

Geometric Lagrangians
for
*massive higher-spin fields**

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*D. F. - *in preparation*

Introduction I: geometry for higher-spin fields?

Central object in Maxwell, Yang-Mills (spin 1) and Einstein (spin 2) theories

is

$$\text{the curvature : } \begin{cases} A_\mu \rightarrow F_{\mu\nu}, \\ h_{\mu\nu} \rightarrow \mathcal{R}_{\mu\nu,\rho\sigma}. \end{cases}$$

It gives us both *dynamical informations* and *geometrical meaning*.

Is it possible to find any similar description for higher-spins?

Introduction II: massive fields - the Fierz system

Free propagation of *massive irreps* of the Poincaré group can be described by

spin- s , massive boson \rightarrow symmetric rank- s tensor $\varphi_{\mu_1 \dots \mu_s}$
 spin- $(s + 1/2)$, massive fermion \rightarrow symmetric rank- s spinor-tensor $\psi_{\mu_1 \dots \mu_s}^a$

satisfying the conditions [*Fierz, 1939*]:

$$(\square - m^2) \varphi_{\mu_1 \dots \mu_s} = 0,$$

$$\partial^\alpha \varphi_{\alpha \mu_2 \dots \mu_s} = 0,$$

$$\varphi^\alpha_{\alpha \mu_3 \dots \mu_s} = 0,$$

$$(i \gamma^\alpha \partial_\alpha - m) \psi_{\mu_1 \dots \mu_s}^a = 0,$$

$$\partial^\alpha \psi_{\alpha \mu_2 \dots \mu_s}^a = 0,$$

$$\gamma^\alpha \psi_{\alpha \mu_2 \dots \mu_s}^a = 0.$$

At the Lagrangian level the problem is

$$\rightarrow \text{how to implement the conditions } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \partial^\alpha \varphi_{\alpha \mu_2 \dots \mu_s} = 0 \\ \varphi^\alpha_{\alpha \mu_3 \dots \mu_s} = 0 \\ \partial^\alpha \psi_{\alpha \mu_2 \dots \mu_s}^a = 0 \\ \gamma^\alpha \psi_{\alpha \mu_2 \dots \mu_s}^a = 0 \end{array} \right. \quad ?$$

Typically, known solutions

\rightarrow involve *auxiliary fields*,

\rightarrow are *not simple deformations* of the massless theory.

Introduction III: the examples of spin 1 and spin 2

Spin 1 and spin 2: massive theory as

quadratic deformation of the geometric theory:

➔ Spin 1 [*Proca*]

$$\mathcal{L}(m = 0) = -\frac{1}{4}F_{\mu\nu}F^{\mu\nu}$$

$$\mathcal{L}(m) = -\frac{1}{4}F_{\mu\nu}F^{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2}m^2 A_\mu A^\mu,$$

$$\partial_\nu F^{\mu\nu} - m^2 A^\mu = 0,$$

$$\partial_\mu \partial_\nu F^{\mu\nu} \equiv 0 \rightarrow \partial_\mu A^\mu = 0$$

➔ Spin 2 [*Fierz-Pauli*]

$$\mathcal{L}(m = 0) = \frac{1}{2}h_{\mu\nu} (\mathcal{R}^{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2}\eta^{\mu\nu} \mathcal{R})$$

$$\mathcal{L}(m) = \frac{1}{2}h_{\mu\nu} \left\{ (\mathcal{R}^{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2}\eta^{\mu\nu} \mathcal{R}) - m^2 \underbrace{(h^{\mu\nu} - \eta^{\mu\nu} h^\alpha_\alpha)}_{\text{Fierz-Pauli mass term}} \right\}$$

$$\partial_\mu (\mathcal{R}^{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2}\eta^{\mu\nu} \mathcal{R}) \equiv 0 \rightarrow \partial_\mu (h^{\mu\nu} - \partial^\nu h^\alpha_\alpha) = 0$$

$$\partial_\mu h^{\mu\nu} - \partial^\nu h^\alpha_\alpha = 0$$

Fierz-Pauli constraint

Introduction IV: difficulties of the Fronsdal's theory

“Canonical” description of higher-spin gauge fields encoded in the
Fronsdal's equation (1978):

$$\mathcal{F} \equiv \square\varphi - \partial\partial\cdot\varphi + \partial^2\varphi' = 0$$

- ↻ gauge invariant under $\delta\varphi = \partial\Lambda$ *iff* $\Lambda' (\equiv \Lambda^\alpha{}_\alpha) \equiv 0$;
- ↻ Lagrangian description *iff* $\varphi'' (\equiv \varphi^{\alpha\beta}{}_{\alpha\beta}) \equiv 0$.

Gauge invariance with a *traceless* parameter

⇒

the “Einstein tensor” does not need to be (and *is not*) divergenceless

$$\partial\cdot\left\{\mathcal{F} - \frac{1}{2}\eta\mathcal{F}'\right\} = \frac{1}{2}\eta\mathcal{F}',$$

not possible to extend the results of spin 1 and spin 2

[Aragone-Deser-Yang 1987]

Introduction V: what do we need to generalise the spin 1 and spin 2 cases?

To try and reproduce the “geometric construction” we need the following:

- Candidate tensors to play the role of *higher-spin curvatures*.
- Candidate *Ricci tensors* and *Dirac tensors*, to define the free equations of motion. These have to be consistent with the known result for the non-geometric, constrained theory of Fronsdal.
- *Bianchi identities* to be satisfied by the generalised Ricci tensors.
- Suitable *mass deformations*, such that the on-shell consequence of the Bianchi identity imply that the system reduces to the Fierz form.

Plan

I. Higher-spin curvatures

II. Geometric massive theory I: bosons $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \rightarrow \text{"Ricci" tensors,} \\ \rightarrow \text{Bianchi identities,} \\ \rightarrow \text{mass deformations.} \end{array} \right.$

III. Geometric massive theory II: fermions $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \rightarrow \text{the example of spin } 3/2, \\ \rightarrow \text{mass deformations.} \end{array} \right.$

IV. Propagators and uniqueness

I. Higher-spin curvatures



Higher-spin curvatures

Following de Wit and Freedman (1980), introduce higher-spin curvatures:

∞ Spin 1 [Maxwell]: $F_{\mu\nu} = \partial_\mu A_\nu - \partial_\nu A_\mu$ s. t. $\delta F_{\mu\nu} = 0$ under $\delta A_\mu = \partial_\mu \Lambda$;

$$\partial \cdot F^\mu = 0$$

(but also $s = 3/2$)

∞ Spin 2 [Einstein]: $\mathcal{R}^\alpha_{\beta\mu\nu} = \partial_\nu \Gamma^\alpha_{\beta\mu} - \partial_\mu \Gamma^\alpha_{\beta\nu}$ s. t. $\delta \mathcal{R}^\alpha_{\beta\mu\nu} = 0$ under $\delta h_{\mu\nu} = \partial_\mu \Lambda_\nu + \partial_\nu \Lambda_\mu$;

$$\mathcal{R}^\alpha_{\beta\alpha\nu} \equiv \mathcal{R}_{\mu\nu} = 0$$

(but also $s = 5/2$)

∞ Spin 3 [de Wit - Freedman]: $\delta \varphi_{\alpha\beta\gamma} = \partial_\alpha \Lambda_{\beta\gamma} + \partial_\beta \Lambda_{\alpha\gamma} + \partial_\gamma \Lambda_{\beta\alpha}$

$$\Gamma_{\rho,\alpha\beta\gamma}^{(1)} = \partial_\rho \varphi_{\alpha\beta\gamma} - (\partial_\alpha \varphi_{\rho\beta\gamma} + \partial_\beta \varphi_{\rho\alpha\gamma} + \partial_\gamma \varphi_{\alpha\beta\rho}) ,$$

$$\Gamma_{\rho\sigma,\alpha\beta\gamma}^{(2)} = \partial_\rho \Gamma_{\sigma,\alpha\beta\gamma}^{(1)} - \frac{1}{2} (\partial_\alpha \Gamma_{\sigma,\rho\beta\gamma}^{(1)} + \dots) ,$$

$$\Gamma_{\rho\sigma\tau,\alpha\beta\gamma}^{(3)} = \partial_\rho \Gamma_{\sigma\tau,\alpha\beta\gamma}^{(2)} - \frac{1}{3} (\partial_\alpha \Gamma_{\sigma\tau,\rho\beta\gamma}^{(2)} + \dots) , \text{ s. t. } \delta \Gamma_{\rho\sigma\tau,\alpha\beta\gamma}^{(3)} = 0 .$$

(but also $s = 7/2$)

~

Curvature

≡ gauge-invariant top of this hierarchy of connexions:

$$\Gamma_{\rho\sigma\tau,\alpha\beta\gamma}^{(3)} \equiv \mathcal{R}_{\rho\sigma\tau,\alpha\beta\gamma}^{(3)} \Rightarrow \text{EoM?}$$

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II. Geometric massive theory I: bosons



Candidate Ricci tensors ($s = 3$)

- Spin-3 curvature: saturate three indices to restore the symmetries of $\varphi_{\mu_1\mu_2\mu_3}$:

$$\mathcal{R}_{\rho_1\rho_2\rho_3, \mu_1\mu_2\mu_3} \rightarrow \partial \cdot \mathcal{R}',$$

- restore dimensions of a relativistic wave operator, introducing *non-localities*:

$$\partial \cdot \mathcal{R}' \rightarrow \frac{1}{\square} \partial \cdot \mathcal{R}',$$

so defining the *simplest* candidate Ricci tensor. [D.F. - A. Sagnotti, 2002]

- This possibility is *highly non-unique* \rightarrow infinitely many -more singular- ones:

$$\frac{1}{\square} \partial \cdot \mathcal{R}' \rightarrow \mathcal{A}_\varphi(a) \equiv \frac{1}{\square} \partial \cdot \mathcal{R}' + a \frac{\partial^2}{\square^2} \partial \cdot \mathcal{R}'',$$

\Rightarrow

$$\boxed{\mathcal{A}_\varphi(a) = 0}$$

➤➤ *Meaning?*

➤➤ *Lagrangian origin (i.e. Bianchi identity)?*

Geometric Lagrangians for massless bosons

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Spin s : the most general candidate “Ricci” tensor

$$\mathcal{A}_\varphi(a_1, \dots, a_k, \dots)$$

is such that, *for almost all choices* of a_1, \dots, a_k, \dots :

➔ (**CONSISTENCY**) the equation $\mathcal{A}_\varphi = 0$ implies the *compensator equation*

$$\mathcal{F} - 3\partial^3 \alpha_\varphi = 0,$$

with $\delta \alpha_\varphi = \Lambda'$ ➔ Fronsdal form, after partial gauge-fixing.

➔ (**LAGRANGIAN**) it is possible to define an *identically divergenceless Einstein tensor* \mathcal{E}_φ s.t.

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2} \varphi \mathcal{E}_\varphi \quad \Rightarrow \quad \mathcal{E}_\varphi = 0 \quad \Rightarrow \quad \mathcal{A}_\varphi = 0,$$

Mass deformation for bosons I

∞ Spin 2:

$$\mathcal{R}_{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2} \eta_{\mu\nu} \mathcal{R} - m^2 (h_{\mu\nu} - \eta_{\mu\nu} h') = 0.$$

⇒

$$\underbrace{M_h = h_{\mu\nu} - \eta_{\mu\nu} h'}_{\text{Fierz-Pauli mass term}},$$

↔

$$\underbrace{\partial \cdot h_\mu - \partial_\mu h'}_{\text{Fierz-Pauli constraint}} = 0,$$

∞ Spin s : General idea: *higher traces* should appear in the mass term:

$$\mathcal{E}_\varphi(a_1, \dots, a_k, \dots) - m^2 M_\varphi = 0$$

⇒

$$\underbrace{M_\varphi = \sum \lambda_k \eta^k \varphi^{[k]}}_{\text{generalised FP mass term}},$$

↔

$$\underbrace{\partial \cdot \varphi - \partial \varphi'}_{\text{FP constraint}} = 0,$$

How ?

Mass deformation for bosons II: spin 4

$$\mu_\varphi \equiv \partial \cdot \varphi - \partial \varphi'$$

➔ We look for λ_1, λ_2 s.t.

$$\partial \cdot M_\varphi = \partial \cdot \{\varphi + \lambda_1 \eta \varphi' + \lambda_2 \eta^2 \varphi''\} = \mu_\varphi + k \eta \mu'_\varphi;$$

in this way

$$\partial \cdot \{\mathcal{E}_\varphi(\{a_1, a_2\}) - m^2 M_\varphi(\lambda_1, \lambda_2)\} = 0 \rightarrow$$

$$\mu_\varphi + k \eta \mu'_\varphi = 0 \rightarrow$$

$$\mu'_\varphi = 0 \rightarrow$$

$$\mu_\varphi = 0$$

➔ The condition $\mu_\varphi = 0$ implies in turn $\mathcal{A}'_\varphi(\{a_1, a_2\}) = 0 \quad \forall \{a_1, a_2\}$

➔ From the resulting equation ($\lambda_1 = -1, \lambda_2 = -1$)

$$\mathcal{A}_\varphi(\{a_1, a_2\}) - m^2 (\varphi - \eta \varphi' - \varphi'') = 0 \rightarrow$$

$$\varphi'' = 0 \rightarrow \varphi' = 0 \rightarrow$$

$$\mathcal{A}_\varphi(\{a_1, a_2\}) = \square \varphi$$

$$\forall \{a_1, a_2\}$$

the last condition needed to put the system in the Fierz form.

Mass deformation for bosons III

→ The general solution is

$$\mathcal{L}(m) = \frac{1}{2} \varphi \{ \mathcal{E}_\varphi(\{a_1, \dots, a_k \dots\}) - m^2 M_\varphi \},$$

where, for $s = 2n$ or $s = 2n + 1$

$$M_\varphi = \varphi - \eta \varphi' - \eta^2 \varphi'' - \frac{1}{3} \eta^3 \varphi''' - \dots - \frac{1}{(2n-3)!!} \eta^n \varphi^{[n]} .$$

→ The structure of the mass term is to be understood such that

$$\partial \cdot M_\varphi = \mu_\varphi + k_1 \eta \mu'_\varphi + \dots + k_m \eta^{[m]} \mu_\varphi^{[m]} + \dots ,$$

so that $\partial \cdot M_\varphi = 0$ implies the basic, *Fierz-Pauli constraint*

$$\mu_\varphi = \partial \cdot \varphi - \partial \varphi' = 0 ,$$

together with all its *consistency conditions*: $\mu_\varphi^{[m]} = 0 \quad \forall m$.

→ *The massive theory is not unique:*

- The Fierz-Pauli constraint implies $\mathcal{A}'_\varphi(\{a_k\}) = 0, \quad \forall(\{a_k\})$
- Under this condition *all traces of φ can be shown to vanish on-shell*
- this implies in turn $\mathcal{A}_\varphi(\{a_k\}) = \square \varphi, \quad \forall(\{a_k\})$, and then *any* Lagrangian equation can be reduced to the Fierz system.

III. Geometric massive theory II: fermions



The example of spin 3/2

Spin-3/2 massive theory as

quadratic deformation of the geometric, Rarita-Schwinger theory:

➔ Spin 3/2

$$\mathcal{L}(m=0) = \frac{1}{2} \bar{\psi}_\mu (\mathcal{R}^\mu - \frac{1}{2} \gamma^\mu \mathcal{R}) + h.c.$$

$$\mathcal{L}(m) = \frac{1}{2} \bar{\psi}_\mu \left\{ (\mathcal{R}^\mu - \frac{1}{2} \gamma^\mu \mathcal{R}) - m (\psi^\mu - \gamma^\mu \psi) \right\} + h.c.$$

$$\partial_\mu (\mathcal{R}^\mu - \frac{1}{2} \gamma^\mu \mathcal{R}) \equiv 0 \rightarrow \partial_\mu (\psi^\mu - \gamma^\mu \psi) = 0$$

$$\partial_\mu \psi^\mu - \not{\partial} \psi = 0$$

(fermionic) Fierz-Pauli constraint

Mass deformation for fermions

In the general case the fermionic analogue of the Fierz-Pauli constraint is

$$\mu_\psi \equiv \partial \cdot \psi - \not{\partial} \psi - \partial \psi' = 0$$

⇒ *Spin 5/2*: We look for a mass term M_ψ s. t.

$$\mathcal{E}_\psi - m \underbrace{(\psi - \lambda_1 \gamma \psi - \lambda_2 \eta \psi')}_{M_\psi} = 0, \quad \Rightarrow \quad \partial \cdot M_\psi = \mu_\psi + \rho_1 \gamma \mu_\psi = 0.$$

The *unique* solution is

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2} \bar{\psi} \{ \mathcal{E}_\psi - m (\psi - \gamma \psi - \eta \psi') \} + h.c..$$

⇒ *Spin $s + 1/2$* : The same procedure leads to the general solution

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2} \bar{\psi} \left\{ \mathcal{E}_\psi - m \left(\psi - \sum_{j=0}^s \frac{1}{(2j-1)!!} \gamma \eta^j \psi^{[j]} - \sum_{i=1}^s \frac{1}{(2i-3)!!} \eta^i \psi^{[i]} \right) \right\} + h.c.$$

⇒ The generalised Fierz-pauli constraint implies the Fierz system *for all* geometric Einstein tensors (including those with more singular terms)
 ⇒ issue of uniqueness (already at the simplest level).

IV. Propagators & uniqueness



Massless propagators

Are all those solutions really equivalent?

➔ *Propagator* from Lagrangian equation with an external current:

$$\mathcal{E}_\varphi(a_1, \dots, a_k \dots) = \mathcal{J} \quad \Rightarrow \quad \varphi = \mathcal{G} \cdot \mathcal{J}$$

➔ *Current exchange* $\mathcal{J} \cdot \varphi = \mathcal{J} \cdot \mathcal{G} \cdot \mathcal{J} \rightarrow$ consistency conditions on the polarisations flowing:

almost all geometric theories give the wrong result, but one.

The correct theory has a simple structure:

➔ The kinetic tensor has the compensator form $\mathcal{A}_\varphi = \mathcal{F} - 3\partial^3 \gamma(\varphi)$;

➔ It satisfies the identities : $\begin{cases} \partial \cdot \mathcal{A}_\varphi - \frac{1}{2} \partial \mathcal{A}'_\varphi \equiv 0 \\ \mathcal{A}''_\varphi \equiv 0 \end{cases}$, and the Lagrangian is*

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2} \varphi (\mathcal{A}_\varphi - \frac{1}{2} \eta \mathcal{A}'_\varphi + \eta^2 \mathcal{B}_\varphi) - \varphi \cdot \mathcal{J}$$

*[D.F. - J. Mourad - A. Sagnotti, 2007]

Massive propagators - spin 4

• Consider the Lagrangian

$$\mathcal{L}(m) = \frac{1}{2} \varphi \{ \mathcal{E}_\varphi(a_1, a_2) - m^2 M_\varphi \} - \varphi \cdot \mathcal{J},$$

where \mathcal{J} is a *conserved* current. The on-shell condition $\mathcal{A}'_\varphi(a_1, a_2) = 0$ reduces the equation of motion to

$$\mathcal{A}_\varphi(a_1, a_2) - m^2 (\varphi - \eta \varphi' - \varphi'') = \mathcal{J}.$$

where

$$\mathcal{A}_\varphi(a_1, a_2) \stackrel{\text{o.s.}}{=} \square \varphi - \frac{\partial^2}{\square} \varphi' - 3 \frac{\partial^4}{\square^2} \varphi'' = 0.$$

\Rightarrow

The whole structure of the propagator is encoded in the coefficients of M_φ

• Inverting the equation of motion

$$\mathcal{J} \cdot \varphi = \frac{1}{p^2 - m^2} \left\{ \mathcal{J} \cdot \mathcal{J} - \frac{6}{D+3} J' \cdot J' + \frac{3}{(D+1)(D+3)} J'' \cdot J'' \right\}$$

while the corresponding computation for the massless case gives

$$\mathcal{J} \cdot \varphi = \frac{1}{p^2} \left\{ \mathcal{J} \cdot \mathcal{J} - \frac{6}{D+2} J' \cdot J' + \frac{3}{D(D+2)} J'' \cdot J'' \right\}$$

thus showing the (generalised) *vDVZ discontinuity* for higher-spin fields.

“KK reduction” and uniqueness

- How to understand the origin of the Fierz-Pauli mass-term, for $s = 2$?

KK reduction ($\square \rightarrow \square - m^2$):

$$\mathcal{R}_{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2}\eta_{\mu\nu}\mathcal{R} \sim \square(h - \eta h') + \dots,$$

- How to perform a KK reduction of a *non local* theory?

Maybe not clear ($\frac{1}{\square} \rightarrow \frac{1}{\square - m^2}$), but still it is unambiguously defined the “pure massive” contribution of the resulting reduction:

$$\mathcal{E}_\varphi = \square(\varphi + k_1\eta\varphi' + k_2\eta^2\varphi'' + \dots) + \dots,$$

- Is it possible to find a geometric theory whose “box” term encodes the coefficients of the generalised FP mass term?

↔ up to spin 4 (at least) *it is the one selected by the analysis of the current exchange.*

- Why the mass term works well with *all* geometric tensors?

Not too strange, also true for spin 2: the non-local theory defined by the eom

$$\mathcal{R}_{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2}\eta_{\mu\nu}\mathcal{R} + \lambda\left(\eta - \frac{\partial^2}{\square}\right)\mathcal{R} - m^2(h - \eta h'),$$

reduces to the Fierz system, and gives the correct current exchange!

Comments & Conclusions

- Foregoing locality, *linear dynamics of higher-spin gauge fields in geometric fashion*; infinitely many formulations are indeed available, at the free level.
- relationship with a parallel, *local*, unconstrained formulation*, or analysis of the propagator, shows that there is *one preferred geometric theory*.

* [*D.F. - A. Sagnotti, '05, '06*]

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- Generalisation of the Fierz-Pauli mass term, for bosons and fermions, involving *all (γ -)traces* of the field.
- Description of massive theory, for spin greater than two, that *does not involve auxiliary fields* (and no dimension-dependent coefficients).
- *Issue of uniqueness:* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Mass term} \quad \rightarrow \text{unique} \\ \text{Massive theory} \quad \rightarrow \text{degenerate} \\ \text{"memory" of the correct theory, by } \text{KK analysis} \text{ ?} \end{array} \right.$
- The van Dam - Veltman - Zakharov discontinuity is shown to be present for any spin.