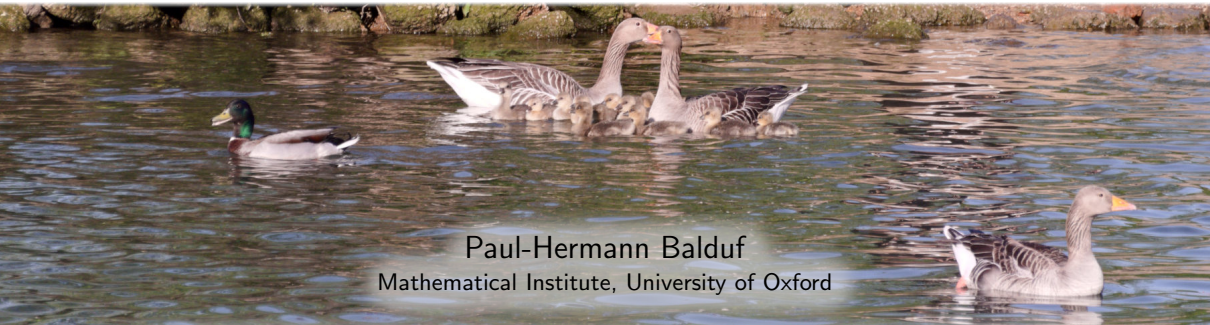


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Topological Feynman integrals and the odd graph complex



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Based on [ARXIV 2503.09558](#) (DOCUMENTA MATHEMATICA ...) together with Simone Hu,
and [ARXIV 2408.03192](#) (JHEP ...) together with Davide Gaiotto.

Slides and links are available from paulbalduf.com/research.



Introduction

Theorem [Balduf and Hu 2025]. The topological form is the Pfaffian form,

$$\alpha_G = \phi_G \quad (\text{up to constants}).$$

This raises questions, among them:

1. What is the topological form α_G ? What does it compute in topological QFT?
2. What is the Pfaffian form ϕ_G ? How is it used in the odd graph complex?
3. (We skip the proof of the theorem)

What can one learn from them being equal?



TQFT Propagator $P_n(\vec{x})$

- Field theory for field Φ , Lagrangian $\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2}\Phi\mathcal{D}\Phi + \dots$ quadratic part is “free field differential operator” \mathcal{D} . E.g. $\mathcal{D} = \partial_\mu\partial^\mu - m^2$.
- Consider n -dimensional topological QFT, position variable $\vec{x} = (x^{(1)}, \dots, x^{(n)})^\top$ with $\mathcal{D} = \text{de Rham operator} = \text{exterior derivative}$:

$$\mathcal{D} = d = dx^{(1)}\partial_{x^{(1)}} + dx^{(2)}\partial_{x^{(2)}} + \dots + dx^{(n)}\partial_{x^{(n)}}.$$

- Propagator is Green function of \mathcal{D} , hence $dP_n(\vec{x}) = \frac{2\pi^{\frac{n}{2}}}{\Gamma(\frac{n}{2})} \delta^n(\vec{x}) dx_1 \wedge \dots \wedge dx_n$. It is

$$P_n(\vec{x}) = \frac{\Omega_n}{|\vec{x}|^n} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^n (-1)^j x^{(j)} dx^{(1)} \wedge \widehat{dx^{(j)}} \wedge dx^{(n)}}{\sqrt{\vec{x} \cdot \vec{x}}^n}.$$

- Ω_n is the projective n -dimensional volume form ($= (n-1)$ -dimensional infinitesimal surface element of a sphere in n dimensions). For example:

$$P_1 = \frac{x}{|x|} = \text{sgn}(x), \quad P_2 = \frac{x^{(2)} dx^{(1)} - x^{(1)} dx^{(2)}}{x^{(1)2} + x^{(2)2}} = \frac{r^2 \sin^2 \phi d\phi + r^2 \cos^2 \phi d\phi}{r^2} = d\phi.$$

Parametric representation of the TQFT propagator $P_n(\vec{x})$

- Recall integral representation of Euler gamma function,

$$\frac{\Gamma(\frac{n}{2})}{|\vec{x}|^n} = \int_0^\infty e^{-\frac{\vec{x}^2}{a}} \frac{da}{a^{\frac{n}{2}+1}}.$$

- [Gaiotto, Kulp, and Wu 2025; Budzik et al. 2023] For each component $x^{(j)}$ introduce $s^{(j)} := \frac{x^{(j)}}{\sqrt{a}}$.
Then, $ds^{(j)} = \frac{dx^{(j)}}{a^{\frac{1}{2}}} - \frac{x^{(j)}}{2a^{\frac{3}{2}}} da$. Explicit calculation yields (recall $da \wedge da = 0$):

$$ds^{(1)} \wedge \dots \wedge ds^{(n)} = \frac{dx^{(1)} \wedge \dots \wedge dx^{(n)}}{a^{\frac{n}{2}}} + \frac{da \wedge \Omega_n}{2a^{\frac{n}{2}+1}}.$$

- If one integrates a , first term vanishes, and

$$\int_0^\infty e^{-\vec{s}^2} ds^{(1)} \wedge \dots \wedge ds^{(n)} = \frac{\Gamma(\frac{n}{2})}{2} \frac{\Omega_n}{(\vec{x}^2)^{\frac{n}{2}}} = \frac{\Gamma(\frac{n}{2})}{2} P_n(\vec{x}).$$

- Notice that the integrand factorizes: $e^{-s^{(1)2}} ds^{(1)} \wedge e^{-s^{(2)2}} ds^{(2)} \wedge e^{-s^{(3)2}} ds^{(3)} \wedge \dots$

Brackets

- Use BRST formalism: BRST differential Q such that gauge-invariant “physical” observables A are 0^{th} cohomology group. That is,

$$QA = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad \nexists B : A = QB.$$

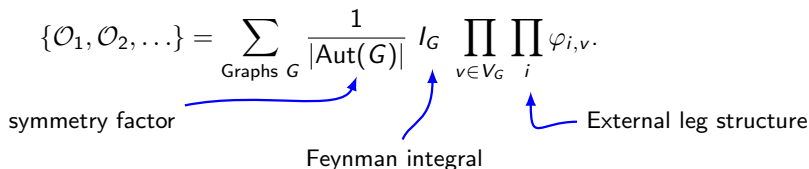
- A classically gauge invariant observable might violate gauge invariance at quantum level (“anomaly”). Work in perturbation theory, let \mathcal{O}_j be local operators. Define *bracket* [Gaiotto, Kulp, and Wu 2025]

$$\{\mathcal{O}_1, \dots, \mathcal{O}_k\} := Q \left(\int_{\mathbb{R}^{n(k-1)}} \mathcal{O}_1 \cdots \mathcal{O}_k \right).$$

- The integral is a sum over Feynman integrals with k vertices in the n -dimensional TQFT,

$$\{\mathcal{O}_1, \mathcal{O}_2, \dots\} = \sum_{\text{Graphs } G} \frac{1}{|\text{Aut}(G)|} I_G \prod_{v \in V_G} \prod_i \varphi_{i,v}.$$

symmetry factor
Feynman integral
External leg structure



The topological form

- Recall that parametric integrand factorizes along dimension \Rightarrow consider 1-dimensional integrand. Schwinger parameter $a_e \in \mathbb{R}$ for each edge. Then the *topological form* α_G is a differential form of degree ℓ in a_e ,

$$I_G = \int \underbrace{\alpha_G \wedge \alpha_G \wedge \dots}_{n \text{ factors}} \quad \text{where} \quad \alpha_G := \frac{1}{\pi^{\frac{|E_G|}{2}}} \int \cdots \int_{\mathbb{R}^{|V_G|-1}} \bigwedge_{e \in E_G} e^{-s_e^2} ds_e.$$

The integral in α_G is over vertex positions $x_v \in \mathbb{R}$.

- Key results of [Balduf and Gaiotto 2025]:

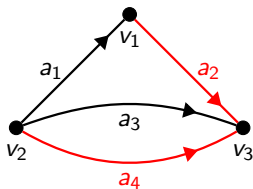
$$\alpha_G = \frac{1}{\pi^{\frac{\ell}{2}} 4^\ell \left(\frac{\ell}{2}\right)! \cdot \psi_G^{\frac{\ell+1}{2}}} \sum_{T \text{ spanning tree}} \det(\mathbb{I}[T]) \left(\sum_{\sigma \in \mathfrak{S}_T} \psi_G^{\sigma(f_1), \sigma(f_2)} \cdots \psi_G^{\sigma(f_{\ell-1}), \sigma(f_\ell)} \right) \bigwedge_{f \notin T} da_f,$$

and $\alpha_G \wedge \alpha_G = 0$ for all graphs (Kontsevich Formality theorem).

Here \mathbb{I} is the edge-vertex incidence matrix, ψ_G is the Symanzik polynomial, ψ^{e_1, e_2} are edge-induced Dodgson polynomials (See appendix. All of these can be produced easily with a computer).

Topological differential form for the dunce's cap

$$\alpha_G = \frac{1}{\pi^{\frac{\ell}{2}} 4^\ell \left(\frac{\ell}{2}\right)! \cdot \psi_G^{\frac{\ell+1}{2}}} \sum_{T \text{ spanning tree}} \det(\mathbb{I}[T]) \left(\sum_{\sigma \in \mathfrak{S}_{\bar{T}}} \psi_G^{\sigma(f_1), \sigma(f_2)} \dots \psi_G^{\sigma(f_{\ell-1}), \sigma(f_\ell)} \right) \bigwedge_{f \notin T} da_f.$$



G has five spanning trees T . For example, consider $T = \{2, 4\}$.

Then $E \setminus T = \{f_1, f_2\} = \{1, 3\}$ and $\mathbb{I}[T] = \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix}$ and

$\psi^{1,3} = -a_4$ (I didn't introduce how to compute this, see appendix).

One obtains the contribution

$$\frac{(+1)}{16\pi(a_1a_3 + a_2a_3 + a_1a_4 + a_2a_4 + a_3a_4)^{3/2}} \cdot (-2a_4) da_1 \wedge da_3.$$

End result:

$$\alpha_G = \frac{-a_4(da_1 \wedge da_3 + da_2 \wedge da_3) + a_3(da_1 \wedge da_4 + da_2 \wedge da_4) - (a_1 + a_2)da_3 \wedge da_4}{8\pi(a_1a_3 + a_2a_3 + a_1a_4 + a_2a_4 + a_3a_4)^{3/2}}.$$

Pfaffians

- ▶ Let M be a $2n \times 2n$ skew-symmetric matrix. The *Pfaffian* is

$$\text{Pf}(M) = \frac{1}{2^n n!} \sum_{\sigma \in \mathfrak{S}_{2n}} \text{sgn } \sigma \cdot M_{\sigma(1), \sigma(2)} \cdots M_{\sigma(2n-1), \sigma(2n)}.$$

- ▶ If a skew-symmetric M has odd dimensions, set $\text{Pf}(M) = 0$.
Then $\text{Pf}(M)^2 = \det(M)$ for all skew-symmetric matrices.
- ▶ This (like the determinant) assumes that the entries of M commute.
- ▶ Examples:

$$\text{Pf} \begin{pmatrix} 0 & b \\ -b & 0 \end{pmatrix} = b, \quad \text{Pf} \begin{pmatrix} 0 & b & c & d \\ -b & 0 & g & h \\ -c & -g & 0 & l \\ -d & -h & -l & 0 \end{pmatrix} = bl - ch + dg.$$

The Pfaffian form

- Consider a graph with even loop number ℓ . Collect Schwinger parameters in diagonal matrix \mathbb{D} . Let \mathcal{C} be its edge-cycle incidence matrix, and $\mathbb{A} = \mathcal{C}^\top \mathbb{D} \mathcal{C}$ the cycle Laplacian, and $d\mathbb{A}$ its differential w.r.t. Schwinger parameters,

$$d\mathbb{A} = d(\mathcal{C}^\top \mathbb{D} \mathcal{C}) = \mathcal{C}^\top d\mathbb{D} \mathcal{C}.$$

Then the matrix $d\mathbb{A} \cdot \mathbb{A}^{-1} \cdot d\mathbb{A}$ is a $\ell \times \ell$ (=even), skew-symmetric matrix whose entries are 2-forms (hence they commute).

- The *Pfaffian form* is defined as [Brown, Hu, and Panzer 2024]

$$\phi_G := \frac{1}{(-2\pi)^{\frac{\ell}{2}}} \frac{\text{Pf}(d\mathbb{A} \cdot \mathbb{A}^{-1} \cdot d\mathbb{A})}{\sqrt{\det \mathbb{A}}}.$$

- Change of cycle basis $\mathcal{C}' = A^\top \mathcal{C} A$ with constant matrix A leads to

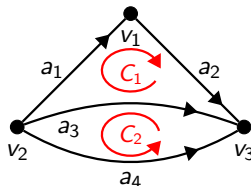
$$d\mathbb{A}' \mathbb{A}'^\top d\mathbb{A} = A^\top d\mathbb{A} A (A^\top \mathbb{A} A)^{-1} A^\top d\mathbb{A} A = A^\top d\mathbb{A} \mathbb{A}^{-1} d\mathbb{A} A$$

known: $\text{Pf}(A^\top B A) = \det(A) \text{Pf}(B)$.

$\Rightarrow \phi_G$ changes sign by $\det(A)$ under change of basis (becomes important later!).



Example: Pfaffian form of the dunce's cap



$$C = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \\ -1 & -1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix},$$

$$\mathbb{A}^{-1} = \frac{1}{\psi_G} \begin{pmatrix} a_3 + a_4 & -a_3 \\ -a_3 & a_1 + a_2 + a_3 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\mathbb{A} = \begin{pmatrix} a_1 + a_2 + a_3 & a_3 \\ a_3 & a_3 + a_4 \end{pmatrix}, \quad d\mathbb{A} = \begin{pmatrix} da_1 + da_2 + da_3 & da_3 \\ da_3 & da_3 + da_4 \end{pmatrix}.$$

$d\mathbb{A} \mathbb{A}^{-1} d\mathbb{A}$ is a 2×2 matrix. Recall $\text{Pf} \begin{pmatrix} 0 & b \\ -b & 0 \end{pmatrix} = b$.

We only need the top right entry of

$$d\mathbb{A} \mathbb{A}^{-1} d\mathbb{A} = \frac{1}{\psi_G} \begin{pmatrix} da_1 + da_2 + da_3 & da_3 \\ da_3 & da_3 + da_4 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} (a_3 + a_4)(da_1 + da_2) + a_4 da_3 & a_4 da_3 - a_3 da_4 \\ -a_3(da_1 + da_2) + (a_1 + a_2) da_3 & (a_1 + a_2)(da_3 + da_4) + a_3 da_4 \end{pmatrix}$$

This yields

$$\phi_G = \frac{a_4 da_1 da_3 + a_4 da_2 da_3 - a_3 da_1 da_4 - a_3 da_2 da_4 + (a_1 + a_2) da_3 da_4}{-2\pi \psi_G^{\frac{3}{2}}}.$$

The main result

Compare the two example calculations for the dunce's cap:

$$\phi_G = \frac{a_4 da_1 da_3 + a_4 da_2 da_3 - a_3 da_1 da_4 - a_3 da_2 da_4 + (a_1 + a_2) da_3 da_4}{-2\pi\psi_G^{\frac{3}{2}}},$$

$$\alpha_G = \frac{-a_4(da_1 da_3 + da_2 da_3) + a_3(da_1 da_4 + da_2 da_4) - (a_1 + a_2) da_3 da_4}{8\pi(a_1 a_3 + a_2 a_3 + a_1 a_4 + a_2 a_4 + a_3 a_4)^{3/2}} = \frac{1}{4}\phi_G.$$

Theorem [Balduf and Hu 2025]. Let \mathcal{C} be any choice of cycle incidence matrix and \mathcal{P} any choice of path matrix, then $\det(\mathcal{C} | \mathcal{P}) \in \{+1, -1\}$ and for all graphs

$$\alpha_G = \frac{\det(\mathcal{C} | \mathcal{P})}{2^\ell} \cdot \phi_G.$$

Proof: Linear algebra, expansion formulas for Pfaffians, match the Dodgson polynomial formula for the topological form α_G .



What is the Pfaffian form good for?

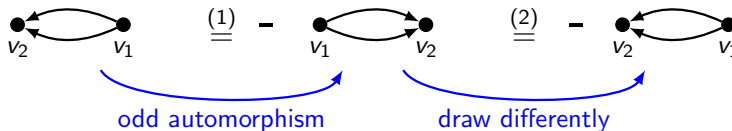


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It solves a combinatorics problem on the odd graph complex...

The odd graph complex

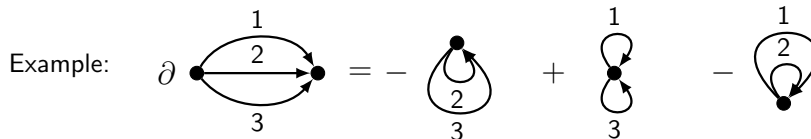
- ▶ The *odd graph complex* GC_3 is a \mathbb{Q} vector space of “oriented graphs” (G, η) ,
- ▶ G has vertex valence at least 3, modulo graph isomorphism.
Grading $\deg(G) = |E| - 3\ell$.
- ▶ Orientation η is (ordering of vertices and a choice of edge directions).
orientation is equivalent to (cycle basis and edge order) [Conant and Vogtmann 2003].
- ▶ E.g. Tadpoles vanish:  = - 
- ▶ More generally, graphs with odd automorphism (=exchange odd number of elements) vanish. E.g. multi edges with even number of edges:



Boundary map of graph complexes

- ▶ Let G/γ denote shrinking of subgraph $\gamma \subset G$ to a vertex. Define the boundary operator

$$\partial(G, \eta) = \sum_{j=1}^n (-1)^j (G/e_j, \eta/e_j).$$



- ▶ Graph homology is $H_\bullet(\text{GC}_3) = \ker \partial / \text{im } \partial$.
I.e. we want graphs G such that $\partial G = 0$ and there is no F with $\partial F = G$.
Homology is graded by degree, H_n where $n = \deg(G) = |E| - 3\ell$, and by loop number .
- ▶ Example: The above graph D_3 (=dipole on 3 edges) has $\partial D_3 = 0$ since all resulting graphs contain tadpoles. $\deg(D_3) = 6 - 3 \times 2 = 0$. Turns out it is not exact, $\nexists F : \partial F = D_3$. Hence $D_3 \in H_0(\text{GC}_3)$, at loop number $\ell = 2$.



Brown's canonical differential forms

- ▶ Let G be a connected graph with cycle Laplacian $\mathbb{A} = \mathcal{C}^\top \mathbb{D} \mathcal{C}$. Define *canonical form* [Brown 2021]

$$\beta_G^n := \text{tr} \left((\mathbb{A}^{-1} d\mathbb{A})^n \right).$$

(distinct objects are called “canonical forms” in the literature. This one is canonical because it is invariant under multiplying \mathbb{A} by any invertible matrix A with $dA = 0$.)

- ▶ β has various good properties, for example
 - ▶ $d\beta^{4k+1} = 0$,
 - ▶ if $k > 0$, the form is projectively invariant,
 - ▶ β_G^n is zero unless $n = 4k + 1$ for $k \in \mathbb{N}_0$,
 - ▶ have algebra structure, where products might have different degree.
E.g. $\beta^5 \wedge \beta^9$ has degree $14 \neq 4k + 1$.
 - ▶ Have Hopf algebra structure where β_j are primitive (i.e. define a coproduct Δ such that $\Delta \beta^{4k+1} = \mathbb{1} \otimes \beta^{4k+1} + \beta^{4k+1} \otimes \mathbb{1}$).
 - ▶ If ω_G is a canonical form of degree n and $|E| = n + 1$, then ω is proportional to the projective volume form $\Omega_{|E|}$,

$$\omega_G = \frac{\text{some polynomial}}{\psi^{\text{some integer}}} \Omega_{|E|}.$$



Computing graph homology with canonical integrals

- ▶ Canonical forms can be used to find cohomology classes in the graph complex.
Let G be some linear combination of graphs such that $\partial G = 0$ (this can be checked by explicit computation).
Hard part: How to establish whether $\exists F$ such that $\partial F = G$?
- ▶ As $d\beta = 0$, also $\int_F d\beta = 0$ for every graph F ,
where $\int_F = \int_{\sigma_F}$ with $\sigma_F = [a_1 : \dots : a_{|E|}] \in \mathbb{P}(\mathbb{R}^{|E|})_+$ ("graph simplex").
- ▶ Stokes theorem:

$$0 = \int_F d\beta = \int_{\partial F} \beta = \int_G \beta \quad (\text{if } \partial F = G).$$

This integral vanishes for all primitive canonical forms β .

(There are more terms for a non-primitive $\omega = \beta \wedge \beta \wedge \dots$, but it still vanishes).

- ▶ Conversely: If one finds *any* β such that $\int_G \beta \neq 0$, one knows that $G \neq \partial F$.
This is a proof that G is not exact, and since $\partial G = 0$, this G defines a cohomology class in the even graph complex.



The role of the Pfaffian form

- ▶ The canonical forms β_G^{4k+1} are *invariant* under change of cycle basis (i.e. they operate on the *even* graph complex).
- ▶ The odd graph complex requires a form that flips sign in the same way as the graphs do.
- ▶ The Pfaffian form ϕ_G has this property [Brown, Hu, and Panzer 2024], it is an “orientation form”. Concretely, for a change of cycle basis, $\mathbb{A} \mapsto A^T \mathbb{A}$, we have

$$\beta_G^{4k+1} \mapsto \beta_G^{4k+1}, \quad \text{but} \quad \phi_G \mapsto \det(A) \phi_G.$$

$\Rightarrow \int_G \phi_G \wedge \omega$ is well-defined on the odd graph complex, where ω is any product of β forms.

- ▶ Can use $\int_G \phi_G \wedge \omega$ to detect homology: If this integral is $\neq 0$, then $G \neq \partial F$.
- ▶ Example from [Brown, Hu, and Panzer 2024]: For $\ell = 6$, the form $\beta^5 \wedge \phi$ is of degree 11. There is a linear combination of graphs with $\ell = 6$ and $|E| = 12$ where the integral is non-vanishing, it spans the homology H_{-6} at $\ell = 6$.

Summary



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- ▶ There is a certain “topological” differential form, α_G , of degree ℓ in Schwinger parameters which computes BRST anomalies in TQFTs.
- ▶ There is another, “Pfaffian”, differential form, ϕ_G , of degree ℓ which realizes the combinatorial sign of the odd graph complex GC_3 and therefore makes integrals $\int_G \phi_G \wedge \omega_G$ well-defined. These integrals detect homology classes in GC_3 .
- ▶ The two forms are the same.



Consequences

A certain physics question (anomalies in TQFT) and a certain pure math problem (homology of GC_3) are answered by the same method in differential geometry. We have ...

- ▶ Obtained physical interpretation of the Pfaffian form ϕ_G : It computes BRST anomalies.
- ▶ Obtained a nice new representation for the topological α_G in terms of relatively simple matrices. \Rightarrow many of its properties follow easily from linear algebra, or from known properties of ϕ_G
 - ▶ $d\alpha_G = 0$, and $\int \alpha_G$ is finite, projective, well-defined under change of labelings, etc.
 - ▶ Much simplified proof of Kontsevich formality theorem $\alpha_G \wedge \alpha_G = 0$ (i.e. there are no anomalies in topological QFT with 2 or more dimensions).
- ▶ Shown that their properties match one by one, e.g.
 - ▶ L_∞ -relations of topological form α_G correspond to Stokes relations of Pfaffian form ϕ_G .
 - ▶ The sum of dipole/multi-edge graphs plays a special role on both sides.
 - ▶ On both sides, one is interested in products between this form and some other forms.

Open question: Was it clear that they are the same? What is the fundamental relation between graph cohomology and anomalies in QFT?

Thank you!



Background: Deformation quantisation

- ▶ Given is a *classical field theory*: Smooth manifold M . Field variable $\phi(t, \mathbf{x})$, canonical conjugate $\pi(t, \mathbf{x})$ are smooth functions on M . Hamilton function $H(\phi(t, \mathbf{x}), \pi(t, \mathbf{x}))$. Skew-symmetric *Poisson bracket* $\{f, g\} \in C^\infty(M)$. Gives equations of motion:

$$\partial_t \phi = \{\phi, H\}, \quad \partial_t \pi = \{\pi, H\}, \quad \{\phi, \pi\} = 1.$$

- ▶ Naive quantisation: Replace $\{f, g\}$ by $\frac{i}{\hbar} [\hat{f}, \hat{g}]$. Runs into inconsistencies for powers of fields. Deformation quantisation: Find a “star product” \star such that

$$[f, g]_\star := f \star g - g \star f \stackrel{!}{=} \hbar \{f, g\} + \mathcal{O}(\hbar^2).$$

- ▶ Power series ansatz with (to be determined) differential operators $B_j(f, g)$.

$$f \star g = B_0(f, g) + \hbar B_1(f, g) + \hbar^2 B_2(f, g) + \dots,$$

Clearly $B_0(f, g) = f \cdot g$ and $B_1(f, g) = \frac{1}{2} \{f, g\}$. What are the higher B_j ?

- ▶ Two conditions:
 1. Should be associative $f \star (g \star h) = (f \star g) \star h$,
 2. Should be invariant under diffeomorphisms $f \mapsto f + \hbar D_1(f) + \hbar^2 D_2(f) + \dots$

Background: Deformation quantisation 2

- Solution in [Kontsevich 2003]: Consider graphs Γ embedded in the upper half plane $\mathbb{H} = \{z \in \mathbb{C} | \Im(z) > 0\}$ with hyperbolic metric.
- In Γ , each vertex with 2 outgoing edges corresponds to a factor $\omega^{ij} \partial_i \partial_j$. (i.e. a graph Γ encodes a nesting of Poisson brackets, a differential operator B_Γ). Graph has n upper vertices and 2 vertices at bottom line \mathbb{R} , corresponding to arguments f, g of $B_n(f, g)$.
- Define angle $\phi(p, q)$ between geodesic $p \rightarrow q$ and vertical line $p \rightarrow i\infty$.
- Each graph is weighted by a weight integral $W_\Gamma = \text{const} \times \int \bigwedge_{e \in E_\Gamma} d\phi_e$. Star product is (details omitted)

$$\star = \cdot + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \hbar^n \sum_{\Gamma} W_\Gamma B_\Gamma.$$

Background: Deformation quantisation 3

- Crucial step: Show that the so-defined \star is associative.
- Associativity condition at order \hbar^n ,

$$\sum_{k=0}^n B_k(B_{n-k}(f, g), h) = \sum_{k=0}^n B_k(f, B_{n-k}(g, h)),$$

amounts to insertion of operators B_j , hence nesting/shrinking of graphs.

- Obstructions to associativity are given by certain integrals over the boundary of configuration space,

$$c_\Gamma = \int_{\partial \tilde{C}_{n,m}} \bigwedge_{e \in E_\Gamma} d\phi_e.$$

These integrals can be shown to vanish and \star is associative. More general, abstract statement: “Formality theorem”.

The significance of $\alpha_\Gamma \wedge \alpha_\Gamma$

- α_Γ is a differential form in da_e , to be integrated over Schwinger parameters a_e .
Itself, α_Γ is an integral over vertex positions x_v of some integrand W_Γ . Schematically:

$$\mathcal{F}(\Gamma) = \int_{\{a_e\}} \alpha_\Gamma = \int_{\{a_e\}} \int_{\{x_v\}} W_\Gamma, \quad W_\Gamma = \bigwedge_{e \in E_\Gamma} e^{-s_e^2} ds_e.$$

- There is one Schwinger variable a_e for each edge, but there could be more than one coordinate x_v for each vertex (i.e. the vertex coordinate is a vector $(x_v^{(1)}, x_v^{(2)}, \dots)$).
Consider a 2-dimensional theory

$$\mathcal{F}(\Gamma) = \int_{\{a_e\}} \int_{\{x_v^{(1)}\}} \int_{\{x_v^{(2)}\}} W_\Gamma^{(1)} \wedge W_\Gamma^{(2)} = \int_{\{a_e\}} \alpha_\Gamma \wedge \alpha_\Gamma.$$

- Here, $\alpha_\Gamma \wedge \alpha_\Gamma$ is some differential form in the da_e 's, independent of the x_v . Conversely, we can exchange the order of integration and do the da_e integral first. The integrand is

$$W_\Gamma^{(1)} \wedge W_\Gamma^{(2)} = \exp \left(- \sum_e \left(s_e^{(1)^2} + s_e^{(2)^2} \right) \right) \bigwedge_e ds_e^{(1)} \wedge ds_e^{(2)}.$$

The significance of $\alpha_\Gamma \wedge \alpha_\Gamma$

$$\int_{\{a_e\}} W_\Gamma^{(1)} \wedge W_\Gamma^{(2)} = \int_{\{a_e\}} \exp \left(- \sum_e \left(s_e^{(1)^2} + s_e^{(2)^2} \right) \right) \bigwedge_e ds_e^{(1)} \wedge ds_e^{(2)}$$

- This expression factorizes for edges. Consider an edge e from point $(0,0)$ to $(x^{(1)}, x^{(2)})$:

$$e^{-s_e^{(1)^2} - s_e^{(2)^2}} ds_e^{(1)} \wedge ds_e^{(2)} = e^{-\frac{\vec{x}^2}{a}} \left(-2a_e^{-2} da_e \left(x^{(2)} dx^{(1)} - x^{(1)} dx^{(2)} \right) + a_e^{-1} dx^{(1)} \wedge dx^{(2)} \right).$$

- Only the term $\propto da_e$ contributes to integral. Polar coordinates in the plane:

$$\vec{x} = \begin{pmatrix} x^{(1)} \\ x^{(2)} \end{pmatrix} = r \begin{pmatrix} \sin \phi \\ -\cos \phi \end{pmatrix}, \quad \frac{d\vec{x}}{d\phi} = r \begin{pmatrix} \cos \phi \\ \sin \phi \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} -x^{(2)} \\ x^{(1)} \end{pmatrix}.$$

$\Rightarrow x^{(1)} dx^{(2)} - x^{(2)} dx^{(1)} = ((-x^{(2)})^2 + (x^{(1)})^2) d\phi = |\vec{x}|^2 d\phi$ is the differential of the 2D angle ϕ of the vector \vec{x} .

- Integrate the Schwinger parameter a_e for a single edge:

$$\int_{a_e=0}^{\infty} e^{-s^{(1)^2} - s^{(2)^2}} ds^{(1)} \wedge ds^{(2)} = \int_{a_e=0}^{\infty} e^{-\frac{|\vec{x}|^2}{a_e}} 2a_e^{-2} |\vec{x}|^2 d\phi_e \wedge da_e = 2 d\phi_e.$$

The significance of $\alpha_\Gamma \wedge \alpha_\Gamma$

- We conclude that the 2-dimensional integral is (very schematically)

$$\mathcal{F}(\Gamma) = \int_{\{x_v^{(1)}\}} \int_{\{x_v^{(2)}\}} \int_{\{a_e\}} W_\Gamma^{(1)} \wedge W_\Gamma^{(2)} = \int_{\{\text{relative positions } \vec{x}_v\}} \bigwedge_e d\phi_e.$$

Closer investigation of the last integral shows: These are the Kontsevich integrals c_Γ which need to vanish in order to make the star product associative and establish the *formality theorem*.

- On the other hand:

$$c_\Gamma = \mathcal{F}(\Gamma) = \int_{\{a_e\}} \int_{\{x_v^{(1)}\}} \int_{\{x_v^{(2)}\}} W_\Gamma^{(1)} \wedge W_\Gamma^{(2)} = \int_{\{a_e\}} \alpha_\Gamma \wedge \alpha_\Gamma$$

- Hence $\int_{\{a_e\}} \alpha_\Gamma \wedge \alpha_\Gamma = 0$ implies the vanishing of Kontsevich integrals.

Formality theorem

- ▶ Kontsevich formality theorem [Kontsevich 2003] $\alpha_G \wedge \alpha_G = 0$ (there are no anomalies in TQFTs with $D \geq 2$) proved with some effort in [Balduf and Gaiotto 2025; Wang and Williams 2024].
- ▶ Now use that $\text{Pf}(A)^2 = \det(A)$:

$$\begin{aligned} \phi_G \wedge \phi_G &\propto \frac{1}{\det \mathbb{A}} (\text{Pf}(\text{d}\mathbb{A}\mathbb{A}^{-1}\text{d}\mathbb{A}))^2 = \det(\mathbb{A}^{-1}) \det(\text{d}\mathbb{A}\mathbb{A}^{-1}\text{d}\mathbb{A}) = \det(\mathbb{A}^{-1}\text{d}\mathbb{A}\mathbb{A}^{-1}\text{d}\mathbb{A}) \\ &= \det\left((\mathbb{A}^{-1}\text{d}\mathbb{A})^2\right) =: \det(M) = \frac{1}{(\ell/2)!} B_n(s_1, s_2, \dots), \end{aligned}$$

where we defined $M := (\mathbb{A}^{-1}\text{d}\mathbb{A})^2$, B_n are Bell polynomials, and

$$s_j = -\frac{(j-1)!}{2} \text{tr}(M^j) = -\frac{(j-1)!}{2} \text{tr}\left((\mathbb{A}^{-1}\text{d}\mathbb{A})^{2j}\right) = -\frac{(j-1)!}{2} \beta_G^{2j} = 0 \quad \forall j.$$

(recall that only $\beta^{4k+1} \neq 0$ due to cyclicity of trace and symmetry of \mathbb{A}).

- ▶ Hence $\phi_G \wedge \phi_G = 0$, and therefore $\alpha_G \wedge \alpha_G = 0$.

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- ▶ Hence $\phi_G \wedge \phi_G = 0$, and therefore $\alpha_G \wedge \alpha_G = 0$.

Graph matrices 1: Incidence matrix and Laplacian

- ▶ Always assume that the graph G is connected. Edge set E , vertex set V .
- ▶ $|E| \times (|V| - 1)$ *incidence matrix* \mathbb{I} has entry $\mathbb{I}_{e,v} = +1$ if edge e ends at vertex v , and -1 if e starts at v , and 0 else. Column of one vertex v_\star left out.
- ▶ $|E| \times |E|$ *edge variable matrix* $\mathbb{D} = \text{diag}(a_1, \dots, a_{|E|})$ contains Schwinger parameters.
- ▶ $(|V| - 1) \times (|V| - 1)$ *vertex Laplacian*

$$\mathbb{L} := \mathbb{I}^\top \mathbb{D}^{-1} \mathbb{I}.$$

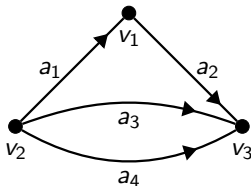
- ▶ *First Symanzik polynomial*

$$\psi_G := \det \mathbb{L} \cdot \det \mathbb{D} = \det \mathbb{L} \cdot \prod_{e \in E} a_e = \sum_{T \text{ spanning}} \prod_{e \notin T} a_e$$

is homogeneous of degree ℓ in the variables a_e .

Example: The dunce's cap

"Dunce's cap" G is a graph on 3 vertices and 4 edges, with $\ell = 2$ loops. Labels and directions are chosen as:



We further choose $v_3 =: v_\star$ as the vertex to remove from \vec{x} .

Remaining: $|V| = 2, |E| = 4$.

\mathbb{I} is 4×2 and \mathbb{D} is 4×4 .

With these choices:

$$\mathbb{I} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ -1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \mathbb{D} = \begin{pmatrix} a_1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & a_2 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & a_3 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & a_4 \end{pmatrix}.$$

This gives the Laplacian $\mathbb{L} = \mathbb{I}^\top \mathbb{D} \mathbb{I}$:

$$\mathbb{L} = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{1}{a_1} + \frac{1}{a_2} & -\frac{1}{a_1} \\ -\frac{1}{a_1} & \frac{1}{a_1} + \frac{1}{a_3} + \frac{1}{a_4} \end{pmatrix}.$$

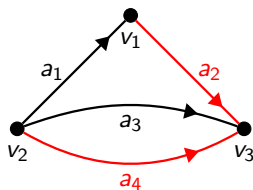
Symanzik polynomial:

$$\psi_G = \det \mathbb{L} \cdot \prod_{e \in E} a_e = a_3 a_4 + a_1(a_3 + a_4) + a_2(a_3 + a_4).$$

(Notice *matrix tree theorem*: The terms of ψ are the complements of spanning trees, $\psi = \sum_T \prod_{e \notin T} a_e$).

Topological differential form for the dunce's cap

$$\alpha_G = \frac{1}{\pi^{\frac{\ell}{2}} 4^\ell \left(\frac{\ell}{2}\right)! \cdot \psi_G^{\frac{\ell+1}{2}}} \sum_{T \text{ spanning tree}} \det(\mathbb{I}[T]) \left(\sum_{\sigma \in \mathfrak{S}_{\bar{T}}} \psi_G^{\sigma(f_1), \sigma(f_2)} \dots \psi_G^{\sigma(f_{\ell-1}), \sigma(f_\ell)} \right) \bigwedge_{f \notin T} da_f.$$



G has five spanning trees T . For example, consider $T = \{2, 4\}$.

Then $E \setminus T = \{f_1, f_2\} = \{1, 3\}$ and $\mathbb{I}[T] = \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix}$ and

$\psi^{1,3} = -a_4$ (I didn't introduce how to compute this).

One obtains the contribution

$$\frac{(+1)}{16\pi(a_1a_3 + a_2a_3 + a_1a_4 + a_2a_4 + a_3a_4)^{3/2}} \cdot (-2a_4) da_1 \wedge da_3.$$

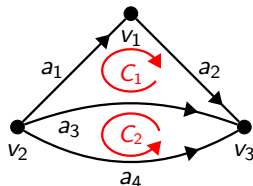
End result:

$$\alpha_G = \frac{-a_4(da_1 \wedge da_3 + da_2 \wedge da_3) + a_3(da_1 \wedge da_4 + da_2 \wedge da_4) - (a_1 + a_2)da_3 \wedge da_4}{8\pi(a_1a_3 + a_2a_3 + a_1a_4 + a_2a_4 + a_3a_4)^{3/2}}.$$

Graph matrices 2: Cycle incidence matrix

- ▶ A *circuit* is a closed path of edges (regardless of edge directions). May visit vertex, but not edge, multiple times.
- ▶ Circuits can be added and subtracted, form a vector space over $\mathbb{Z} \pmod{\pm 2}$. *Cycle space*, dimension: $|E| - |V| + 1 = \ell$ is *loop number*.
- ▶ A choice of basis for cycle space determines a *cycle incidence matrix* \mathcal{C} : Entry $\mathcal{C}_{e,c} = +1$ if edge e is in cycle c in positive direction, -1 if in negative direction.
- ▶ Analogously, vertex incidence matrix \mathbb{I} represents a choice of basis in *cut space*.
- ▶ The spaces, and hence the matrices \mathcal{C} and \mathbb{I} are orthogonal,
 $\mathbb{I}^T \mathcal{C} = \mathbb{O}_{(|V|-1) \times \ell}$, $\mathcal{C}^T \mathbb{I} = \mathbb{O}_{\ell \times (|V|-1)}$.

Example: Cycles in the dunce's cap



$\ell = 2 \Rightarrow 2$ linearly independent circuits to be chosen as basis of cycle space. This choice is not unique.

With C_1 and C_2 as drawn,

$C_1 = \{+a_1, +a_2, -a_3\}$ and $C_2 = \{-a_3, +a_4\}$.

$$\mathcal{C} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \\ -1 & -1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \text{recall } \mathbb{I} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ -1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

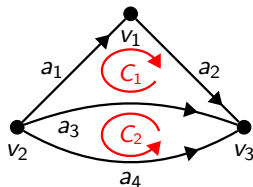
Columns of \mathcal{C} are basis vectors in cycle space, columns of \mathbb{I} are basis vectors in cut space.

Cut space and cycle space are orthogonal, i.e.

$$\mathcal{C}^T \mathbb{I} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ -1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Graph matrices 3: Cycle Laplacian

- ▶ Recall the vertex Laplacian $\mathbb{L} := \mathbb{I}^\top \mathbb{D}^{-1} \mathbb{I}$, is a $(|V| - 1) \times (|V| - 1)$ sym. matrix.
- ▶ Analogously *cycle Laplacian* is the $\ell \times \ell$ symmetric matrix $\mathbb{A} := \mathcal{C}^\top \mathbb{D} \mathcal{C}$.
- ▶ Determinant is $\det \mathbb{A} = \psi_G$ (regardless of the choice of \mathcal{C}). Hence, \mathbb{A} is invertible.



$$C_1 = \{+a_1, +a_2, -a_3\} \text{ and } C_2 = \{-a_3, +a_4\}.$$

$$\mathcal{C} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \\ -1 & -1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \mathbb{A} = \begin{pmatrix} a_1 + a_2 + a_3 & a_3 \\ a_3 & a_3 + a_4 \end{pmatrix}.$$

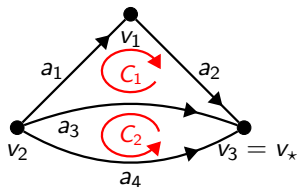
Inverse matrix denominator is Symanzik polynomial
 $\det \mathbb{A} = \psi_G$,

$$\mathbb{A}^{-1} = \frac{1}{\psi_G} \begin{pmatrix} a_3 + a_4 & -a_3 \\ -a_3 & a_1 + a_2 + a_3 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Graph matrices 4: Path matrices

- ▶ A *path matrix* \mathcal{P} is a $|E| \times (|V| - 1)$ -matrix where column j is a directed path of edges from v_\star to v_j .
- ▶ \mathcal{P} has the same shape as \mathbb{I} , but they are distinct. In fact, $\mathcal{P}^\top \mathbb{I} = \mathbb{1}_{(|V|-1) \times (|V|-1)}$.
- ▶ One can show that $\det(\mathcal{C} | \mathcal{P}) \in \{+1, -1\}$. This determinant encodes a (relative) sign ambiguity that arises from the choice of cycle basis in \mathcal{C} [Conant and Vogtmann 2003].

Let $v_\star = v_3$ and paths $P_1 = \{a_1, -a_3\}$ and $P_2 = \{-a_4\}$.



$$\mathcal{C} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \\ -1 & -1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \mathcal{P} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ -1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \mathbb{I} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ -1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

The concatenation $(\mathcal{C} | \mathcal{P})$ has full rank and $\det(\mathcal{C} | \mathcal{P}) = +1$.
 One also checks that $\mathcal{P}^\top \mathbb{I} = \mathbb{1}_{2 \times 2}$.
 It is coincidence that all matrices have the same shape.

Dodgson polynomials

- Consider the *expanded Laplacian*, defined as the block matrix

$$\mathbb{M} := \begin{pmatrix} \mathbb{D} & \mathbb{I} \\ -\mathbb{I}^T & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

One can show that $\det(\mathbb{M}) = \psi$.

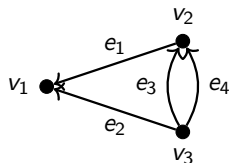
- Let $\mathbb{M}(A, B)$ be \mathbb{M} with rows A and columns B removed. If $|A| = |B|$, this is a square matrix, and its determinant is called *Dodgson polynomial*

$$\psi^{A,B} := \det(\mathbb{M}(A, B)).$$

- In particular, if $A = \{i\}$ and $B = \{j\}$ each consist of only one index, the Dodgson polynomials $\psi^{i,j}$ are the cofactors of \mathbb{M} , i.e. they are entries of the inverse.
- \mathbb{M} has block form, so \mathbb{M}^{-1} has block form. Bottom right block is \mathbb{L}^{-1} . \Rightarrow Lemma:

$$(\mathbb{L}^{-1})_{i,j} = (-1)^{i+j} \frac{\psi^{i,j}}{\psi} \quad (\text{where } i, j \text{ are indices of vertices}).$$

Example: Dodgson polynomials



$$\mathbb{I} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\mathbb{M} = \begin{pmatrix} a_1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & -1 \\ 0 & a_2 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & a_3 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & a_4 & 0 & 1 \\ -1 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & -1 & -1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

In \mathbb{M} , the first 4 rows and columns refer to edges, the last 2 rows and columns refer to vertices v_1, v_2 . Compute vertex-indexed Dodgson polynomials explicitly:

$$\psi^{v_1, v_1} = \det \begin{pmatrix} a_1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & -1 \\ 0 & a_2 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & a_3 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & a_4 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 & -1 & -1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} = a_2 (a_1 a_3 + a_1 a_4 + a_3 a_4)$$

$$\psi^{v_1, v_2} = -a_2 a_3 a_4 = \psi^{v_2, v_1}, \quad \psi^{v_2, v_2} = (a_1 + a_2) a_3 a_4.$$

Indeed,

$$\mathbb{I}^{-1} = \frac{1}{a_3 a_4 + a_1 a_3 + a_1 a_4 + a_2 a_3 + a_2 a_4} \begin{pmatrix} a_2(a_3 a_4 + a_1(a_3 + a_4)) & a_2 a_3 a_4 \\ a_2 a_3 a_4 & (a_1 + a_2) a_3 a_4 \end{pmatrix}.$$

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