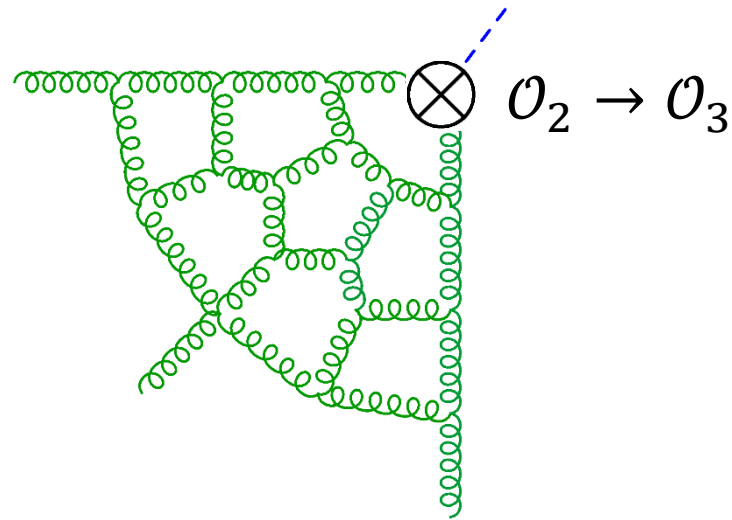


Another 8 Loop Form Factor in Planar N=4 SYM



LD, Z. Li to appear
CAmps, UCLA
November 9, 2025

Lance Dixon (SLAC)

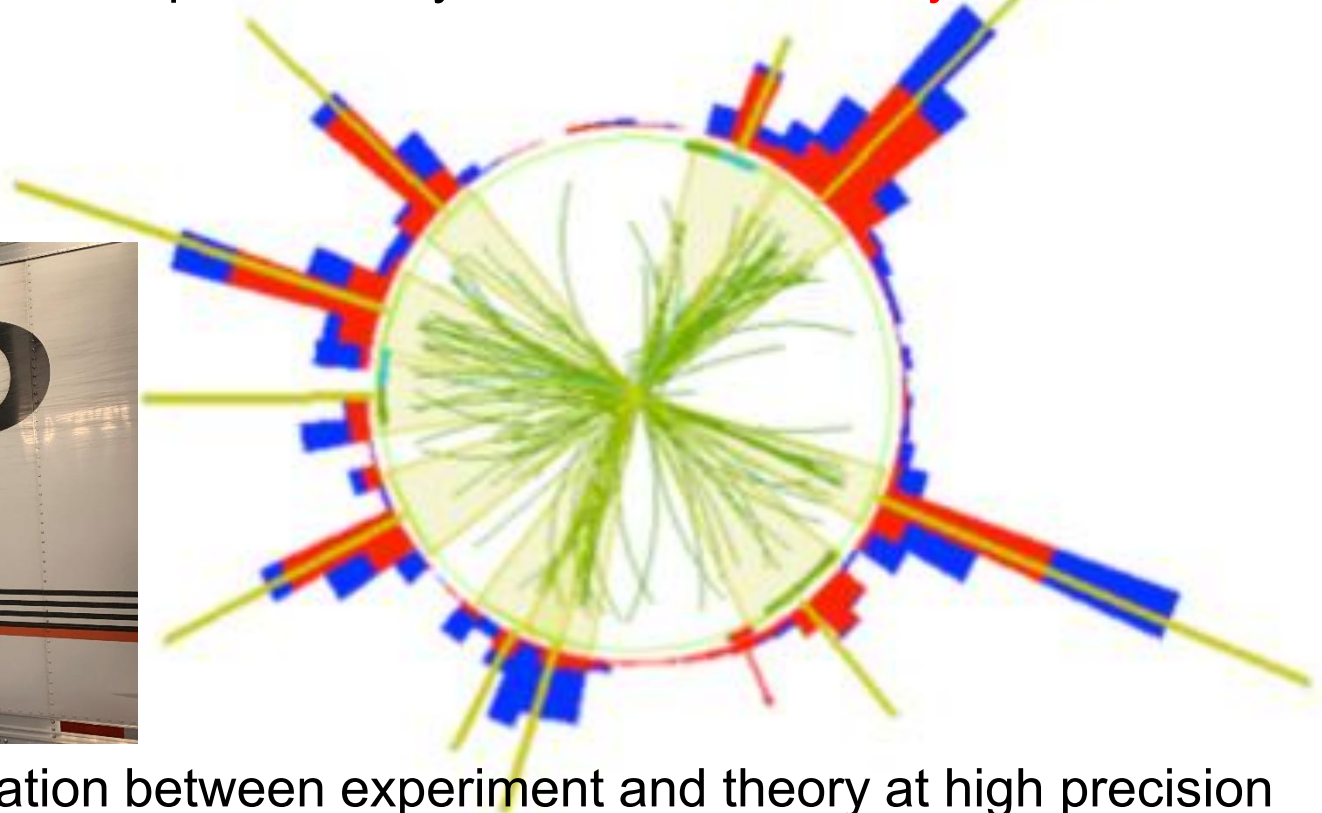




CMS Experiment at LHC, CERN
Data recorded: Mon Oct 25 05:47:22 2010 CDT
Run/Event: 148864 59276196
Lumi section: 520
Orbit/Crossing: 136152948 / 1594

LHC is QCD Machine

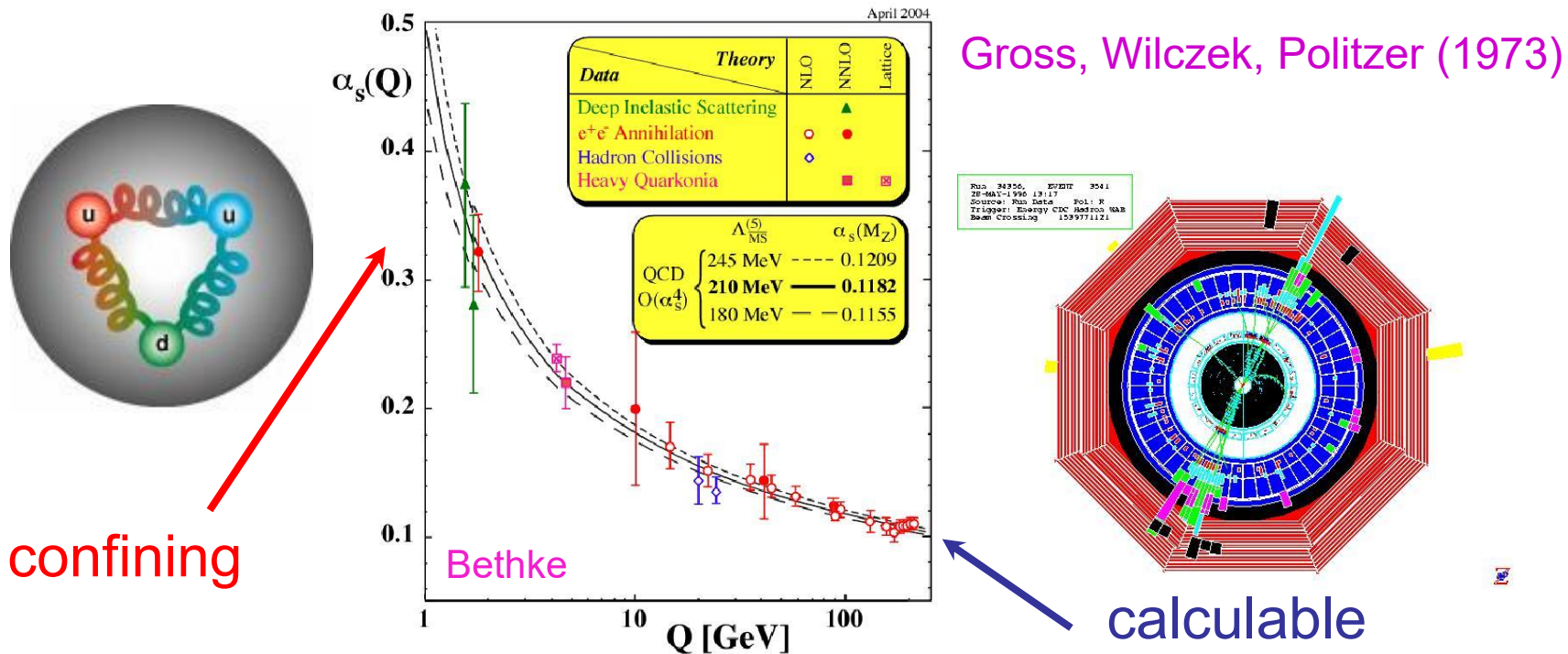
Copious production of quarks and gluons, materialize as collimated jets of hadrons, predicted by Quantum Chromodynamics



- Confrontation between experiment and theory at high precision requires higher order corrections in the strong coupling α_s

The Key of Asymptotic Freedom

- Gluons **anti**-screen charge: Interaction strength α_s for QCD is **small at short distances**, so we can series expand in α_s
 $\rightarrow$ perturbation theory $\rightarrow$ Feynman diagrams

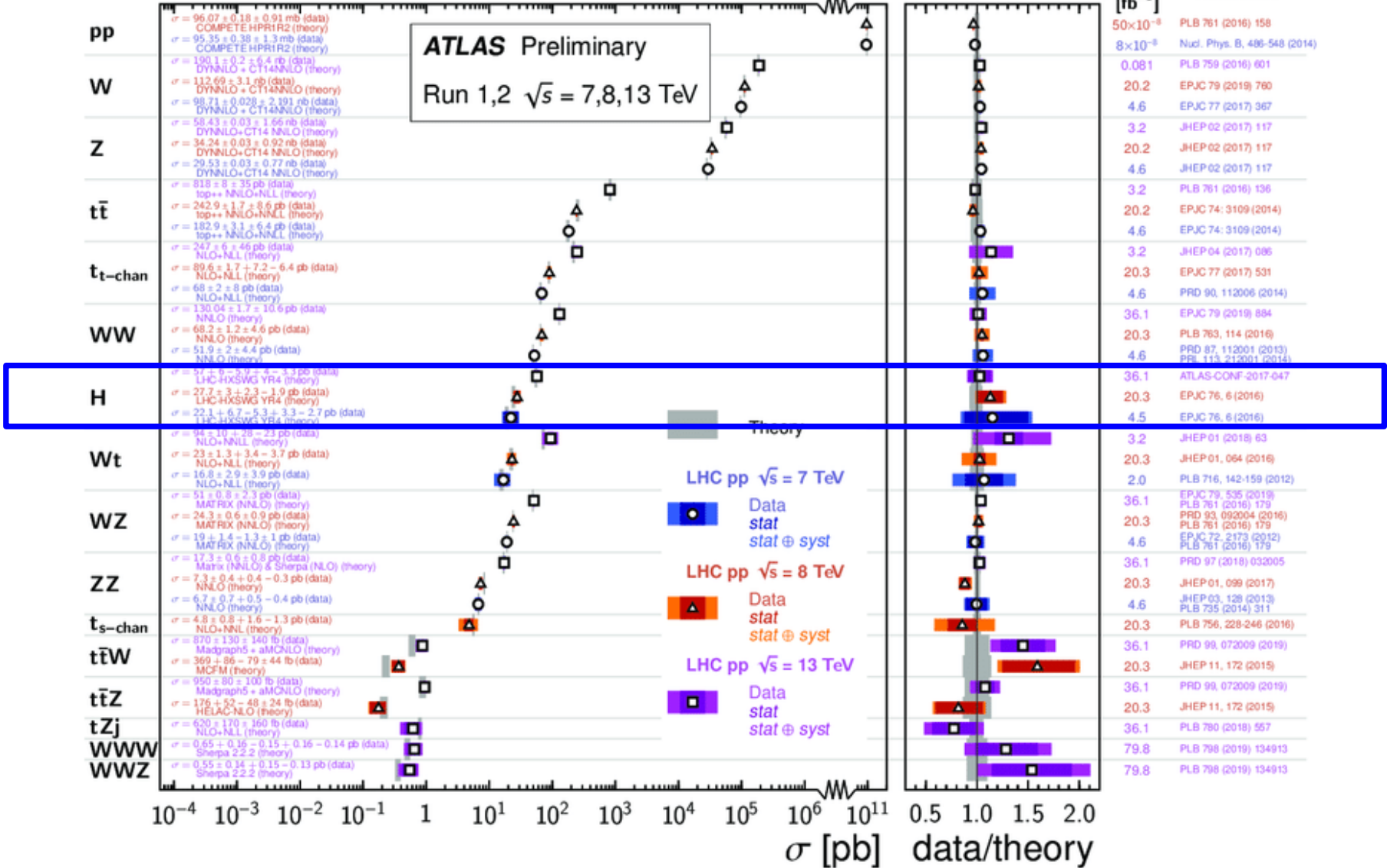


Standard Model Total Production Cross Section Measurements

Status:
November 2019

$\int \mathcal{L} dt$
[fb⁻¹]

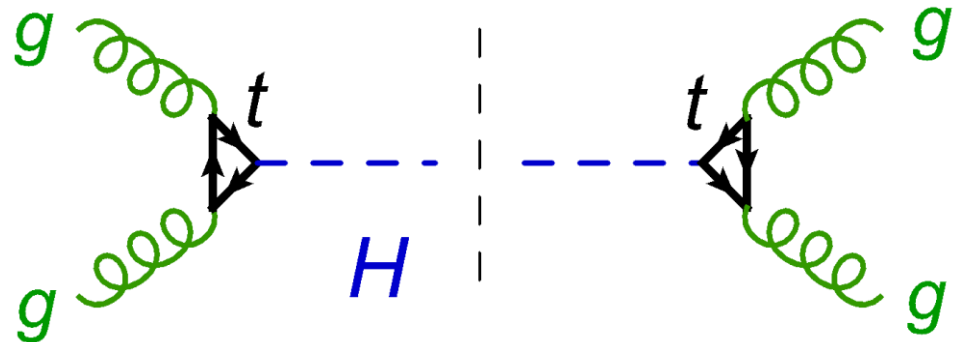
Reference



Producing Higgs bosons at LHC

Higgs boson dominantly produced by **gluon fusion**, a **quantum process** at “one loop”, mediated by **top quark**, because **t** couples strongly to both gluons and Higgs

Leading Order (LO)
cross section
 $= |\text{one-loop amplitude}|^2$



- Since $2m_{top} = 350 \text{ GeV} \gg m_{Higgs} = 125 \text{ GeV}$,
interaction between gluons and Higgs is **approximately local** (mediated by an **operator** $H G_{\mu\nu}^a G^{\mu\nu a}$)

Perturbative Short-Distance Cross Section

$$\hat{\sigma}(\alpha_s, \mu_F, \mu_R) = [\alpha_s(\mu_R)]^{n_\alpha} \left[\underset{\text{LO}}{\hat{\sigma}^{(0)}} + \frac{\alpha_s}{2\pi} \underset{\text{NLO}}{\hat{\sigma}^{(1)}}(\mu_F, \mu_R) + \left(\frac{\alpha_s}{2\pi}\right)^2 \underset{\text{NNLO}}{\hat{\sigma}^{(2)}}(\mu_F, \mu_R) + \dots \right]$$

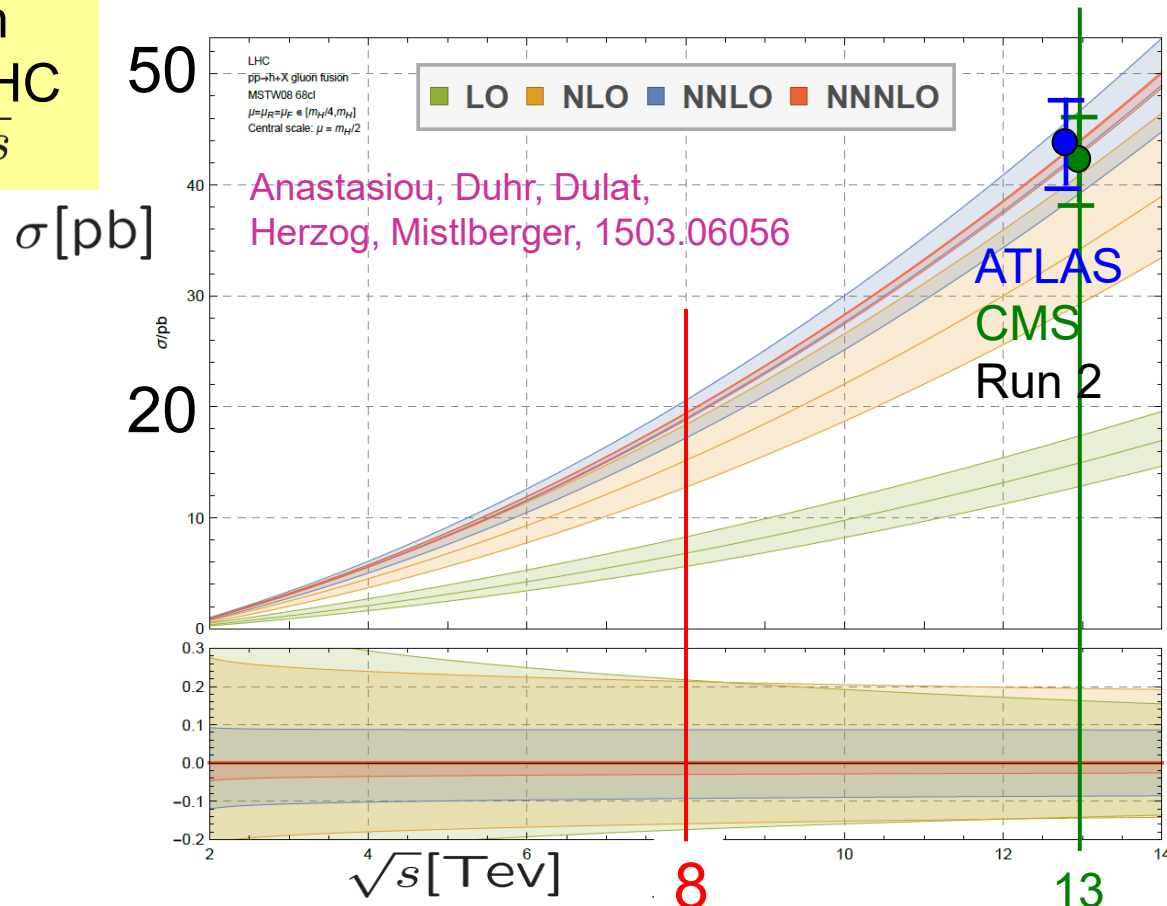
Higgs gluon fusion
cross section at LHC
vs. CM energy $\sqrt{s}$

LO terrible!

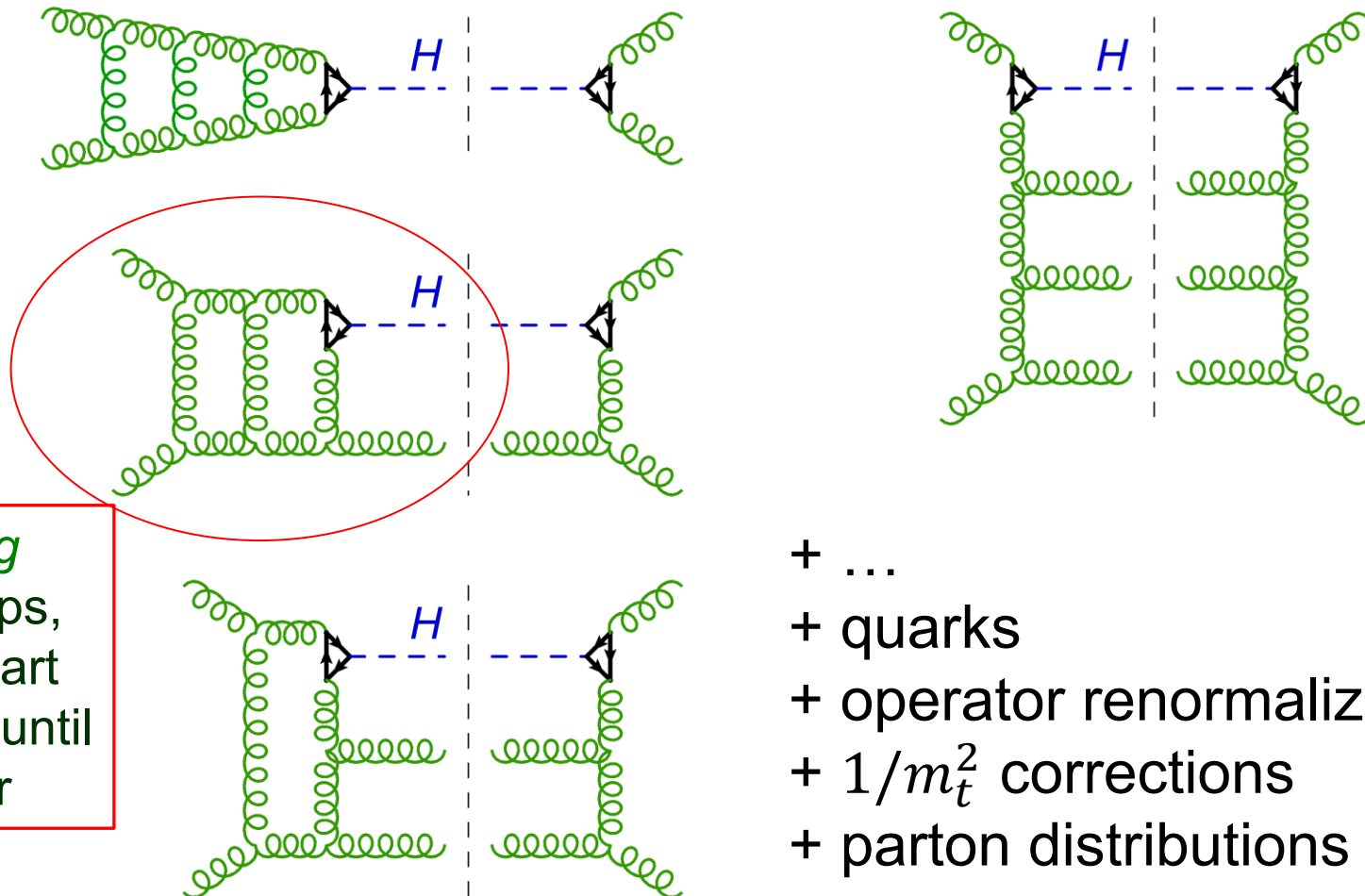
LO $\rightarrow$ NNNLO

$\rightarrow$ factor of 2 or 3 increase!

**Poor convergence
of expansion in $\alpha_s(\mu)$
necessitates high orders!**



Very few of the NNNLO QCD diagrams



Scattering amplitudes are underlying building blocks

“Goldilocks Process” $\sim gg \rightarrow Hg$

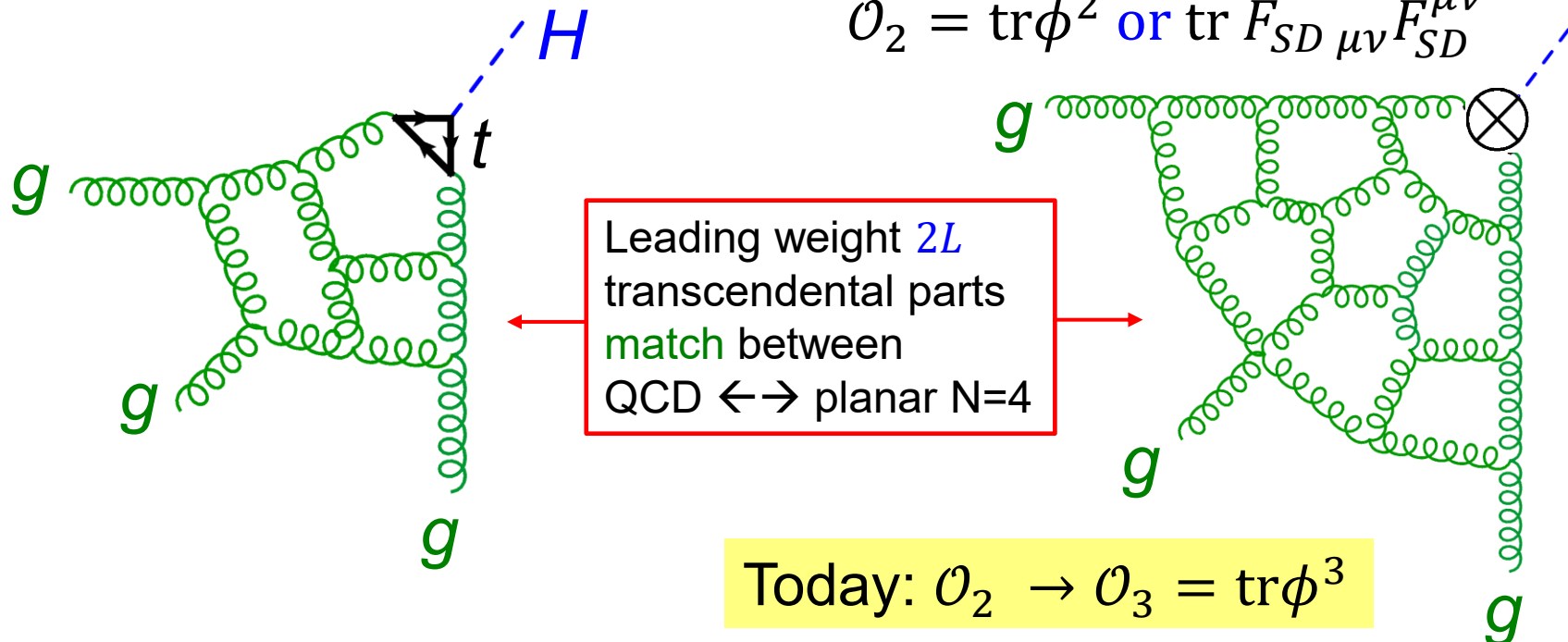
QCD state of art is now
three loops @ large N_c
(not counting top quark loop)

Chen, Guan, Mistlberger, 2504.06490 LD, Ö. Gürdoğan, A. McLeod, M. Wilhelm
2012.12286, 2112.06243, 2204.11901

Can get to **eight** loops – in **analog**
process: 3-point form factor of

$\text{tr}\phi^2$ operator in **planar N=4 SYM**

$\mathcal{O}_2 = \text{tr}\phi^2$ or $\text{tr} F_{SD\,\mu\nu} F_{SD}^{\mu\nu}$



Planar N=4 SYM is great

- See Jara's talk for why
- Teaches us “something” about the leading transcendental part of QCD
- For simple processes, the answer is a polylogarithmic function of known weight ($2L$ at loop order L) and high loop order computations can be relatively simple.
- We know how to remove all infrared divergences, via the BDS(-like) ansatz.
- Finite remaining functions $\mathcal{E}_3^{(L)}$ for $\text{tr}\phi^2$; $\mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{(L)}$ for $\text{tr}\phi^3$

$\text{tr}\phi^3$ form factor was known to 6 loops

Basso, LD, Tumanov, 2410.22402

- 3 loops agrees with integrand-based computation

Henn, Lim, Torres Bobadilla, 2410.22465

- 6 loops based on **amplitude bootstrap**, with exactly the same function space $\mathcal{C}$ as for the $\text{tr}\phi^2$ form factor, and **boundary conditions** provided by the **FFOPE**

Sever, Tumanov, Wilhelm, 2009.11297, 2105.13367, 2112.10569;

Basso, Tumanov, 2308.08432

- The fact that the same function space works for $\text{tr}\phi^2$ **and** $\text{tr}\phi^3$ is **not at all obvious**

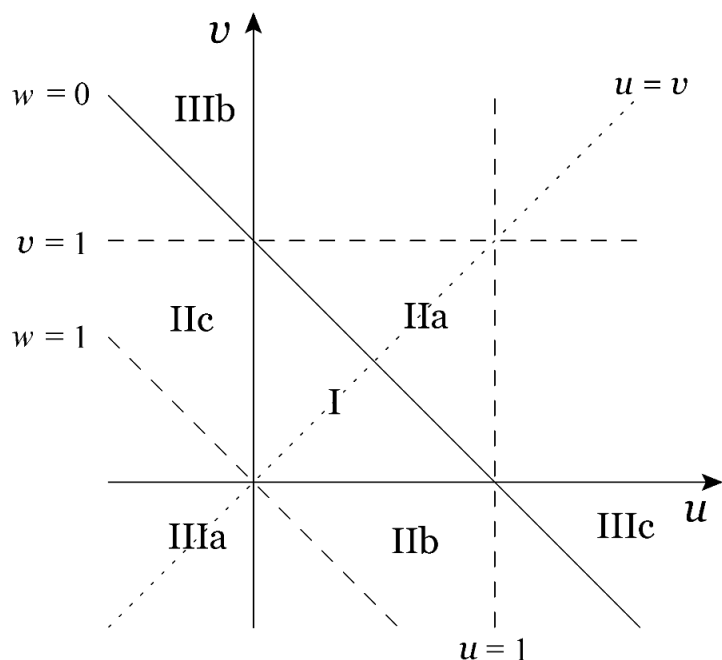
3-point form factor kinematics is two-dimensional

$$k_1 + k_2 + k_3 = -k_H$$

$$s_{123} = s_{12} + s_{23} + s_{31} = m_H^2$$

$$s_{ij} = (k_i + k_j)^2 \quad k_i^2 = 0$$

$$u = \frac{s_{12}}{s_{123}} \quad v = \frac{s_{23}}{s_{123}} \quad w = \frac{s_{31}}{s_{123}}$$



$$u + v + w = 1$$

I = decay / Euclidean

IIa,b,c = scattering / spacelike operator

IIIa,b,c = scattering / timelike operator

N=4 amplitude is
 S_3 invariant

$D_3 \equiv S_3$ dihedral symmetry generated by:

a. cycle: $i \rightarrow i + 1 \pmod{3}$, or

$$u \rightarrow v \rightarrow w \rightarrow u$$

b. flip: $u \leftrightarrow v$

Map polylogs to **symbols**

- Iterative differentiation of a polylogarithmic function F n times for a weight n function, can be used to define its **symbol**:

["ln" is implicit in s_{i_k}]

$$\mathcal{S}[F] \equiv \sum_{s_{i_1}, \dots, s_{i_n} \in \mathcal{L}} F^{s_{i_1}, \dots, s_{i_n}} s_{i_1} \otimes \dots \otimes s_{i_n}$$

where s_{i_k} are **letters** in the symbol **alphabet** $\mathcal{L}$
and $F^{s_{i_1}, \dots, s_{i_n}}$ are just rational numbers (often integers!)
Goncharov, Spradlin, Vergu, Volovich, 1006.5703

Common alphabet for $\text{tr}\phi^2$ and $\text{tr}\phi^3$

Let $u = \frac{s_{12}}{s_{123}}$, $v = \frac{s_{23}}{s_{123}}$, $w = \frac{s_{31}}{s_{123}} = 1 - u - v$

Then

$$\mathcal{L} = \{a, b, c, d, e, f\}$$

where $a = \sqrt{\frac{u}{vw}}$, $b = \sqrt{\frac{v}{wu}}$, $c = \sqrt{\frac{w}{uv}}$, $d = \frac{1-u}{u}$, $e = \frac{1-v}{v}$, $f = \frac{1-w}{w}$

- Symbols of $\text{tr}\phi^2$ form factor $\mathcal{E}_3^{(L)}$ simplify (remarkably) at $L = 1$ and 2 loops, to just 6 and 12 terms:

$$\mathcal{S}[\mathcal{E}_3^{(1)}] = (-2)[b \otimes d + c \otimes e + a \otimes f + b \otimes f + c \otimes d + a \otimes e]$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{S}[\mathcal{E}_3^{(2)}] = & 8[b \otimes d \otimes d \otimes d + c \otimes e \otimes e \otimes e + a \otimes f \otimes f \otimes f + b \otimes f \otimes f \otimes f + c \otimes d \otimes d \otimes d + a \otimes e \otimes e \otimes e] \\ & + 16[b \otimes b \otimes b \otimes d + c \otimes c \otimes c \otimes e + a \otimes a \otimes a \otimes f + b \otimes b \otimes b \otimes f + c \otimes c \otimes c \otimes d + a \otimes a \otimes a \otimes e] \end{aligned}$$

(really only 1 and 2 terms, plus images under **dihedral symmetry**)

Low loop $\text{tr}\phi^3$ symbols

- Symbols of $\text{tr}\phi^3$ form factor $F_{3,3}^{(L)}$ at $L = 1, 2$ loops are just 2 and 18 terms, plus D_3 dihedral images:

$$\mathcal{S} \left[\mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{(1)} \right] = a \otimes b - a \otimes a + \text{dihedral}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{S} \left[\mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{(2)} \right] = & 6 a \otimes a \otimes a \otimes a - 6 a \otimes a \otimes b \otimes a - 6 a \otimes b \otimes a \otimes a + 5 a \otimes b \otimes b \otimes a \\ & + a \otimes b \otimes c \otimes a - 3 a \otimes e \otimes a \otimes a + 3 a \otimes e \otimes c \otimes a + 8 a \otimes a \otimes b \otimes b \\ & - 6 a \otimes a \otimes a \otimes b - 6 a \otimes b \otimes b \otimes b + 5 a \otimes b \otimes a \otimes b \\ & - 2 a \otimes a \otimes c \otimes b - 2 a \otimes c \otimes b \otimes b + 3 a \otimes f \otimes a \otimes b - 3 a \otimes f \otimes b \otimes b \\ & + a \otimes b \otimes c \otimes b + a \otimes c \otimes a \otimes b + a \otimes c \otimes c \otimes b \\ & + \text{dihedral} \end{aligned}$$

The bootstrap

Combines:

1. knowledge of the polylogarithmic function space
(steal from $\text{tr}\phi^2$)
2. empirical multi-final entry conditions (similar to $\text{tr}\phi^2$)
3. leading and next-to-leading discontinuities (in bulk!)
4. the FFOPE at level of “one flux tube excitation”
(fixes collinear limit of the function)

1. Function space from $\text{tr}\phi^2$

- Symbol alphabet $\{a, b, c, d, e, f\}$
- Every term in the symbol **starts with** a, b, c ; **never** d, e, f
- Physical reason related to **causality**, which dictates where **branch cuts** can appear: only for $(p_i + p_j)^2 \sim 0$
- 12 pairs of adjacent letters are **forbidden**:

~~$\dots a \otimes d \dots, \quad \dots b \otimes e \dots, \quad \dots c \otimes f \dots$
 $\dots d \otimes a \dots, \quad \dots e \otimes b \dots, \quad \dots f \otimes c \dots$
 $\dots d \otimes e \dots, \quad \dots e \otimes f \dots, \quad \dots f \otimes d \dots$
 $\dots e \otimes d \dots, \quad \dots f \otimes e \dots, \quad \dots d \otimes f \dots$~~

- **Resemble** constraints from **causality**: **Steinmann relations**
Steinmann, Helv. Phys. Acta (1960)
- But **not really**, which mystified us for a while...
- However, the relations are **antipodally dual** to (extended) Steinmann relations for the 6-gluon amplitude!!

2. (multi-)final entries

- $\text{tr}\phi^2$ symbol only ends in d, e , or f (3 final entries)
- $\text{tr}\phi^2$ symbol only ends in a, b , or c ;
but also $\mathcal{E}_{3,3}^a + \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^b + \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^c = 0$ (2 final entries)
- At each loop order, we learn another layer of multi-final entry conditions, e.g. by 3 loops we know that:

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{d,a} = \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{e,b} = 0, \quad \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{f,b} = -\mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{f,a}, \quad \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{c,a} = -\mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{a,a} - \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{b,a} \\ \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{c,b} = -\mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{a,b} - \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{b,b}, \quad \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{d,b} = \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{e,a} - \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{f,a} + \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{a,b} - \mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{b,a}.\end{aligned}$$

3. Leading discontinuities

- Compact formula from FFOPE:

$$\mathcal{W}_{3,3}^L|_{T^1 \ln^L T} = \int du \frac{\pi}{\cos(\pi i u)} S^{2iu} \frac{1}{L!} [2(\psi(\frac{1}{2} + iu) + \psi(\frac{1}{2} - iu) - 2\psi(1))]^L$$

- Normally such formulas only hold in the collinear limit $v \rightarrow 0$, but this one actually holds in the bulk (generic u, v) for a suitable extrapolation.
- There is only a 2-letter symbol for this discontinuity, with letters $A \equiv u/v$ and $C \equiv (1 - w)/v$.
and it is possible to predict it recursively to all loop orders.

3. Leading discontinuity (cont.)

After converting the leading discontinuity from $\mathcal{W}_{3,3}^L$ to $\mathcal{R} \equiv \exp(R_{3,3})$ normalization, we find for the symbols of $\mathcal{R}^{(L)}$:

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{R}^{(0)} &= 1, \\ \mathcal{R}^{(1)} &= 0, \\ \mathcal{R}^{(2)} &= -AA, \\ c_L(XCA^k) &= 2L c_{L-1}(XA^k) - \xi_k \frac{L!}{(L-k-1)!} c_{L-k-1}(X),\end{aligned}\tag{1.9}$$

$$\mathcal{R}^{(3)} = -2CAA - 6ACA + 4A\tag{1.10}$$

$$\mathcal{R}^{(4)} = -16CCAA - 16CACA \cdot \xi_k = \sum_{m=0}^k \frac{(-2)^{m+1}}{(m+1)!} \frac{k!}{m!(k-m)!}\tag{1.11}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{R}^{(5)} &= -160CCCAA - 160CA \\ &\quad + 160CAACA + 320AC = (-1)^k {}_2F_1(-k, 2; 2) \\ &\quad - 190AACAA - 150AA = 0, -\frac{2}{3}, \frac{2}{3}, -\frac{2}{5}, \frac{4}{45}, \frac{10}{63}, -\frac{32}{105}, \frac{142}{405}, \dots\end{aligned}\tag{1.12}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{R}^{(6)} &= -1920CCCCAA - 1920CCACCA - 1920CCCACA - 1920CACCCA - 5760ACCCCA \\ &\quad + 1920CCCCAA + 1920CCACAA + 1920CCAACA + 1920CACCAA + 1920CACACA \\ &\quad + 1920CAACCA + 3840ACCCAA + 3840ACCACA + 3840ACACCA + 3840AA, CCCA \\ &\quad - 1224CCAAAA - 1224CACAAA - 1384CAACAA - 1224CAAACA - 1800ACCAAA \\ &\quad - 2280ACACAA - 1800ACAACA - 2280AACCBA - 2280AACACA - 1800AAACCA \\ &\quad + 608CAAAAA + 672ACAAAA + 912AACAAA + 992AAACAA + 672AAAACA \\ &\quad - 185AAAAAA.\end{aligned}\tag{1.13}$$

Solve a large system of linear equations

- At 8 loops, $1495 \times 403 = 602,485$ unknowns
- Solve mod p
- See Zhenjie's: <https://github.com/munuxi/SparseRREF>
- One 10 digit prime was enough to reconstruct over the rational numbers.
- Symbol level unknowns, $1251 \times 403 = 504,153$ of them, are all integers!

Higher loop $\text{tr}\phi^2$ and $\text{tr}\phi^3$ symbols are lengthy!

loop order L	$\text{tr}\phi^2$ symbol terms	$\text{tr}\phi^3$ symbol terms
1	6	9
2	12	105
3	636	1,773
4	11,208	44,391
5	263,880	747,837
6	4,916,466	14,637,501
7	92,954,568	????
8	1,671,656,292	????

LD, Gürdoğan, McLeod, Wilhelm, 2204.11901;
Basso, LD, Tumanov, 2410.22402; LD, Z. Li, to appear

$\text{tr}\phi^2$: number of (symbol-level) linearly independent $\{n, 1, \dots, 1\}$ coproducts ($2L - n$ derivatives)

weight n	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
$L = 1$	1	3	1														
$L = 2$	1	3	6	3	1												
$L = 3$	1	3	9	12	6	3	1										
$L = 4$	1	3	9	21	24	12	6	3	1								
$L = 5$	1	3	9	21	46	45	24	12	6	3	1						
$L = 6$	1	3	9	21	48	99	85	45	24	12	6	3	1				
$L = 7$	1	3	9	21	48	108	236	155	85	45	24	12	6	3	1		
$L = 8$	1	3	9	21	48	108	242	466	279	155	85	45	24	12	6	3	1

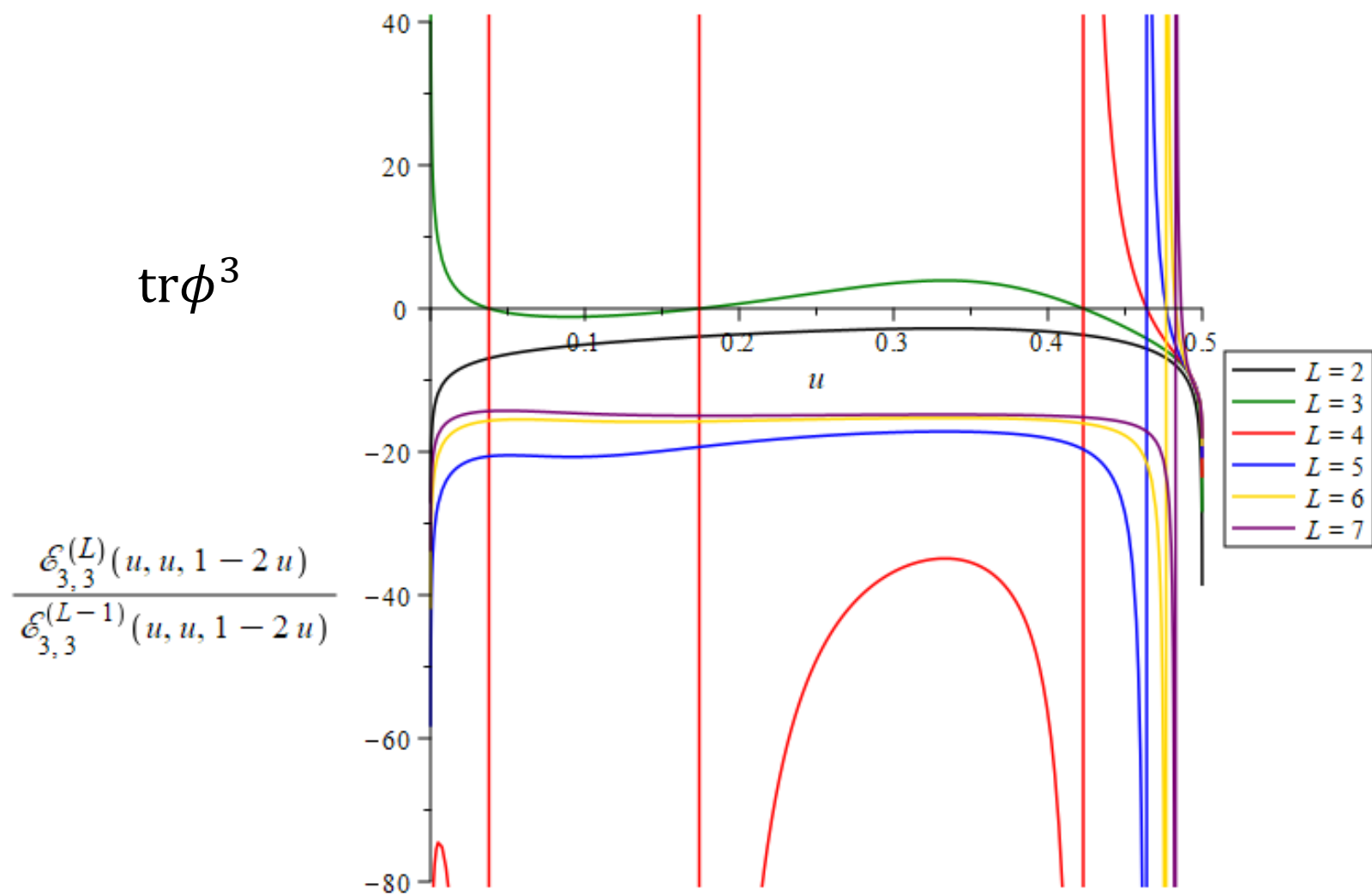
- Properly normalized L loop $\text{tr}\phi^2$ form factors $F_3^{(L)}$ belong to a small space $\mathcal{C}$, dimension saturates on left
- $F_3^{(L)}$ also obeys multiple-final-entry relations, saturation on right

$\text{tr}\phi^3$: number of (symbol-level) linearly independent $\{n, 1, \dots, 1\}$ coproducts ($2L - n$ derivatives)

weight n	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
$L = 1$	1	2	1														
$L = 2$	1	3	3	2	1												
$L = 3$	1	3	9	13	6	2	1										
$L = 4$	1	3	9	21	29	13	6	2	1								
$L = 5$	1	3	9	21	48	57	29	13	6	2	1						
$L = 6$	1	3	9	21	48	105	112	57	29	13	6	2	1				
$L = 7$	1	3	9	21	48	108	242	206	112	57	29	13	6	2	1		
$L = 8$	1	3	9	21	48	108	242	519	375	206	112	57	29	13	6	2	1

- Properly normalized L loop $\text{tr}\phi^3$ form factors $F_{3,3}^{(L)}$ belong to **same small space** $\mathcal{C}$, dimension
- $F_{3,3}^{(L)}$ obeys **different** multiple-final-entry relations, saturation on right

Successive loop ratios reveal finite radius of convergence



High energy at fixed angles

- $u, v \rightarrow \infty$, with $r = u/v$ held fixed

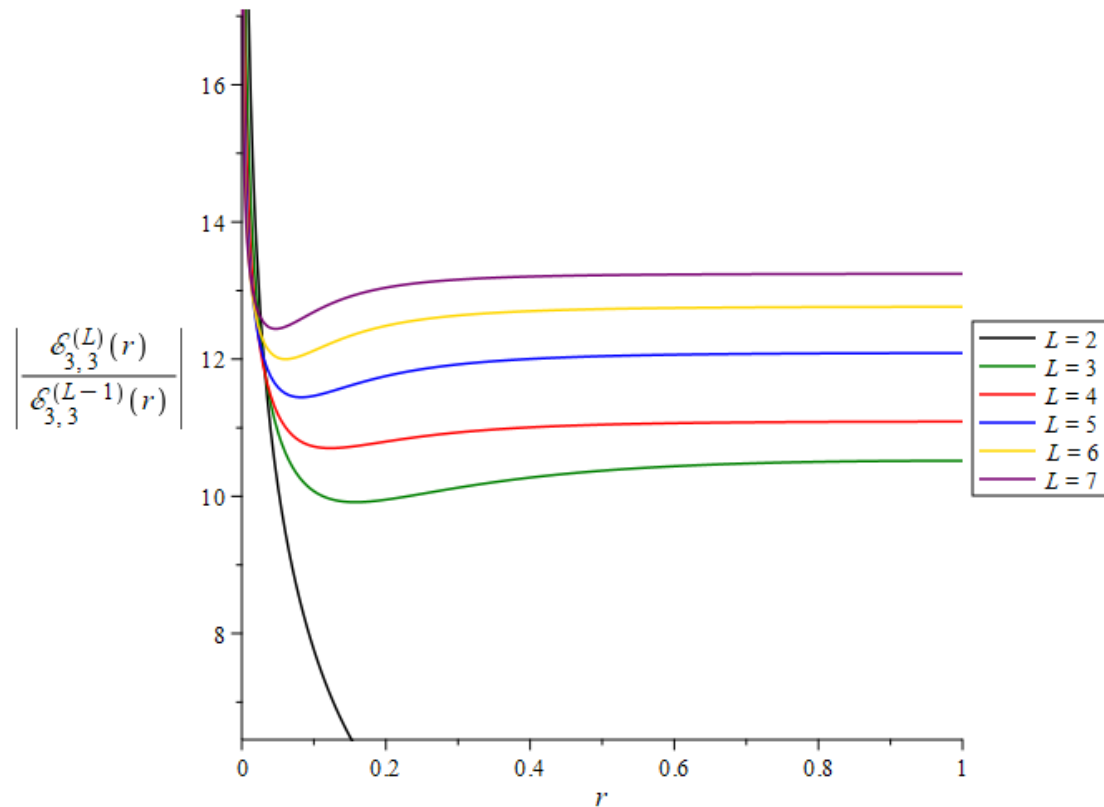
- $\text{tr}\phi^2$ form factor

$\mathcal{E}_3 \rightarrow \text{constant}$

(indep. of r)

- $\text{tr}\phi^3$ form factor

$\mathcal{E}_{3,3}$ is nontrivial $\rightarrow$



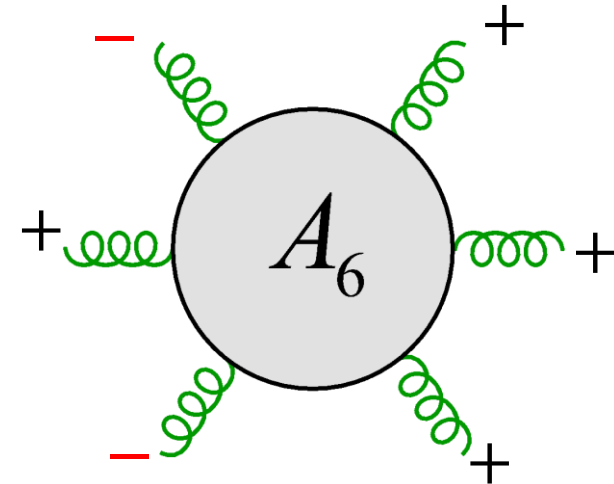
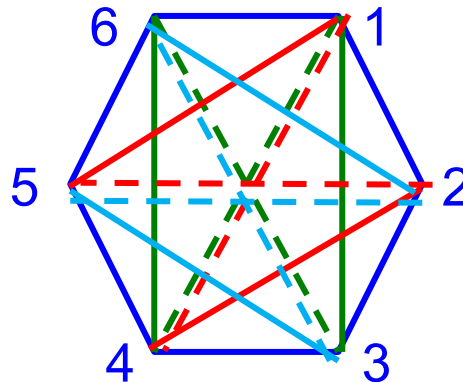
Six-gluon MHV amplitude

- Dual to Wilson hexagon,
invariant under **dual conformal transformations**; it only depends on **3 dual conformal cross ratios**, $\hat{u}, \hat{v}, \hat{w}$:

$$\hat{u} = \frac{x_{13}^2 x_{46}^2}{x_{14}^2 x_{36}^2} = \frac{s_{12} s_{45}}{s_{123} s_{345}}$$

$$\hat{v} = \frac{s_{23} s_{56}}{s_{234} s_{123}}$$

$$\hat{w} = \frac{s_{34} s_{61}}{s_{345} s_{234}}$$



D_6 dihedral symmetry:
cycle (mod 6) and flip,
but it acts on $\hat{u}, \hat{v}, \hat{w}$
as $D_3 = S_3$

Parity-preserving surface:
(lower-dimensional kinematics)

$$\Delta \equiv (1 - \hat{u} - \hat{v} - \hat{w})^2 - 4\hat{u}\hat{v}\hat{w} = 0$$

Antipodal duality (AD) for $\text{tr}\phi^2$

LD, Ö. Gürdoğan, A. McLeod, M. Wilhelm, 2112.06243

$$F_3^{(L)}(u, v, w) = S \left(A_6^{(L)}(\hat{u}, \hat{v}, \hat{w}) \right)$$

- **Antipode map** S , is a “coinverse” for the Hopf algebra.
- At symbol level, it simply **reverses order of all letters**:

$$S(x_1 \otimes x_2 \otimes \cdots \otimes x_m) = (-1)^m x_m \otimes \cdots \otimes x_2 \otimes x_1$$

- **Kinematic map** in terms of **underlying variables** is:

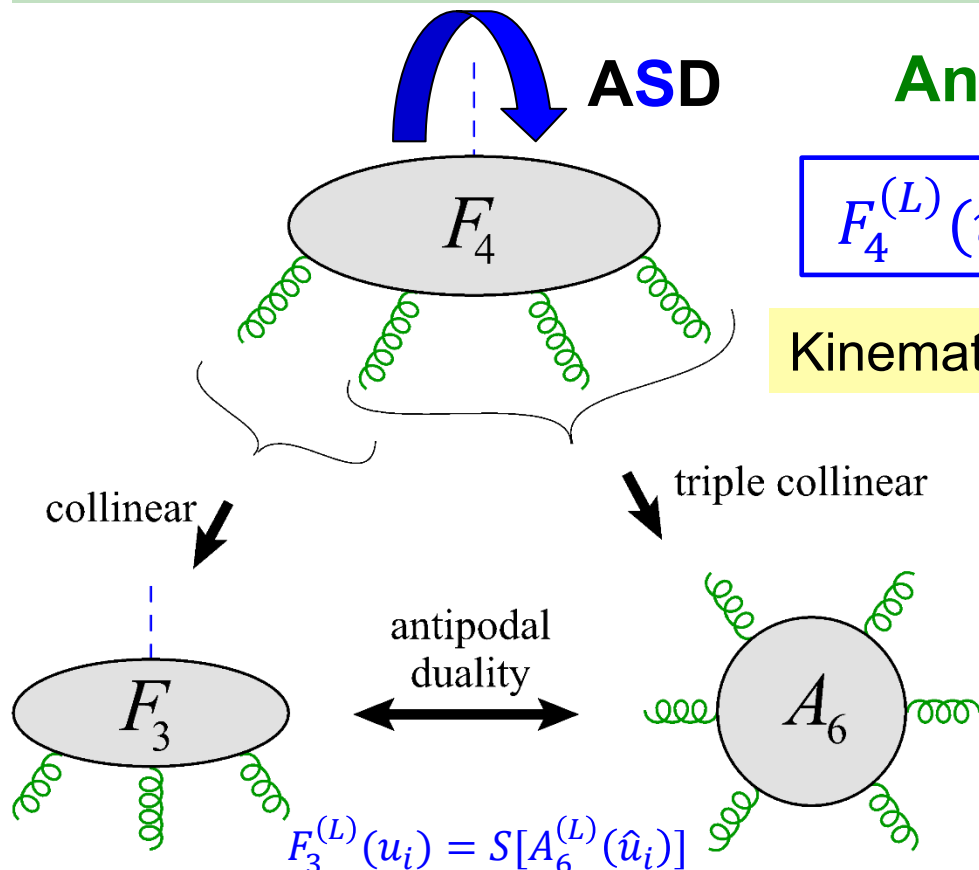
$$\hat{u} = \frac{vw}{(1-v)(1-w)}, \quad \hat{v} = \frac{wu}{(1-w)(1-u)}, \quad \hat{w} = \frac{uv}{(1-u)(1-v)}$$

Maps $u + v + w = 1$ to $\Delta = 0$ parity-preserving surface for A_6

- Role of **branch cuts** and **derivatives** exchanged by S

Antipodal Self Duality

Given antipodal duality relating 2-collinear and 3-collinear limits of F_4 , natural to search for self-duality of F_4 that holds for all parity-preserving bulk kinematics



And it's there!

$$F_4^{(L)}(u_i, v_i) = S[F_4^{(L)}(\mathbf{C}(u_i), \mathbf{C}(v_i))]$$

Kinematic map $\mathbf{C}$ simple in FFOPE variables:

$$\mathbf{C}: \quad T_2 \rightarrow \frac{T}{S}, \quad S_2 \rightarrow \frac{1}{TS}$$

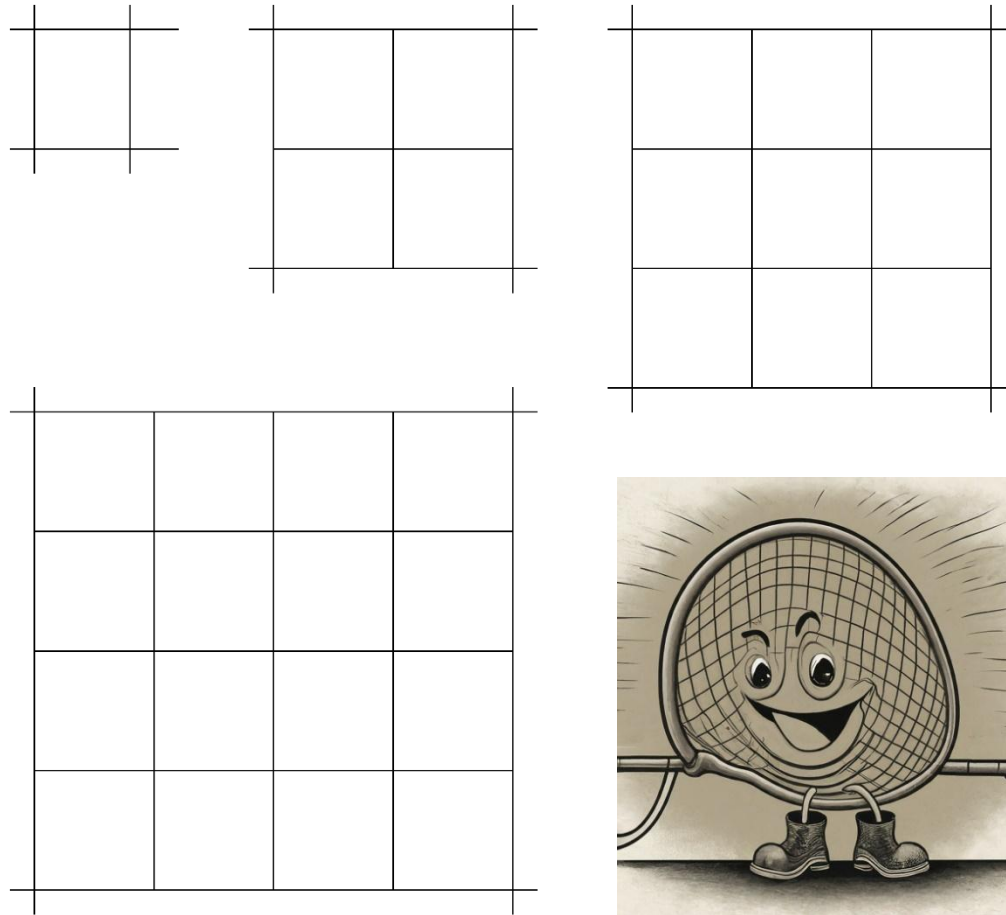
$$T \rightarrow \sqrt{\frac{T_2}{S_2}}, \quad S \rightarrow \sqrt{\frac{1}{T_2 S_2}}$$

$$F_2 = 1$$

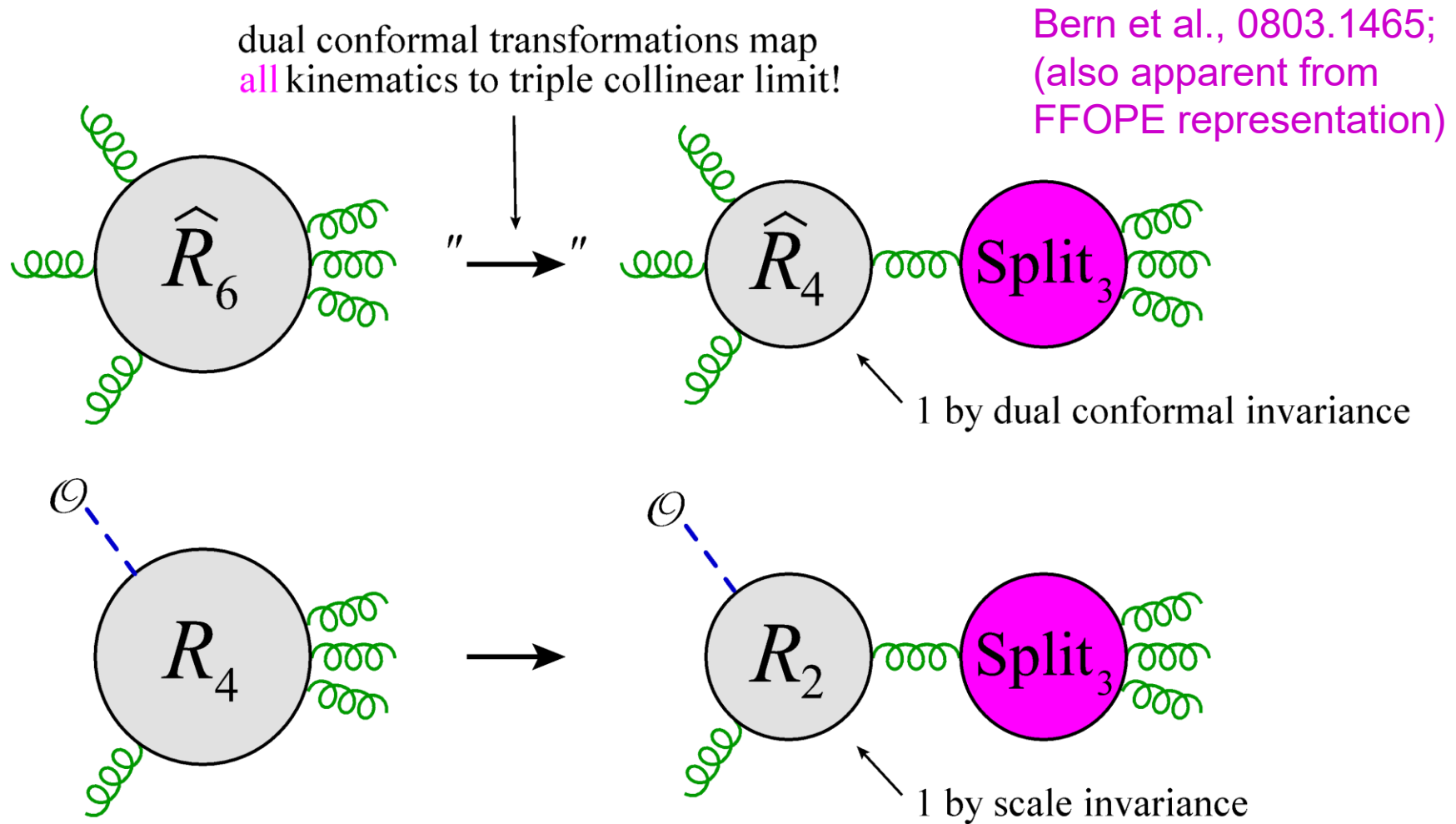
Main Open Question

- Why does $\text{tr}\phi^3$ 3-point form factor live in same space as the $\text{tr}\phi^2$ one?
- This space has powerful adjacency conditions whose only explanation is via antipodal duality.
- But the 2 final entries for $\text{tr}\phi^3$, $\mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{a/b}$ and $\mathcal{E}_{3,3}^{b/c}$, are very different from the 3 final entries for $\text{tr}\phi^2$, $\mathcal{E}_3^d$, $\mathcal{E}_3^e$, and $\mathcal{E}_3^f$, and so they map to the “wrong” first entries for the hexagon functions (A_6 amplitude). ???

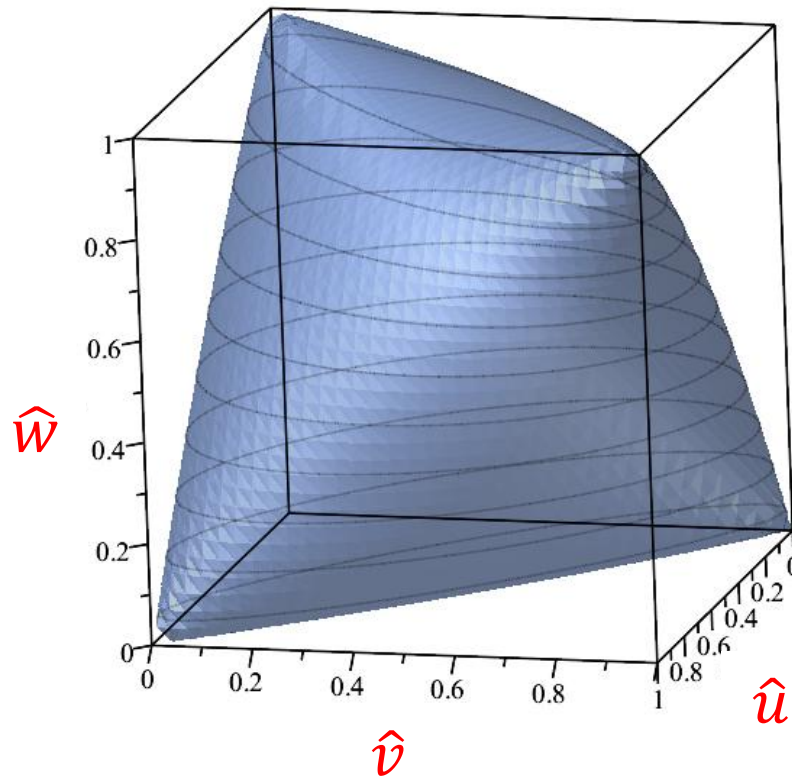
Extra Slides



Triple Collinear Limit of 4-point form factor → 6-gluon amplitude



Parity-preserving surface



$$\Delta \equiv (1 - \hat{u} - \hat{v} - \hat{w})^2 - 4\hat{u}\hat{v}\hat{w} = 0$$

$\Delta = 0$ means that kinematics lies in a
3d subspace of 4d spacetime $\rightarrow$ parity invariant

FFOPE kinematical variables for F_4

$$u_i = \frac{S_{i,i+1}}{S_{1234}}, \quad v_i = \frac{S_{i,i+1,i+2}}{S_{1234}}$$

$$-u_1 + u_3 + v_4 + v_1 = 1$$

$$-u_2 + u_4 + v_1 + v_2 = 1$$

$$-u_3 + u_1 + v_2 + v_3 = 1$$

$$u_1 = \frac{T^2 T_2^2}{(T^2 + 1)(S^2 + T^2 + T_2^2 + 1)}$$

$$u_2 = \left\{ 1 + T^2 + \frac{S^2 [(1 + F_2^2) S_2 T_2 + F_2 (1 + S_2^2 + T^2 + T_2^2)]}{F_2 S_2^2} \right\}^{-1}$$

$$u_3 = \frac{S^2}{(T^2 + 1)(S^2 + T^2 + T_2^2 + 1)}$$

$$u_4 = \frac{S^2 T^2}{S_2^2} u_2$$

$$v_1 = \frac{T_2^2 + 1}{S^2 + T^2 + T_2^2 + 1}$$

- OPE limit takes $T, T_2 \rightarrow 0$, **interpolates** between **2-collinear limit** $T_2 \rightarrow 0$ and **3-collinear limit** $T \rightarrow 0$

ASD beyond 2 loops

LD, Ö. Gürdoğan, Y.-T. Liu, A. McLeod, M. Wilhelm, 2212.02410v2;
LD, Z. Li, to appear

- Bootstrapped symbol of F_4 at **3 loops**, using same 113 letter (2-loop) alphabet.
- **Unique result**, which obeys all the FFOPE predictions we could check.
- 2 loop symbol uses only 34 of the letters [3,784 terms]
- 3 loop symbol uses only 88 of the letters [3,621,202 terms]
- 4 loop symbol uses only 88 of the letters [???? terms]
- No OPE checks yet at 4 loops, but few constraints needed to fix it.
- **ASD holds in 3D at 4 loops!**