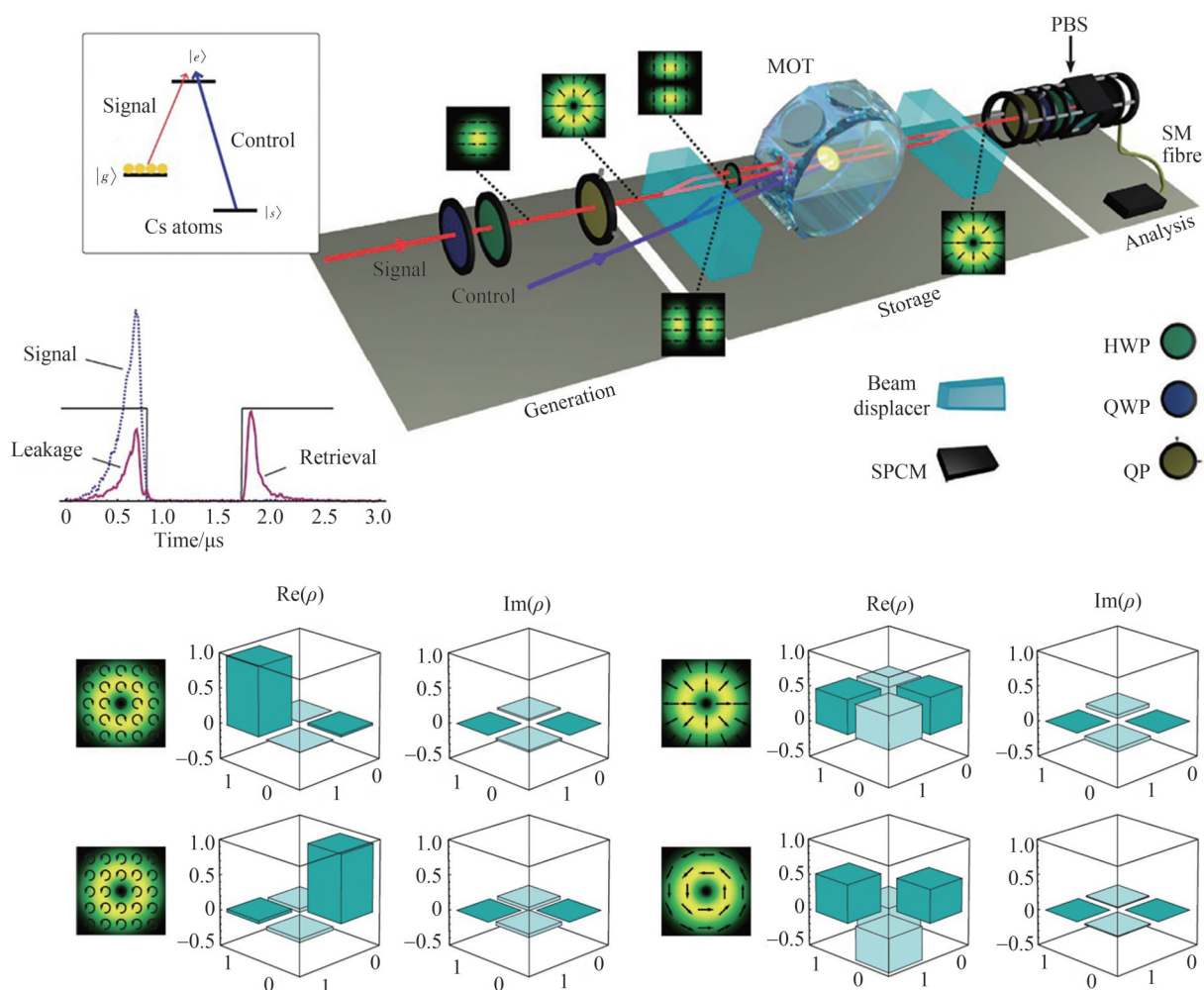
原子吸收谱的观测^[116];2017年,GOZZINI S研究团队基于钾原子介质利用泵浦探测机制在Hanle配置下实现了高对比度电磁诱导吸收,并且研究发现不同配置下,不同圆偏振光场将诱导不同的相干暗态或亮态^[117]。除此之外,最近的理论工作也展现出原子介质在实现矢量光场调控中的优势,例如利用LG模式在非线性磁光旋转效应下产生可操控的矢量光场^[118],以及结合外部光场与磁场的共同作用从而实现对矢量光场偏振旋转的多自由度操控^[119]等。

3 基于相干效应的矢量光场调控与应用

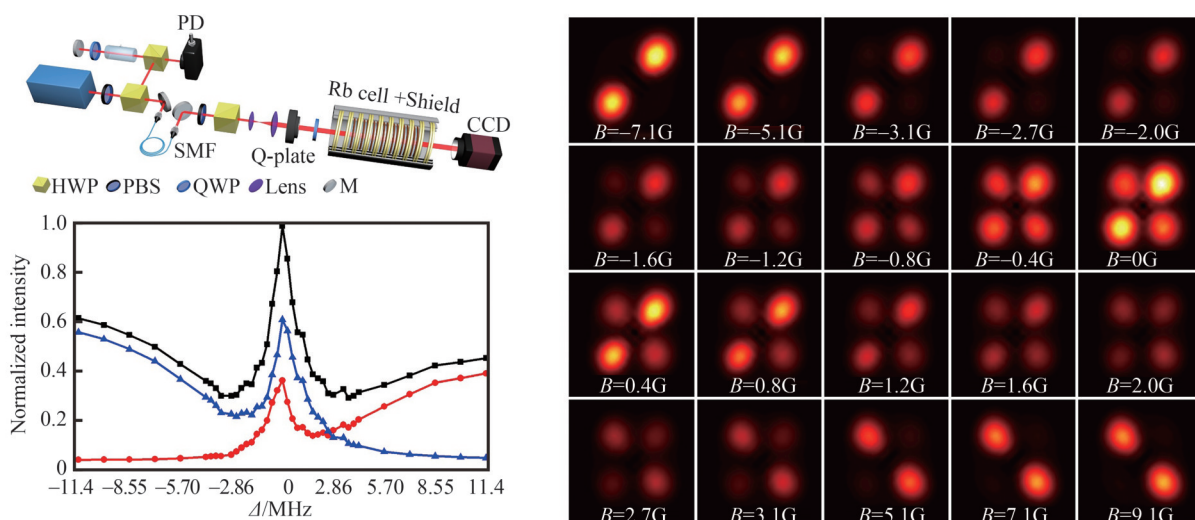
原子介质与光场相互作用时,光场耦合不同能级形成的跃迁通道之间会产生量子干涉效应。干涉相长或者相消取决于外部光场的相位或频率,导致原子表现出集体自旋的效果,此时的状态被称为原子自旋波,且具有相应的振幅和相位。其中最为人们熟知的量子干涉效应主要有电磁诱导透明(Electromagnetically Induced Transparency, EIT)^[120]、受激绝热拉曼转换^[121]、Hanle效应^[122]与空间EIT^[123],目前已经广泛应用于光场的量子存储^[124]、高效粒子转换^[125]以及3D磁场测量^[126]等领域。然而,在利用光与原子相互作用的量子相干效应实现光场调控方面,多数研究小组通常采用单路径、单一偏振光场调节原子集体自旋进而达到调控光场的目的。当引入空间偏振非均匀的矢量光场时,便可以实现空间分布的原子自旋波。2006年,KARPA L等在热原子介质中通过加载纵向梯度磁场,利用电磁诱导透明效应制备原子自旋,检索的信号光展示出微小偏移。该实验验证了电磁诱导透明机制中,具有非零磁矩的暗态极子的偏转效应^[127]。而后,部分学者通过多种物理系统验证了原子集体自旋极化与电磁波相同的波动与干涉行为,为光场的相干调控与应用奠定了坚实的理论和实验基础。

原子自旋波的时空干涉最早可以追溯到ARLT J等的相关工作简报,他们利用相干脉冲激发里德堡原子,从而得到时域脉冲光场的干涉震荡效应。2008年,肖艳红教授课题组基于热原子介质探索了原子自旋波的空间转移特性^[128]。实验将空间两路独立电磁诱导透明配置光路置于同一铷原子池,其中一路仅有控制光存在,通过EIT存储机制后,在两条路径同时检索到了信号光存储信号。不仅如此,他们通过改变存储信号光的相位,在两路径同时观测到了相同的输出干涉信号,该实验直接验证了原子自旋波空间转移的可能性。2016年,肖艳红教授研究团队同样通过搭建双通路EIT存储验证了基于热原子介质由原子相干传输造成的反宇称-时间对称性^[129]。实验报告了在热原子蒸汽池中,通过飞行原子的快速相干输运导致两个长寿命原子自旋波之间的耗散耦合,进而允许在相变阈值上观测到反宇称-时间对称的基本特征。虽然上述工作均利用原子自旋波空间演化特性探索光场等的传输及演化特征,却没有有效利用结构光场在构建空间分布原子自旋波优越性。2015年,法国索邦大学LAURAT J教授研究团队在冷原子系综中利用矢量光场构建双路径原子集体自旋,通过EIT效应将矢量光场刻录至原子自旋波进而实现矢量光场的高保真度存储^[130],实验装置与结果如图7(a)所示。2019年,史保森教授研究小组利用热原子系综,采用同样配置验证了矢量光场在热原子介质构建空间分布原子自旋波的可能性^[131]。值得注意的是,虽然LAURAT J教授与史保森教授研究团队分别基于原子介质完成了矢量光场构建空间分布原子自旋波的可行性,但是两个方案均通过光束位移器将矢量光场投影至两偏振基矢进行验证。本实验组也相继开展利用矢量光场直接探索原子相干转移的可能性。2019年,本团队通过单束混合矢量光场直接观测到量子相干增强^[132],该效应直接造成矢量光场的特异性透射分布如图7(b)所示。实验中,单束混合矢量光场直接经过加载了纵向磁场的铷原子泡,通过调节磁场大小以及方向,观测到混合矢量光场特异性的透射强度分布。通过对透射光场的强度分析得到了光场在磁场零点附近的透射峰分布,实验中通过搭建双通路单一偏振光实验验证了这种由于原子横向漂移造成的相干增强效应,并且该干涉效应随着两路光场分离距离的增加而减小。

矢量光场作为光子SAM与OAM耦合的光场模式,其在构造空间分布原子自旋波时扮演重要角色^[133]。Hanle效应指单一线偏振光场经过加载纵向磁场的原子介质时形成的一种自诱导透明现象。当磁场为零时,线偏振光场分解为左旋与右旋圆偏振基矢耦合原子不同基态与同一激发态,造成原子跃迁通道干涉相消,通过扫描磁场可直接观测到Hanle效应透射峰。然而,当磁场方向与光场偏振平行时,光场以原始偏振态耦合原子至相干暗态,造成光场透射增强;但是当磁场方向与光场偏振垂直时,光场依然以左右旋圆偏振



(a) Quantum memory of vector beams based on cold atomic ensembles



(b) Quantum coherence induced transparency of hybrid vector beams

图7 空间量子相干效应实现光场调控^[130,132]

Fig. 7 Manipulation of VBs by through the spatial quantum coherence effect^[130,132]

分量耦合原子,从而难以形成空间暗态造成光场透射减弱,这种效应也被称为空间EIT。

2006年, BARREIRO S等在实验中利用携带有不同OAM、偏振正交的两光束观测到了旋转多普勒

频移,并且该频移引起的光谱展宽随着OAM量子数的增大而不断增加^[133]。在该实验方案中,研究人员利用马赫-曾德尔干涉仪构建携带有不同OAM的正交偏振光束叠加态,事实上该叠加态光束即为传统意义上的矢量光场,这也是利用矢量光场与原子介质实现相干调控的应用。2015年,英国格拉斯哥大学Sonja教授课题组基于冷原子系综利用柱矢量光场观测到了空间量子相干效应,该效应使得矢量光场与原子相互作用时展示了一种空间结构性的暗态极子分布^[123]。该小组采用Q-plate产生空间偏振任意分布的矢量光场,并利用该光场作为探测光直接穿过加载了横向磁场的冷铷原子介质,通过调节磁场透射的矢量光场展示出了花瓣状的强度分布,通过光场的花瓣形状可以直观地观测到空间暗态极子的分布,如图8(a)所示。2021年,该小组同样利用矢量光场在冷原子介质演示了空间EIT关于磁场测量的实验

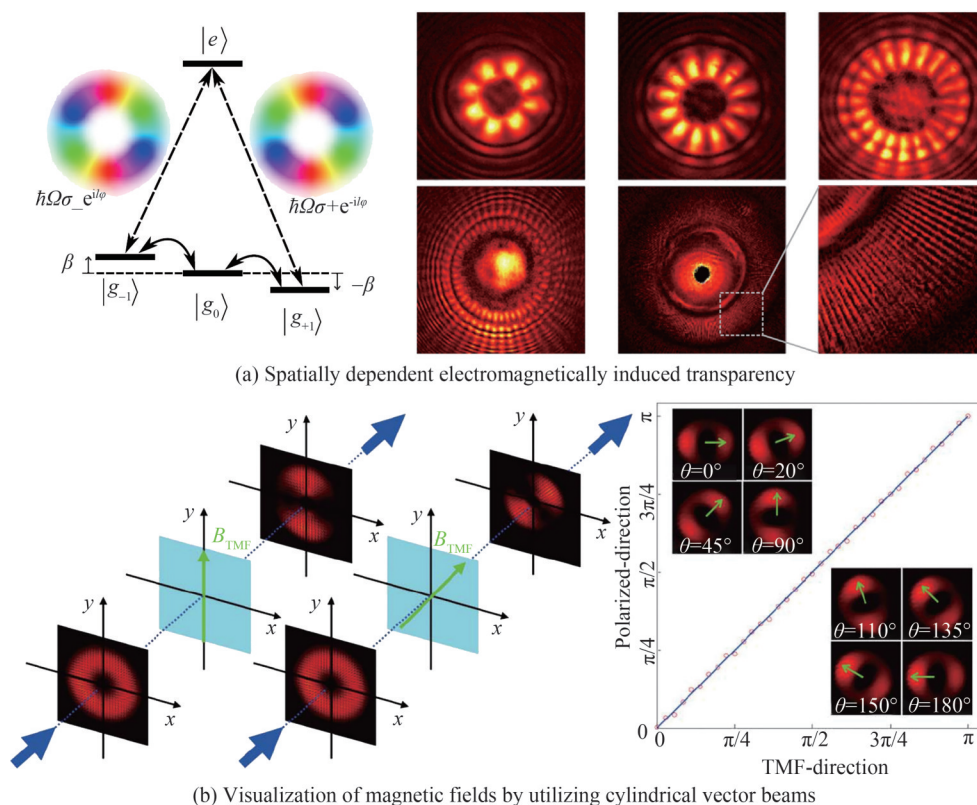


图8 空间电磁诱导透明效应实现光场调控^[123,134]

Fig. 8 Manipulation of VBs by using spatial EIT effect^[123,134]

方案^[126],在冷铷原子云中记录结构性的原子自旋极化,并记录由此产生的吸收模式的图像,进而推导出外部磁场分布。这一效应主要将原子拉莫进动时间测量中的瞬态效应转化至空间域,提出了利用矢量光场探测磁场的新概念。2021年,本课题组将此效应扩展至热原子系综^[134]。实验装置如图8(b)所示,实验采用Q-plate产生径向矢量光场直接注入加载了横向和纵向磁场的热铷原子泡,在纵向磁场调制下,矢量探测光仅仅展示了Hanle吸收特性,即随着纵向磁场的增加,透射光场的整体强度逐渐减弱。然而在横向磁场调制下,光场偏振与磁场方向平行的部分透射增强,而光场偏振与磁场方向垂直的部分吸收增强。光场的强度分布表现为结构性的空间强度分布如图8(b)所示,因而通过后场光场强度与强度位置分布可以直观推断出磁场的整体方向和大小,所以该实验在一定程度上可以视为磁场可视化测量的初步研究方案。

4 矢量光场的频率转换与传输

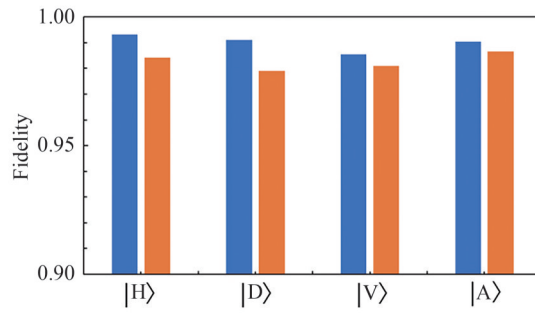
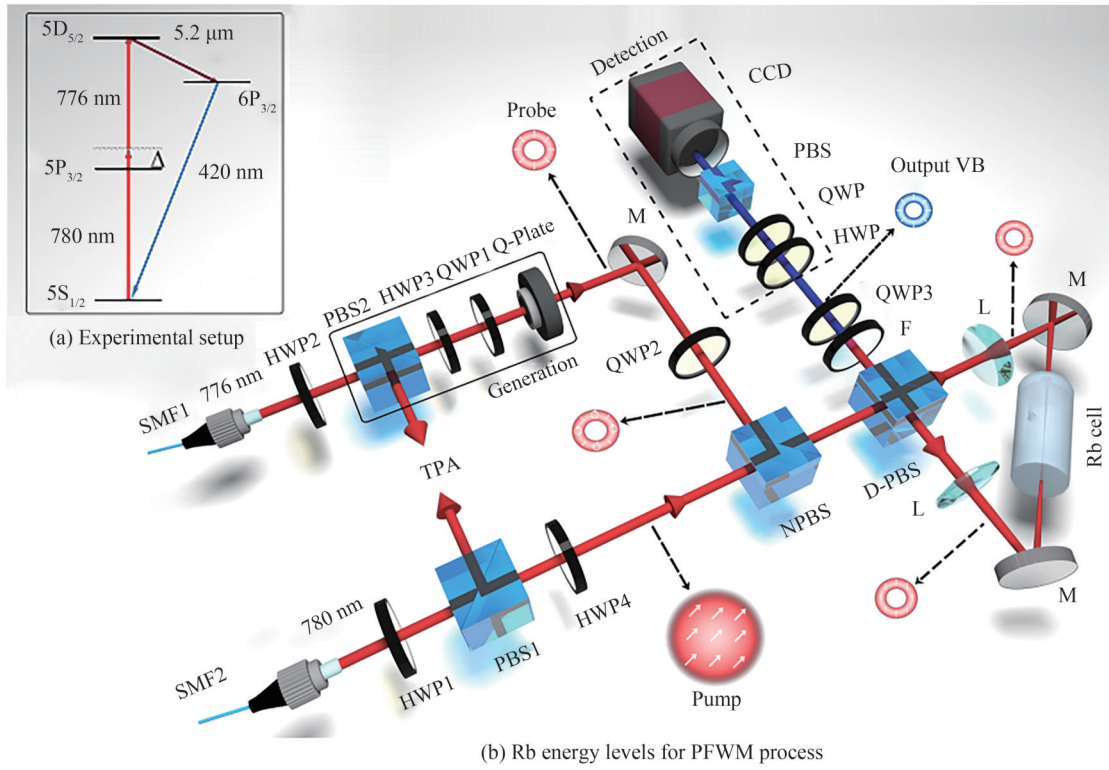
随着现代光学的迅速发展,矢量光场的应用范围在逐步扩展,在基础科学领域的研究深度也在增加。目前,矢量光场的产生和调控大多依靠线性光学器件实现,这类器件在偏振和空间模式上的调制受材料色散、光学损伤阈值以及波长覆盖范围的影响,使产生的矢量光场处于特定的波长范围和输出功率。近几年,

基于原子介质和晶体介质中的非线性频率转换过程与光子学、量子光学、集成光子学的结合产生了许多独特的光学现象,结构光场的研究为非线性频率转换注入了新的活力,同时也进一步拓展了结构光场的应用范围。比如结构光场的引入实现对谐波振幅、相位、偏振及频谱等多自由度的调控。与集成光子学结合,在满足器件小型化的同时,还可以极大地丰富光与物质的相互作用。在量子光学领域,通过非线性参量下转换可以实现单光子源的产生和操控。关于矢量光场与晶体介质的非线性相互作用,国内外相关课题组分别进行了较为深入的探索与研究,例如史保森教授课题组^[135]、上海交通大学陈险峰教授课题组^[136-138]、厦门大学陈理想教授课题组^[139-140]、哈尔滨理工大学朱智涵教授课题组^[141-143]以及巴西 KHOURY A Z 教授课题组^[144-145]等。最近,王慧田教授课题组基于周期性极化磷酸钛钾(Periodically Poled Potassium Titanyl Phosphate, PPKTP)晶体实现了矢量光场的三倍频转换^[146],哈尔滨理工大学朱智涵教授课题组则基于 PPKTP 晶体实现了任意矢量光场共形的参量上转换^[147],对实现基于矢量光场的量子通讯接口有重要的研究价值。相较于晶体介质,原子介质具有较强的原子相干特性、高效的非线性过程、可操控的吸收和色散特性,同样是用于产生、传输和操控光束的理想媒介。基于原子介质既可以通过参量四波混频过程产生不同波长范围的光场,还可以通过原子克尔效应调控光场在介质中的折射率,从而达到调控其非线性传输的目的。接下来,本文将重点介绍近年来利用原子介质中参量多波混频过程实现矢量光场非线性频率及空间偏振模式转换的相关工作进展。

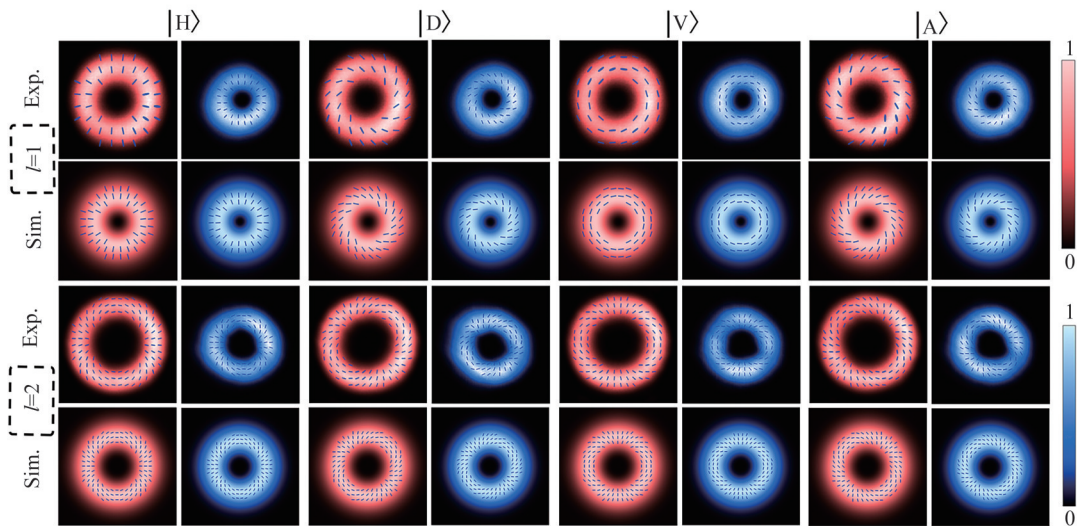
2012年,WALKER G等在理论与实验上探索了铷原子介质中光场的 OAM 跨光谱相干转换的物理规律^[148]。在双光泵浦以及相位匹配的条件下,他们发现两束近红外光场所携带的 OAM 均会转换到由参量四波混频产生的相干蓝光上。此外,通过叠加态的相干激发,他们还证明了参量过程产生的信号光的空模并非入射光场强度上的简单叠加产生,而是在相位匹配条件下由于相位相干导致量子干涉的结果。因此,该工作证明了基于碱金属原子介质的四波混频过程具有极强的原子相干特性,同时也为原子介质中矢量光场跨光谱的非线性频率转换提供了理论及实验基础。由于矢量光场可以表示为一对偏振正交且携带不同 OAM 的基矢组成的叠加态,本课题组利用相位自稳定的非线性 Sagnac 干涉仪将入射的矢量光场态分解为水平和竖直且携带不同 OAM 的两个正交基矢态^[149],同时注入 ⁸⁵Rb 蒸汽中参与自发四波混频过程,在干涉仪的出射端口实现了矢量光场从近红外波段到蓝光波段的频率转换,实验装置与对应能级如图 9 (a) 和 (b) 所示。分布在高阶庞加莱球赤道上且具有旋转对称性的自旋-轨道耦合(Spin-Orbital Coupling, SOC)态^[150, 151]以及高阶矢量光场非线性频率转换的实验结果如图 9 (c) 和 (d) 所示。引入偏振依赖的空间斯托克斯测量法^[152],重构探测光与信号光 SOC 态的密度矩阵并计算,一阶 SOC 态的平均保真度可达 99.04%,二阶 SOC 态的平均保真度为 98.27%。这意味着在矢量光场频率转换过程中几乎不改变光场原本的自旋-轨道耦合态,即产生的信号光场与入射的探测场在横截面上的偏振态分布保持高度的一致性。除了自发四波过程实现矢量光场的非线性产生外,基于原子介质中的受激参量四波混频过程(吸收两个强耦合光子,产生一个信号光光子和一个共轭光光子)实现了弱信号矢量光场放大和相位共轭光场的产生^[153]。此外,西北大学任兆玉教授课题组利用柱矢量光场对称且丰富的偏振分布,在原子介质中实现了稳定相位匹配条件以及单次扫描获取偏振依赖响应的简并多波混频过程^[154-155]。

与在自由空间中传播不同,光场在非线性介质中的传输过程除了要考虑光场本身的衍射之外,还需要考虑由光与介质相互作用过程中导致的折射率变化,这种介质折射率的改变将引起光场传输的非线性特性,产生不同于自由空间传播时的物理现象。例如,单模高斯型激光束在克尔介质中传输时,由于光场横截面上强度分布不同,造成折射率沿径向非均匀分布,导致激光束在这种克尔介质中传输时产生聚焦的过程,类似于激光经过透镜的效果。该自聚焦过程与光场本身的衍射过程到达传输平衡态时,就会产生自陷效应^[156]。空间光孤子^[157]的形成就是在该稳定的自陷效应下诱导激发。光束在非线性介质中传输时的分裂、成丝现象对于研究空间光孤子以及利用光丝进行激光加工等具有潜在的应用价值。

除了光场非均匀强度可以引起介质不同的非线性响应之外,不同偏振态的光场在非线性介质中传输时诱导产生的非线性效应也不相同。例如,在克尔介质中传输时,椭圆偏振光的两个正交分量之间由于交叉相位调制将引入额外的非线性相移,导致出射场的偏振态发生改变^[158]。横截面上偏振非均匀分布的矢量光场在非线性介质中的传播也会引起光场呈现出相应的非线性响应。王慧田教授课题组研究了矢量光场在



(c) Calculated fidelity for the four output SOI states



(d) Theoretically simulated, experimental profile and reconstructed four SOI states of input probe beams (red) and output VBs (blue)

图9 基于碱金属原子腔自发四波混频实现矢量光场跨光谱的非线性频率转换^[149]

Fig. 9 Trans-spectral vector beam nonlinear conversion via parametric four wave mixing in alkali metal atomic vapor^[149]

透明克尔介质中传输时的非线性效应^[159],如图10(a)~(c)所示。在不考虑介质吸收特性的非线性传输过程中,一阶杂化偏振矢量光场在线偏振分布的位置处逐渐演化为稳定C4l旋转对称瓣状结构,其中 l 代表入射杂化矢量场的拓扑荷数。由于横截面上不同的偏振态分布情况,杂化矢量场和柱矢量光场在是否引入随机噪声表现出不同的传输演化结果。2016年,BOUCHARD F等发现相比于左右旋圆偏振入射的标量光束,空间偏振不均匀分布的柱矢量光场在饱和克尔介质中具有更稳定的传输特性^[160],如图11所示。该现象是由于矢量光场两个正交基矢之间存在交叉相位调制,抑制了光束在传输时分裂成丝的过程。这对于实现高功率激光在非线性介质中的稳定传输具有重要意义。2018年,GIBSON C J等基于原子介质中光场非线性

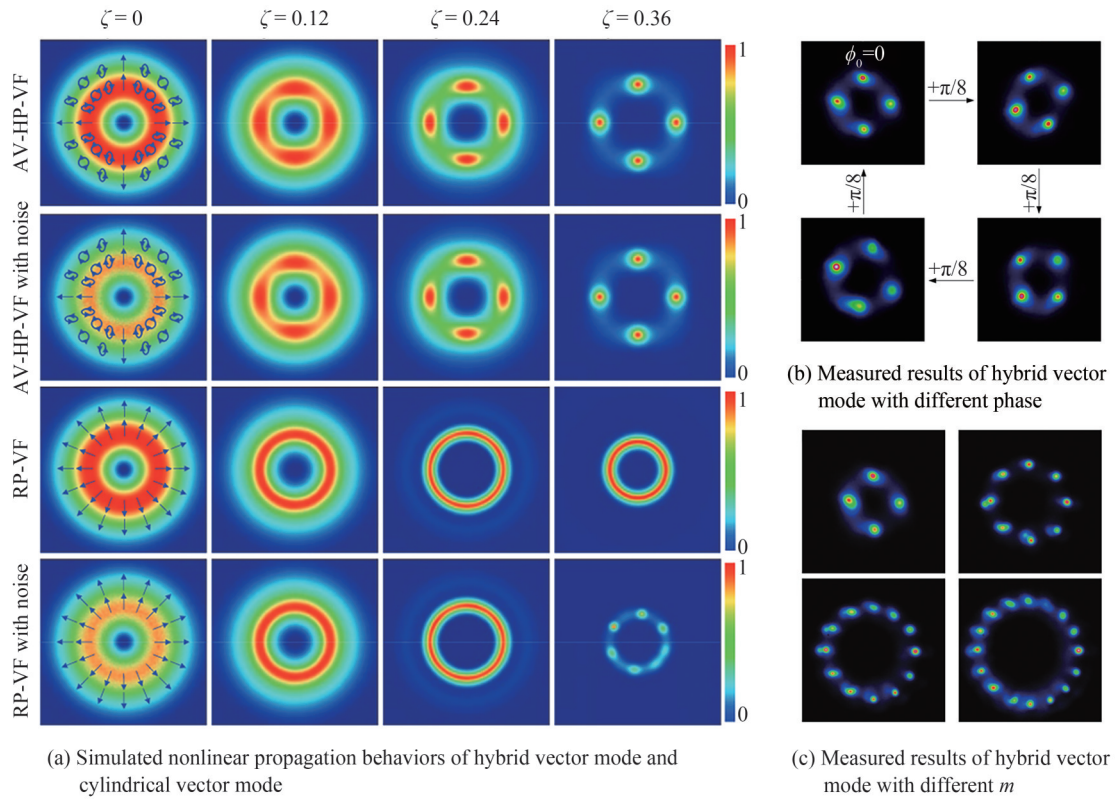


图10 杂化矢量光场与柱矢量光场的非线性传播特性^[159]

Fig. 10 Nonlinear propagation characteristics of hybrid and cylindrical vector light field^[159]

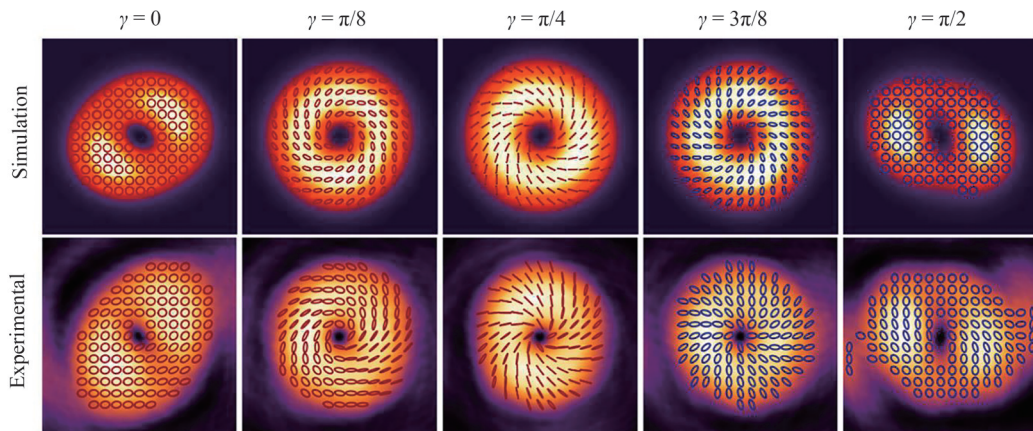


图11 标量光场和矢量光场在铷原子蒸汽中的非线性传播特性^[160]

Fig. 11 Nonlinear propagation properties of scalar and vector light in rubidium vapor^[160]

传输时的交叉相位调制效应提出了一种全庞加莱球光场偏振态可控旋转技术^[161-162],该技术的提出为矢量光场在光镊、偏振成像等领域的应用提供了理论支撑。本课题组基于铷原子介质中的交叉相位调制效应,在实验上观察到杂化偏振矢量光场在非线传输过程中偏振态旋转的现象^[163],如图12(a)所示。通过控制相应的实验条件可以调节非线性作用的强弱,进而实现对偏振态的可控旋转。此外,如图12(b)所示,本课题组在实验上利用传输过程的非线性效应以及吸收效应实现了光场空间模式的可控分裂^[164],基于交叉相位调制,杂化矢量光场在传输的初始阶段先聚焦到线偏位置,随着传输过程聚焦和吸收达到平衡状态,光束呈现出环状结构,该临界状态之后吸收效应占主,光束演化到圆偏位置。近期的部分工作表明具有矢量偏振分布的光场在原子介质中传输时可以有效抑制由非线性自相位调制引起的强度奇点现象^[165]。该工作为光场在非线介质中的稳定传输提供了实验依据。

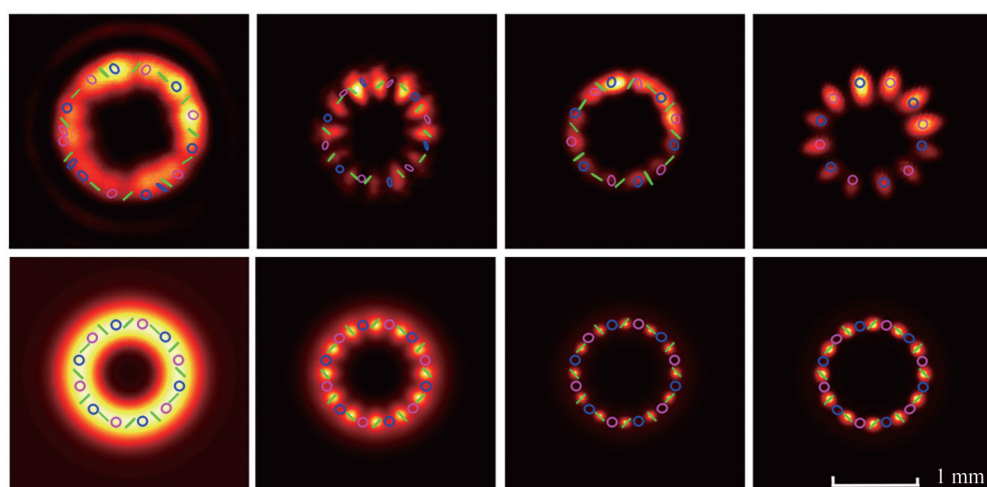
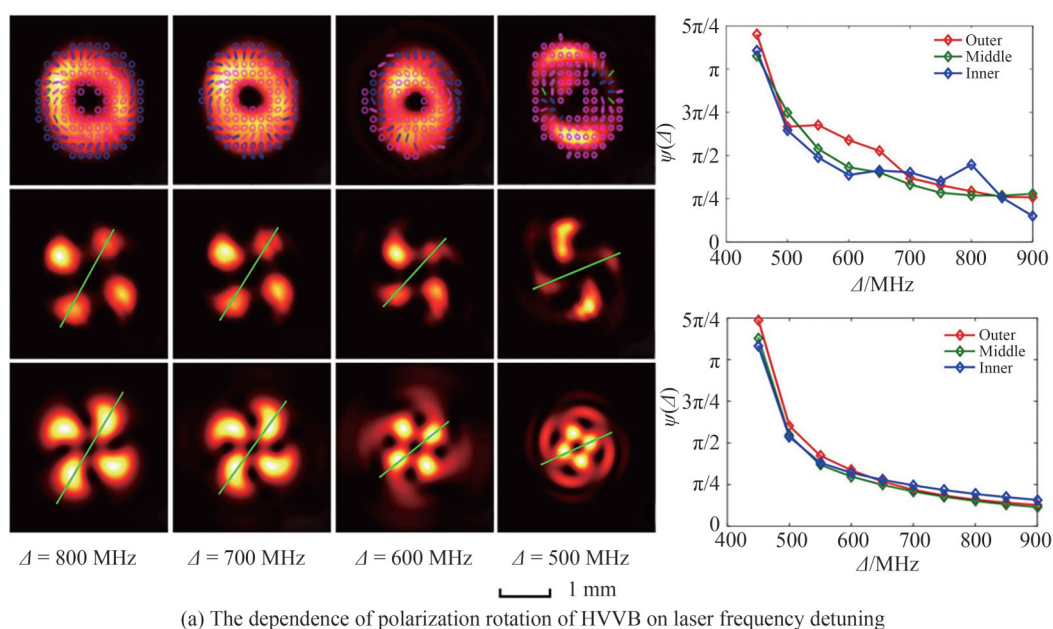


图12 杂化矢量光场在铷原子介质中偏振态旋转及空间模式的可控分裂^[163-164]

Fig. 12 Polarization rotation and spatial mode controllable collapse of hybrid vector light field in rubidium atoms^[163-164]

5 总结与展望

近年来,矢量光场以其奇特的光场偏振、相位以及强度分布引起了学者们的广泛关注。随着矢量光场的发展,矢量光场与物质相互作用产生的新现象与新效应在量子通信、粒子操控、医学等领域展示出巨大的

应用潜力。本文回顾了基于原子介质的矢量光场调控,主要包括基于原子空间极化实现矢量光场的强度、偏振以及多参量联合调控;利用原子相干效应实现矢量光场的相干调控以及应用;基于原子介质实现矢量光场的非线性传输与频率转换等相关研究。

未来关于矢量光场与原子介质相互作用研究的主要趋势体现在几个方面:1)目前大多数的研究都是利用柱对称矢量光场来探索光与物质的相互作用,其他类型矢量光场的应用仍有待探索,例如时空矢量光场、阵列矢量光场和特殊空间分布的矢量光场等^[166-169];2)目前关于相互作用的研究仅仅涉及到较低激发态的原子和低阶的极化率,探索矢量光场与高激发态原子的相互作用和对高阶极化率的调控,对于原子物理的基础研究和应用开发都具有重要的意义^[170-172];3)在非线性和频率转换中,研究不同类型矢量光场高效率、高阶数以及宽波长范围的转换是实现光互联技术中量子接口的关键,例如中远红外、极紫外和太赫兹波段等^[173, 174]。总之,关于矢量光场与原子介质相互作用的研究正处于快速发展阶段,矢量光场与原子介质作用中的新效应有望在未来科技发展中展现出重要的应用价值。

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Recent Progress on the Interaction between Vector Beams and Alkali Metal Atomic Medium (Invited)

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Abstract: The polarization of the light field plays an important role in the interaction of light and matters. In the past few decades, most research works have been based on scalar light fields with a uniform distribution of polarization. Recently, with the development of light field generation and manipulation, the vector beam with non-uniform spatial polarization distribution has attracted much attention. The vector beam has multi-dimensional controllable degrees of freedom and unique focal field properties, which offers great research value and broad application prospects in classical and quantum communication, optical manipulation, microscopic imaging etc. The study of the interaction between the vector beam and matters enriches the understanding of the vector properties of the light field, but also promotes the new development of light field manipulation in different media. Due to easy polarization and more controllable degrees of freedom, the atomic medium provides an ideal platform for exploring the characteristics of the vector beam and realizing the manipulation of the vector light field. In this review, we highlight the recent progress in the interaction between vector beams and atomic media, such as spatial anisotropy, coherent control, frequency conversion, and nonlinear transmission using vector beams. Specifically, we first describe how to manipulate a vector beam using the spatial anisotropy of atomic ensembles. Vector beam has a spatially structured polarization distribution that can produce unique atomic polarization. On the one hand, atomic polarization depends on the polarization state of the light field. As a result, the intensity and polarization of the light field can be modulated by spatially atomic polarization. On the other hand, magneto-optical rotation modifies the polarized state of the light by causing the anisotropy of the atomic medium with a magnetic field. This technique could be used to control the polarization and intensity distribution of the vector beam. Secondly, many research teams typically employ a single path or mono-polarized light to modify the collective spin of atoms and achieve the goal of light field modulation by leveraging the quantum coherence effect of the interaction between light and atoms. Spatially distributed atomic spin waves can be created when a vector beam is utilized to create an interaction between light and atoms. Slow light and storage of the vector beam can be achieved by co-coupling with the control beam in the three-energy level

atomic medium by decomposing the vector beam into orthogonal single polarization states. In addition, the spatial position-dependent atomic spin coherence can be built due to the complex polarization structure of the vector beam, which also can realize the specific modulation of intensity and polarization of the optical field. Vector beam, as a coupled state between spin angular momentum and orbital angular momentum, can effectively match Zeeman sublevels and the rotational frequency shift of atoms, so the broadening effect on the transmitted spectrum can be effectively observed. However, when the magnetic field direction is perpendicular to the light polarization, the light field still couples the atoms with the left and right spin circular polarization components, making it difficult to form the spatial dark state and increasing refraction. In contrast, when the magnetic field direction is parallel to the light polarization, the light field couples the atoms to the coherent dark state, which enhances light transmission. As a result, the polarization distribution of the vector beam can be used to record the spatial atomic coherence generated by the magnetic field and then to realize magnetic field visualization. Thirdly, we investigate the study of the interaction between the vector beams and atoms based on nonlinear effects in atomic ensembles. The atomic ensemble is the perfect media for producing, transmitting, and modifying light beams because they have high coherence qualities, effective nonlinear processes, and customizable absorption and dispersion features compared to crystalline media. The four-wave mixing process can realize the light field with different wavelengths. Meantime, light transmission can be modulated by adjusting the refractive index of media through the Kerr effect. Therefore, the vector beam's frequency conversion and nonlinear transmission can be implemented. Experimentally, the vector beam is decomposed into orthogonal polarization states by building a Sagnac setup, and the wavelength conversion of the two orthogonal polarization states is achieved by four-wave mixing. Thus, the wavelength conversion of the vector beam is realized by interference in the output port. The cross-phase modulation between the two orthogonal elliptically polarized light components will cause an additional nonlinear phase shift based on the Kerr effect, changing the polarization state of the outgoing light field and realizing the nonlinear modulation of the vector beam. At last, we also discuss and outlook the potential research aspect in this rising field.

Key words: Vector beam; Atomic medium; Anisotropy; Quantum coherence; Four-wave mixing

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