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Spring School on Superstring Theory and Related Topics

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Modularity in 2D CFT

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Lecture 1: Modularity in 2D CFT

1. Introduction & Overview

Let me begin with a broad overview of these 4 lectures.

THIS IS A SERIES OF LECTURES ON

BPS STATECOUNTING

IN STRING THEORY (BPS STATES ARE SPECIAL STATES WHICH WE'LL DEFINE IN DUE COURSE)

An important role in BPS State counting is played by

Automorphic functions \supset modular forms

So our first two lectures will emphasize that aspect.

Modular forms, and automorphic forms have played an important role in mathematics since the early 19th century – and continue to be a very active area of research. E.g. the proof of FLT relies on the theory of modular forms.

The subject entered physics in the 1980's in the context of 2D CFT and string theory.

1980's: 2D CFT – constrain spectrum
w.s. string – anomaly cancell.

- Constrains the spectrum of 2D CFT
- Consistency conditions on the worldsheet includes cancellation of diffeo anomalies = modular anomalies.

- But the current motivation comes largely from the program of accounting for the entropy of SUSY BH's using D-brane microstates.

BH MICROSTATES \Leftrightarrow D-BRANES

This program began with the paradigmatic computation of Strominger + Vafa in 1995. Let us sketch in caricature what they did. The exact details are not crucial to what I will subsequently say.

S-V PARADIGM

S.V. considered type IIB string Theory

$$\text{IIB} / \mathbb{R}_t \times \mathbb{R}^4 \times S^1 \times K3$$

$$Q1 D1 \quad \times \quad \times$$

$$Q5 D5 \quad \times \quad \times \quad \times$$

For large radiuses S^1 They argue that
the low energy dynamics is governed by
a 1+1 dimd CFT of maps

$$\mathbb{R}_t \times S^1 \longrightarrow (K3)^Q / S_Q := \text{Sym}^Q K3$$

$$Q = Q1, Q5$$

COUNT BPS STATES WITH ELLIPTIC GENUS

$$\chi(\text{Sym}^Q K3) \sim \sum_n C^{(Q)}(n) q^n$$

$n \sim$ Third charge (momentum on S^1_R)

$C^{(N)}(n)$ "counts" BPS states of charge

$$(Q1, Q5, n)$$

On the other hand, in 5D
SUGRA of IIB/S'xK3 $\exists!$

BH WITH CHARGES Q_1, Q_5, n
LEAVING 8 SUPERSYMMETRIES UNBROKEN.

One computes the $\frac{\text{area}}{4}$ of the
horizon to be

$$S_{BH} = 2\pi \sqrt{Q_1 Q_5 n}$$

Called BH entropy because it behaves
like an entropy: Major problem in GR
is to acct for the entropy in terms of microstates.

BUT going back to the
D-brane picture, χ is a modular
function (more precisely, a weak Jacobi
form) and modularity \Rightarrow

For $n \gg Q$:

$$\log C^{(Q)}(n) \sim 2\pi \sqrt{Q \cdot n} = 2\pi \sqrt{Q_1 Q_5 n}$$

GREAT SUCCESS!

Lecture I: Basics of modular forms in 2DCFT

Lecture II Combine with extended SUSY:

Elliptic genus, Jacobi Forms,

Lecture IIIA: NEW RESULT

PROGRAM: Repeat this for
more realistic B.H.'s

a.) $d = 4$

b.) Fewer susy

Current state of the art:

1. BACKGROUNDS WITH $d=4$ & 16 REAL SUSY'S: GOOD CONTROL: SEE A. SEN'S LECTURES.

2. BCKGND'S WITH $d=4$ & 8 REAL SUSY'S: MUCH LESS IS KNOWN; WE ARE LEARNING.

∃ change regimes where we do not know how to compute microstate degeneracy, even at leading order,

and so the SV program is incomplete

In terms of Jan-DeBoer's lectures

$$\Gamma \rightarrow \lambda \Gamma \quad \lambda \rightarrow \infty ?$$

$$\hat{q}_0 = q_0 - \frac{1}{2} (D_{ABC} P^C)^{-1} Q_A Q_B$$

$$-\hat{q}_0 \gg P^3 \quad \checkmark$$

$$-\hat{q}_0 \sim P^3 \quad ?$$

Lectures III B+IV will focus on BPS
Statecounting for boundstates of
D-branes on a CY 3-fold -

For appropriate charges these
can lead to $d=4$ BH's with
4 unbroken susy's.

The main theme of those lectures
will be that even the index of
BPS states depends on background
fields via wall-crossing.

Nevertheless, Thanks to modularity
we can make some interesting
statements approximating the OSV
conjecture.

One last preliminary remark: I can only say very little in 1 hour.

Many more details are in the very preliminary lecture notes posted on the school web-page.

Now we will review some basic aspects of the theory of modular forms and how it is related to 2D conformal field theory.

We will take a point of view emphasizing the role of "polar states," and how they constrain the spectrum of the theory.

2. 2D CFT on a torus

2D CFT \mathcal{C} ; HAS HILBERT SPACE

$$\mathcal{H} = \bigoplus_{h, \tilde{h}} N_{h, \tilde{h}} V_h \otimes \tilde{V}_{\tilde{h}}$$

V_h : HW Rep: $L_0 |h\rangle = h |h\rangle$, $L_n |h\rangle = 0$, $n > 0$

$$Z(\tau, \bar{\tau}) := \text{Tr}_{\mathcal{H}} q^{L_0 - c/24} \bar{q}^{\tilde{L}_0 - \tilde{c}/24}$$

$$= \text{Tr} e^{-2\pi\beta H + 2\pi i \theta P}$$

$$q = e(\tau), \quad \tau = \theta + i\beta, \quad e(x) := e^{2\pi i x}$$

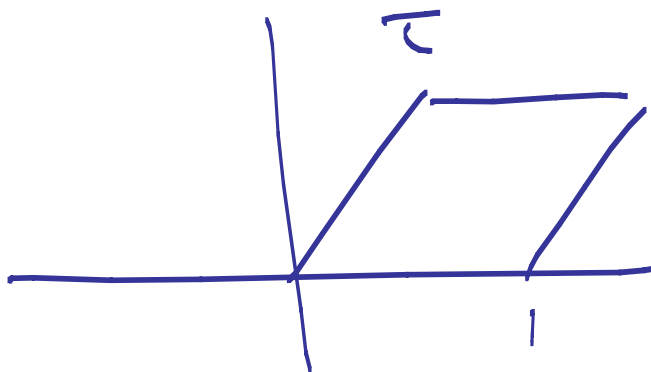
$$H = L_0 + \tilde{L}_0 - \frac{c + \tilde{c}}{24}$$

$$P = L_0 - \tilde{L}_0 - \frac{c - \tilde{c}}{24}$$

Spectrum bounded below discrete \Rightarrow
 Z has no singularities for $\tau \in \mathcal{H}$
Might for $\text{Im} \tau \rightarrow 0, \infty$

AS EXPLAINED IN THE NOTES
THIS Z CAN BE INTERPRETED
AS THE PARTITION FUNCTION OF
 \mathcal{C} ON THE TORUS, MORE
PRECISELY ON THE ELLIPTIC CURVE

$$E_\tau = \mathbb{C} / \mathbb{Z} \oplus \tau \mathbb{Z}$$



IF \mathcal{C} IS DIFF-INVARIANT THEN
IN PARTICULAR \mathbb{Z} IS INVARIANT UNDER
GLOBAL DIFF'S OF E_{τ} .

ORIENTATION-PRESERVING DIFFS

$$\Gamma = SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix} \in M_2(\mathbb{Z}), \det = 1 \right\}$$

ACTS BY $\tau \mapsto \frac{a\tau + b}{c\tau + d}$

Facts about the
Modular group $\Gamma := SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$

1. Generators and relations

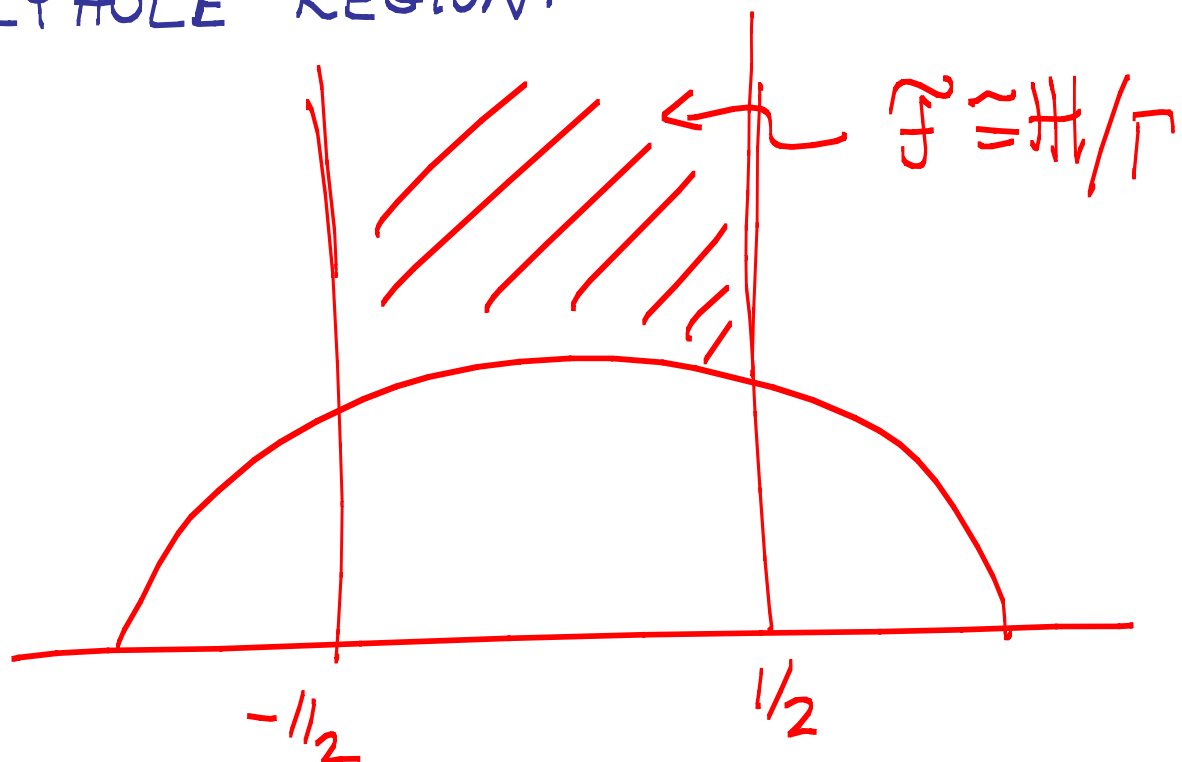
$$S = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \quad T = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$S^2 = -1 \quad (ST)^3 = (TS)^3 = -1$$

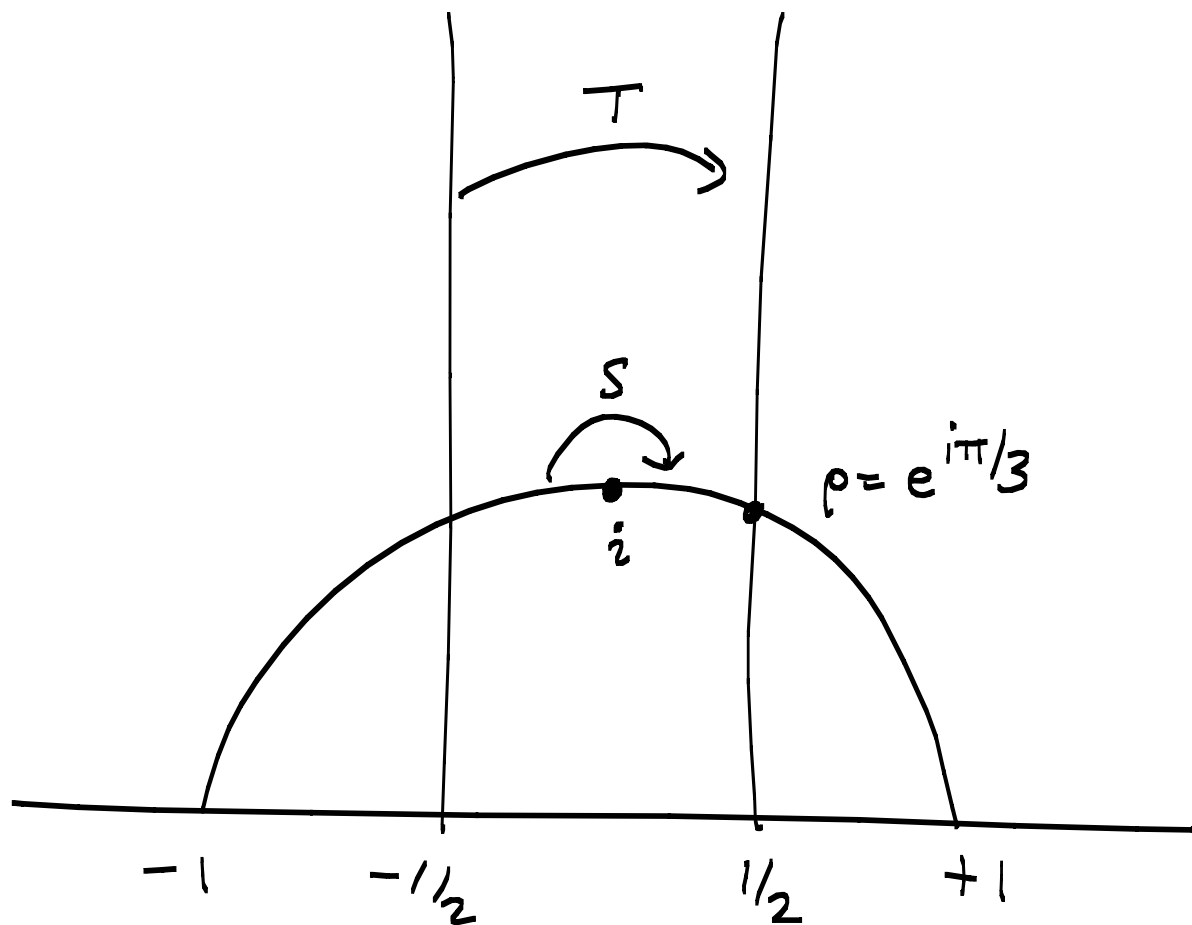
$\gamma = -1$ acts trivially on τ so

$$S^2 = 1 \quad \text{and} \quad (ST)^3 = 1 \quad \text{in} \quad \overline{\Gamma} = PSL(2, \mathbb{Z})$$

2. FROM THIS WE DERIVE THE
STANDARD FUNDAMENTAL DOMAIN =
KEYHOLE REGION:



3. 3 SPECIAL POINTS WITH NONTRIVIAL STABILIZER



$$\tau = i \quad \mathbb{Z}_2 = \langle S \rangle$$

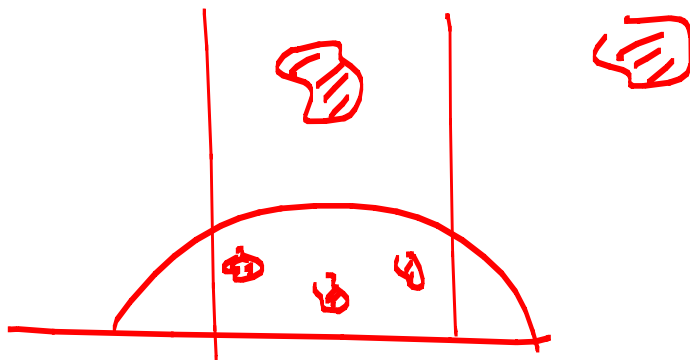
$$\tau = \rho = e^{i\pi/3} \sim e^{2\pi i/3} \quad \mathbb{Z}_3 = \langle ST \rangle$$

$$\tau = i\infty \quad \Gamma_\infty = \langle T \rangle = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \ell \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \mid \ell \in \mathbb{Z} \right\}$$

$$4. \quad \hat{\mathbb{Q}} = [\infty/v \mathbb{Q} \quad (\mathbb{H}/v\hat{\mathbb{Q}})]/\Gamma \cong \mathbb{CP}^1$$

3. Chiral Splitting and Holomorphy

By itself, modular invariance is not terribly strong: take any function with compact support in \mathcal{F} . By averaging over Γ we get a modular invt. function.



But holomorphy + modularity can impose strong constraints.

Already $\text{Vir}_L \oplus \widetilde{\text{Vir}}_R \Rightarrow$ A kind of holomorphic factorization of $Z(\tau, \bar{\tau})$

$$Z(\tau, \bar{\tau}) = \sum_{h, \tilde{h}} N_{h, \tilde{h}} \chi_h(\tau) \overline{\chi_{\tilde{h}}(\tau)}$$

THIS SPLITTING IS MORE POWERFUL
THE FEWER THE TERMS IN THE
SUM.

In general, when we have a
finite decomposition

$$Z(\tau, \bar{\tau}) = \sum_i f_i(\tau) \tilde{f}_i(\bar{\tau})$$

THEN WE CONCLUDE

$$f_i(\gamma(\tau)) = M_{ij}(\gamma) f_j(\tau)$$

Where $M(\gamma)$ is a projective
rep of Γ . \tilde{f}_i transforms in the
contragredient repⁿ.

TO ILLUSTRATE THIS IDEA CONSIDER AN
EXTREME CASE:

$$Z(\tau, \bar{\tau}) = f(\tau).$$

WHERE $f(\tau)$ is a modular function.

ONE WAY THIS CAN HAPPEN IS
TO USE THE WITTEN INDEX AS
WE'LL SEE NEXT TIME.

NOW WE CAN INVOKE

THM: FIELD OF MEROMORPHIC MODULAR
FUNCTIONS = $\mathbb{C}(j)$

PF: $\exists j : (\mathbb{H} \cup \infty) / \Gamma \rightarrow \mathbb{CP}^1$
 $\mathbb{C}(j) \cong \mathbb{C}(z)$

WE'LL SHOW LATER:

$$j(\tau) = q^{-1} + 196884q + \dots$$

NOW APPLY THIS: $Z(\tau)$ HAS NO
SING'S ON $\mathbb{H} \Rightarrow$

$Z(\tau)$ = POLYNOMIAL IN j ORDER $\frac{C}{24}$.

THIS STRONGLY CONSTRAINS THE SPECT.
BUT WE CAN DO BETTER:

IN GENERAL, IF WE CAN WRITE

$$f(\tau) = \sum_{n \geq 0} \hat{f}(n) e^{2\pi i(n-\Delta)\tau}$$

- TERMS WITH $n-\Delta < 0$: POLAR
- TERMS WITH $n-\Delta > 0$: NONPOLAR

$$f(\tau) = f^-(\tau) + f^+(\tau)$$

- The constant term $n-\Delta = 0$ is polar or nonpolar depending on context. In the present case it is polar.

WE NOW USE THIS EXAMPLE TO
ILLUSTRATE THE MAIN THEME OF THIS
LECTURE:


THE FINITE SET OF POLAR
DEG'S DETERMINES THE ∞ SET
OF NONPOLAR DEG'S.

IN OUR EXAMPLE

$$\begin{aligned} Z(\tau) &= Z^-(\tau) + Z^+(\tau) \\ &= \sum_{n-\Delta \leq 0} d(n) e^{2\pi i (n-\Delta)\tau} + Z^+ \\ &= a_{\Delta} j^{\Delta} + \dots + a_0 \uparrow \\ &\quad \quad \quad N_0 + \dots \end{aligned}$$

PLUG IN q -EXPANSION FOR j
TO GET A TRIANGULAR SYSTEM
OF EQ'S FOR a_0, \dots, a_{Δ} IN
TERMS OF $d(0), \dots, d(\Delta)$.

4. SIMPLE EXAMPLE: "CHIRAL SCALARS"

GAUSSIAN: $\mathbb{R} \times S^1 \longrightarrow S^1_R$ 

$$\frac{(2\pi R)^2}{4\pi\alpha'} \int dX * dX \quad X \sim X+1$$

A STANDARD EXERCISE IN CFT

$$Z(\tau, \bar{\tau}) = \frac{\bigoplus \Lambda_R}{\eta \bar{\eta}}$$

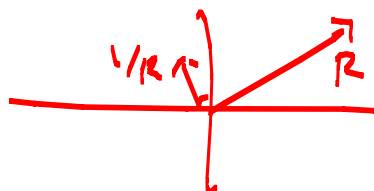
$$\bigoplus \Lambda = \sum_{\Lambda} q^{\frac{1}{2} p_+^2} \bar{q}^{\frac{1}{2} p_-^2} \quad \text{SIEGEL-NARAIN FOR } \Lambda \subset \mathbb{R}^{1,1}$$

$$\Lambda_R = \{ n e + m f \mid n, m \in \mathbb{Z} \} \subset \mathbb{R}^{1,1}$$

$$v = (v_+, v_-) \quad v^2 = v_+^2 - v_-^2$$

$$e = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \left(\frac{1}{R} ; \frac{1}{R} \right) \quad f = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (R ; -R)$$

$$e^2 = f^2 = 0 \quad e \cdot f = 1 \quad \Pi^{1,1}$$



$$\eta(\tau) = q^{1/24} \prod_{n=1}^{\infty} (1 - q^n)$$

Poisson: $\oplus_{\Lambda} \longrightarrow (c\tau+d)^{1/2} (c\bar{\tau}+d)^{1/2} \oplus_{\Lambda}$

$$\Rightarrow \eta(\gamma\tau) = (c\tau+d)^{1/2} e^{i\phi(\gamma)} \eta(\tau)$$

\uparrow
 24th root of 1.

NOW THIS RESULT GENERALIZES TO
 (b_+, b_-) CHIRAL/ANTICHIRAL IN WHICH CASE

$$Z(\tau, \bar{\tau}) = \frac{\oplus_{\Lambda}}{\eta^{b_+} \bar{\eta}^{b_-}} \quad \Lambda \subset \mathbb{R}^{b_+, b_-}$$

THE EMBEDDING OF Λ ENCODES GEOM.
 DATA OF THE TARGET SPACE.

THESE THEORIES TYPICALLY HAVE
 MODULAR ANOMALIES, ONLY FOR

- Λ EVEN UNIMODULAR
- $b_+ - b_- = 0 \pmod{24}$

$$\dim \Lambda = 24k, \quad b_- = 0 \Rightarrow Z(\tau)$$

DIGRESSION: I'D LIKE TO MAKE A DIGRESSION FROM OUR MAIN THEME. WE MUST BE CAREFUL WHEN SPEAKING OF THE "THEORY OF A CHIRAL SCALAR" WHAT WOULD ITS PARTITION FUNCTION BE? THE ZERO MODES OF CHIRAL/ANTICHIRAL ARE CORRELATED BY Λ .

HOWEVER IN SOME CASES A THEORY OF A CHIRAL SCALAR DOES EXIST - BUT IT IS VERY SUBTLE - AND NOT WELL APPRECIATED.

I ILLUSTRATE THIS WITH GAUSSIAN MODEL

$$R^2 = p/q \Rightarrow$$

$$Z = \sum_{\mu, \nu \bmod 2m} N_{\mu\nu} f_{\mu}(\tau) \overline{f_{\nu}(\tau)}$$

$$f_{\mu}(\tau) = \frac{\bigoplus_{\mu, m} (0, \tau)}{\eta}$$

(WE'LL MEET THESE \oplus -FUNCTIONS OF LEVEL m AGAIN IN THE NEXT LECT.)

HERE $m = 2pq$.

FINITE HOLOMORPHIC FACTORIZATION RESULTS FROM ENHANCED SYMMETRY

$$\text{HEIS. EXT. OF } LS^1 = \check{H}^1(S^1)$$

THESE HEIS. EXT. HAVE A

$$\text{LEVEL} = 2pq.$$

SELF-DUAL SCALAR AT LEVEL ONE!

TO DEFINE IT WE HAVE TO TAKE

$R^2 = 2$ (F.F. RADIUS; NOT THE SD RADIUS)

AND TAKE A DOUBLE COVER OF S^1 .

THE RESULTING THEORY OF A CHIRAL SCALAR HAS P.F. IN TERMS OF LEVEL $\frac{1}{2}$ -THETA FUNCTIONS

$$\overline{Z}_\epsilon = \frac{\vartheta(\epsilon)}{\eta} \quad \epsilon = \text{SPIN STR.}$$

THE REASON I STRESS THIS POINT
IS THAT THIS IS JUST THE
SIMPLEST EXAMPLE OF A SELF-DUAL
THEORY, AND FURTHER EXAMPLES
INCLUDE

- M5-BRANE
- TYPE II RR FIELDS

SIMILAR SUBTLETIES APPLY TO THESE
IMPORTANT CASES.

BUT THAT'S THE TOPIC OF ANOTHER
LECTURE SERIES - ONE I ALMOST
GAVE HERE, BUT THEN CHICKENED
OUT AND DECIDED TO TALK ABOUT
MORE MAINSTREAM TOPICS.

5. Modular Forms

The above examples motivate the study of more general functions than modular functions.

For $\gamma = \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix} \in \Gamma$

define $j(\gamma, \tau) := c\tau + d$

Def: A vector-valued nearly-holomorphic modular form of weight w is a collection $f_\mu(\tau)$ holomorphic for $\tau \in \mathbb{H}$

$$f_\mu(\gamma\tau) = j(\gamma, \tau)^w M(\gamma)_{\mu\nu} f_\nu(\tau)$$

We need w nonintegral so
$$-\pi < \arg(z) \leq \pi$$

From the cocycle identity

$$j(\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \tau) = j(\gamma_1, \gamma_2 \tau) j(\gamma_2, \tau)$$

Prove $M(\gamma)$ is a projective repⁿ
of Γ : "multiplier system."

Simplest case $M(\gamma) = 1$ 1×1 .

Put $\gamma = -1 \Rightarrow w$ an even integer.

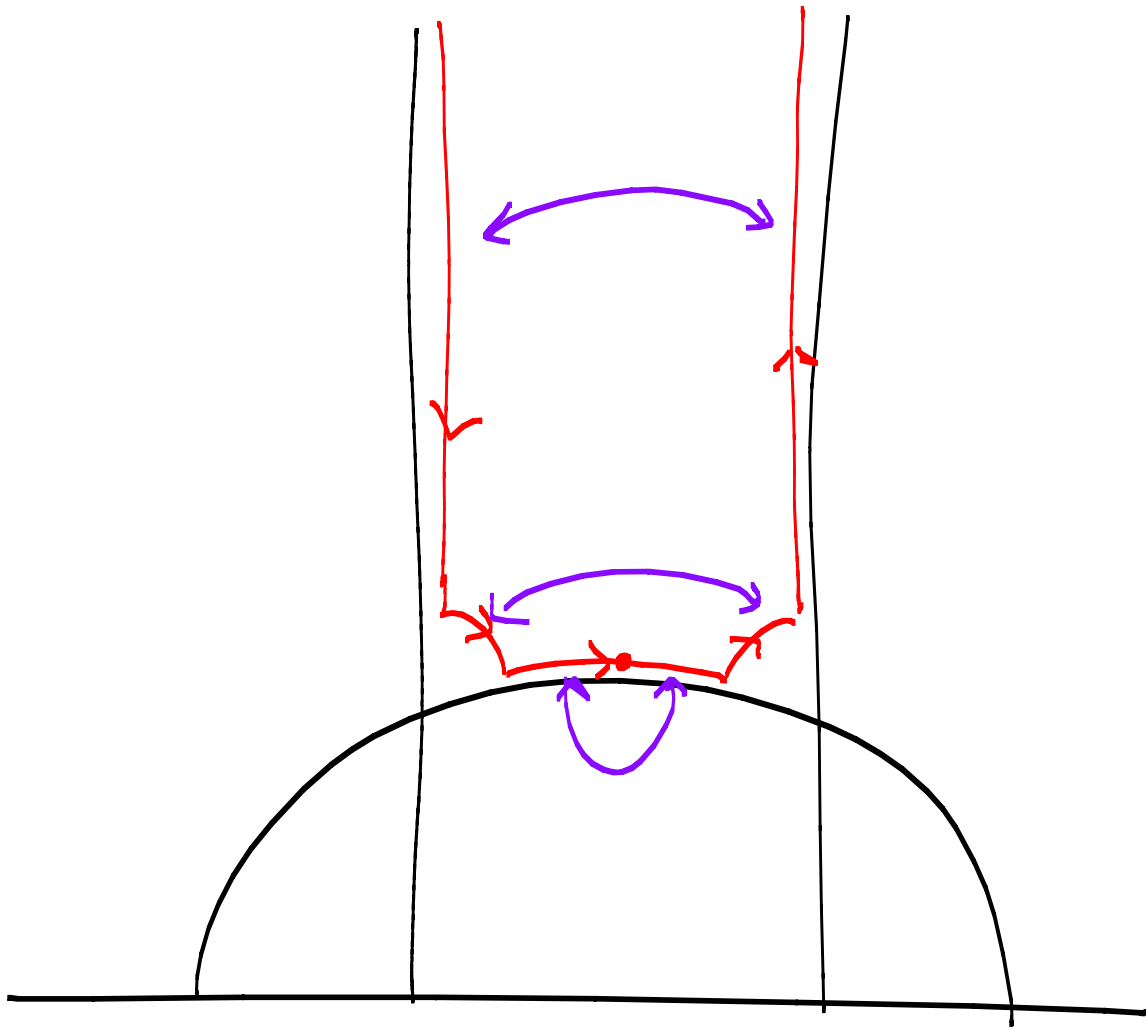
$$\gamma = T \Rightarrow f(\tau) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} \hat{f}(n) q^n$$

(Many interesting physical questions are
related to asymptotics of $\hat{f}(n)$)

When $M(\gamma) = 1$ we can derive a useful constraint on any meromorphic function f s.t.

$$f(\gamma\tau) = (c\tau + d)^w f(\tau)$$

$V_p(f)$ = order of zero of f @ p .



For any meromorphic function transforming $w/w\tau = w$

Integrate $\frac{1}{2\pi i} \frac{df}{f}$ around the red

Contour to get:

$$V_{\infty}(f) + \frac{1}{2} V_i(f) + \frac{1}{3} V_p(f)$$

$$+ \sum_{p \in H/\Gamma}^* V_p(f) = \frac{w}{12}$$

(*)

$p \in H/\Gamma$

only fin. many terms non-zero.

Now, we have used "nearly half" because in the math literature an important growth condition is imposed for the term "modular form".

IN MATH "MODULAR FORM" MEANS,
 $f(\tau)$ HAS SUB-EXP. GROWTH AT $\tau = i\infty$

$$\Rightarrow \hat{f}(n) = 0 \text{ FOR } n < 0.$$

WHAT WE GAIN:

$M_w(\Gamma)$ THE VECTOR SPACE OF MODULAR FORMS OF WEIGHT w IS EXPLICITLY KNOWN.

FIRST WE SHOW IT CAN BE NONEMPTY

$$G_w(\tau) := \sum_{\substack{m, n \in \mathbb{Z} \\ m\tau + n \neq 0}} \frac{1}{(m\tau + n)^w} \quad \begin{array}{l} w \in 2\mathbb{Z} \\ w \geq 4 \text{ CONV.} \end{array}$$

OBVIOUSLY MODULAR.

FOR LATER PURPOSES I WANT TO REWRITE THIS.

NOTE: $\Gamma_\infty \setminus \Gamma \cong \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Rel. prime} \\ (c, d) \end{array} \right\}$

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} a+cl & b+dl \\ c & d \end{pmatrix}$$

Factor out common divisor \Rightarrow

$$G_w(\tau) = S(w) \sum_{\gamma \in \Gamma_\infty \setminus \Gamma} j(\gamma, \tau)^{-w}$$

$$= 2S(w) E_w(\tau) \quad \text{"EISENSTEIN SERIES"}$$

NOTE $E(\tau) \rightarrow 1, \tau \rightarrow i\infty$

EXERCISE: VERIFY MODULARITY OF $\sum_{\Gamma \backslash \Gamma} j^{-w}$ USING COCYCLE IDENTITY.

(WITH A LITTLE MORE WORK CAN DERIVE q -EXP.)

Now the product of modular forms is modular and

$M_*(\Gamma) = \bigoplus_w M_w(\Gamma)$ is a ring.

THM: $M_*(\Gamma) = \mathbb{C}[E_4, E_6]$

This theorem is proven by systematically exploiting the identity $(*)$

$$v_p(f) \in \mathbb{Z}_+, \quad p \in H \cup \hat{\mathbb{Q}} \implies$$

$$w < 0 \implies M_w = 0$$

$$w = 0 \implies M_0 = \mathbb{C} \cdot 1$$

$$w = 2 \implies M_2 = 0.$$

For weight $w=4$ $(*)$ becomes

$$V_\infty + \frac{1}{2} V_i + \frac{1}{3} V_p + \sum^* V_p = \frac{1}{3}$$

with all v 's ≥ 0 and integral.

The only solution is

$$V_\infty = V_i = V_p = 0 ; V_p = 1$$

Thus: M_4 is one-dimensional and generated by E_4 , which moreover has a simple zero at p and no others, in \mathcal{F} .

EX: $M_6 = \mathbb{C} \cdot E_6$; FIND ZEROS OF E_6

SOMETHING NEW HAPPENS AT $w=12$

$$E_4^3 - E_6^2 := (2)^3 \Delta$$

$$\Delta = q + \dots$$

Simple zero @ $q=0$; NO OTHER ZEROS IN \mathbb{H} .

If f is any modular form of weight 12 then

$$\frac{f - \hat{f}(0) \cdot E_{12}}{\Delta} \in M_0$$

hence a constant. So

$$M_{12} = \langle \Delta, E_{12} \rangle = \langle \Delta, E_4^3 \rangle = \langle \Delta, E_6^2 \rangle$$

The same argument also shows

$$M_w = \Delta \cdot M_{w-12} \oplus \langle E_w \rangle$$

So it follows that

$$\dim M_w = \begin{cases} \left\lfloor \frac{w}{12} \right\rfloor & w \equiv 2 \pmod{12} \\ \left\lfloor \frac{w}{12} \right\rfloor + 1 & w \not\equiv 2 \pmod{12}. \end{cases}$$

This is dimension of polynomial ring.

Remarks:

1. A modular form with $\hat{f}(0)=0$, i.e. a form which vanishes for $q \rightarrow 0$ is called a "cusp form."

2. Given the transformation properties of η we see that

$$\Delta = \eta^{24} = q^{\frac{\infty}{11}} (1 - q^n)^{24}$$

manifestly showing that it does not vanish in \mathbb{H} .

3. Similarly, we can construct the j function:

$$\begin{aligned} J(\tau) &= \frac{E_4^3}{\Delta} = \frac{E_6^2}{\Delta} + (12)^3 \\ &= q^{-1} + 744 + 196884q + \dots \end{aligned}$$

Now we come to a key point:
Given the examples of even the
simplest partition functions in 2D CFT
we should

1. Allow for negative weight
2. Allow for singularities at ∞

NOW WE CAN RETURN TO OUR
MAIN THEME WHICH IS CRUCIAL
TO THE PHYSICAL APPLICATIONS:

For negative weight nearly
holomorphic forms the polar part
uniquely determines the entire form.

In physical terms: The
degeneracy of polar states completely
determines the entire spectrum,
including black hole states.

We can demonstrate this easily for the case $M(\chi) = 1$ using our identity \oplus

By definition $V_p(f) \geq 0$ for $p \in H$.

Therefore $w < 0$ forces $V_\infty(f) < 0$.

Moreover, if f, \tilde{f} have the same polar piece then $f - \tilde{f}$ has $V_\infty = 0$ and hence must vanish.

Remark:

1. False if you drop holomorphy.
2. False if you drop modularity
3. Even false if you drop $w < 0$:

For nearly holomorphic positive weight forms you could always add a cusp form.

The above conclusion can be generalized to vector valued modular forms.