On the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics

B. Zilber

University of Oxford

October 14, 2015

University of Oxford

B. Zilber

Why science is possible?

University of Oxford

On the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics

Why science is possible?

The huge universe allows a succinct mathematical description. Why and how?

For example, the equation

 $\mathbf{F} = m \mathbf{a}$

provides a complete description the Newtonian law of motion under the constant force.

From these one can derive the more general Euler's law of motion.

Why science is possible?

The huge universe allows a succinct mathematical description. Why and how?

For example, the equation

 $\mathbf{F} = m \mathbf{a}$

provides a complete description the Newtonian law of motion under the constant force.

From these one can derive the more general Euler's law of motion.

Eugene Wigner called it *"the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics"*.

Algorithmic compressibility

P.C.W. Davies [1992], following R.J.Solomonoff [1964], writes: "the existence of regularities [in the real world] may be expressed by saying that the world **is algorithmically compressible**."

University of Oxford

Algorithmic compressibility

P.C.W. Davies [1992], following R.J.Solomonoff [1964], writes: "the existence of regularities [in the real world] may be expressed by saying that the world **is algorithmically compressible**."

"The fundamental laws of physics seem to be expressible as succinct mathematical statements. ...

University of Oxford

Algorithmic compressibility

P.C.W. Davies [1992], following R.J.Solomonoff [1964], writes: "the existence of regularities [in the real world] may be expressed by saying that the world **is algorithmically compressible**."

"The fundamental laws of physics seem to be expressible as succinct mathematical statements. ... does this fact tell us something important about the structure of the brain, or the physical world, or both?".

Categoricity versus algorithmic compressibility

(Uncountable) categoricity is a model-theoretic formalisation of algorithmic compressibility.

University of Oxford

B. Zilber

Categoricity versus algorithmic compressibility

(Uncountable) categoricity is a model-theoretic formalisation of algorithmic compressibility.

A small collection T of sentences is said to be uncountably categorical if there exists a unique model **M** of T of a huge size.

University of Oxford

Categoricity versus algorithmic compressibility

(Uncountable) categoricity is a model-theoretic formalisation of algorithmic compressibility.

A small collection T of sentences is said to be uncountably categorical if there exists a unique model **M** of T of a huge size.

A countable collection T of sentences (of a formal language) is said to be uncountably categorical if for some uncountable cardinal number κ there exists **one and only one** model **M** of Tof size κ .

< <p>O > < <p>O >

Categoricity versus algorithmic compressibility

(Uncountable) categoricity is a model-theoretic formalisation of algorithmic compressibility.

A small collection T of sentences is said to be uncountably categorical if there exists a unique model **M** of T of a huge size.

A countable collection T of sentences (of a formal language) is said to be uncountably categorical if for some uncountable cardinal number κ there exists **one and only one** model **M** of Tof size κ .

Can this happen indeed?

Numerical systems which underline sciences:

University of Oxford

Numerical systems which underline sciences:

the ring of integers

$$\mathbb{Z} = (\{\ldots -3, \ -2, \ -1, \ 0, \ 1, \ 2, \ldots\}, \ +, \times)$$

is countable and has countable formal theory

 $\forall x, y: x+y = y+x, \ \forall x, y, z: \ x(y+z) = xy+xz, \ \forall x: \ x \cdot 0 = 0, \ \dots$

University of Oxford

・ロト ・同ト ・ヨト ・ヨ

B. Zilber

Numerical systems which underline sciences:

the ring of integers

$$\mathbb{Z} = (\{\ldots -3, \ -2, \ -1, \ 0, \ 1, \ 2, \ldots\}, \ +, \times)$$

is countable and has countable formal theory

 $\forall x, y: x+y = y+x, \ \forall x, y, z: \ x(y+z) = xy+xz, \ \forall x: x \cdot 0 = 0, \ \dots$

the theory of integers **does have** uncountable models too, but there is no uniqueness, so **not uncountably categorical**.

University of Oxford

The field of real numbers $\mathbb{R} = (\mathbb{R}, +, \times)$ is uncountable (of cardinality continuum), its theory is countable but there is no uniqueness, so not uncountably categorical.

University of Oxford

The field of real numbers $\mathbb{R} = (\mathbb{R}, +, \times)$ is uncountable (of cardinality continuum), its theory is countable but there is no uniqueness, so not uncountably categorical.

The field of complex numbers

$$\mathbb{C} = (\{x + iy: x, y \in \mathbb{R}\}, +, \times)$$

is uncountable (of cardinality continuum), its theory is countable and in any uncountable cardinal κ there exists **unique** model **M** of *T* of size κ .

The field of real numbers $\mathbb{R} = (\mathbb{R}, +, \times)$ is uncountable (of cardinality continuum), its theory is countable but there is no uniqueness, so not uncountably categorical.

The field of complex numbers

$$\mathbb{C} = (\{x + iy : x, y \in \mathbb{R}\}, +, \times)$$

is uncountable (of cardinality continuum), its theory is countable and in any uncountable cardinal κ there exists **unique** model **M** of *T* of size κ .

So, this is an example of an **algorithmically compressible** structure!

The field of real numbers $\mathbb{R} = (\mathbb{R}, +, \times)$ is uncountable (of cardinality continuum), its theory is countable but there is no uniqueness, so not uncountably categorical.

The field of complex numbers

 $\mathbb{C} = (\{x + iy : x, y \in \mathbb{R}\}, +, \times)$

is uncountable (of cardinality continuum), its theory is countable and in any uncountable cardinal κ there exists **unique** model **M** of *T* of size κ .

So, this is an example of an **algorithmically compressible** structure!

If physical universe is *co-ordinatizable in terms of (the algebra of) complex numbers*, then this explains that the comprehensive physical science is possible.

◆□▶ ◆□▶ ◆臣▶ ◆臣▶ ─臣 ──○へ⊙

University of Oxford

On the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics

Euclidean geometry studies spaces with real co-ordinates, smooth trajectories in these spaces and fits best with Newtonian physics.

University of Oxford

On the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics

Euclidean geometry studies spaces with real co-ordinates, smooth trajectories in these spaces and fits best with Newtonian physics.

Algebraic geometry studies spaces with complex co-ordinates,

University of Oxford

On the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics

Euclidean geometry studies spaces with real co-ordinates, smooth trajectories in these spaces and fits best with Newtonian physics.

Algebraic geometry studies spaces with complex co-ordinates, or more generally, co-ordinates over **algebraically closed fields** in which all polynomial equations have solutions.

University of Oxford

Euclidean geometry studies spaces with real co-ordinates, smooth trajectories in these spaces and fits best with Newtonian physics.

Algebraic geometry studies spaces with complex co-ordinates, or more generally, co-ordinates over **algebraically closed fields** in which all polynomial equations have solutions. Trajectories in algebraic geometry are given by polynomial equations, e.g.

$$y^2 = x^3 + x + 1,$$

the equation for an elliptic curve. Those are expressible in the same formal language as the field of complex numbers.

• • • • • • • • • • • •

Because the field of complex numbers is categorical, any theory based on algebraic geometry will be categorical.

University of Oxford

On the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics

Because the field of complex numbers is categorical, any theory based on algebraic geometry will be categorical.

A.Macintyre (1971): Algebraically closed fields are the only numerical systems (fields) which are categorical.

University of Oxford

Because the field of complex numbers is categorical, any theory based on algebraic geometry will be categorical.

A.Macintyre (1971): Algebraically closed fields are the only numerical systems (fields) which are categorical.

Question (1981). Is it true that every categorical theory can be reduced to algebraic geometry? So eventually to the theory of an algebraically closed field?

Classification Theorem

1993: (Hrushovski and Z.) Under a natural extra assumption the only uncountably categorical structures are algebraic-geometric with possibly "finite fibres" over them.

University of Oxford

B. Zilber



B. Zilber



2004: In general, finite fibres over algebraic-geometric objects have quantum nature.

University of Oxford

B. Zilber

Physicists discovered quantum formalism in the form of the canonical commutation relation (Heisenberg)

 $QP - PQ = i\hbar$.

University of Oxford

B. Zilber

Physicists discovered quantum formalism in the form of the canonical commutation relation (Heisenberg)

 $QP - PQ = i\hbar$.

This relation and the physical variables Q and P speak about the geometry of physical world that can not be captured by usual variables x, y, ...

University of Oxford

Physicists discovered quantum formalism in the form of the canonical commutation relation (Heisenberg)

 $QP - PQ = i\hbar$.

This relation and the physical variables Q and P speak about the geometry of physical world that can not be captured by usual variables x, y, ...

What is this geometry?

University of Oxford

Physicists discovered quantum formalism in the form of the canonical commutation relation (Heisenberg)

 $QP - PQ = i\hbar$.

This relation and the physical variables Q and P speak about the geometry of physical world that can not be captured by usual variables x, y, ...

What is this geometry? How to draw pictures in this geometry?

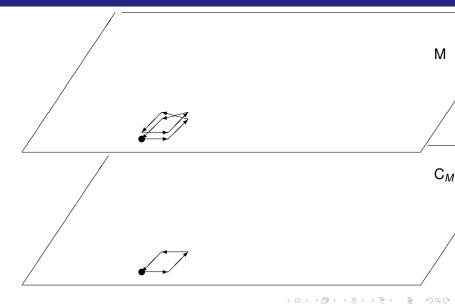
Physicists discovered quantum formalism in the form of the canonical commutation relation (Heisenberg)

 $QP - PQ = i\hbar$.

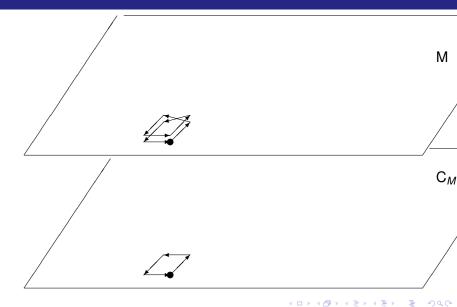
This relation and the physical variables Q and P speak about the geometry of physical world that can not be captured by usual variables x, y, ...

What is this geometry? How to draw pictures in this geometry?

Classifying uncountable categorical structures model theory closes in on solving this problem.



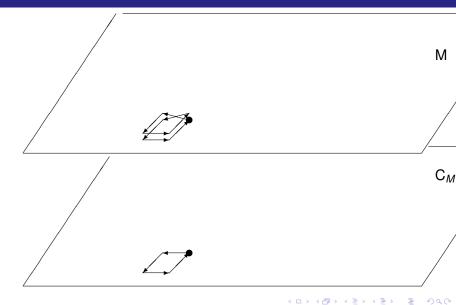
On the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics



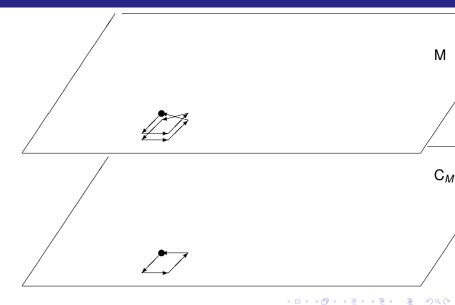
Der ter ter e broch

B. Zilber

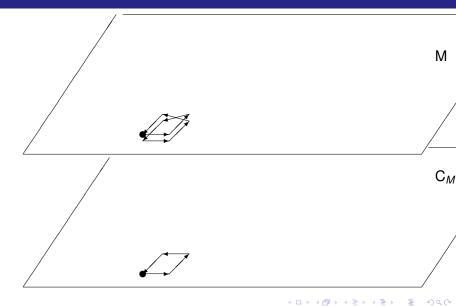
University of Oxford



On the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics



B. Zilber



B. Zilber

"The fundamental laws of physics seem to be expressible as succinct mathematical statements. ... does this fact tell us something important about the structure of the brain, or the physical world, or both?".

University of Oxford

B. Zilber