On Absence of 3-loop Divergence in $N=4$ Supergravity

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We argue that $N=4$ supergravity is 3-loop UV finite because the relevant supersymmetric candidate counterterm is known to be SL(2, $\mathbb{R}$) $\times$ SO(6) invariant, which violates the Noether-Gaillard-Zumino current conservation. Analogous arguments, based on the universality properties of groups of type E7, also apply to $N=5,6,8$ in 4,5,7 loops, respectively, since the $1/N$ BPS invariants break duality symmetry between Bianchi identities and quantum corrected vector field equations.

I. INTRODUCTION

A new miraculous cancellation of the 3-loop ultraviolet divergence was discovered \[1\] at 3-loops in $d=4$ $N=4$ supergravity using $d=4$ $N=4$ and $N=0$ Yang-Mills theory and BCJ color-kinematic duality \[2\]. Pure $d=4$ $N=4$ supergravity \[3\] (without vector multiplets) has an electromagnetic $SL(2, \mathbb{R}) \times SO(6)$ duality group $\mathcal{G}$ which will be central for our discussion of $N=4$.

Meanwhile, the earlier recent work \[3\] predicted that all $N \geq 4$ supergravities are expected to be UV divergent at loop order $L = N-1$, since the new supersymmetric and duality invariant $1/N$ BPS candidate counterterms were constructed at the fully non-linear level. In particular for $N=4$ the 3-loop $R^4$ divergence was predicted and for $N=8$ the 7-loop $\partial^8 R^4$ divergence was predicted, complementing the analysis in \[1\]. It is therefore rather important to understand the origin of the cancellation of the UV divergences of tens of thousands of high-rank tensor integrals in \[1\].

The difference with the previous case of 3-loop UV finiteness of $N=8$ \[7\] is that the candidate counterterm \[8\] was only known at the linear level. But this difference may not be important since the duality argument in \[3\] for explanation of the 3-loop finiteness in $N=8$, is also valid for $N=4$, as we will show below. The argument in \[8\] is based on duality current conservation and associated with it Noether-Gaillard-Zumino (NGZ) identity \[10\]. The argument is valid beyond $N=8$ case due to universality property of extended supergravity duality groups $\mathcal{G}$, which belong to groups of type E7 \[11\].

One has to keep in mind that $N=4$ supergravity has a 1-loop triangle anomaly \[12\]. Therefore each higher-loop computation may, or may not support the formal path integral predictions. By looking at Table I in \[1\] it seems likely that the anomaly may not yet kicked in at the 4-graviton 3-loop level. The role of anomaly requires a separate investigation here. But the underlying path integral prediction \[8\] for $N=4$ supergravity is the $SL(2, \mathbb{R}) \times SO(6)$ duality current conservation and associated with it Noether-Gaillard-Zumino (NGZ) identity \[10\].

The old counterterm prediction paradigm was developed in \[8, 13\] and applied recently in \[5\]. The new point made in \[8\] required to revisit this paradigm: It was shown that the electro-magnetic duality symmetry rotating the Bianchi identities $\partial_\mu F^\mu = 0$ into the vector field equations $\partial_\mu G^\mu = 0$ is always broken when supersymmetric duality invariant quantum corrections are added to classical extended supergravity. This means, quite unexpectedly, that the duality invariant counterterms, including the counterterms constructed in \[3\], may be forbidden by the requirement of duality invariance of the theory modified by quantum corrections.

A need to revisit the old counterterm paradigm was confirmed in \[14\]. However, it was conjectured there that it is always possible to restore the duality symmetry in presence of a counterterm, by modifying the original theory. The procedure of restoration of duality symmetry of the deformed action was further developed in \[15–17\]. It was demonstrated there that the restoration of duality broken by the quartic counterterm deformation requires the existence of the Born-Infeld type deformation, involving higher derivatives. So far the restoration procedure performed for various models in \[12–17\] was only efficient for $U(1)$ duality models, not including supergravity. Moreover, even if a successful Born-Infeld version of $N=4$ and $N=8$ supergravity were constructed, it is not obvious whether the existence of such new highly nonlinear theories would have any implications for the issue of UV finiteness of the original $N=4$ and $N=8$ supergravity, see a discussion of this issue in \[17\].

In this paper we will show, along the lines of \[9\], that the requirement of duality symmetry forbids the 3-loop UV divergence in $N=4$ supergravity. In the absence of an alternative explanation of the 3-loop finiteness of $N=4$ supergravity, the result of the computation in \[1\] may be viewed as an evidence that our duality argument \[9\] provides a useful tool for investigation of UV properties of extended supergravity.

\[1\] The absence of the 3-loop UV divergence in $N=4$ $d=4$ supergravity was also derived in \[3\] using the 2-loop heterotic string theory computation and the $R^4$ non-renormalization theorem.
II. UNIVERSALITY OF DUALITY GROUPS OF TYPE E7 IN EXTENDED SUPERGRAVITIES

In all extended supergravities $N \geq 4$ scalars are in the coset space $G/H$ where the duality group $G$ is of type E7. This includes $SL(2, \mathbb{R}) \times SU(4)$, $SU(5, 1)$, $SO^*(12)$ and $E_{7(7)}$ for $N=4, 5, 6, 8$ respectively. In particular, duality groups $G$ of type E7 in extended supergravity admit a symplectic representation, a doublet $(F, G)$ which transforms in the fundamental representation of $Sp(2n, \mathbb{R})$:

$$\left( \begin{array}{c} F \\ G \end{array} \right)' = \left( \begin{array}{cc} A & B \\ C & D \end{array} \right) \left( \begin{array}{c} F \\ G \end{array} \right),$$

(1)

whereas the gauge kinetic $n \times n$ matrix $N(\phi)$ transforms via fractional transformation

$$N(\phi)' = (C + DN)(A + BN)^{-1}.$$  

(2)

Here the vector part of the action is

$$\mathcal{L}_v = \frac{1}{4} F \cdot \text{Im} N(\phi) \cdot F + F \cdot \text{Re} N(\phi) \cdot \tilde{F},$$

(3)

where the symbol $\cdot$ is used for matrix multiplication. The scalar part is

$$\mathcal{L}_s = \frac{1}{2} g_{ij}(\phi) \partial_\mu \phi^i \partial^\mu \phi^j,$$

(4)

where $g_{ij}(\phi)$ is the scalar metric of the nonlinear $\sigma$-model associated with the $G/H$ coset space. The dual vector field strength is defined as

$$\tilde{G}^{\mu\nu}(F, \phi) \equiv 2 \frac{\delta S_v(F, \phi)}{\delta F^{\mu\nu}}.$$  

(5)

The electro-magnetic duality symmetry

$$\left( \begin{array}{c} \partial_\mu \tilde{F}^{\mu\nu} \\ \partial_\mu \tilde{G}^{\mu\nu} \end{array} \right)' = \left( \begin{array}{cc} A & B \\ C & D \end{array} \right) \left( \begin{array}{c} \partial_\mu \tilde{F}^{\mu\nu} \\ \partial_\mu \tilde{G}^{\mu\nu} \end{array} \right),$$

(6)

rotating the Bianchi identities $\partial_\mu \tilde{F}^{\mu\nu} = 0$ into the vector field equations $\partial_\mu \tilde{G}^{\mu\nu} = 0$, is always broken when duality invariant quantum corrections are added to classical extended supergravity. The total quantum corrected action has to transform under duality as follows:

$$\frac{\delta}{\delta \tilde{F}^{\mu\nu}} \left( S[F', \varphi'] - S[F, \varphi] - \frac{1}{4} \int (\tilde{F}CF + \tilde{G}BG) \right) = 0.$$  

(7)

Here the duality transformation on vectors acts so that the Noether-Gaillard-Zumino (NGZ) duality current is conserved. The reason for this identity is that $G$ has to transform as in (1) but this should also be consistent with its definition given in (5) where the $G$ transformations rules depend on those of $F$ and $\phi$. When the action is deformed, for example by counterterms, so that $S_v = S_v^c + \lambda S_v^t$, $G$ is also deformed so that $G(F, \phi) = G^c(F, \phi) + G^t(F, \phi)$. The classical supergravity action satisfy NGZ identity, but the counterterms are duality-invariant, which means that

$$S^c[F', \varphi'] = S^c[F, \varphi],$$

(8)

which violates the current conservation for the quantum corrected action, when the counterterms are the only addition to the classical action.

III. COUNTERTERM PREDICTION FOR $N \geq 4$, $L = \mathcal{N} - 1$ UV DIVERGENCE

The true geometric on shell supersymmetric and duality invariant candidate non-BPS counterterms appear for the first time in $L = N$, for example for $N=4 \quad L = 4$, or for $N=8 \quad L = 8$. The status of $1/N$ BPS invariants, next to geometric ones, was not clear for a very long time. The situation was clarified recently in [3] where it was shown that each of these superinvariants can be defined by the integral over the fraction of the superspace, $4(N-1)$ fermionic coordinates, and nevertheless is both supersymmetric as well as duality invariant at the fully non-linear level. These candidate counterterms are given in [3]

$$I^N = \kappa^{2(L-1)} \int d\mu(N, 1, 1) B_{\alpha\beta} B^{\alpha\beta},$$

(9)

where $L = \mathcal{N} - 1$ and $N = 4, 5, 6, 8$. Here $B_{\alpha\beta}$ is some bi-linear combination of the torsion superfield, whose first component is a gaugino field and the measure of integration $d\mu(N, 1, 1)$ is defined with the help of a harmonic superspace, which allows to single out one particular direction in $\mathcal{N}$ space as a special. For example, in $N=4$

$$B_{\alpha\beta} \equiv B_{\alpha\beta}^1, \quad B_{\alpha\beta}^l \equiv \chi_{\alpha\beta}^{ij} \chi_{\alpha\beta}^{kl},$$

(10)

where the spinorial superfield $\chi_{\alpha\beta}$ and its conjugate $\chi_{\alpha\beta}^{ij}$ are invariant under the duality group $SL(2, \mathbb{R}) \times SO(6)$ and direction 1 (in $i, j, k = 1, 2, 3, 4$) is special.

Spinors are invariant under $G$-duality, in particular for $N=4$ spinorial superfield $\chi_{\alpha\beta}$ and its conjugate are $SL(2, \mathbb{R}) \times SO(6)$ invariant, for $N=5$ they are $SU(5, 1)$ invariant, for $N=6$ they are $SO^*(12)$ and for $N=8$ they are $E_{7(7)}$ invariant. This leads to the statement that $I^{N=4}$ is invariant under $SL(2, \mathbb{R}) \times SO(6)$, $I^{N=5}$ is invariant under $SU(5, 1)$ $I^{N=6}$ is one of the two possible $SO^*(12)$ invariants, and $I^{N=8}$ is invariant under $E_{7(7)}$ where $I^N$ is defined in (9) for all these cases. Supersymmetry is
manifest since the expression is defined in an on shell superspace. Finally, spinors transform under $\mathcal{H}$-symmetry, if it is not gauge-fixed, or under the compensating transformation, if it is gauge-fixed, but the counterterms are constructed to be $\mathcal{H}$-invariant.

It is therefore not accidental that the prediction in [5] about the $\mathcal{N}=4$, $L=3$ and $\mathcal{N}=8$, $L=7$ and intermediate cases, $\mathcal{N}=5$, $L=4$ and $\mathcal{N}=6$, $L=5$, concerning the universal candidate counterterms in [13] has the flavor of universality for all of these cases. But it just turned out [1] that $\mathcal{N}=4$, $L=3$ is free of divergences, whereas the case $\mathcal{N}=8$, $L=7$ is beyond our reach, computationally.

We will now proceed with the explanation of the argument in [9] which predicts that all these cases are free of divergences. The general case of $\mathcal{G}$-duality explained in [10], [9] for $\mathcal{N}$-extended supergravity and the one for $\mathcal{N}=8$ with $E_{7(7)}$ duality are both complicated technically. The case of $\mathcal{N}=4$ with $SL(2,\mathbb{R}) \times SO(6)$ symmetry of equations of motion and Bianchi identities is, fortunately, relatively simple.

IV. A TOY MODEL OF $\mathcal{N}=4$ SUPERGRAVITY

We will discuss the $\mathcal{N}=4$ supergravity formulation [3] in conventions of [19], which also provides the string theory context of this model. In the toy model we will keep the axion-dilaton and only one vector field, so that only the $SL(2,\mathbb{R})$ duality will be present. The coset space $\frac{U(1)}{\mathbb{Z}_2}$ is $SL(2,\mathbb{R})$. The scalar part of the action depending on $\tau = \chi + ie^{-\phi}$ is

$$L_s = -\frac{1}{2} \frac{\partial \tau \partial^\tau + \tau^2}{1 - \tau^2} = (\partial_\mu \phi \partial^\mu \phi + e^{2\phi} \partial_\mu \chi \partial^\mu \chi).$$

This is a $\sigma$-model action for the $\frac{SL(2,\mathbb{R})}{U(1)}$ coset space, see [19] for details. It is a particular case of the general $\mathcal{G}/\mathcal{H}$ scalar action, given in [4]. The action (11) is $SL(2,\mathbb{R})$ invariant under duality transformation:

$$\tau' = \frac{D \tau + C}{B \tau + A},$$

with real global parameters $A, B, C, D$ restricted by $AD - BC = 1$ (in general case in [11] each $A, B, C, D$ is given by a $n \times n$ matrix, restricted by the $Sp(2n, \mathbb{R})$ condition). The vector part of the bosonic action is

$$L_v = -\frac{1}{4} (e^{-\phi} F^2 + \chi \tilde{F}^2),$$

where $F_{\mu \lambda} = \partial_\mu A_\lambda - \partial_\lambda A_\mu$ and $\tilde{F}^{\mu \lambda} = \frac{1}{2} e^{-1} \epsilon^{\mu \nu \lambda \sigma} F_{\nu \lambda \sigma}$. Up to a change of conventions between [19] describing $\mathcal{N}=4$ and generic extended supergravities in [10] the general kinetic term for vectors $N(\phi)$ can be identified with $\tau$ in $\mathcal{N}=4$.

There is a Bianchi identity for the vector field $\partial^\mu \tilde{F}_{\mu \nu} = 0$. To define a duality transformation action on vectors we need to form an $SL(2,\mathbb{R})$ doublet as defined in [13] so that the vector field equations are $\partial^\mu \tilde{G}_{\mu \nu} = 0$. The $SL(2,\mathbb{R})$ symmetry action on the single vector doublet is given in [1] for the $Sp(2n, \mathbb{R})$ with $n = 1$. Under these transformations equations of motion and Bianchi identities are mixed, as shown in [14]. One can check that the variation of the vector part of the classical vector action under $SL(2,\mathbb{R})$ transformation of scalars and vectors given in [12], [11], with $G$ defined in [15] is in agreement with the NGZ identity [17]. Note that the action is invariant under \textit{“electric”} transformations with parameters $A, D$ when $B = C = 0$. It is only non-invariant when the off-diagonal transformations mixing \textit{“electric”} components with \textit{“magnetic”}, $B, C$ are involved which include a shift of a scalar, $\tau \rightarrow \tau + \text{const}$. For example, for $A = 1, D = 1$, and $B = \beta, C = \gamma$,

$$\delta F = \beta G, \quad \delta G = \gamma F, \quad \delta \tau = \gamma - \beta \tau.$$ (14)

That is why the non-trivial part of duality symmetry involves the soft scalar limits, studied in the recent analysis of the supergravity counterterms, for example in [6], but it also mixes electric and magnetic fields.

V. DUALITY INVARIANT COUNTERTERMS

It was important in the proof of duality invariance of $I^N$ in [9] that the superfield $\chi_{\dot{i}ijk}$ is manifestly invariant under $\mathcal{G}$ and covariant under $\mathcal{H}$ for all $\mathcal{N} \geq 4$ where scalars are in $\frac{U(1)}{\mathbb{Z}_2}$. In our toy model of $\mathcal{N}=4$ supergravity with gauge-fixed local $\mathcal{H} = U(1)$ when the model has only one complex physical scalar $\tau$, an illustration of the point above can be given. Under supersymmetry the first component of the spinor superfield transformations as follows

$$\delta \chi_{\alpha \dot{i}jk} = e^{-\phi/2} F_{\alpha \dot{\beta}[ij} \epsilon_{k]}^{\beta} + \ldots$$ (15)

Under global $SL(2,\mathbb{R})$

$$(e^{-\phi/2})' = \frac{1}{|B \tau + A|} e^{-\phi/2}, \quad (F_{\alpha \dot{\beta}ij})' = (B \tau + A) F_{\alpha \dot{\beta}ij}$$ (16)

Therefore $e^{-\phi/2} F_{\alpha \dot{\beta}ij}$ transforms with the scalar-dependent phase

$$(e^{-\phi/2} F_{\alpha \dot{\beta}ij})' = \frac{B \tau + A}{|B \tau + A|} e^{-\phi/2} F_{\alpha \dot{\beta}ij},$$ (17)

which is a $\tau$-field dependent compensating transformation for local $U(1)$ gauge-fixing. Thus the superfield $\chi_{\dot{i}ijk}$ also transforms only under the compensating $U(1)$ and the product of two such spinorial superfields $\tilde{B}^l_{\dot{\alpha} \beta k} \equiv \chi_{\dot{l}ij}^{\dot{k} \beta \alpha} \chi_{\dot{i}jk}$ is both $SL(2,\mathbb{R})$ and $U(1)$ invariant.
Thus, if we would look at the bosonic part of the supergravity counterterms, in particular, $I^N$ in (9), we would find that they - being functions of scalars and vectors - are invariant under $SL(2, \mathbb{R})$ symmetry as shown in eq. (10). Therefore the deformed action

$$S_{def} = S_{cl} + \lambda I^N$$

(18)

with deformed $SL(2, \mathbb{R})$ doublet $(F, G)$, where

$$G = G_{cl} + 2\lambda \frac{\delta I^N}{\delta F},$$

(19)

does not satisfy the NGZ identity and duality symmetry is broken. In particular, for the $N=4, L=3$ case the UV divergence $I^N=4$ would break the duality.

VI. BORN-INFELD TYPE SUPERGRAVITY?

In [14] it was conjectured that it may be possible to develop the deformation of the action [15] further, so that the new action

$$\tilde{S}_{def} = S_{cl} + \lambda S_1 + \lambda^2 S_2 + ... \lambda^n S_n + ...$$

(20)

is consistent with NGZ identity (7), despite the fact that with $S_n = 0$ for $n \geq 2$ the duality current conservation is broken. It was suggested in [14] that the duality argument of [9] may not imply UV finiteness in the classes of the models where such construction is possible.

We have studied this proposal in [13]-[17] and found that a certain generalization of the procedure or Ref. [14] is indeed possible. This lead to the discovery of new, previously unknown models with electro-magnetic duality group $\mathcal{G} = U(1)$. In particular, the Born-Infeld model with higher derivatives with initial deformation of the Maxwell action via open string corrections $\lambda (\partial F)^4$ with $\lambda = (\alpha')^4$ was completed, a recursive formula for $S_n$ in [20] was found in [16] and all terms of the type $\lambda^n \partial^{4n} F^{2n+2}$ were produced algorithmically. Some large classes of models with non-linear $U(1)$ duality, generalizing the Born-Infeld model with $N=2$ global supersymmetry [20] were constructed in [17].

The reason for the infinite proliferation of Born-Infeld type terms with higher powers of $F$ in extended supergravities is the same as in the original Born-Infeld model [21]. Once the Maxwell action is deformed, by quartic in $F$ terms, an infinite number of $F^n$ terms has to be added in order to preserve the $U(1)$ duality at the non-linear level. The self-duality property of the Born-Infeld action,

$$F \tilde{F} + G \tilde{G} = 0,$$

(21)

which is a degenerate case of NGZ identity (7), was in fact discovered by Schrödinger [22] in 1935.

In classical extended supergravities the classical action is universally quadratic in $F$, see eq. (3). The 3-loop counterterms $R^4 + (\partial F)^4 + R^2 (\partial F)^2 + (\partial^2 \phi)^4 + ...$ have terms quartic in $\partial F$, so all higher order terms with more $F$ and more derivatives must be present in (20). When groups of type $E_7$ degenerate to $U(1)$ and extended supergravities degenerate to pure $\mathcal{N}=0$ Maxwell theory, we know the answer [16] for Born-Infeld model with higher derivatives, satisfying the NGZ constraint at the non-linear level when $G(F)$ depends on all powers of $F$. It is interesting that the $U(1)$ duality group is a degenerate case of groups of type $E_7$.

The concept of degeneration (when the quartic invariant becomes a perfect square) is easy to illustrate using the $E_7(7)$ invariant Cartan-Cremmer-Julia black hole entropy formula (23), $S = 4\pi \sqrt{J}$. It depends on one fundamental $56 (p^i, q_i), i = 1, ..., 8$

$$J_{E_7(7)} = p^i q_{jkl} q_{i} - \frac{1}{4} p^i q_{jkl} q_{i} q_{kl} q_{kl}$$

$$+ \frac{1}{96} \epsilon_{ijklmnopq} q_{ij} q_{kl} q_{mn} q_{pq}$$

$$+ \frac{1}{96} \epsilon_{ijklmnopq} p^i p^j p^k p^m p^np^pq.$$ (22)

In $\mathcal{N}=4$ the symplectic representation is $\mathbb{R} = (2, 6)$ in $SL(2, \mathbb{R}) \times SO(6)$, and the quartic invariant remains quartic, not degenerate, see eqs. (33) in [24]

$$J_{SL(2, \mathbb{R}) \times SO(6)} = q^2 p^2 - (q \cdot p)^2.$$ (23)

Reducing to $U(1)$ with $i = 1$ leads to a degeneration of the quartic invariant of groups of type $E_7$

$$J_{U(1)} = p^2 q^2 - \frac{1}{4} p^2 q^2 = \frac{3}{4} (pq)^2$$ (24)

into a perfect square [11, 18].

From the perspective of the UV finiteness of $\mathcal{N}=4$ and $\mathcal{N}=8$ supergravity, it is important that, at present, the Born-Infeld type duality symmetric model are known only for the subclass of degenerate groups of type $E_7$, namely for $U(1)$ duality models. This may explain why the duality argument [9], which was developed for the investigation of the conjectured all-loop finiteness of the $\mathcal{N}=8$ supergravity, may also account for the $\mathcal{N}=4$ case: In both cases the corresponding groups are non-degenerate groups of type $E_7$.

VII. DISCUSSION

The 3-loop UV finiteness of $\mathcal{N}=8$ was discovered [12] back in 2007. Five years later, a similar result was ob-
tained in $\mathcal{N}=4$ supergravity \cite{1}. It is interesting that
the origin of miraculous cancellations in both cases may be
related to the universality of type E7 duality groups
in classical extended supergravities. These dualities
(including $E_{7(7)}$ and $SL(2,\mathbb{R}) \times SO(6)$, respectively)
and local extended supersymmetry seem to control the Feyn-
man graphs at the 3-loop quantum level. In $\mathcal{N}=8$
case other explanations of the 3-loop UV finiteness were pro-
posed over the years, but for $\mathcal{N}=4$ the duality current
conservation is the only explanation available at present.
More computational data, especially for anomaly-free
$\mathcal{N}=5$, $\mathcal{N}=4$ and $\mathcal{N}=6$, $\mathcal{N}=5$ will help to test this expla-
nation of the 3-loop $\mathcal{N}=4$ and $\mathcal{N}=8$ miracles. In $\mathcal{N}=4$
one has to keep in mind that the anomaly may interfere
with symmetry expectations starting from $\mathcal{N}=4$. This is-
sue has to be investigated more thoroughly, since it looks
plausible that $\mathcal{N}=4$ $\mathcal{L}=4$ result could be in reach.

In conclusion, we believe that the duality current con-
servation argument in \cite{9}, which explains the just estab-
lished 3-loop finiteness of $\mathcal{N}=4$ supergravity \cite{1}, should
be studied more extensively and it may help to clarify
the UV properties of extended supergravities.

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