

Title: Why the quantum? Insights from classical theories with a statistical restriction

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Abstract: It is common to assert that the discovery of quantum theory overthrew our classical conception of nature. But what, precisely, was overthrown? Providing a rigorous answer to this question is of practical concern, as it helps to identify quantum technologies that outperform their classical counterparts, and of significance for modern physics, where progress may be slowed by poor physical intuitions and where the ability to apply quantum theory in a new realm or to move beyond quantum theory necessitates a deep understanding of the principles upon which it is based. In this talk, I demonstrate that a large part of quantum theory can be obtained from a single innovation relative to classical theories, namely, that there is a fundamental restriction on the sorts of statistical distributions over classical states that can be prepared. This restriction implies a fundamental limit on the amount of knowledge that any observer can have about the classical state. I will also discuss the quantum phenomena that are not captured by this principle, and I will end with a few speculations on what conceptual innovations might underlie the latter set and what might be the origin of the statistical restriction.

# Why the Quantum?

## Insights from Classical Theories with a Statistical Restriction



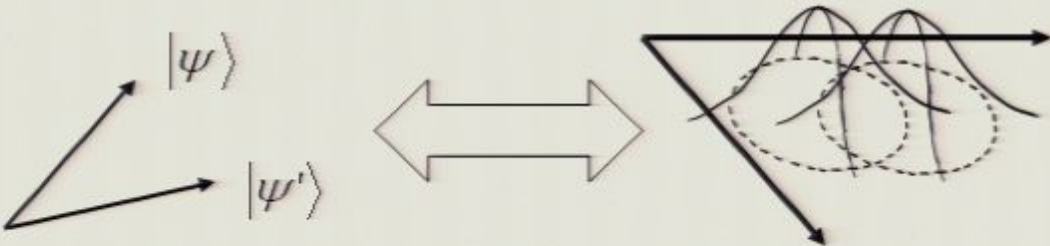
Robert Spekkens  
DAMTP, University of Cambridge  
Feb, 27, 2008, PI Colloquium  
Funding: The Royal Society

Classical statistical theory  
+  
fundamental restriction on statistical distributions  
⇓  
A large part of quantum theory

In the sense of reproducing the operational predictions

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Strong evidence for the view that  
quantum states are states of knowledge,  
not states of reality



The fire

shadows cast  
on wall

Prisoners

Roadway where  
puppeteers perform

## Classical theory

Mechanics

## Statistical theory for the classical theory

Liouville mechanics

## Restricted Statistical theory for the classical theory

Restricted Liouville mechanics  
= Gaussian quantum mechanics

Gaussian QM includes:

- **Most basic quantum phenomena**

e.g. noncommutativity, Interference, coherent superposition, collapse, complementary bases, no-cloning, ...

- **Most quantum information-processing tasks**

e.g. teleportation, key distribution, quantum error correction, improvements in metrology, ...

- **A large part of entanglement theory**

e.g. monogamy, distillation, deterministic and probabilistic single copy entanglement transformation, catalysis, ...

- **A large part of the formalism of quantum theory**

e.g. Choi-Jamiolkowski isomorphism, Naimark extension, Stinespring dilation, multiple convex decompositions of states, ...

***A great deal of what we usually take to be mysteriously nonclassical!***

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Bits

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Statistical theory of bits

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 $\simeq$  Stabilizer theory for qubits

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Restricted statistical optics  
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Electrodynamics

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Restricted statistical electrodynamics  
= $\simeq$  part of QED?

## Classical theory

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Bits

Trits

Optics

Electrodynamics

General relativity

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Statistical GR

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= $\simeq$  part of QED?

Restricted statistical GR  
= $\simeq$  part of quantum gravity?

Practical applications of this characterization of part of quantum theory

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- Developing Quantum technologies
  - computation
  - cryptography
  - metrology

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- Developing Quantum technologies
  - computation
  - cryptography
  - metrology
- Extending the range of applicability of quantum theory
- Modifying quantum theory, if necessary



## Categorizing quantum phenomena

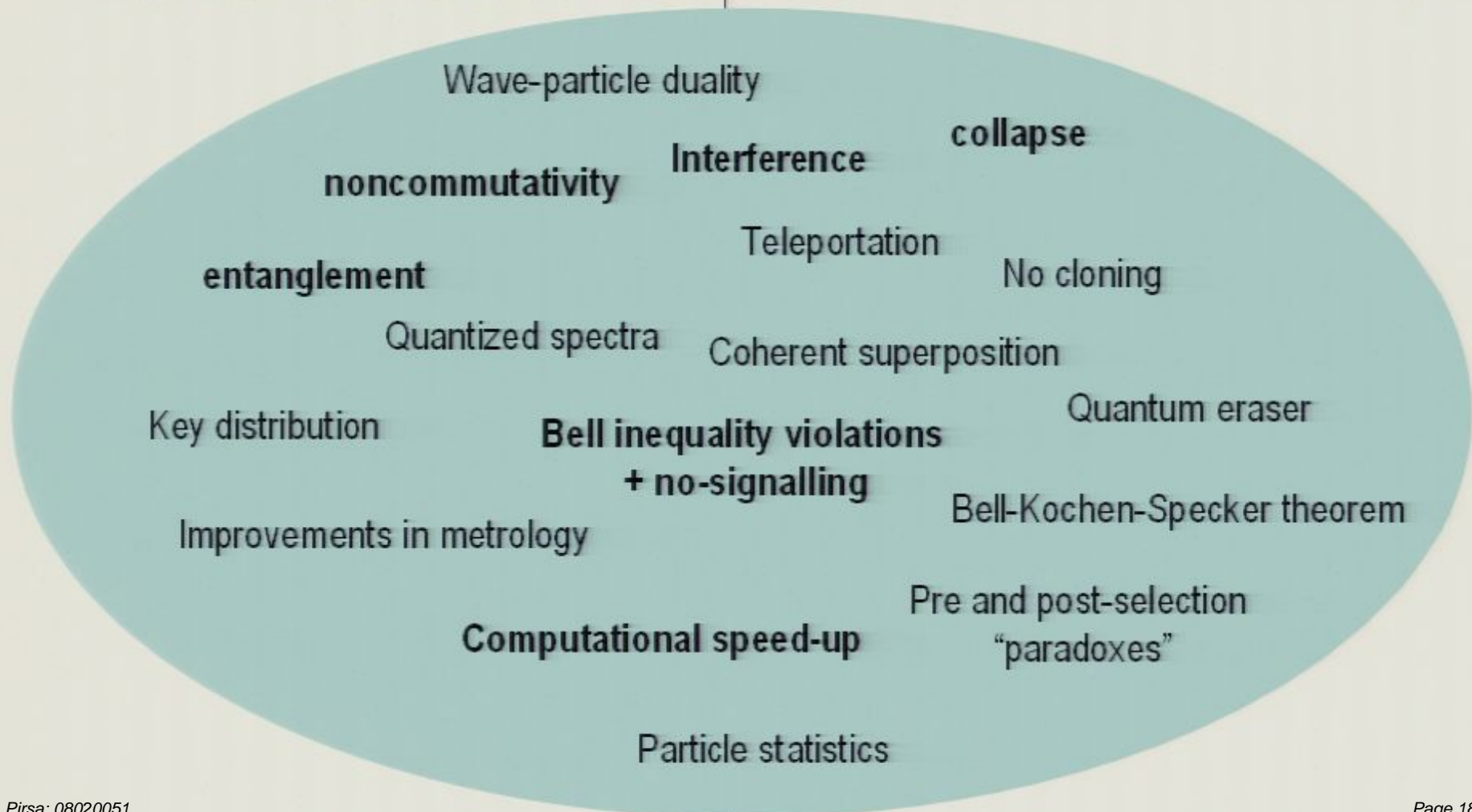
**Those arising in a restricted  
statistical classical theory**

**Those not arising in a restricted  
statistical classical theory**

# Categorizing quantum phenomena

Those arising in a restricted statistical classical theory

Those not arising in a restricted statistical classical theory



## Categorizing quantum phenomena

Those arising in a restricted statistical classical theory

Interference  
Noncommutativity  
Entanglement  
Collapse  
Wave-particle duality  
Teleportation  
No cloning  
Key distribution  
Improvements in metrology  
Quantum eraser  
Coherent superposition  
Pre and post-selection  
“paradoxes”  
Others...

Those not arising in a restricted statistical classical theory

Bell inequality violations + no-signalling  
Computational speed-up (if it exists)  
Bell-Kochen-Specker theorem  
Certain aspects of items on the left  
Others...

Quantized spectra?  
Particle statistics?  
Others...

# Categorizing quantum phenomena

Those arising in a restricted statistical classical theory

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Wave-particle duality  
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No cloning

***Not so strange after all!***

Improvements in metrology  
Quantum eraser  
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Others...

Those not arising in a restricted statistical classical theory

Bell inequality violations + no-signalling  
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Bell-Kochen-Specker theorem  
Certain aspects of items on the left  
Others...

***Still surprising!  
Find more!  
Focus on these***

Quantized spectra?  
Particle statistics?  
Others...

## A research program

The success of restricted statistical theories suggests that:

**Quantum theory is best understood as a kind of probability theory and that**

**Quantum states are incomplete descriptions of a deeper reality**

Speculative possibility for an axiomatization of quantum theory

Principle 1: There is a fundamental restriction on observers capacities to know and control the systems around them

Principle 2: ??? (Some change to the classical picture of the world)

We need to explore possibilities for principle 2, even if only in toy theories  
Ultimately, we need to derive principle 1

# Statistical classical theories with a restriction on knowledge

# Restricted Liouville mechanics

Joint work with  
Stephen Bartlett and  
Terry Rudolph

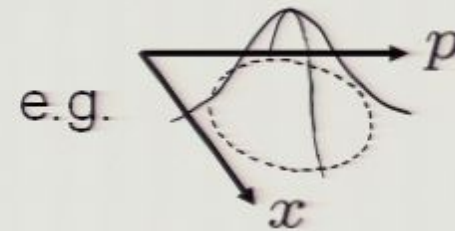




# Liouville mechanics

Liouville distribution on phase space

$$\mu(x_1, p_1, x_2, p_2, \dots)$$



What is a good statistical restriction to apply ?

-- look to quantum theory

## Quantum particle mechanics

Covariance matrix

$$\gamma(\hat{\rho}) = 2 \begin{pmatrix} \Delta^2 x_1 & C_{x_1, p_1} & C_{x_1, x_2} & C_{x_1, p_2} & \dots \\ C_{p_1, x_1} & \Delta^2 p_1 & C_{p_1, x_2} & C_{p_1, p_2} & \\ C_{x_2, x_1} & C_{x_2, p_1} & \Delta^2 x_2 & C_{x_2, p_2} & \\ C_{p_2, x_1} & C_{p_2, p_1} & C_{p_2, x_2} & \Delta^2 p_2 & \\ \vdots & & & & \dots \end{pmatrix}$$

where

$$\Delta^2 x \equiv \langle \hat{x}^2 \rangle - \langle \hat{x} \rangle^2$$

$$C_{x,p} \equiv \frac{1}{2} \langle \hat{x} \hat{p} + \hat{p} \hat{x} \rangle - \langle \hat{x} \rangle \langle \hat{p} \rangle$$

General form of the uncertainty principle is:

$$\gamma(\hat{\rho}) + i\hbar \Sigma \geq 0$$

where

$$\Sigma = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 & & \dots \\ 1 & 0 & & \\ & & 0 & -1 \\ & & 1 & 0 \\ \vdots & & & & \dots \end{pmatrix}$$

For a single canonical degree of freedom

$$2 \begin{pmatrix} \Delta^2 x & C_{x,p} \\ C_{p,x} & \Delta^2 p \end{pmatrix} + i\hbar \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \geq 0$$

$$2 \begin{pmatrix} \Delta^2 x & C_{x,p} - \frac{1}{2}i\hbar \\ C_{p,x} + \frac{1}{2}i\hbar & \Delta^2 p \end{pmatrix} \geq 0$$

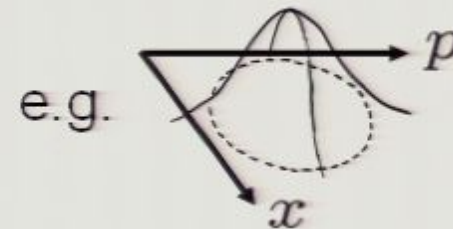
$$4\Delta^2 x \Delta^2 p \geq (\langle \hat{x}\hat{p} + \hat{p}\hat{x} \rangle - 2\langle \hat{x} \rangle \langle \hat{p} \rangle)^2 + \hbar^2$$

$$\Delta x \Delta p \geq \hbar/2$$

# Liouville mechanics

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$$\mu(x_1, p_1, x_2, p_2, \dots)$$



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where  $\Delta^2 x \equiv \langle x^2 \rangle - \langle x \rangle^2$

$$C_{x,p} \equiv \langle xp \rangle - \langle x \rangle \langle p \rangle$$

$$\langle f(x, p) \rangle \equiv \int dx dp f(x, p) \mu(x, p)$$

## Liouville mechanics with a statistical restriction

Assume:

The classical uncertainty principle:

The only Liouville distributions that can be prepared are those that satisfy

$$\gamma(\mu) + i\hbar\Sigma \geq 0$$

and that have maximal entropy for a given set of second-order moments.

## Liouville mechanics with a statistical restriction

Assume:

The classical uncertainty principle:

The only Liouville distributions that can be prepared are those that satisfy

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and that have maximal entropy for a given set of second-order moments.

Among valid  $\mu$  with a given  $\gamma$ , multi-variate Gaussians maximize the entropy

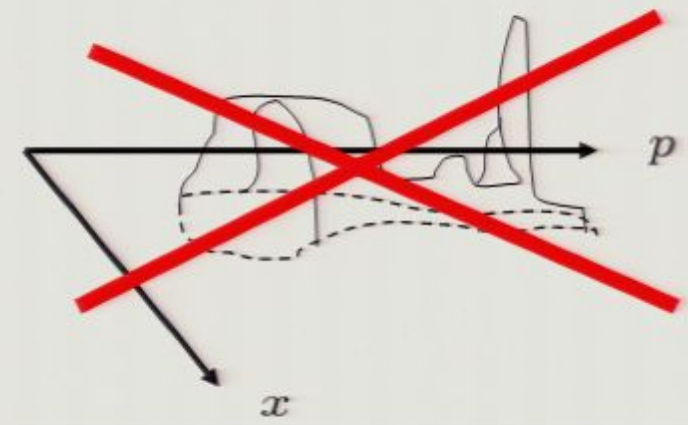
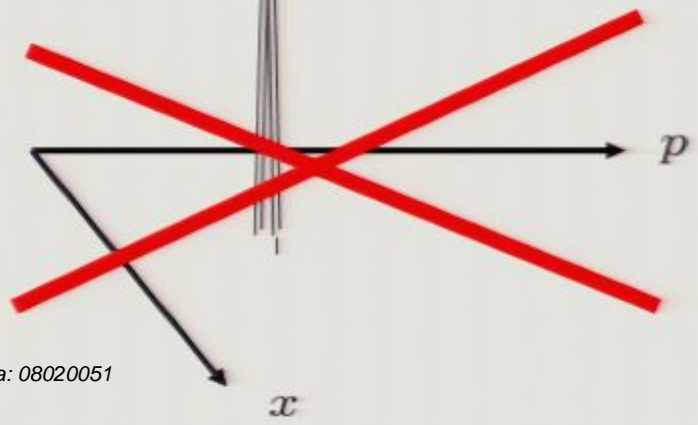
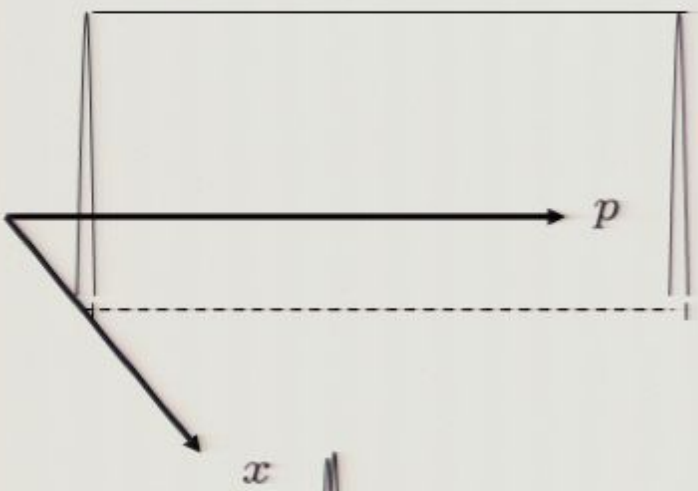
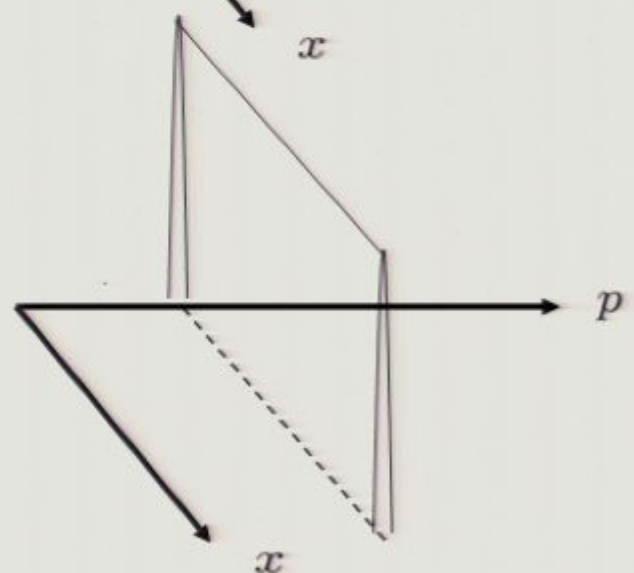
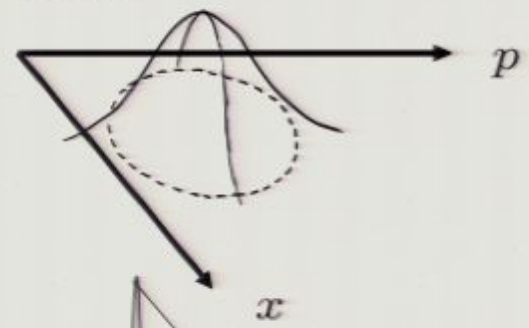
$$\mu(\mathbf{z}) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^{n/2} |\gamma|^{1/2}} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{z} - \langle \mathbf{z} \rangle)^T \gamma^{-1} (\mathbf{z} - \langle \mathbf{z} \rangle)\right)$$

where  $\mathbf{z} \equiv (x_1, p_1, x_2, p_2, \dots)$

# Valid distributions for one canonical system

$$\mu(x, p) \geq 0$$

$$\int \mu(x, p) dx dp = 1$$



Valid distributions for a pair of canonical systems

Uncorrelated distributions

$$\mu(x_1, p_1, x_2, p_2) = \mu(x_1, p_1) \mu(x_2, p_2)$$

Correlated distributions

$$\text{e.g. } \mu(x_1, p_1, x_2, p_2) = \frac{1}{\mathcal{N}} \delta(x_1 - x_2) \delta(p_1 + p_2)$$

This corresponds to the **entangled state** of Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen

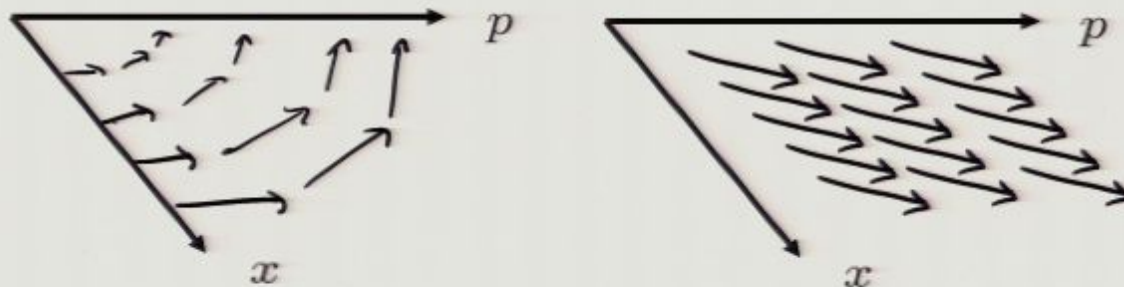


## Valid deterministic transformations

The group of canonical transformations with quadratic Hamiltonian

Only canonical transformations preserve the CUP

Only quadratic Hamiltonians preserve the gaussianity



One can also determine the probabilistic transformations

→ Found to be isomorphic to the bipartite distributions

## Valid measurements

Sets of indicator functions  $\{\xi_k(x, p)\}$

$\xi_k(x, p)$  = probability of  $k$  given  $(x, p)$

$$\xi_k(x_1, p_1)$$



$$\mu(x_1, p_1, x_2, p_2)$$

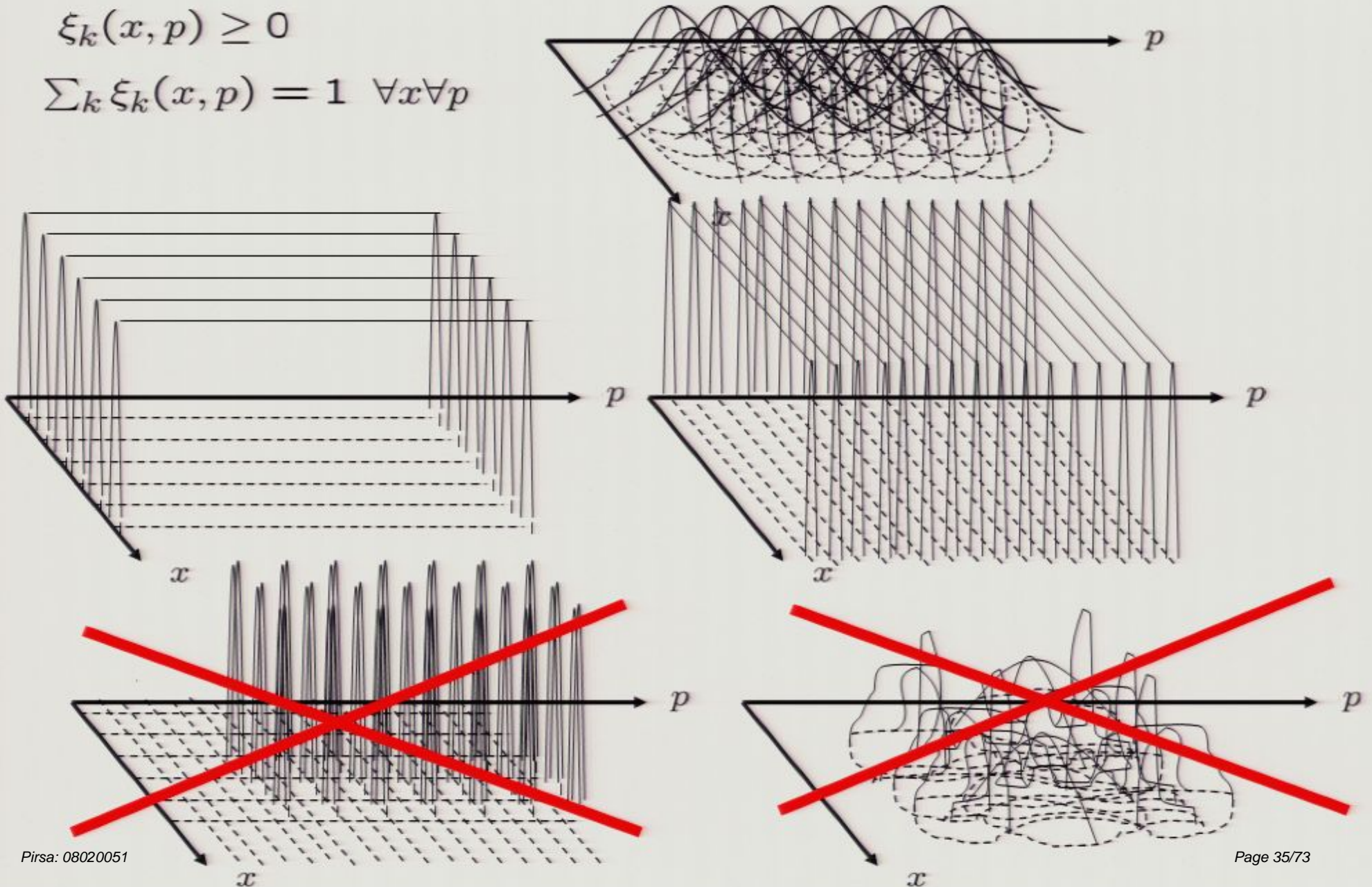
$$\begin{aligned}\mu(x_2, p_2) &\propto \int dx_1 dp_1 \xi(x_1, p_1) \delta(x_1 - x_2) \delta(p_1 + p_2) \\ &= \xi(x_2, -p_2)\end{aligned}$$

$$\mu(x_2, p_2) \propto \int dx_1 dp_1 \xi(x_1, p_1) \mu(x_1, p_1, x_2, p_2)$$

Valid measurements for one canonical system

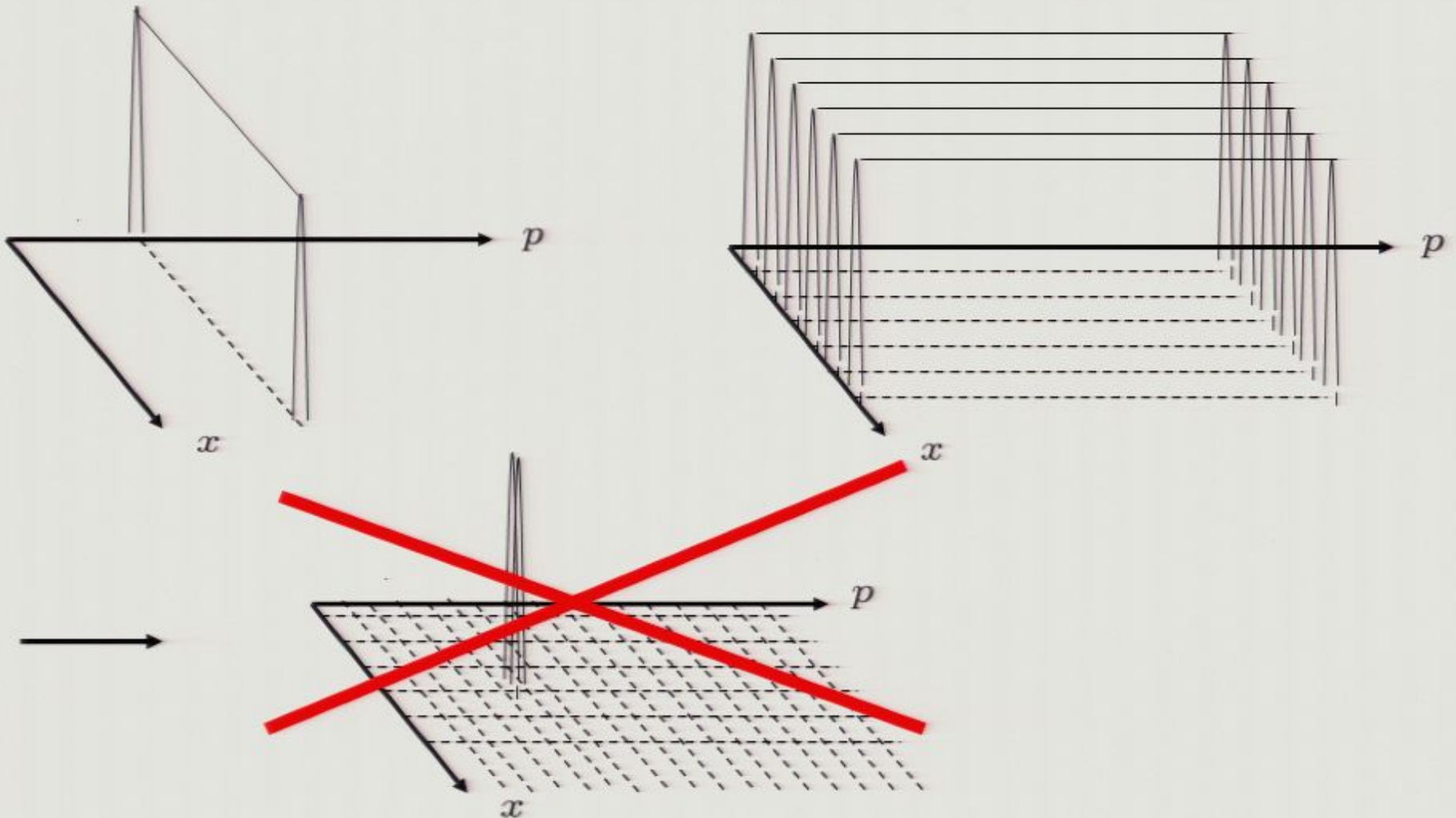
$$\xi_k(x, p) \geq 0$$

$$\sum_k \xi_k(x, p) = 1 \quad \forall x \forall p$$



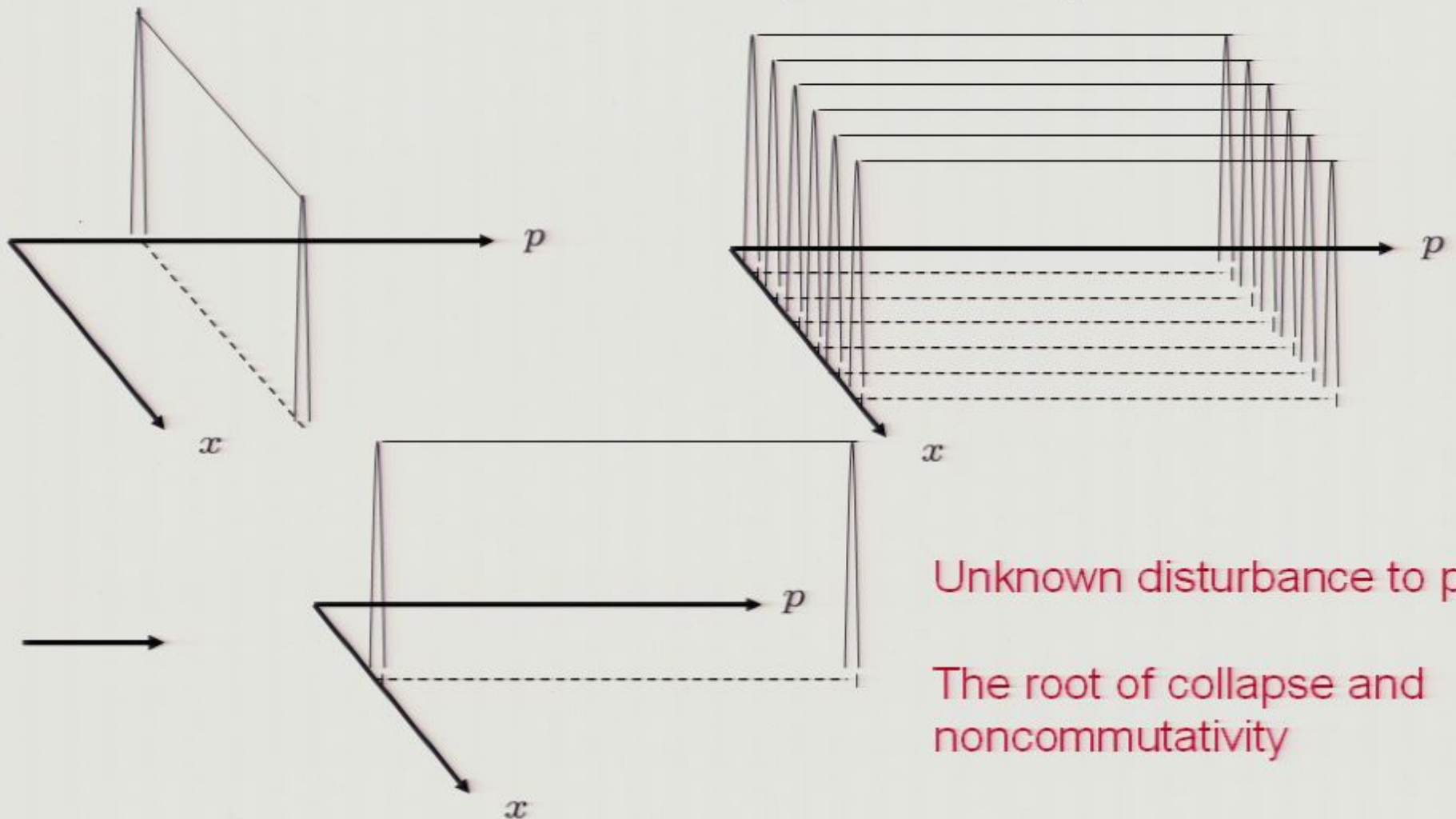
# Measurement-induced transformations

Measure  $x$  in a reproducible way



# Measurement-induced transformations

Measure  $x$  in a reproducible way



Unknown disturbance to  $p$

The root of collapse and noncommutativity

**Note:** the evolution is *deterministic* if the apparatus is treated internally

Internal apparatus

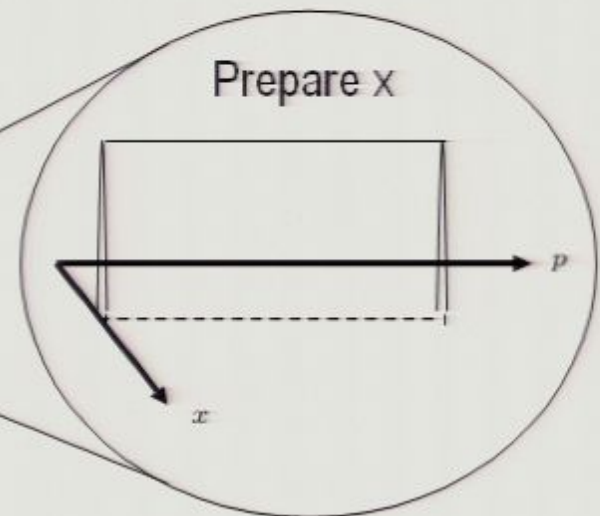
External apparatus

Measure x



Unknown disturbance to p

Measure x



Interact by  $H_{int} = x_{sys} p_{app}$



Final x of apparatus reflects initial x of system  
Final p of system reflects initial p of apparatus

*The position of the internal-external **cut** doesn't matter*

## Gaussian quantum mechanics

Define  $\hat{A}_{\mathbf{z}} = \bigotimes_{i=1}^n \hat{A}_{x_i, p_i}$      $\mathbf{z} \equiv (x_1, p_1, x_2, p_2, \dots)$

$$\hat{A}_{x_i, p_i} = \frac{1}{\pi \hbar} \int e^{-ip_i y / \hbar} \left| x_i - \frac{1}{2}y \right\rangle \left\langle x_i + \frac{1}{2}y \right| dy$$

Wigner rep'n of  $\rho$ .     $W_{\rho}(\mathbf{z}) = \text{Tr}(\rho \hat{A}_{\mathbf{z}})$

**Gaussian state  $\rho$ :** one that has a Gaussian Wigner rep'n

$$W_{\rho}(\mathbf{z}) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^{n/2} |\gamma|^{1/2}} \exp \left( -\frac{1}{2} (\mathbf{z} - \langle \mathbf{z} \rangle)^T \gamma^{-1} (\mathbf{z} - \langle \mathbf{z} \rangle) \right)$$

Note:  $\langle \hat{x}^k \hat{p}^l \rangle_{\hat{\rho}} = \langle x^k p^l \rangle_{W_{\hat{\rho}}}$     therefore     $\gamma(\hat{\rho}) = \gamma(W_{\hat{\rho}})$

**Gaussian measurements and transformations:** preserve Gaussianity

## Gaussian quantum mechanics

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**Gaussian measurements and transformations:** preserve Gaussianity

One can prove

**Theorem:** Restricted Liouville mechanics is empirically equivalent to Gaussian quantum mechanics



Gaussian QM includes:

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e.g. Choi-Jamiolkowski isomorphism, Naimark extension, Stinespring dilation, multiple convex decompositions of states, ...

***A great deal of what we usually take to be mysteriously nonclassical!***

# Restricted statistical theory of trits

Joint work with Olaf Schreiber

Building upon:

Spekkens, [quant-ph/0401052](#) [Phys. Rev. A 75, 032110 (2007)]

S. van Enk, [arxiv:0705.2742](#) [Found. Phys. 37, 1447 (2007)]

D. Gross, [quant-ph/0602001](#) [J. Math. Phys. 47, 122107 (2006)]

Does quantum theory suggest a good statistical restriction?

For finite-d system, no good analogue of

$$\Delta x \Delta p \geq \hbar/2$$

Instead, note simply that:

Jointly-measurable observables = a commuting set of observables

This suggests

Jointly-knowable variables = a set of canonically **nonconjugate** variables

Continuous case: variables with vanishing Poisson bracket

$$\{f, g\}_{PB} = 0$$

where

$$\{f, g\}_{PB} \equiv \sum_{i=1}^n \left( \frac{\partial f}{\partial x_i} \frac{\partial g}{\partial p_i} - \frac{\partial f}{\partial p_i} \frac{\partial g}{\partial x_i} \right)$$

Discrete configuration space

$$(X_1, \dots, X_n) \in (\mathbb{Z}_3)^n \quad \mathbb{Z}_3 = \{0, 1, 2\}$$

Discrete phase space

$$(X_1, P_1, \dots, X_n, P_n) \in (\mathbb{Z}_3)^{2n}$$

General canonical variable

$$f = a_1 X_1 + b_1 P_1 + \dots + a_n X_n + b_n P_n$$

$$a_1, b_1, \dots, a_n, b_n \in \mathbb{Z}_3$$

Vector in symplectic vector space associated with variable

$$v_f = (a_1, b_1, \dots, a_n, b_n) \in (\mathbb{Z}_3)^{2n}$$

Discrete case: **nonconjugate variables** are those such that

$$[v_f, v_g] = 0$$

where

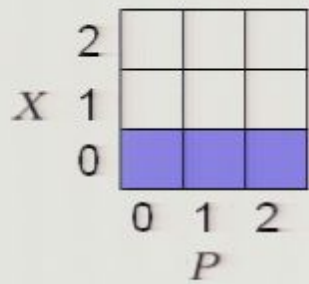
$$[u, v] = u^T \Sigma v$$

## The discrete classical uncertainty principle:

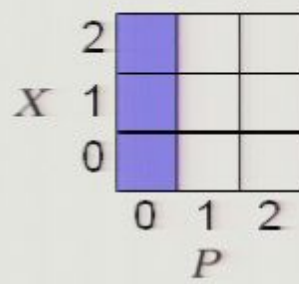
The only distributions that can be prepared are those that correspond to fixing the values of a set of canonical and **nonconjugate** variables

An observer can know at most half of the full set of variables  
(and only certain halves)

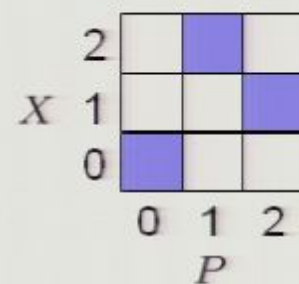
$X$  known



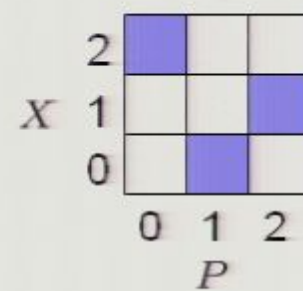
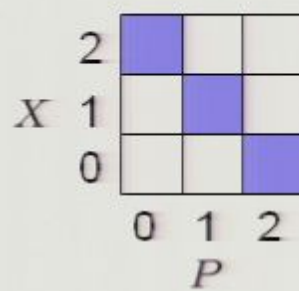
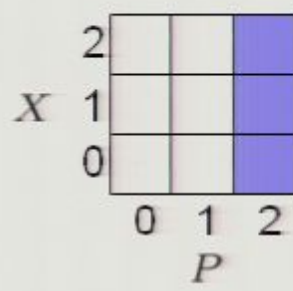
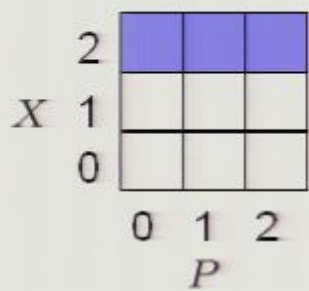
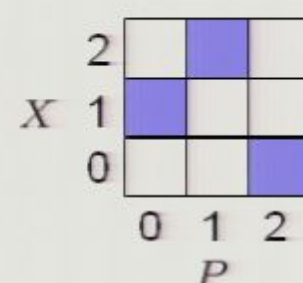
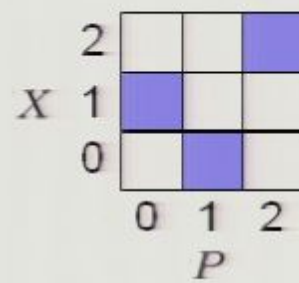
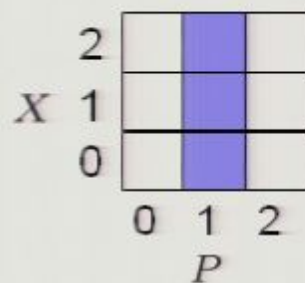
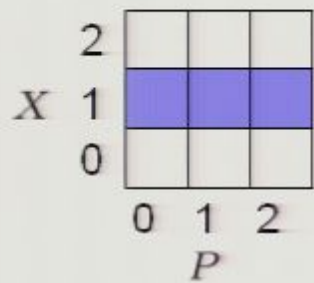
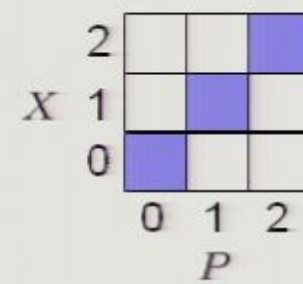
$P$  known



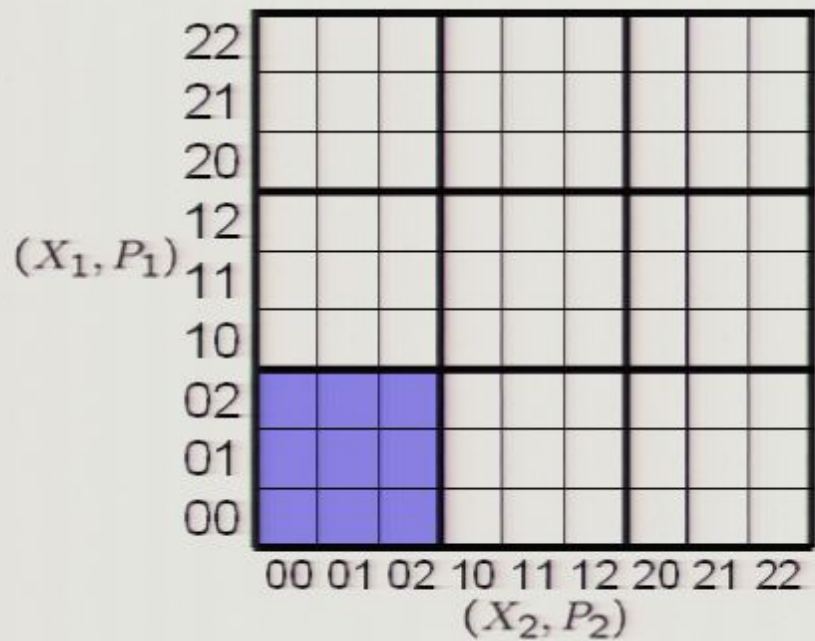
$X + P$  known



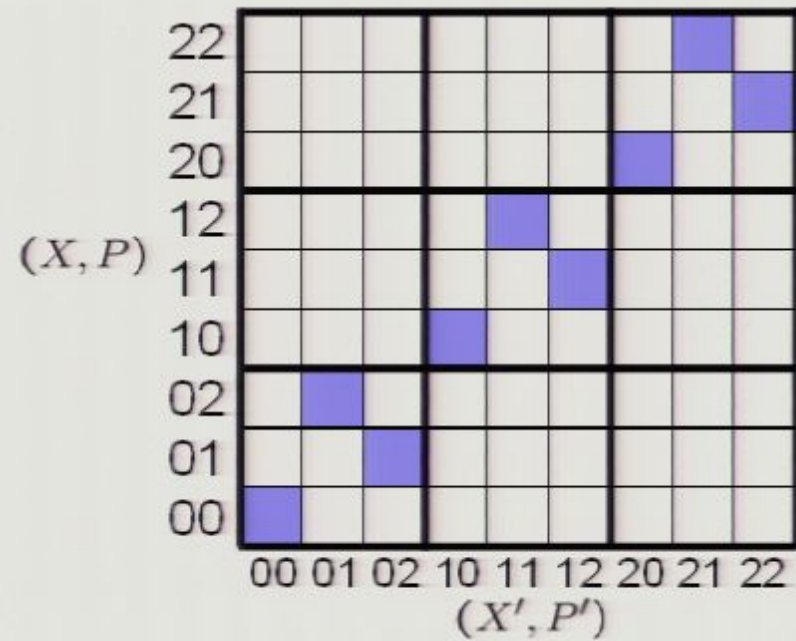
$X - P$  known



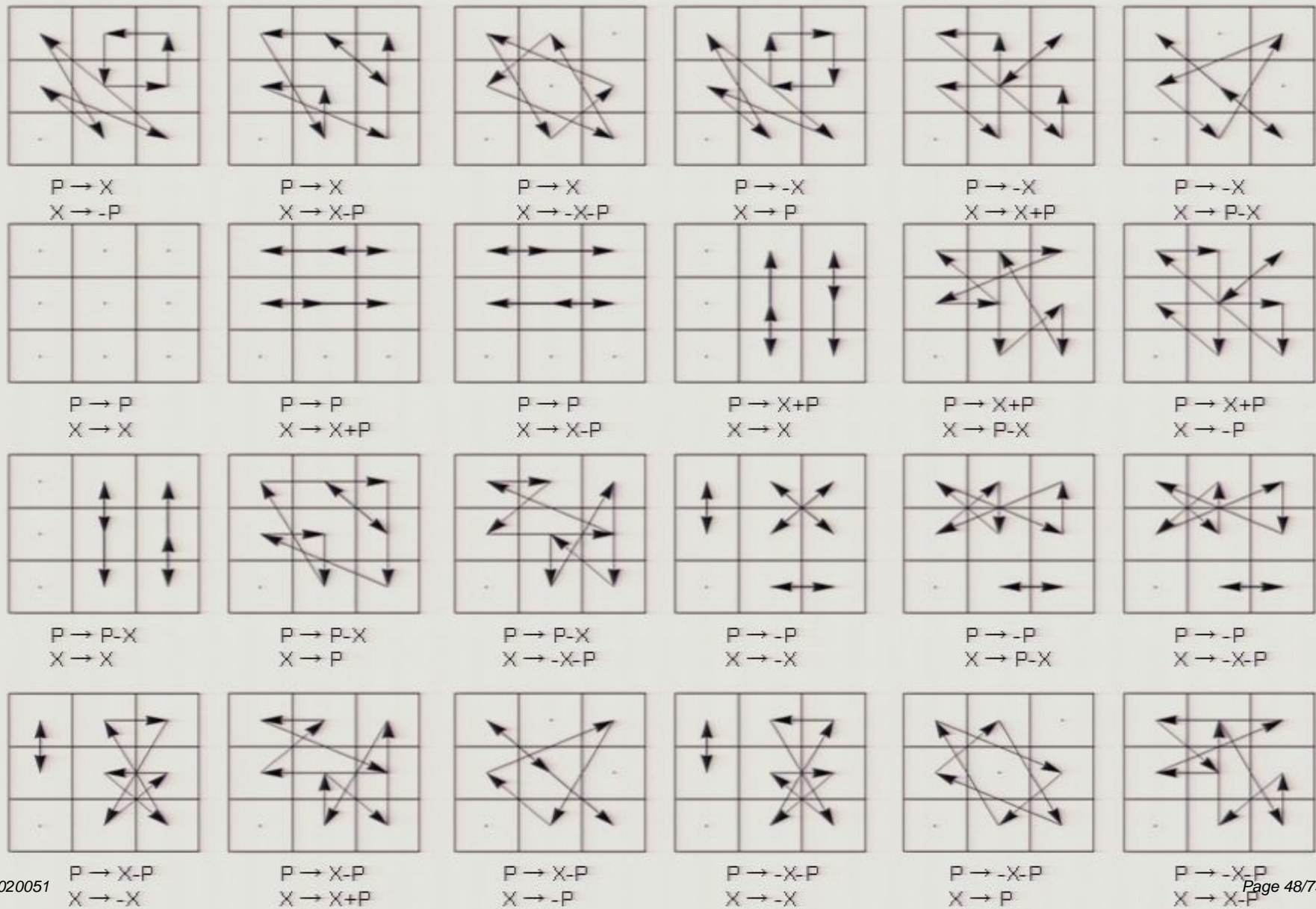
$X_1$  and  $X_2$  known



$X_1 - X_2$  and  $P_1 + P_2$  known

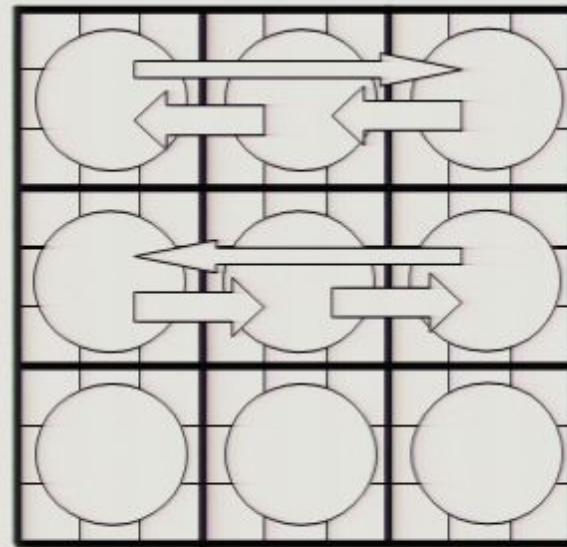
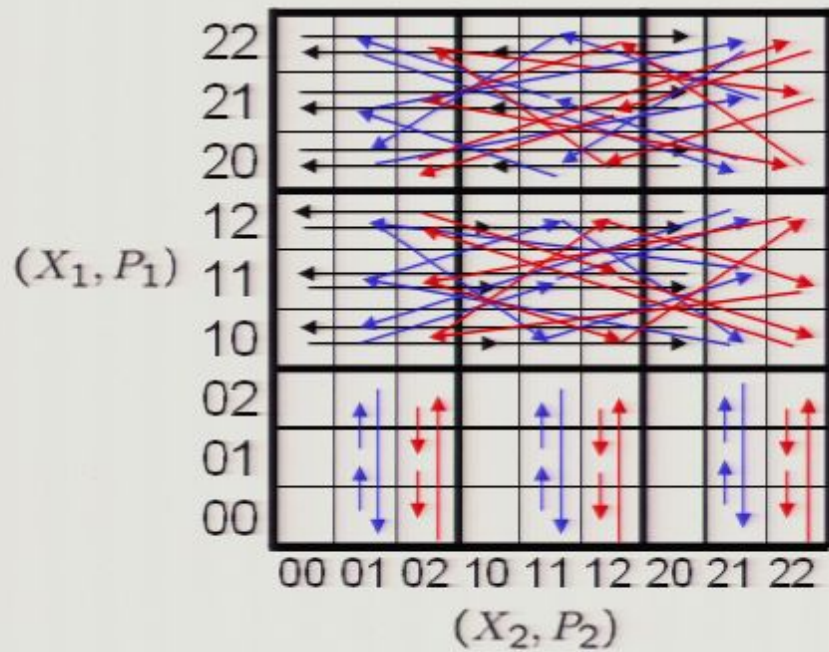


# Symplectic transformations for a single trit





$$\begin{aligned}
 X_1 &\mapsto X_1 \\
 P_1 &\mapsto P_1 + P_2 \\
 X_2 &\mapsto X_1 + X_2 \\
 P_2 &\mapsto P_2
 \end{aligned}$$



## Qutrit Stabilizer theory

**Stabilizer state:** an eigenstate of a commuting set of canonical observables defined by symplectic transformations of

$$\hat{X} = \sum_{x \in \mathbb{Z}_3} |x\rangle\langle x|$$
$$\hat{P} = \sum_{p \in \mathbb{Z}_3} |p\rangle\langle p| \quad \text{where } \langle x|p\rangle = \frac{1}{\sqrt{3}} e^{i\frac{2\pi}{3}xp}$$

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Therefore

**Theorem:** The restricted statistical theory of trits is empirically equivalent to the Stabilizer theory for qutrits

Stabilizer qutrit theory includes:

- **Most basic quantum phenomena**

e.g. noncommutativity, Interference, coherent superposition, collapse, complementary bases, no-cloning, ...

- **Most quantum information-processing tasks**

e.g. teleportation, key distribution, quantum error correction, improvements in metrology, dense coding, ...

- **A large part of entanglement theory**

e.g. monogamy, distillation, deterministic and probabilistic single copy entanglement transformation, catalysis, ...

- **A large part of the formalism of quantum theory**

e.g. Choi-Jamiolkowski isomorphism, Naimark extension, Stinespring dilation, multiple convex decompositions of states, ...

***A great deal of what we usually take to be mysteriously nonclassical!***

# Restricted statistical theory of bits (a.k.a. “the toy theory”<sup>©</sup>)

Spekkens, quant-ph/0401052 [Phys. Rev. A 75, 032110 (2007)]

## The knowledge-balance principle:

The only distributions that can be prepared are those that correspond to knowing at most **half** of a set of canonical variables sufficient to specify the state

The constraint of nonconjugacy isn't workable in this context  
However, a constraint of locality does most of its work

The theory is close to but not precisely the [Stabilizer theory for qubits](#)

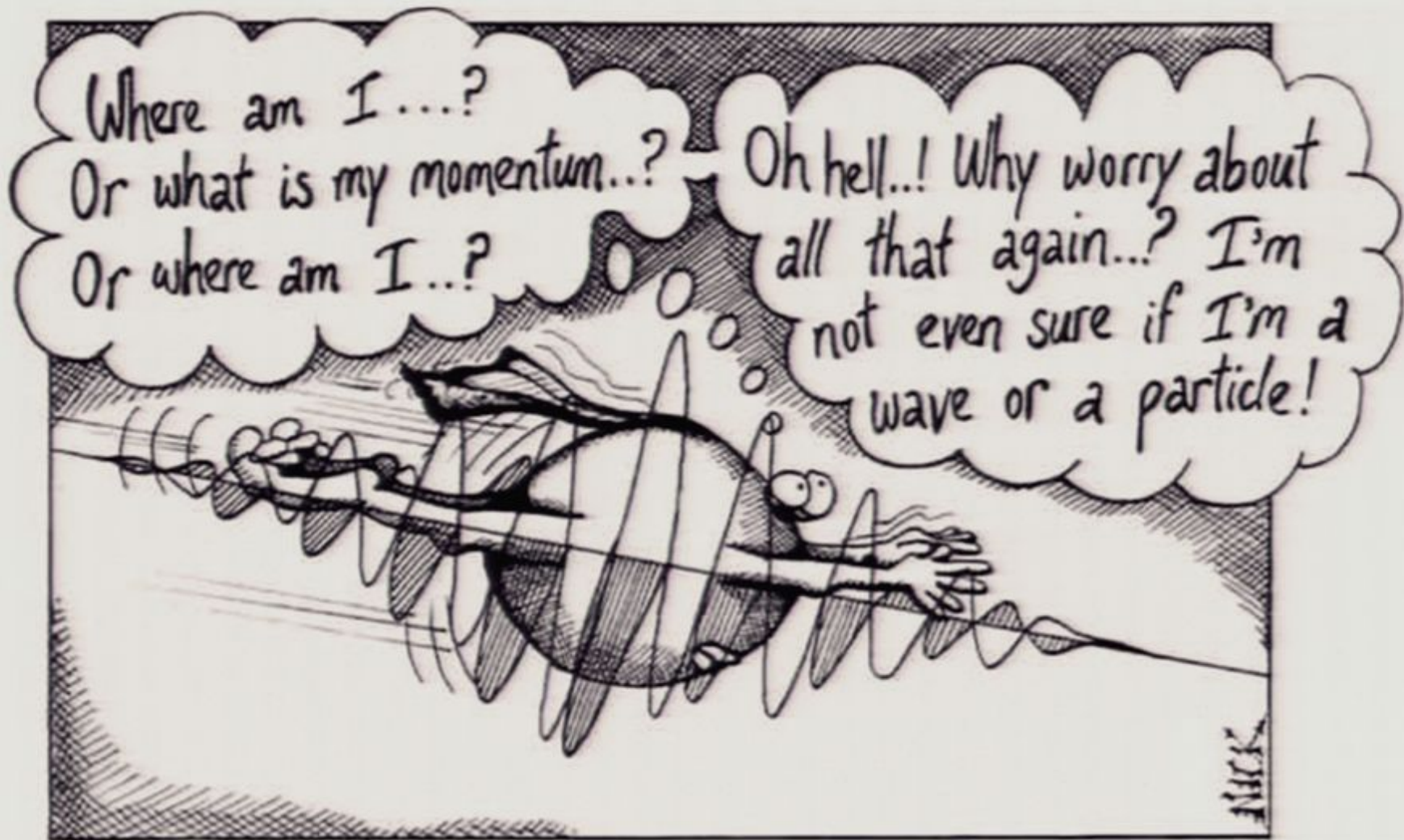
In restricted statistical theories for  $d$ -level systems  
 $d$  [even](#) and  $d$  [odd](#) are fundamentally different

# Restricted statistical optics

Simply take  $x, p \rightarrow E, B$  in restricted Liouville mechanics

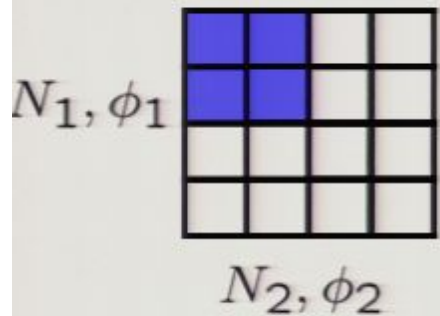
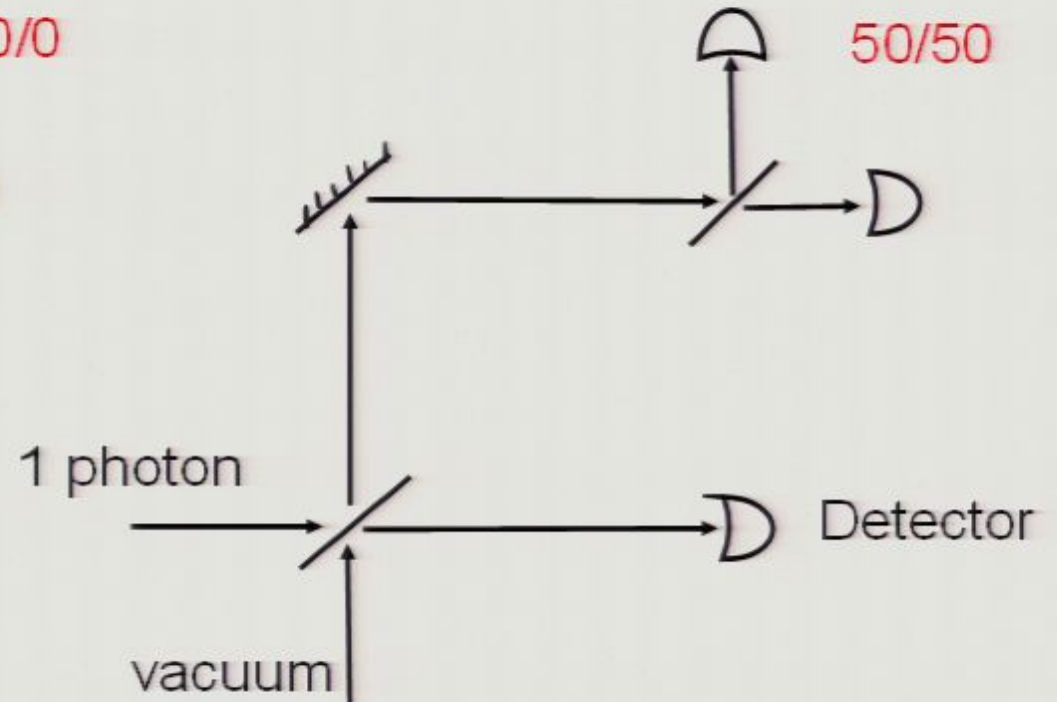
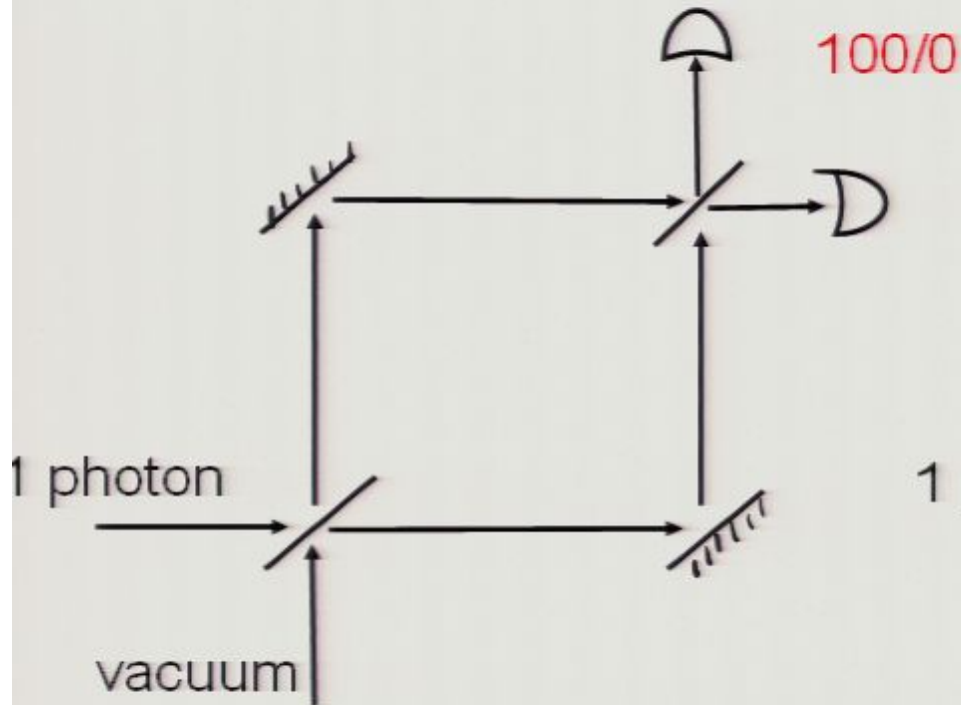
Equivalent to linear quantum optics





# Restricted statistical theory of “bit-valued fields”

Joint work with Elliott Martin



Occupation number and discrete phase both well-defined

One obtains:

- Wave-like interference with particle-like detection
- Interaction-free measurement (the safer x-ray)
- quantum eraser

# Restricted statistical theory of electrodynamics

Future research

## “Stochastic electrodynamics”

See: Boyer, Marshall & Santos, de la Peno & Cetto, Cole  
(Note: unlike most proponents, I do not expect a derivation of all of quantum theory)

Low energy physics that proponents claim to reproduce:

- Stability of ground state of Hydrogen
- Radius of ground state of Hydrogen
- Planck blackbody spectrum
- Einstein A and B coefficients
- Lamb shift
- Casimir effect
- Unruh effect
- Aharonov-Bohm effect
- Energy quantization

Restricted  
statistical theory of  
<insert classical theory>

More future research

Phenomena **not** arising from a  
statistical restriction

## Categorizing quantum phenomena

Those arising in a restricted statistical classical theory

Interference  
Noncommutativity  
Entanglement  
Collapse  
Wave-particle duality  
Teleportation  
No cloning  
Key distribution  
Improvements in metrology  
Quantum eraser  
Coherent superpositions  
Pre and post-selection  
“paradoxes”  
Others...

Those not arising in a restricted statistical classical theory

Bell inequality violations + no-signalling  
Computational speed-up (if it exists)  
Bell-Kochen-Specker theorem  
Certain aspects of items on the left  
Others...

**Key for identifying the missing conceptual innovations of quantum theory**

Quantized spectra?  
Particle statistics?  
Others...



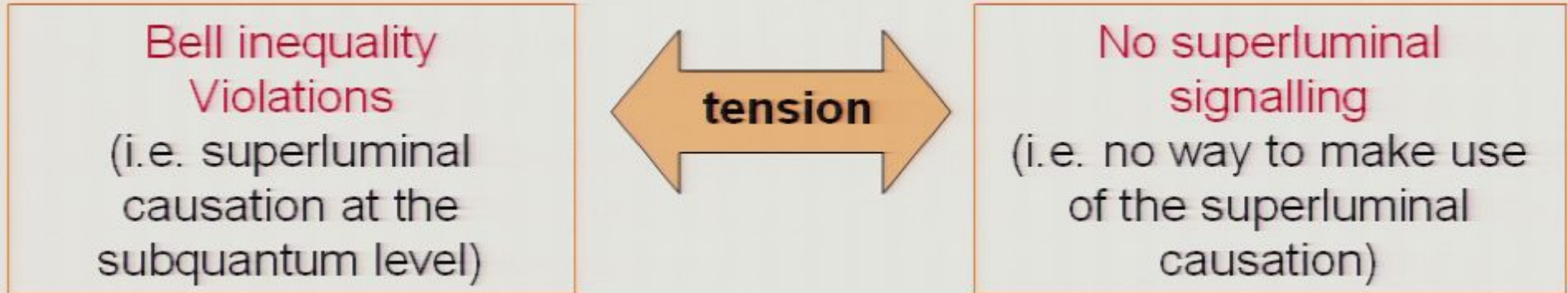
# Contextuality as an umbrella for the remaining nonclassicality

(Spekkens, PRA 71, 052108)

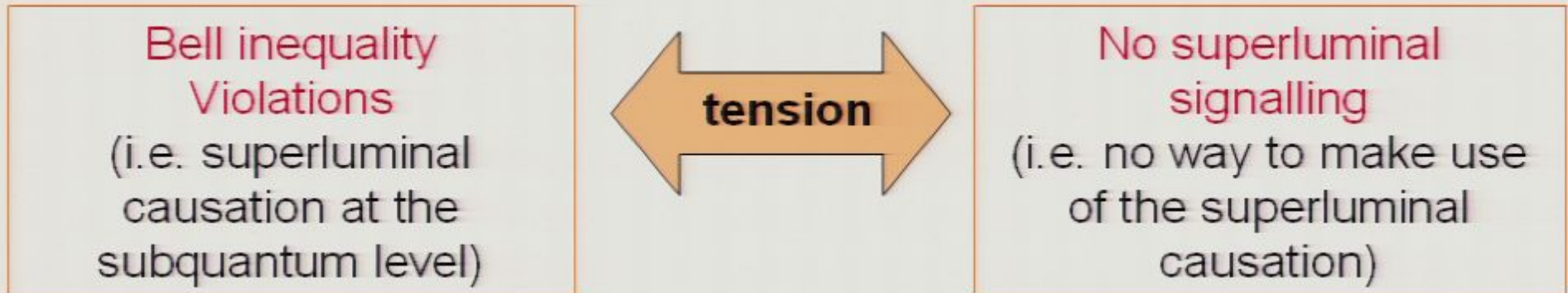
Notions of nonclassicality found to be instances of contextuality:

- all variants of the **Bell-Kochen-Specker theorem** -- algebraic, state-specific, statistical, continuous, discrete
- all variants of **Bell's theorem**
- all **no-go theorems for noncontextuality of preparations, transformations and unsharp measurements**, including the 2d ones (Spekkens, PRA 71, 052108, 2005)
- All variants of **von Neumann's no-go theorem**, including the negative-energy tunneling “paradox” and independence of angular momentum spectrum on reference point (Spekkens, PIRSA:07060037)
- Necessity of **negativity in quasi-probability representations** such as the Wigner representation (Spekkens, arXiv:0710.5549; Emerson and Ferrie, arXiv:0711.2658)
- Quantum **improvements in certain IP tasks** e.g. “parity-oblivious random access codes” (Spekkens and Toner, in preparation)
- **Aspects of pre- and post-selected “paradoxes”** (Leifer and Spekkens, PRL 95, 200405, 2005)

## One of the key remaining mysteries

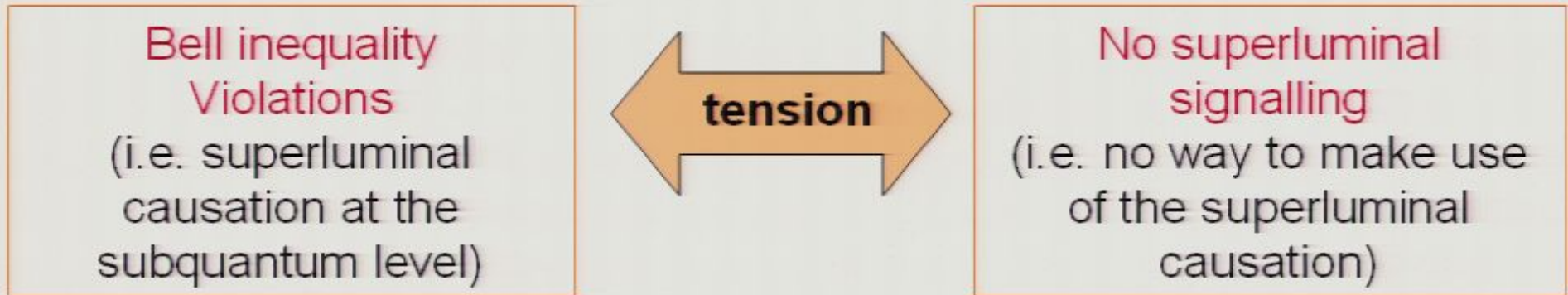


## One of the key remaining mysteries



1. *Deny Bell inequality violations*  
(experimental loopholes, superdeterminism)

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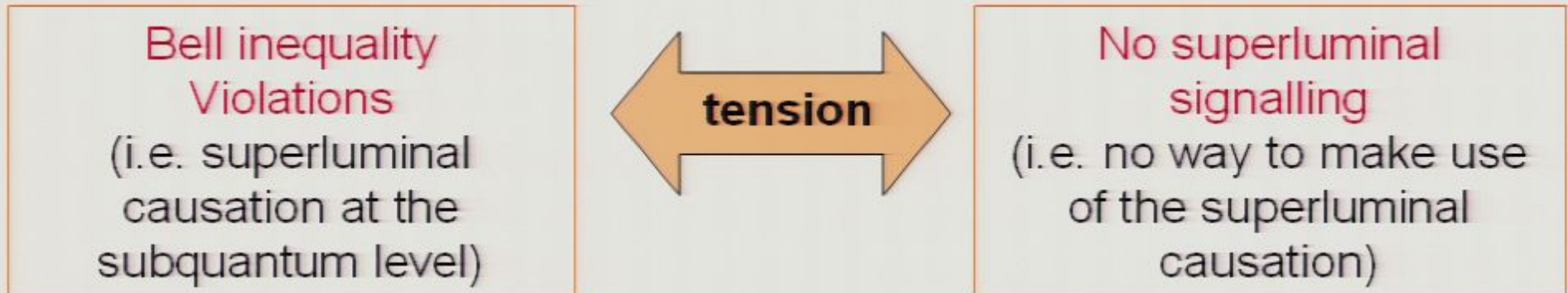
(experimental loopholes, superdeterminism)

### 2. *Admit the possibility of superluminal signalling*

Theorem (Valentini):

“subquantum” distributions + Bell inequality violations + determinism  $\rightarrow$  signalling

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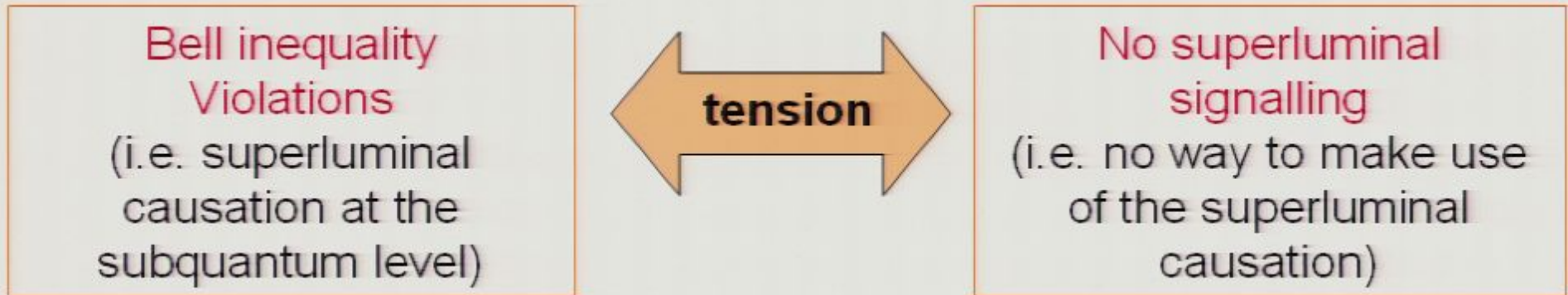
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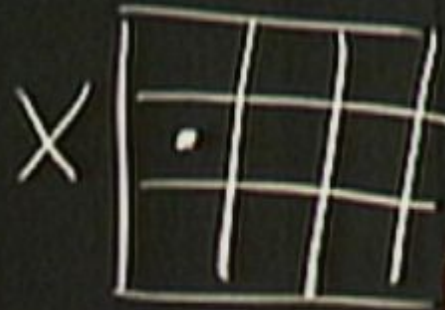
“subquantum” distributions + Bell inequality violations + determinism  $\rightarrow$  signalling

### 3. *Find a worldview for which the tension disappears*

no-signalling + Bell inequality violations + determinism  $\rightarrow$  statistical restriction

What assumptions will get us precisely the statistical restriction of QT?

# 4- Extrinsic curvature

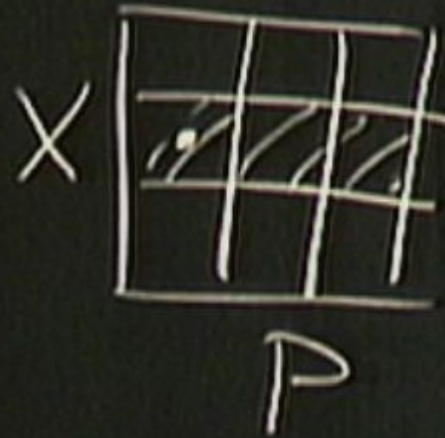


$$K_{ab} =$$

Consider :

$$\begin{aligned} K_{ab} &\equiv n_{\alpha;j} e_{\beta}^{\alpha} \\ &= K_{ba} \end{aligned}$$

# 4 - Extrinsic curvature



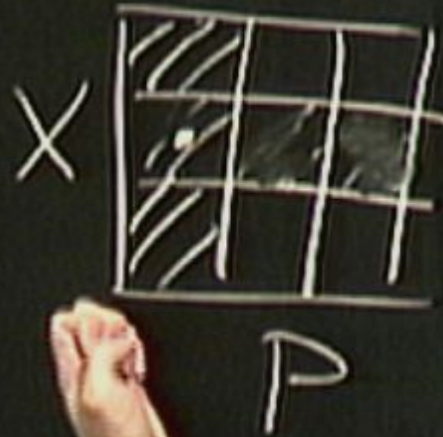
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# 4 - Extrinsic curvature



$$K_{ab} =$$

Consider :

$$\begin{aligned} K_{ab} &\equiv n_{\alpha} \gamma^{\alpha}_{\beta} e^{\beta}_{,a} \\ &= K_{ba} \end{aligned}$$