

**Toroidal circular dichroism**T. A. Raybould,<sup>1,\*</sup> V. A. Fedotov,<sup>1</sup> N. Papasimakis,<sup>1</sup> I. Kuprov,<sup>2</sup> I. J. Youngs,<sup>3</sup> W. T. Chen,<sup>4,†</sup> D. P. Tsai,<sup>4,5</sup> and N. I. Zheludev<sup>1,6</sup><sup>1</sup>*Optoelectronics Research Centre, University of Southampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, United Kingdom*<sup>2</sup>*School of Chemistry, University of Southampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, United Kingdom*<sup>3</sup>*DSTL, Salisbury, United Kingdom*<sup>4</sup>*Department of Physics, National Taiwan University, Taipei 10617, Taiwan*<sup>5</sup>*Research Center for Applied Sciences, Academia Sinica, Taipei 115, Taiwan*<sup>6</sup>*Centre for Disruptive Photonic Technologies, TPI, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

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We demonstrate that the induced toroidal dipole, represented by currents flowing on the surface of a torus, makes a distinct and indispensable contribution to circular dichroism. We show that toroidal circular dichroism supplements the well-known mechanism involving electric dipole and magnetic dipole transitions. We illustrate this with rigorous analysis of the experimentally measured polarization-sensitive transmission spectra of an artificial metamaterial, constructed from elements of toroidal symmetry. We argue that toroidal circular dichroism will be found in large biomolecules with elements of toroidal symmetry and should be taken into account in the interpretation of circular dichroism spectra of organics.

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Chirality, i.e., the property by which a pattern cannot be superimposed with its mirror image [1], is a basic characteristic of structured matter at all scales from the cosmological to the molecular. It enters fundamental questions, such as the homochirality observed in life [2] and the parity violation within the standard model of physics [3,4]. A ubiquitous manifestation of chirality is optical activity, an optical effect characterized by the rotation of the polarization plane of linearly polarized light propagating through a chiral medium and preferential transmission of circularly polarized light of a particular handedness (circular dichroism) if the medium is dissipative. Observed more than 150 years ago by Pasteur on solutions of tartaric acid [5], optical activity occupies a central position in the diagnostic methodology of many scientific disciplines [6] where it provides the means for obtaining information about the microscopic structure and electromagnetic excitations of a medium from its far-field scattering properties. An examination of optical activity is invaluable, for example, in the biosciences where it enables deduction of the conformation of proteins in a dynamic fashion [7] or in the study of magnetic phenomena in strongly correlated electronic systems [8].

Optical activity is typically described within the dipole approximation of the dynamic multipole expansion [6] where the interaction of an incident wave with induced collinear electric and magnetic dipoles affects the polarization state of the wave upon transmission. Certain combinations of electric dipole and other higher-order multipoles (most notably electrical quadrupole) can also contribute to optical activity [9,10], although such contributions are usually considered negligible, especially in isotropic media [11,12]. It has been suggested [13] that optical activity could arise even in the absence of an electric dipolar response due to the excitation of

toroidal multipoles—an elusive part of the dynamic multipole response [14–16].

The toroidal dipole is a localized electromagnetic excitation, distinct from the electric and magnetic dipoles. Whereas the electric dipole can be understood as a pair of opposite charges and the magnetic dipole as a current loop, the toroidal dipole corresponds to currents flowing on the meridians of a torus. Toroidal dipoles provide physically significant contributions to the basic characteristics of matter including absorption and dispersion. Recent experimental observations of resonant toroidal dipole excitations in metamaterials and the discovery of anapoles, nonradiating charge-current configurations involving toroidal dipoles have attracted considerable attention to the subject (see Ref. [17] and references therein).

In this paper we analyze the role of toroidal excitations in the polarization-sensitive response of chiral media. Utilizing a structurally chiral metamaterial, we enhance in a resonant fashion the microscopic toroidal and electric quadrupole responses to circularly polarized radiation and show that this previously unexplored combination of dynamically induced multipole scattering leads to a new mechanism of strong circular dichroism. Our results challenge the common interpretation of circular dichroism based on the electric dipole-magnetic dipole approximation and enhance its capabilities as a diagnostic tool.

The metamaterial used for this study has been derived from the structure previously shown to support a strong toroidal dipolar response under linearly polarized excitation [18]. Its metamolecule consists of a cluster of four rectangular metallic wire loops embedded in a dielectric slab [Fig. 1(a)]. The loops are arranged about the axis of the metamolecule ( $y$  axis) at separations of  $90^\circ$  to give a fourfold symmetric structure where opposite facing loops are separated by a distance  $r$ . The symmetry is then broken by introducing identical splits to the loops, located on either the top or the bottom sides of the slab and alternating between adjacent loops. The metamaterial is formed by translating the metamolecule along the  $x$  and  $y$  axes, resulting in a one-metamolecule-thick metamaterial slab with a rectangular unit cell as shown in Fig. 1(a). Although the individual metamolecules are achiral,

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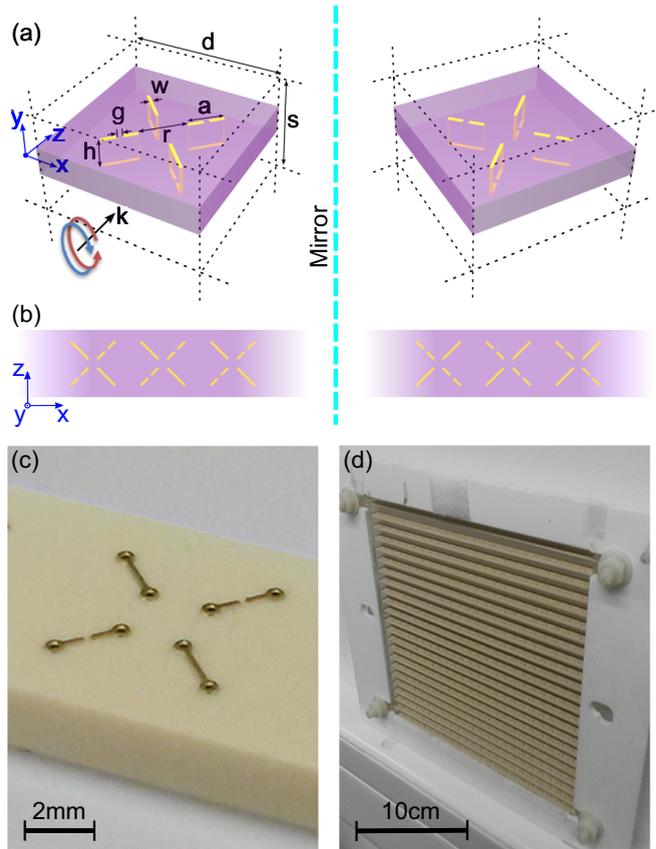


FIG. 1. (a) A schematic of the toroidal metamolecule and its orientation with respect to the metamaterial crystal lattice (indicated by dashed lines). The dimensions are  $d = 8$ ,  $s = 7.5$ ,  $h = 1.5$ ,  $r = 2.44$ ,  $g = w = 0.15$ , and  $a = 1.8$  mm. Right circular polarization (RCP) (red) and left circular polarization (LCP) (blue) light propagates along the  $z$  axis. The individual metamolecules are achiral as indicated by the mirror image. (b) The metamaterial slab is formed by translating the unit cell along the  $x$  and  $y$  axes, which imposes structural chirality on the sample. The mirror image shows the enantiomeric form of the metamaterial crystal. (c) Closeup photograph of the fabricated toroidal metamolecule. (d) Metamaterial sample after assembly.

the resulting metamaterial crystal is chiral due to the regular arrangement of its metamolecules (structural chirality [19]) and is available in two enantiomeric forms interconnected by a mirror reflection [Fig. 1(b)].

The metamaterial sample was fabricated by etching a  $35\text{-}\mu\text{m}$ -thick copper foil on both sides of a low-loss dielectric printed circuit board (PCB) laminate Rogers TMM<sup>®</sup> 3 using high-resolution photolithography [Fig. 1(c)]. The top and bottom patterns were electrically connected through narrow electroplated holes. All copper tracks were coated with a  $2\text{-}\mu\text{m}$ -thick layer of gold to prevent oxidization and staining of copper as well as to reduce Ohmic losses. The assembled metamaterial sample consisted of  $24 \times 24$  metamolecules. Its transmission response was experimentally characterized at normal incidence in a microwave anechoic chamber at frequencies in the range of 12.5–16.5 GHz using broadband linearly polarized horn antennas equipped with collimating lenses and a vector network analyzer. Our measurements yielded a complex transmission matrix  $t_{ij}$  ( $i, j = x, y$ ), which

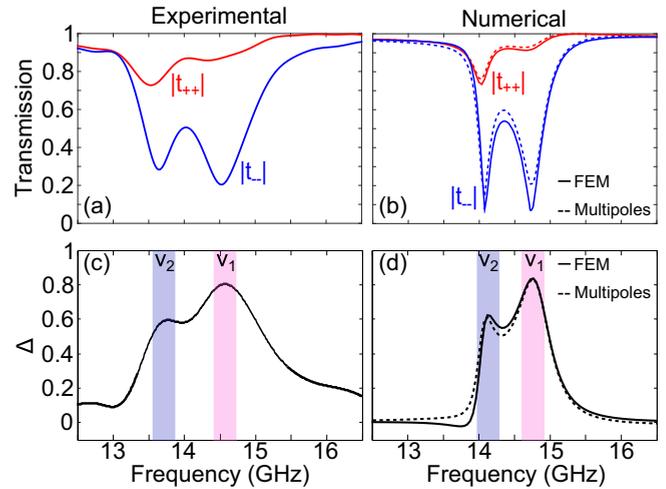


FIG. 2. Measured (left) and calculated (right) circular transmission responses of the toroidal metamaterial. (a) and (b) show the amplitudes of the circularly polarized transmission  $t_{++}$  and  $t_{--}$ , whereas panels (c) and (d) show circular dichroism  $\Delta$ . Results calculated using two different methods—finite-element simulation and multipole decomposition of currents are shown by solid and dashed curves, respectively. Pink and navy bands mark the resonances of corresponding conventional ( $\nu_1$ ) and toroidal ( $\nu_2$ ) circular dichroisms, respectively.

fully describes the metamaterial transmission in a linear polarization basis. Using established relations [20], this is converted into the  $t_{\alpha\beta}$  ( $\alpha, \beta = +, -$ ) in a circularly polarized basis, where the  $+$  and  $-$  denote RCP and LCP, respectively.

As indicated by Fig. 2(a), the diagonal elements of the resulting matrix,  $t_{++}$  and  $t_{--}$ , are nonidentical, indicating the presence of circular dichroism in the transmission response of the metamaterial. The difference between the transmission intensities  $\Delta = |t_{++}|^2 - |t_{--}|^2$  is a measure of the metamaterial's circular dichroism, and it exhibits two resonant bands located at  $\nu_1 = 14.6$  and  $\nu_2 = 13.6$  GHz where the dichroism reaches  $\sim 0.6$  and  $\sim 0.8$ , respectively [Fig. 2(b)].

In order to determine the origin of the circular dichroism at these two resonances, we conduct a full-wave simulation of the metamaterial response using a three-dimensional finite-element solver (COMSOL 3.5A). The metamaterial array was modeled by placing the toroidal metamolecule in a rectangular unit cell with periodic boundary conditions imposed along the  $x$  and  $y$  axes [Fig. 1(a)]. The wires of the metallic loops were assumed to be infinitely thin strips of perfect electric conductors. Permittivity of the dielectric slab was set to  $\epsilon = 3.45 - i0.007$ , which corresponds to Rogers TMM<sup>®</sup> 3 dielectric laminate used in the fabrication of the metamaterial sample [21]. The transmission coefficients of circularly polarized light extracted from this simulation agree well with those observed experimentally [Fig. 2] with the slight discrepancy arising due to fabrication tolerances and uncertainty in the dielectric constant of the PCB laminate.

The microscopic origin of the effect was analyzed in terms of multipolar charge-current excitations supported by the metamolecules (analogous to multipolar transitions in the molecules). The multipole moments were computed based

on spatial distributions of the induced conduction and displacement current densities extracted from the finite-element simulation as per the method described in Ref. [18]. The full expressions for the multipole moments can be found in Ref. [14]. To simplify the analysis the expansion was truncated at the octopole order for electric and magnetic multipoles and at the quadrupole order for toroidal multipoles. Following the recently proposed methodology [22], we can directly link the multipolar excitations of individual metamolecules to the far-field response of the entire metamaterial array and reconstruct the linear and circularly polarized transmission matrices  $t_{ij}$  and  $t_{\alpha\beta}$ , respectively, from the multipole scattering contributions. The accuracy of this approach is demonstrated by Figs. 2(c) and 2(d) where we compare the metamaterial transmission calculated through the multipole decomposition (dashed curves) with that obtained directly from the simulations (solid curves).

For the purpose of the analysis it is sufficient to perform the multipole decomposition of the metamaterial's polarization conversion responses  $t_{xy}$  and  $t_{yx}$  since these can be regarded as a manifestation of the observed circular dichroism in the linear basis. Indeed, by comparing the linear and circularly polarized transmission matrices [20], it can be shown that circular dichroism is  $\Delta \propto \text{Im}(t_{xy} - t_{yx})$ , and so it exists only for nonzero and nonidentical linear polarization conversion terms. We note that  $|t_{xy}| = |t_{yx}|$  as dictated by the symmetry of the metamaterial with respect to the propagation direction ( $z$  axis). Figures 3(a) and 3(b) show the results of the multipole decomposition where we retained only six multipole components for clarity, namely,  $x$  components of electric  $\mathbf{p}$  and magnetic  $\mathbf{m}$  dipoles at  $\nu_1$  and electric quadrupole  $\mathbf{Q}_e$  and  $y$  components of electric, magnetic, and toroidal  $\mathbf{T}$  dipoles at  $\nu_2$  (other multipole components are at least one order of magnitude smaller than the dominant ones).

In agreement with the modeled circular dichroism data [Fig. 2(d)], the resonances in the multipole scattering occur at frequencies  $\nu_1$  and  $\nu_2$ . Figures 3(a) and 3(b) indicate a symmetry to the linear conversion response as expected from the aforementioned  $|t_{xy}| = |t_{yx}|$  condition. However, the multipoles contributing to the same resonant features in  $t_{xy}$  and  $t_{yx}$  are different. This indicates that the observed circular dichroism can be attributed to the simultaneous excitation of pairs of different multipoles. In particular, at  $\nu_1$  the dominant pair comprises electric and magnetic dipoles with collinear moments— $p_x$  and  $m_x$ . Such a combination corresponds to the conventional mechanism of optical activity and hence is considered as a reference case in our further analysis below. At  $\nu_2$ , however, the contributions of  $p_x$  and  $m_x$  become only secondary, whereas the circular dichroism appears to be underpinned by the previously unexplored combination of the toroidal dipole  $T_y$  and electric quadrupole  $Q_e$ .

The presence of these multipole pairs can be visually detected in the distributions of electric and magnetic fields inside the unit cell arising under circularly polarized excitation [Figs. 3(c)–3(f)]. At  $\nu_1$  the field lines of both electric and magnetic fields are seen to align parallel to the  $x$  axis, which indicates the presence of electric and magnetic dipolar excitations in the metamolecule with the net dipole moments being collinear and oriented along the  $x$  axis [Figs. 3(c) and 3(d)]. At  $\nu_2$  the magnetic field is confined within a well-defined ringlike

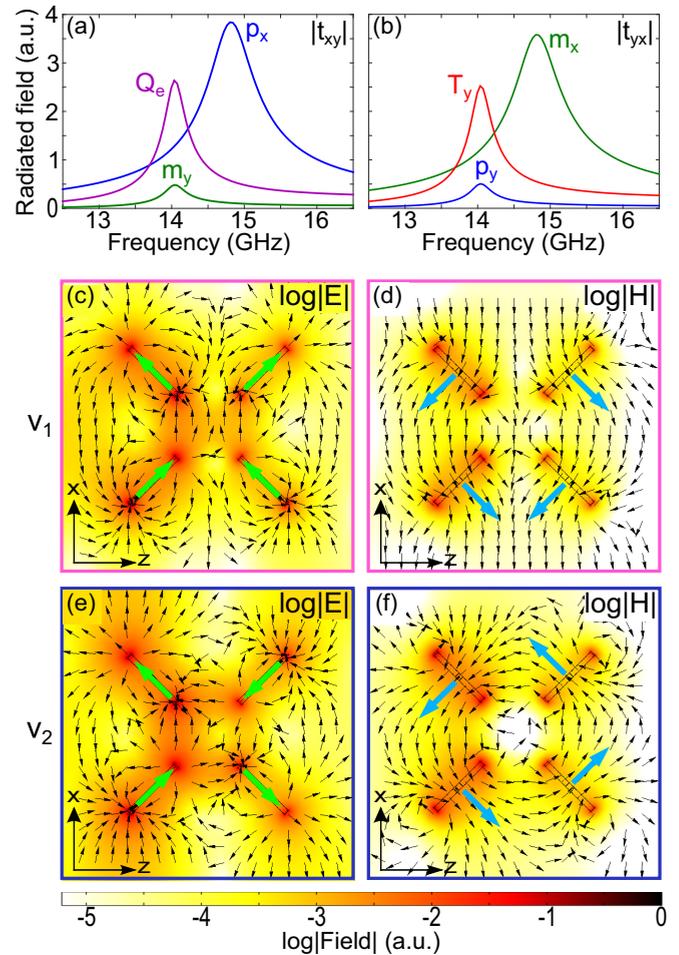


FIG. 3. Amplitudes of the fields radiated by the four most dominant multipole components (electric dipole  $\mathbf{p}$ , magnetic dipole  $\mathbf{m}$ , toroidal dipole  $\mathbf{T}$ , and electric quadrupole  $\mathbf{Q}_e$ ) that contribute to the polarization conversion response of the metamaterial—(a)  $t_{xy}$  and (b)  $t_{yx}$ . (c)–(f) give the field distributions ( $\log_{10} |E|$  and  $\log_{10} |H|$ ) around a metamolecule when excited by LCP light at (c) and (d)  $\nu_1$  and (e) and (f)  $\nu_2$ . The black arrows give the corresponding  $E$  and  $H$  field directions. The green (blue) arrows show the orientation of the induced electric (magnetic) dipoles for the individual rings.

area where the field lines form a closed loop, threading through all individual resonators of the metamolecule [Fig. 3(e)]. Such a magnetic-field configuration is unique to the toroidal dipolar excitation with a net dipole moment aligned parallel to the axis of the metamolecule ( $y$  axis) and is formed by poloidal currents flowing in the wire loops of the metamolecules. The distribution of the electric field features a pattern similar to that in Fig. 3(c) but with the field lines on the opposite sides of the metamolecule aligned antiparallel to each other [Fig. 3(f)], which is indicative of an electric quadrupole excitation.

The analysis of the nature of the observed circular dichroism can be further reinforced by examining the role of the identified multipole pairs in shaping the polarization eigenstates of the metamaterial structure. The eigenstates were computed by solving the characteristic equation of the circularly polarized transmission matrix  $t_{\alpha\beta}$ . Here,  $t_{\alpha\beta}$  is again reconstructed from the microscopic multipole response of the system [22].

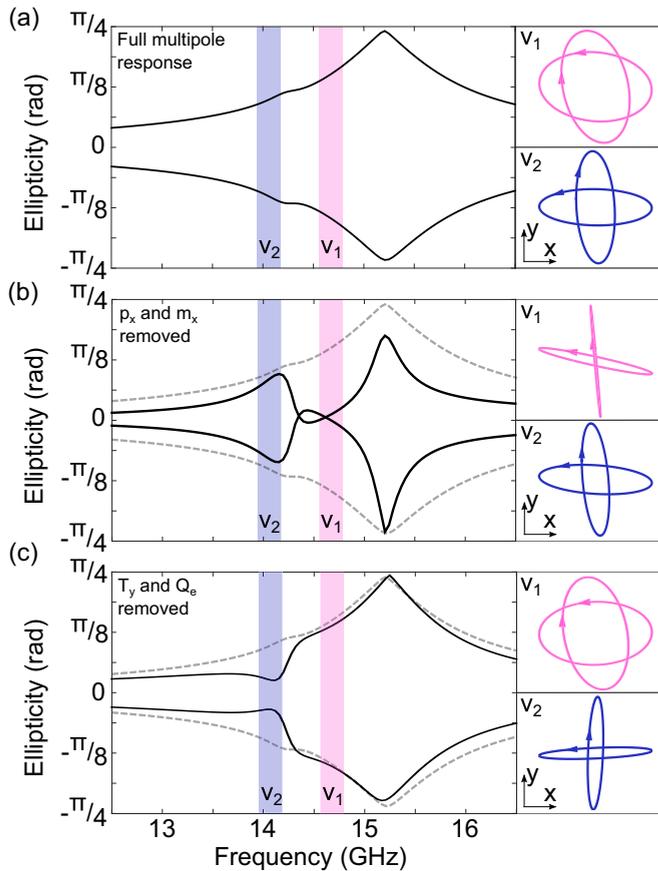


FIG. 4. Ellipticity angles of the metamaterial eigenstates (left) and associated polarization ellipses at  $\nu_1$  and  $\nu_2$  (right), calculated based on the multipole expansion of microscopic charge-current excitations supported by toroidal metamolecules. (a) shows the results obtained using the complete multipole set. (b) and (c) show the results corresponding to pairs  $p_x - m_x$  and  $T_y - Q_e$  being removed from the microscopic response of the metamaterial (solid curves) and compared to the complete multipole response from the upper panel (dashed curves).

The polarization eigenstates were characterized in terms of their ellipticity angle  $\epsilon$ , where  $|\epsilon|$  takes values between  $\pi/4$  (circular polarization) and 0 (linear polarization). A positive ellipticity angle defines right-handed rotation, whereas a negative ellipticity angle defines left-handed rotation. The two limiting cases of  $\epsilon = \pm\pi/4$  and  $\epsilon = 0$  represent polarization eigenstates of optically active (chiral) isotropic media and linearly birefringent (achiral) anisotropic media, respectively. The calculated eigenstates of the metamaterial correspond to the intermediate case of counter-rotating elliptical polarizations with  $\epsilon \approx \pm\pi/8$  near the resonances where the ellipticity arises due to anisotropy in the metamaterial structure [Fig. 4(a)].

The roles of the multipoles are assessed by removing in pairs their contributions from the linear conversion response, preserving the symmetry of the conversion, and then recalculating

the ellipticity angles of the resulting eigenstates. The application of this approach is illustrated in Fig. 4(b) for the reference case. One can see that at  $\nu_1$  the removal of just  $p_x$  and  $m_x$  leads to a decrease in  $|\epsilon|$  to approximately  $\pi/60$  for both eigenstates with their elliptical polarizations collapsing to almost linear states. This significant transition towards a purely anisotropic response confirms that on the microscopic level the observed circular dichroism at  $\nu_1$  results from electric and magnetic dipole scattering induced in the metamolecules. Using the same approach for the combination of  $T_y$  and  $Q_e$  we also observed a clear change in the polarization eigenstates but at  $\nu_2$ , where  $|\epsilon|$  decreases to approximately  $\pi/30$  [Fig. 4(c)]. These nonvanishing values of  $|\epsilon|$  are attributed to the contribution of  $p_x$  and  $m_x$  that also impact the circular dichroism at  $\nu_2$  as indicated by Fig. 4(b). Nevertheless, the resulting modification of the eigenstates at  $\nu_2$  supports our conclusion that the resonant scattering of the toroidal dipole and electric quadrupole is the dominant mechanism underpinning the circular dichroism at this frequency. The presence of strong toroidal and quadrupole contributions to the circular dichroism of the metamaterial represents a new kind of enantiomeric phenomenon—observed here and not observed even in chemistry where the circular dichroism is a standard analytical technique that reports, for example, on secondary and tertiary structures of proteins [23].

To summarize, we have investigated experimentally and numerically a structurally chiral metamaterial that exhibits strong circular dichroism and supports a resonant toroidal dipolar response. Analysis of the fields scattered by the charge-current multipoles induced in the metamolecules and the polarization eigenstates of the system reveals that the metamaterial exhibits both the conventional mechanism of circular dichroism by way of electric and magnetic dipole transitions and a previously unobserved form of circular dichroism, underpinned by the resonant excitation of the toroidal dipole and electric quadrupole. We note that metamaterial structures have been utilized to replicate many phenomena which occur in natural media with metamolecules being analogous to molecules and conduction currents being analogous to displacement currents and polarization. Hence, this observed multipole combination is anticipated to be the cause of (or at least strongly contribute to) circular dichroism in many other material systems with toroidal topology, such as large molecules commonly encountered in chemistry and biology where optical activity is directly linked to the topology of the whole molecule [24–29].

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