

Classical Polylogarithms for

Amplitudes and Wilson Loops



A.B. Goncharov M. Spradlin C. Vergu A. Volovich

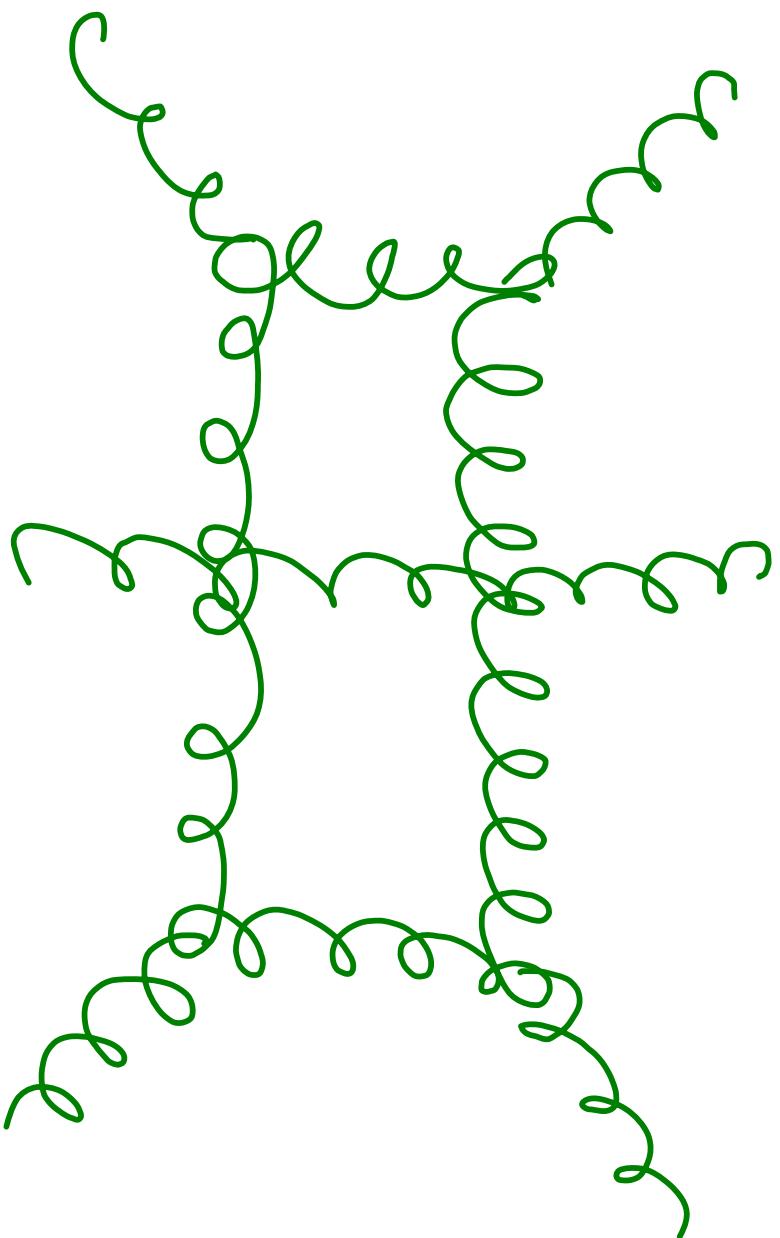
Introduction

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Simplest nontrivial multi-loop scattering amplitude in $\mathcal{N}=4$ SYM:

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Simplest nontrivial multi-loop scattering amplitude in $\mathcal{N}=4$ SYM:
the two-loop six-particle MHV ($++ \rightarrow ++++$) amplitude



+ many more

The ABDK/BDS Ansatz

The **infrared** and **collinear** behavior of amplitudes in massless gauge theories are tightly constrained by general field theory arguments. (Catani, Sterman, Tejeda-Yeomans)

$$\log A_{M\bar{V}} \sim (\text{known IR divergent terms}) + (\text{specific finite terms with prescribed collinear behavior}) + (\text{finite terms with trivial collinear limits}) + \mathcal{O}(\text{IR regulator}) \text{ terms}$$

Collinear Limits

A function $F_n(k_1, k_2, \dots, k_n)$ of n 4-vectors k_i has "trivial collinear limits" if

$$F_n(k_1, \dots, k_i, k_{i+1}, \dots, k_n) \rightarrow F_{n-1}(k_1, \dots, k_i + k_{i+1}, \dots, k_n)$$

when two cyclically adjacent k_i become parallel.

(Or, more generally, any number may become parallel
 \Rightarrow "multi-collinear" limits)

The ABDK/BDS Ansatz

Bern, Dixon and Smirnov (BDS) made a specific proposal for how to write the terms in terms of one-loop amplitudes

$$\log A_{\text{MTV}} \sim (\text{known IR divergent terms})$$

- + (specific finite terms with prescribed collinear behavior)
- + (finite terms with trivial collinear limits)
- + $\mathcal{O}(\text{IR regulator})$ terms

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The BDS ansatz was supported by laborious calculations at $n=4,5$ through 3 loops. (Anastasiou, Bern, Cachazo, Dixon, Kosower, Roiban, Smirnov, MSt, Volovich, Wen)

But explicit calculation revealed that the BBS ansatz fails beginning at two-loops for $n=6$ particles.

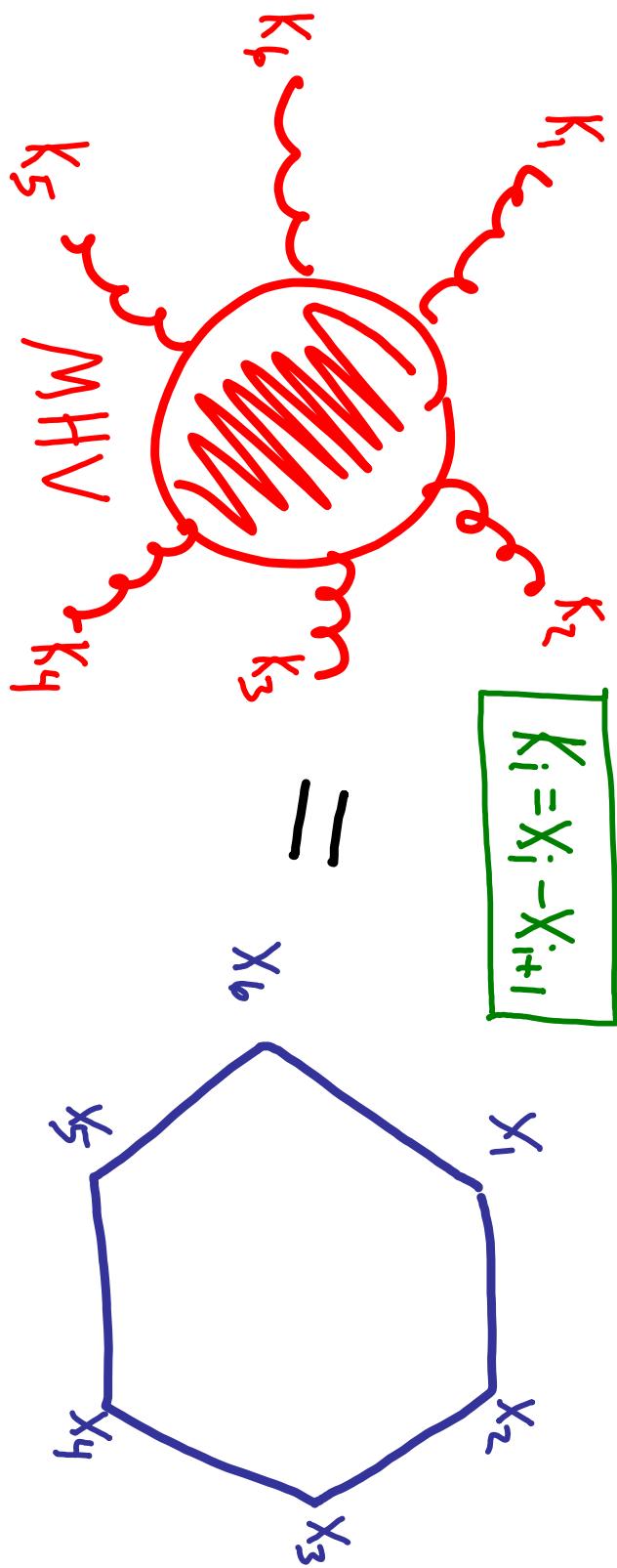
\Rightarrow The BBS "remainder function" is nonzero (though, as emphasized, it must have trivial collinear limits.)

(Bern, Dixon, Kosower, Roiban, MS, Vergu, Volovich)

(BDKRSV)

Amplitudes = Wilson Loops

In parallel developments, inspired by the work of Alday and Maldacena at strong coupling, it was experimentally observed that, apparently order by order in perturbation theory,



(Drummond, Korchemsky, Sokatchev, Brandhuber, Heslop, Trnaglini, BKRSW; " + Katsaroumpas, Nguyen, Spence)

Dual Conformal Invariance

Once you accept $A = \mathcal{W}$, then the conformal Ward identity which the Wilson loop satisfies (in \times space) implies a highly nonobvious relation on A which we call the

dual conformal Ward identity!

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dual conformal Ward identity.

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The most general solution to the DCWI is

$$\log A = (\text{BDS ansatz}) + (\text{any finite dual conformally invariant})$$

ie any function of cross-ratios $\frac{x_{ij}^2 x_{ke}^2}{x_{ie}^2 x_{jk}^2}$

Modern Understanding

Given the presumption of dual conformal invariance, the BPS ansatz $\log A \sim A^{1\text{-loop}}$ is trivially true for $n=4, 5$ to all loops, because there are no possible cross-ratios!

Modern Understanding

Given the presumption of dual conformal invariance, the $\text{BDS ansatz } \log A \sim A^{\text{1-loop}}$ is **trivially** true for $n=4, 5$ to all loops, because there are no possible cross-ratios!

What is highly **nontrivial** is the apparent fact that the amplitude remainder function

||

Wilson loop remainder function

(Bern, Dixon, Kosower, Roiban, M&S, Vergu, Volovich,
Drummond, Henn, Korchemsky, Sokatchev)

The Simplest Non-Trivial Amplitude/Wilson Loop in SYM

The rest of this talk is about the 2-loop 6-particle remainder function $\mathcal{R}_6^{(2)}$. What do we know?

- A function of three dual conformal cross-ratios

$$U_1 = \frac{S_{12} S_{45}}{S_{123} S_{345}} \quad U_2 = \frac{S_{23} S_{56}}{S_{234} S_{123}} \quad U_3 = \frac{S_{35} S_{61}}{S_{345} S_{234}} \quad S_{ij\dots} = (k_i + k_j + \dots)^2$$

- Symmetric under any permutation of the u 's.
- Vanishes in any collinear limit

$$\mathcal{R}(0, u, 1-u) = \begin{array}{c} \text{Diagram of a hexagon with dashed diagonal and red arrow} \\ = \end{array}$$

$$= \begin{array}{c} \text{Diagram of a pentagon} \\ = 0 \end{array}$$

In a heroic effort, Del Duca, Duhr and Smirnov found a manageable way to evaluate the appropriate Wilson loop diagrams, and obtained

an analytic formula for $\mathcal{R}(v_1, v_2, v_3)$

in terms of Goncharov polylogarithms

$$G(a_k, a_{k-1}, \dots, a_1; z) = \int_0^z G(a_{k-1}, \dots, a_1; t) \frac{dt}{t - a_k} \quad G(z) = 1$$

and the slightly more familiar special cases, the harmonic polylogarithms, with all $a_i = 0$ or 1.

Motivation

$$\begin{aligned}
& \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_2)H\left(0, 0, 1; \frac{u_1 + u_3 - 1}{u_1 - 1}\right) - H(0; u_1)H(0, 0, 1; (u_1 + u_3)) - \\
& \frac{1}{24}\pi^2H(0; u_3)\mathcal{H}\left(1; \frac{1}{v_{132}}\right) - \frac{1}{24}\pi^2H(0; u_1)\mathcal{H}\left(1; \frac{1}{v_{213}}\right) + \frac{1}{24}\pi^2H(0; u_3)\mathcal{H}\left(1; \frac{1}{v_{213}}\right) - \\
& \frac{1}{8}\pi^2H(0; u_1)\mathcal{H}\left(1; \frac{1}{v_{231}}\right) + \frac{1}{8}\pi^2H(0; u_3)\mathcal{H}\left(1; \frac{1}{v_{231}}\right) + \frac{1}{8}\pi^2H(0; u_1)\mathcal{H}\left(1; \frac{1}{v_{312}}\right) - \\
& \frac{1}{8}\pi^2H(0; u_2)\mathcal{H}\left(1; \frac{1}{v_{312}}\right) + \frac{1}{24}\pi^2H(0; u_1)\mathcal{H}\left(1; \frac{1}{v_{231}}\right) - \frac{1}{24}\pi^2H(0; u_2)\mathcal{H}\left(1; \frac{1}{v_{312}}\right) - \\
& \frac{1}{4}H(0; u_2)H(0; u_3)\mathcal{H}\left(0, 1; \frac{1}{u_{123}}\right) - \frac{1}{4}H(0; u_2)H(0, 1, 0; u_1) - \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_3)H(0, 1, 0; u_2) - \\
& \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_3)H(0, 0, 1; (u_2 + u_3)) - \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_2)H(0, 1, 0; u_1) - \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_3)H(0, 1, 0; u_2) - \\
& \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_1)H(0, 1, 0; u_3) + \frac{1}{4}H(0; u_2)H\left(0, 1, 1; \frac{u_1 + u_3 - 1}{u_2 - 1}\right) - \\
& \frac{1}{4}H(0; u_3)H\left(0, 1, 1; \frac{u_1 + u_2 - 1}{u_2 - 1}\right) + \frac{1}{4}H(0; u_1)H\left(0, 1, 1; \frac{u_1 + u_3 - 1}{u_1 - 1}\right) - \\
& \frac{1}{4}H(0; u_2)H\left(0, 1, 1; \frac{u_1 + u_3 - 1}{u_1 - 1}\right) - \frac{1}{4}H(0; u_1)H\left(0, 1, 1; \frac{u_1 + u_3 - 1}{u_3 - 1}\right) + \\
& \frac{1}{4}H(0; u_3)H\left(0, 1, 1; \frac{u_2 + u_3 - 1}{u_3 - 1}\right) + \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_2)H(1, 0, 0; u_1) - \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_3)H(1, 0, 0; u_1) - \\
& \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_1)H(1, 0, 0; u_2) + \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_3)H(1, 0, 0; u_2) + \frac{1}{2}H(0; u_1)H(1, 0, 0; u_3) - \\
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& \frac{1}{4}H(0; u_3)H\left(1, 0, 1; \frac{u_1 + u_3 - 1}{u_1 - 1}\right) + 3H(0, 0, 1; (u_1 + u_3)) + \\
& \frac{3}{2}H(0, 0, 1; \frac{u_2 + u_3 - 1}{u_3 - 1}) + 3H(0, 0, 1; (u_2 + u_3)) + \frac{9}{4}H(0, 1, 0; u_1) + \\
& \frac{9}{4}H(0, 0, 1; \frac{u_3 - 1}{u_3 - 1}) + \frac{1}{2}H(0, 0, 1; u_3) - \frac{1}{2}H(0, 1, 0; u_3) - \frac{1}{2}H(0, 1, 0; u_2) - \\
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& \frac{1}{4}H(0, 1, 1; \frac{u_3 - 1}{u_3 - 1}) + 2H(1, 0, 1; u_1) + 2H(1, 0, 1; u_2) + 2H(1, 0, 1; u_3) + \\
& \frac{1}{4}H(1, 1, 0; \frac{u_1 + u_2 - 1}{u_2 - 1}) + \frac{1}{4}H(1, 1, 0; \frac{u_1 + u_3 - 1}{u_1 - 1}) + \\
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\end{aligned}$$

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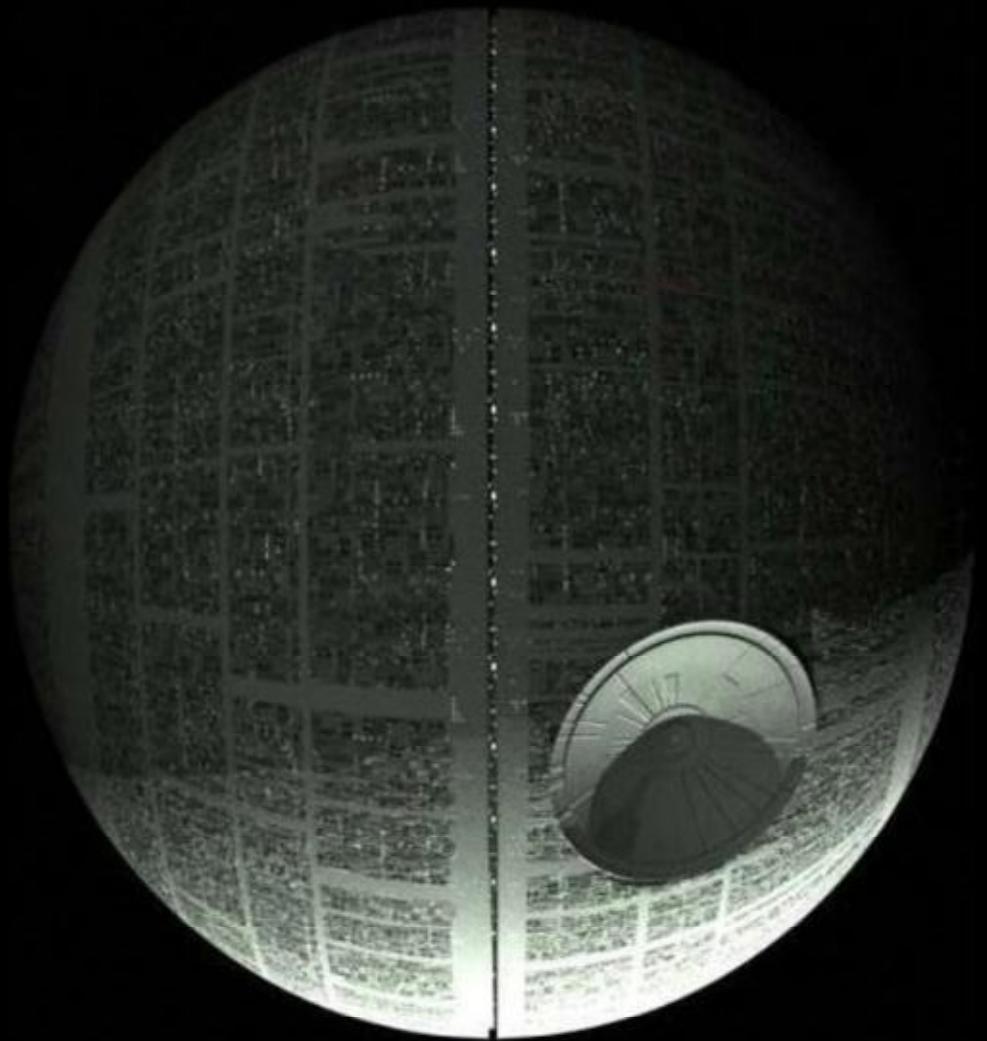
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But to do battle against the Goncharov polylogarithms we need a serious weapon –

Some Hi-Tech from the theory of Mixed Motives



Transcendentality

The two-loop remainder function has uniform
transcendentality degree 4.

A function of degree k is one which can be written as

$$T_K = \int_0^1 dt_1 \int_0^{t_1} dt_2 \cdots \int_0^{t_{k-1}} dt_k \gamma^*(d\log R_1(t_1)) \circ \cdots \circ \gamma^*(d\log R_K(t_K))$$

where • R_i are rational functions with rational coefficients

- $\gamma^{(0)} = a, \gamma^{(1)} = b$, a, b are rational points in \mathbb{C}^n
- $\int d\log R_1 \circ \cdots \circ d\log R_K = \int_a^b \left(\int_a^t d\log R_1 \circ \cdots \circ d\log R_{K-1} \right) d\log R_K(t)$
- The integral is taken along a path in \mathbb{C}^n and one needs to check local homotopy invariance.

The Symbol of a Transcendental function

A very useful quantity associated to a function of uniform degree k is its **Symbol**.

The symbol is an element of the

k -fold tensor product of the multiplicative group of rational functions (modulo constants)

$$\boxed{\text{Symbol}(T_k) = R_1 \otimes R_2 \otimes \cdots \otimes R_k}$$

The Symbol made Simple

A function of degree K is one which can be written as a K -fold iterated integral of a rational integrand

$$T_K(X_1, \dots, X_m) = \int dt_1 \int_{t_1}^{t_2} dt_2 \cdots \int_{t_{K-1}}^{t_K} dt_K R(X_1, \dots, X_m; t_1, \dots, t_K)$$

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The symbol is a way to express the integrand in a way which preserves information about the order (but not the path) of integration.

The symbol can be computed recursively. If

$$dT_K = \sum_i T_{K-1}^i d\log R_i$$

Then $\text{Symbol}(T_K) = \sum_i \text{symbol}(T_{K-1}^i) \otimes R_i$

Note that the symbol satisfies

$$\begin{aligned} & R_1 \otimes \dots \otimes (R_a R_b) \otimes \dots \otimes R_k \\ &= R_1 \otimes \dots \otimes R_a \otimes \dots \otimes R_k + R_1 \otimes \dots \otimes R_b \otimes \dots \otimes R_k \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} & R_1 \otimes \dots \otimes (c R_i) \otimes \dots \otimes R_k \\ &= R_1 \otimes \dots \otimes R_i \otimes \dots \otimes R_k \quad \text{for any constant } c \end{aligned}$$

... properties it inherits from dlog_R .

Examples

- degree 0

$$T_0 = R$$

$$\text{Symbol}(T_0) = 0$$

- degree 1

$$T_1 = \log R$$

$$dT_1 = d\log R \Rightarrow \text{Symbol}(T_1) = R$$

- degree 2

$$T_2 = \text{Li}_2(R) = \int_0^R -\log(1-t) d\log t$$

$$dT_2 = -\log(1-R) d\log R$$

$$\Rightarrow \text{Symbol}(T_2) = -(1-R) \otimes R$$

or consider

$$T_2 = \log R_1 \log R_2$$

$$dT_2 = \log R_1 d\log R_2 + \log R_2 d\log R_1$$

$$\Rightarrow \text{Symbol}(T_2) = R_1 \otimes R_2 + R_2 \otimes R_1$$

Classical Polylogarithms

The functions Lik are defined recursively by

$$Lik(z) = \int_0^z Lik_{-1}(t) dt$$

$$Lik_1(z) = -\log(1-z)$$

$$\Rightarrow \text{Symbol}(Lik(z)) = -((1-z) \underbrace{\otimes z \otimes \dots \otimes z}_{k-1 \text{ times}})$$

Using these definitions it is straightforward to calculate the symbol of all harmonic & Goncharov polylogs, and hence the symbol S of the DDS formula.

But what is it good for?

Uses of the Symbol

The symbol converts polylog functional equations into rational function identities

$$\text{Symbol}(\text{Li}_2(z)) = -((1-z) \otimes z)$$

$$\begin{aligned}\Rightarrow \text{Symbol}(\text{Li}_2(1-x)) &= -(1/x) \otimes (1/x) = x \otimes \left(\frac{x-1}{x}\right) \\ &= x \otimes \left(\frac{1-x}{x}\right) = x \otimes (1-x) - x \otimes x \\ &= \text{Symbol}(-\text{Li}_2(1-x) - \frac{1}{2} \log(x)^2)\end{aligned}$$

\Rightarrow

$$\boxed{\text{Li}_2(1-x) = -\text{Li}_2(1-x) - \frac{1}{2} \log(x)^2}$$

Ambiguities

Here we got lucky!, but consider

$$\text{Li}_2(1-x) + \log(x) \log(1-x) = -\dot{\text{Li}}_2(x) + \frac{\pi^2}{6}$$

The symbol doesn't see this term

\Rightarrow The symbol only fixes the "leading transcendentality" piece, i.e. modulo constants times functions of lower degree

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⇒ The symbol only fixes the "leading transcendentality" piece, i.e. modulo constants times functions of lower degree

A related ambiguity is that the symbol obviously has no knowledge of where to put branch cuts

$\log(x)$, $\log(-x)$, $-\log(\frac{1}{x})$, $\frac{1}{2}\log(x^2)$, $\frac{3}{2}\log(-x^{2/3})$ have the same symbol

The Symbol of the DDS Function

The symbol S is a mess! It involves arguments

$$u_i,$$

$$1 - u_i,$$

$$u_i + u_j,$$

$$1 - u_i - u_j$$

$$v_{jkl}^{\pm} = \frac{u_k - u_l \pm \sqrt{(u_k + u_l)^2 - 4u_j u_k u_l}}{2(1 - u_j) u_k}$$

$$v_{jkl}^{\pm} = \frac{1 - u_j - u_k + u_l \pm \sqrt{\Delta}}{2(1 - u_j) u_k}$$

$$\Delta = ((-u_1 - u_2 - u_3)^2 - 4u_1 u_2 u_3)$$

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$$u_i,$$
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$$1-u_i-u_j$$

$$v_{jkl}^{\pm} = \frac{u_k - u_l \pm \sqrt{(u_k + u_l)^2 - 4u_j u_k u_l}}{2(1-u_j) u_k}$$

This is a redundant set; they satisfy many algebraic identities.

Eliminate these in terms of the rest (not obvious that this had to be possible!).

$$u_{jkl}^{\pm} = \frac{1 - u_j - u_k + u_l \pm \sqrt{\Delta}}{2(1-u_j) u_k}$$

$$\Delta = ((-u_1 - u_2 - u_3)^2 - 4u_1 u_2 u_3)$$

Momentum Twisters

We still have a $\sqrt{\Delta}$ we don't want; we need to find variables on a covering space.

The "right" variables are

$$U_1 = \frac{Z_{23} Z_{36}}{Z_{25} Z_{36}} \quad U_2 = \frac{Z_{16} Z_{34}}{Z_{14} Z_{36}} \quad U_3 = \frac{Z_{12} Z_{45}}{Z_{14} Z_{25}}$$

$$z_{ij} = z_i - z_j \\ z_i \in \mathbb{P}^1$$

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We still have a $\sqrt{\Delta}$ we don't want; we need to find variables on a covering space.

The "right" variables are

$$U_1 = \frac{Z_{23} Z_{56}}{Z_{25} Z_{36}} \quad U_2 = \frac{Z_{16} Z_{34}}{Z_{14} Z_{36}} \quad U_3 = \frac{Z_{12} Z_{45}}{Z_{14} Z_{25}}$$

$$\begin{aligned} z_{ij} &= z_i - z_j \\ z_i &\in \mathbb{P}^1 \end{aligned}$$

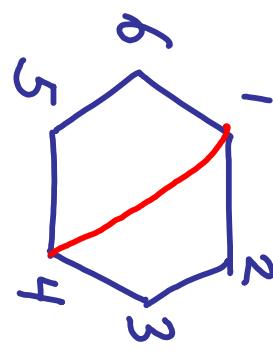
or, if you prefer momentum twistors,

$$U_1 = \frac{\langle 1234 \rangle \langle 4561 \rangle}{\langle 1245 \rangle \langle 3461 \rangle} \quad \text{etc (cyclically)}$$

Then Δ becomes a perfect square, so the symbol can be expressed in terms of cross-ratios of Z 's.

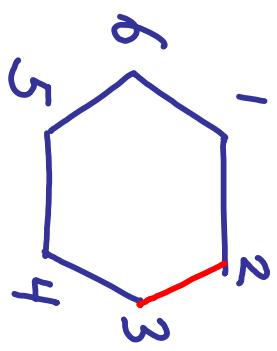
Cross-Ratios

There are 15 different kinds of cross-ratios (of course, only 3 are independent, they satisfy algebraic relations)



$$\frac{z_{23}z_{56}}{z_{16}z_{45}} = u_1$$

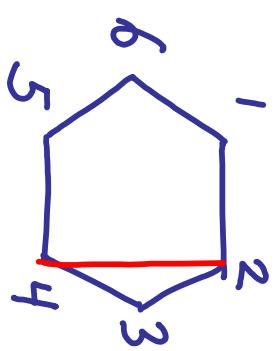
"diagonal"
 u_1, u_2, u_3



$$\frac{z_{14}z_{56}}{z_{16}z_{45}} = -x_1^+$$

"edge"

$$x_1^+, x_2^+, x_3^+$$



$$\frac{z_{13}z_{56}}{z_{16}z_{35}}$$

"chord"

6 of these

$$X_i^\pm = u_i \quad X_i^\mp = 1$$

$$X_i^\pm = \frac{u_1 + u_2 + u_3 - 1 \pm \sqrt{\Delta}}{2u_1u_2u_3}$$

$$X_i^+ X_i^- = \frac{u_i^2}{u_1 u_2 u_3}$$

Miracle #1

In \mathbb{Z} coordinates, the symbol would have been a linear combination of terms like

$$\varphi_1(r_i) \otimes \varphi_2(r_i) \otimes \varphi_3(r_i) \otimes \varphi_4(r_i)$$

for arbitrary polynomials of the cross-ratios r_i

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for arbitrary polynomials of the cross-ratios r_i

We found that in fact it takes the form

$$S = \sum_{i,j,k,l=1}^{15} C_{ijkl} r_i \otimes r_j \otimes r_k \otimes r_l \quad \text{for rational } C_{ijkl}$$

(There is considerable ambiguity in writing it this way due to identities like

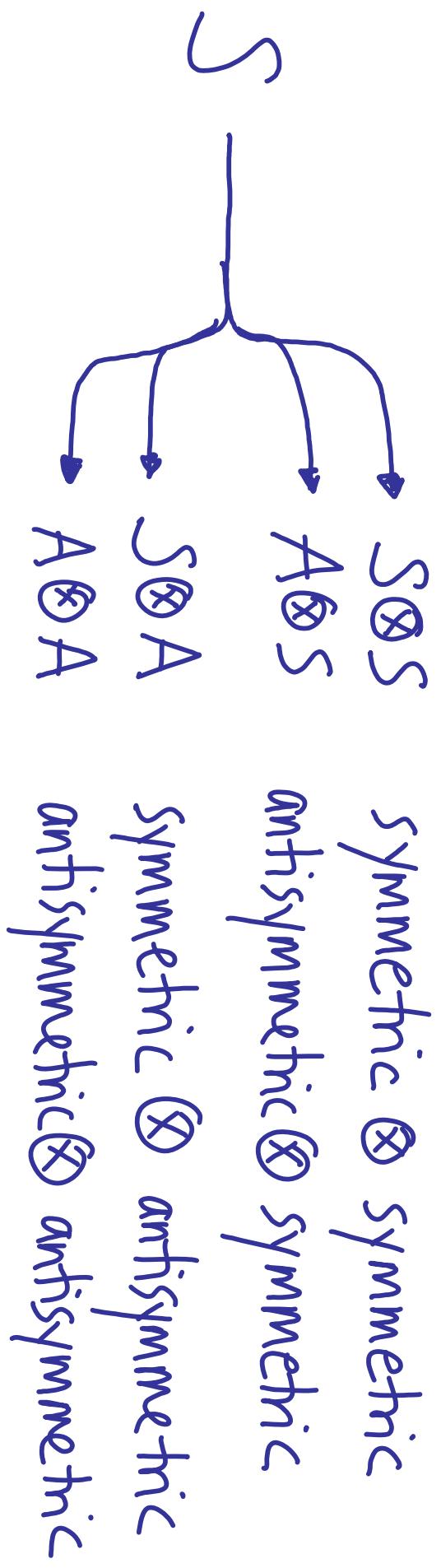
$$\frac{z_{14} z_{56}}{z_{16} z_{45}} \cdot \frac{z_{45} z_{3}}{z_{14} z_{35}} = \frac{z_{13} z_{56}}{z_{16} z_{35}}$$

Miracle #2

We find that S can be expressed in terms of the diagonal and edge cross-ratios only; chords drop out.

(This should provide a possible hint about the structure of the n -point remainder function for $n \geq 6$)

Let us decompose the symbol S into four pieces depending on the symmetry properties under exchange of the first two entries, and last two entries



i.e. $(A \otimes A)_{ijkl} = \frac{1}{4}(C_{ijke} - C_{jikl} - C_{ijke} + C_{jilk})$ etc.

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Motivic hi-tech: any function of transcendentality degree 4 whose symbol satisfies $A \wedge A = 0$ can be expressed in terms of the classical (poly)logs $\text{Li}_4(x), \text{Li}_3(x), \text{Li}_2(x), \text{Li}_1(x)$ & $\log(x)$ only!

A comment: there is no constructive algorithm for determining what arguments can appear inside the polylogs; they could be in principle arbitrary rational functions of your original variables.

e.g. $(1+x+x^2) \otimes x = \left(\frac{1-x^3}{1-x}\right) \otimes x$

$$= (1-x^3) \otimes x - (1-x) \otimes x$$

$$= \frac{1}{3} (1-x^3) \otimes x^3 - (1-x) \otimes x$$

$$\Rightarrow -\frac{1}{3} \text{Li}_2(x^3) + \text{Li}_2(x)$$

In practice, guessing, experimentation & luck required!

A Divide & Conquer Algorithm

We want to find a function with given symbol S in terms of

	$A \otimes A$	$S \otimes A$	$A \otimes S$	$S \otimes S$
$L_{i_4}(x)$				✓
$L_{i_3}(x) \log(y)$		✗		✗
$L_{i_2}(x) L_{i_2}(y)$	✓		✗	
$L_{i_2}(x) \log(y) \log(z)$		✓		
$\log(x) \log(y) \log(z) \log(w)$	✗	✓	✓	✓

} ← do third
 ↑ ← do first
 ↑ ← do second
 ↑ ← do last

(Note that $L_{i_2}(x)L_{i_2}(y)$ satisfies $A \wedge A = O!$)

Analyticity

This algorithm gives a prototype, \tilde{R} , which has the same symbol as that of the DOS formula for $R_6^{(k)}$.

The most annoying part was finding an expression which put all branch cuts in the right place.

Physical input specifies that we expect the remainder function to be smooth (and real-valued) everywhere in the Euclidean regime where $y_i > 0$.

This frequently involved "unsimplifying"

i.e.

$$\frac{1}{2} \log(x^+ / x^-) \rightarrow \sum_{i=1}^3 \ell_i(x_i^+) - \ell_i(x_i^-)$$

where

$$\ell_n(x) = \frac{1}{2} L_{in}(x) - \frac{1}{2} (-1)^n L_{in}(\bar{x})$$

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In terms of the function

$$\begin{aligned} L_4(x^+, x^-) &= \ell_4(x^+) - \frac{1}{2} \log(x^+ x^-) \ell_3(x^+) \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{8} \log(x^+ x^-)^2 \ell_2(x^+) - \frac{1}{48} \log(x^+ x^-)^3 \ell_1(x) \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{384} \log(x^+ x^-)^4 + (x^+ \leftrightarrow x^-) \end{aligned}$$

we find...

Final (?) Result

$$\mathcal{R} = \sum_{i=1}^3 \left(L_4(x_i^+, x_i^-) - \frac{1}{2} L_{ij} \left((-\gamma_{ij}) \right) \right) - \frac{1}{8} \left(\sum_{i=1}^3 L_{i2} \left((-\gamma_{ii}) \right)^2 \right) + \frac{\mathcal{J}^4}{12}$$

$$+ \frac{\pi^2}{12} \left(\mathcal{J}^2 + \frac{\pi^2}{6} \right) \times \begin{cases} -2 & \text{if } D > 0, |v_1 + v_2 + v_3| \\ +1 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

This piece is required to cancel discontinuities across various branch cuts.

The full function is completely smooth, manifestly symmetric in u_1, u_2, u_3 , and valid for all $u_i > 0$.

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our formula provides hope, where before there was
none, to the idea that we might be able to
really unlock the secrets of multi-loop SYM amplitudes,
and hopefully connect to strong coupling
(Alday, Gaiotto,
Maldacena, Sever,
Vieira)

End of the Coefficient \times Integral Paradigm?

Despite all the recent progress in amplitudes,
the paradigm for computing loop amplitudes remains

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But perhaps there is
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