

# Some Remarks on Quadratic Gravity

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Quantum Gravity and Cosmology  
ShanghaiTech University  
July 4, 2024



**Radboud  
Universiteit**



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$$D = 1 + 3$$

$$(- + + +)$$

$$c = 1 = \hbar$$

$$\Lambda \geq 0$$



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# Introduction

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Einstein's General Relativity:

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[Stelle PRD (1977)]

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( M_p^2 (R - 2\Lambda) + \frac{\alpha}{6} R^2 - \frac{\beta}{2} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \right)$$

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Massive spin-0

Massive spin-2 ghost

# Outline

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( M_p^2 (R - 2\Lambda) + \frac{\alpha}{6} R^2 - \frac{\beta}{2} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \right)$$

1. Motivations for Quadratic Gravity [theoretical and experimental]
2. Some remarks on its quantization(s)
3. Question:  $\lim_{\beta, \alpha \rightarrow \infty} S = ?$  [L.B., JHEP 12 (2023) 111]

# Motivations

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$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( M_p^2 (R - 2\Lambda) + \frac{\alpha}{6} R^2 - \frac{\beta}{2} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \right)$$

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- Inflation for free:  $\alpha \sim 10^{10}$  [Starobinsky 1980+]



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- A 'unique' strictly renormalizable QFT of gravity in  $D = 4$
- Inflation for free:  $\alpha \sim 10^{10}$  [Starobinsky 1980+]
- New physics in the sub-Planckian regime [unlike EFTs of GR]:

$$m_0 = \frac{M_p}{\sqrt{\alpha}}, \quad m_2 = \frac{M_p}{\sqrt{\beta}}, \quad \alpha, \beta \gg 1 \quad \Rightarrow \quad m_0, m_2 \ll M_p$$

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- Future measurement of tensor-to-scalar ratio can constrain  $\beta$

[Salvio 2017+; Anselmi, Bianchi, Piva 2019]

# Motivations

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What about the spin-2 ghost?

# Remarks on the quantization(s)

Scalar toy model:

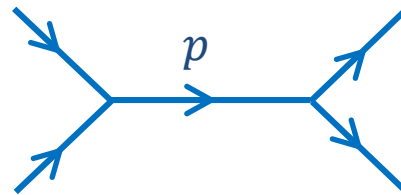
$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2} \phi \square \left( 1 - \frac{\square}{M^2} \right) \phi - V(\phi) \Rightarrow G(p^2) = \frac{1}{p^2 - i\epsilon} - \frac{1}{p^2 + M^2 - i\epsilon}$$

ghost

Optical theorem:

$$S^+ S = 1, \quad S = 1 + iT,$$
$$1 = \sum_{\{n\}} c_n |n\rangle \langle n| \quad \Rightarrow \quad 2\text{Im}\{\langle a|T|a\rangle\} = \sum_{\{n\}} c_n |\langle n|T|a\rangle|^2$$

Tree-level example ( $V \sim \phi^3$ ):



# Remarks on the quantization(s)

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$$\text{Im}\{\langle a|T|a\rangle\} \sim \pi [\delta(p^2) - \text{sign}(\epsilon)\delta(p^2 + M^2)]$$

# Remarks on the quantization(s)

## Feynman ghost with positive norms

$$G(p^2) = \frac{1}{p^2 - i\epsilon} - \frac{1}{p^2 + M^2 - i\epsilon}$$

$$(\epsilon > 0, \epsilon > 0)$$

$$S^+ S = 1, \quad S = 1 + iT,$$
$$1 = \sum_{\{n\}} c_n |n\rangle\langle n|, \quad c_n^{normal} > 0$$
$$c_n^{ghost} > 0$$

Optical theorem:

$$2\text{Im}\{\langle a|T|a\rangle\} = \sum_{\{n\}} c_n |\langle n|T|a\rangle|^2 \geq 0$$

Tree level example:

$$\text{Im}\{\langle a|T|a\rangle\} \sim \pi [\delta(p^2) - \delta(p^2 + M^2)]$$

Unitarity is violated!

# Remarks on the quantization(s)

## 1) Feynman ghost with negative norms

[Salvio, Strumia, Holdom...]

$$G(p^2) = \frac{1}{p^2 - i\epsilon} - \frac{1}{p^2 + M^2 - i\epsilon}$$

$$(\epsilon > 0, \epsilon > 0)$$

$$S^+ S = 1, \quad S = 1 + iT,$$
$$1 = \sum_{\{n\}} c_n |n\rangle\langle n|, \quad c_n^{normal} > 0$$
$$c_n^{ghost} < 0$$

Optical theorem:

$$2\text{Im}\{\langle a|T|a\rangle\} = \sum_{\{n\}} c_n |\langle n|T|a\rangle|^2 \gtrless 0$$

Tree level example:

$$\text{Im}\{\langle a|T|a\rangle\} \sim \pi [\delta(p^2) - \delta(p^2 + M^2)] \gtrless 0$$

Unitarity is preserved!

# Remarks on the quantization(s)

## 2) Anti-Feynman ghost with positive norms

[Donoghue, Menezes,...]

$$G(p^2) = \frac{1}{p^2 - i\epsilon} - \frac{1}{p^2 + M^2 - i\varepsilon}$$

$$(\epsilon > 0, \varepsilon < 0)$$

$$S^+ S = 1, \quad S = 1 + iT,$$
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Optical theorem:

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Tree level example:

$$\text{Im}\{\langle a|T|a\rangle\} \sim \pi [\delta(p^2) + (p^2 + M^2)] \geq 0$$

Unitarity is preserved!



# Remarks on the quantization(s)

## 3) Fakeon ghost

[Anselmi, Piva 2017+]

$$G(p^2) = \frac{1}{p^2 - i\epsilon} - \frac{1}{2} \left[ \frac{1}{p^2 + M^2 - i\epsilon} + \frac{1}{p^2 + M^2 + i\epsilon} \right]$$

$$(\epsilon > 0, \epsilon > 0)$$

$$S^+ S = 1, \quad S = 1 + iT,$$
$$1 = \sum_{\{n\}} c_n |n\rangle\langle n|, \quad c_n^{normal} > 0$$

“ $c_n^{ghost} = 0$ ”

Optical theorem:

$$2\text{Im}\{\langle a|T|a\rangle\} = \sum_{\{n\}} c_n^{normal} |\langle n|T|a\rangle|^2 \geq 0$$

Tree level example:

$$\text{Im}\{\langle a|T|a\rangle\} \sim \pi \delta(p^2) \geq 0$$

Unitarity is preserved!

# Remarks on the quantization(s)

A recent question [Kubo & Kugo, arXiv:2402.15956]

Toy model:

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{2} \phi(\square - m^2)\phi + \gamma \frac{1}{2} \chi(\square - M^2)\chi - g\chi\phi^2 + \dots, \quad M \geq 2m$$

Resum the self-energies in the  $\chi$ -propagator: [nice ref.: Anselmi, JHEP 06 (2022) 058]

$$\text{---}\chi\text{---}\bigcirc\text{---}\chi\text{---} = \text{---}\chi\text{---} + \text{---}\chi\text{---}\bigcirc\text{---}\chi\text{---} + \dots$$

$$G_\chi(p^2) = \frac{\gamma}{p^2 + M^2 - \zeta i\varepsilon} \quad \rightarrow \quad \bar{G}_\chi(p^2) = \frac{\gamma}{p^2 + M_{ph}^2 - i(\zeta\varepsilon + \gamma M_{ph}\Gamma)}$$

$$\gamma = \pm 1, \quad \zeta = \pm 1, \quad \varepsilon > 0, \quad \Gamma > 0$$

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**Question:** do the complex poles appear in the physical or unphysical sheet?

# Remarks on the quantization(s)

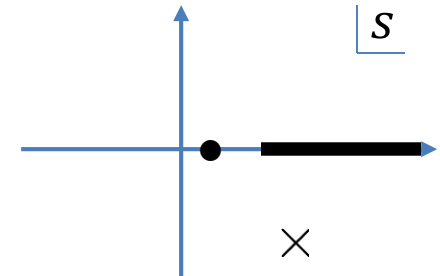
Standard case  $\gamma = 1, \quad \zeta = 1$

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$\chi$ -propagator:  $s \equiv -p^2, \quad \bar{G}_\chi(s) = \lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0^+} \bar{G}_\chi(s + i\varepsilon)$

Resummation of  $\chi$ -propagator:

$$\bar{G}_\chi(s) = \frac{1}{-s + M_{ph}^2 - i(\varepsilon + M_{ph}\Gamma)}$$



[e.g., see QFT book by Brown]

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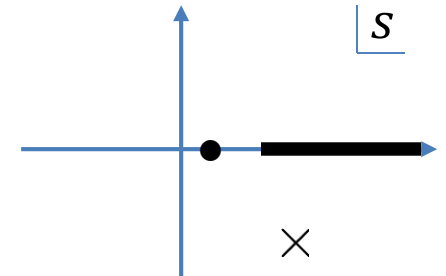
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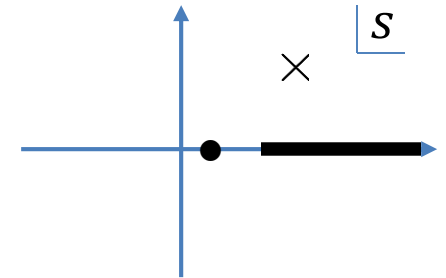
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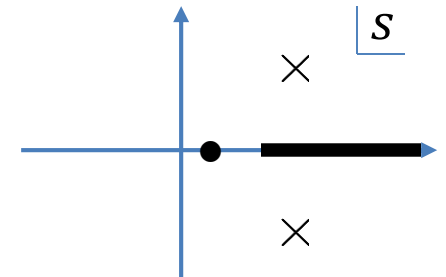
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The complex pole  $s = M_{ph}^2 + iM_{ph}\Gamma$  is located on the first sheet !!!

Asymptotic states with complex masses...?!?!?

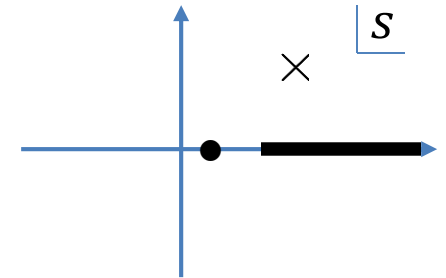


# Remarks on the quantization(s)

2) Anti-Feynman ghost with positive norm  $\gamma = -1, \quad \zeta = -1$

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The complex pole  $s = M_{ph}^2 + iM_{ph}\Gamma$  is located on the second sheet !

NO asymptotic states with complex mass!



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$$\begin{aligned} G(x) &= \int \frac{d^4 p}{(2\pi)^4} e^{ip \cdot x} \frac{M^2}{(p^2 - i\epsilon)(p^2 + M^2 + i\epsilon)} \\ &= \int \frac{d^4 p}{(2\pi)^4} e^{ip \cdot x} \left[ \frac{1}{p^2 - i\epsilon} - \frac{1}{p^2 + M^2 + i\epsilon} \right] \end{aligned}$$

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- 2 prescriptions together **but** only 1 type of Wick rotation
- Good behavior of position-space propagator is necessary for a good UV behavior of loop integrals

e.g. 
$$\int \frac{d^4 k}{(2\pi)^4} \frac{1}{k^2(k^2 + M^2)} \frac{1}{k^2(k^2 + M^2)} \sim \int d^4 x G(x)G(-x)$$

## Question

---

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( M_p^2 (R - 2\Lambda) + \frac{\alpha}{6} R^2 - \frac{\beta}{2} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \right)$$

$$\lim_{\beta, \alpha \rightarrow \infty} S = ?$$

## Simpler example

$$S = -\frac{1}{4g^2} \int d^4x \hat{F}_{\mu\nu}^a \hat{F}^{a\mu\nu}, \quad \hat{F}_{\mu\nu}^a = \partial_\mu \hat{A}_\nu^a - \partial_\nu \hat{A}_\mu^a + f^{abc} \hat{A}_\mu^b \hat{A}_\nu^c$$

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Question:

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Canonically normalized field:

$$A_\mu^a = \frac{1}{g} \hat{A}_\mu^a \quad \Rightarrow \quad S = -\frac{1}{4} \int d^4x F_{\mu\nu}^a F^{a\mu\nu},$$

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Limit:

$$\lim_{g \rightarrow 0} S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x A_\mu^a (\eta^{\mu\nu} \square - \partial^\mu \partial^\nu) A_\nu^a \quad (A_\mu^a = \text{fixed})$$

## Question

---

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( M_p^2 (R - 2\Lambda) + \frac{\alpha}{6} R^2 - \frac{\beta}{2} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \right)$$

$$\lim_{\beta, \alpha \rightarrow \infty} S = ?$$

1. Identify the canonically normalized fields
2. Identify the interaction couplings
3. Determine the structure of the particle spectrum

## Additional spin-0 field

$$S[g, \phi] = \frac{\bar{M}_p^2}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} (R - 2\Lambda) - \frac{\beta}{4} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} + S_0[g, \phi],$$

$$S_0[g, \phi] = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -\frac{1}{2} \nabla^\mu \phi \nabla_\mu \phi - \frac{m_0^2}{2} \frac{3\bar{M}_p^2}{2} \left( 1 - e^{\sqrt{2/3}\phi/\bar{M}_p} \right)^2 \right]$$

$$\bar{M}_p^2 \equiv M_p^2 + \frac{4}{3} \alpha \Lambda$$

Shifted Planck Mass when  $\Lambda \neq 0$

$$m_0^2 \equiv \frac{M_p^2}{\alpha}$$

Mass of the spin-0 field

# Additional spin-2 field

Spin-2 field  $f_{\mu\nu}$ :

[Kaku et al. (1977); Hindawi et al. (1996); Tekin (2016); Anselmi & Piva (2018)]

$$S[g, \phi, f] = \frac{\tilde{M}_p^2}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} (R - 2\Lambda) + S_0[g, \phi] \\ - \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ \tilde{M}_p (G_{\mu\nu} + \Lambda g_{\mu\nu}) f^{\mu\nu} - \frac{m_2^2}{2} (f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} - f^2) \right]$$

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Diagonalization:  $g_{\mu\nu} \rightarrow g_{\mu\nu} - \frac{2}{\tilde{M}_p} f_{\mu\nu}$

$$S[g, \phi, f] = \frac{\tilde{M}_p^2}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} (R - 2\Lambda) + S_0[g - 2f/\tilde{M}_p, \phi] + S_2[g, f],$$

$$\tilde{M}_p^2 \equiv M_p^2 + \frac{2}{3} (2\alpha + \beta) \Lambda$$

Shifted Planck Mass when  $\Lambda \neq 0$

## Additional spin-2 field

$$\begin{aligned}
 S_2[g, f] = & -S_{FP}[g, f] - \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ (2f_\mu^\rho f_{\rho\nu} - f f_{\mu\nu}) R^{\mu\nu} + \left( \Lambda - \frac{R}{2} \right) \left( f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2} f^2 \right) \right] \\
 & - \frac{1}{2} \frac{m_2^2}{\tilde{M}_p} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} [5f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} f - 4f^{\mu\nu} f_\mu^\rho f_{\rho\nu} - f^3] \\
 & + \frac{8}{3} \frac{1}{M_p^2} \frac{1}{\tilde{M}_p} \int d^4x d^4y d^4z \frac{\delta^{(3)} S_{EH}}{\delta g_{\mu\nu}(x) \delta g_{\rho\sigma}(y) \delta g_{\alpha\beta}(z)} f_{\mu\nu}(x) f_{\rho\sigma}(y) f_{\alpha\beta}(z) \\
 & + O(f^4)
 \end{aligned}$$

$S_{PF}[g, f]$  is a covariantized Fierz-Pauli action for  $f_{\mu\nu}$  with mass  $m_2^2$

$$m_2^2 = \frac{\tilde{M}_p^2}{\beta} = \frac{M_p^2}{\beta} + \frac{2}{3} \left( 2 \frac{\alpha}{\beta} + 1 \right) \Lambda$$

spin-2 ghost mass depends on  $\Lambda$  !

$$m_2^2 \geq \frac{2}{3} \Lambda$$

$$(\Lambda \geq 0, \beta > 0)$$

# Couplings

n-point interaction couplings:

$$\sim \left(\frac{1}{\tilde{M}_p}\right)^{n-2} = \left(\frac{1}{M_p}\right)^{n-2} \left(\frac{1}{1+2\Lambda(2\alpha+\beta)/3M_p^2}\right)^{\frac{n-2}{2}}$$

$$\sim \left(\frac{1}{\bar{M}_p}\right)^{n-2} = \left(\frac{1}{M_p}\right)^{n-2} \left(\frac{1}{1+4\Lambda\alpha/3M_p^2}\right)^{\frac{n-2}{2}}$$

Couplings dependence on  $\Lambda$   $\Rightarrow$  additional dependence on  $\beta$  and  $\alpha$  !

# Degrees of freedom

Linear analysis:

$$\frac{\delta S}{\delta f^{\mu\nu}} = 0 \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad \tilde{M}_p(G_{\mu\nu} + \Lambda g_{\mu\nu}) = m_2^2(f_{\mu\nu} - g_{\mu\nu}f)$$

4 Constraints:

$$\nabla_\mu f_\nu^\mu = \nabla_\nu f$$



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4 Constraints:

$$\nabla_\mu f_\nu^\mu = \nabla_\nu f$$

$$g^{\mu\nu} \frac{\delta S}{\delta g^{\mu\nu}} = 0 \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad \tilde{M}_p \left( m_2^2 - \frac{2}{3} \Lambda \right) f = 0$$

1 trace constraint:

$$f = 0 \quad (m_2^2 - 2\Lambda/3 \neq 0)$$

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1 trace constraint:

$$f = 0$$

$$(m_2^2 - 2\Lambda/3 \neq 0)$$

# dof  $f_{\mu\nu}$ :  $10 - 4 - 1 = 5 \quad \Rightarrow \quad$  massive spin-2 with 5 helicities

## Degrees of freedom: remark

---

$$\tilde{M}_p \left( m_2^2 - \frac{2}{3} \Lambda \right) f = 0, \quad m_2^2 - \frac{2}{3} \Lambda = 0 \quad ?$$

In this case the linear trace equation vanishes identically

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Two possibilities:

1.  $\Lambda = 0$ :  $m_2^2 = 0$  (massless)
2.  $\Lambda \neq 0$ :  $m_2^2 = \frac{2}{3} \Lambda$  (partially massless)

These cases need a separate discussion!

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These cases need a separate discussion!

NB:

$$\beta \rightarrow \infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad m_2^2 - \frac{2\Lambda}{3} = \frac{\bar{M}_p^2}{\beta} \rightarrow 0$$

## Case $\Lambda = 0$

Stückelberg formalism:

$$f_{\mu\nu} = \varphi_{\mu\nu} + \frac{1}{m_2} (\nabla_\mu A_\nu + \nabla_\nu A_\mu) + \frac{2}{m_2^2} \nabla_\mu \nabla_\nu \chi$$

The limit is regular in  $D = 4$ :

$$\lim_{\beta \rightarrow \infty} S = \frac{M_p^2}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} R - M_p \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} G_{\mu\nu} \varphi^{\mu\nu} + \frac{1}{4} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} F^{\mu\nu} F_{\mu\nu} + S_{\phi\chi}[g, \phi, \chi]$$

$$S_{\phi\chi}[g, \phi, \chi] = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ \frac{1}{2} e^{-\sqrt{2/3}\chi/M_p} (\nabla_\mu \chi \nabla^\mu \chi - \nabla_\mu \phi \nabla^\mu \phi) - \frac{m_0^2}{2} \frac{3M_p^2}{2} e^{-2\sqrt{2/3}\chi/M_p} \left( 1 - e^{\sqrt{2/3}\phi/M_p} \right)^2 \right]$$

$f_{\mu\nu}$  splits into 5 interacting massless ghost-like dofs ( $\pm 2, \pm 1, 0$ )

## Case $\Lambda > 0$

---

It is NOT a massless limit:

$$\beta \rightarrow \infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad m_2^2 = \frac{\bar{M}_p^2}{\beta} + \frac{2}{3}\Lambda \rightarrow \frac{2}{3}\Lambda$$

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NB: In Massive Gravity theories this limit is known as *partially massless limit* and in general may lead to strong coupling! [de Rham et al. (2018)]



## Case $\Lambda > 0$

$$\lim_{\beta \rightarrow \infty} S = S_{EH}^{(2)}[\bar{g}, h] - S_{FP}^{(m^2=2\Lambda/3)}[\bar{g}, \varphi] + S_{\phi\chi}[g, \phi, \chi]$$

$$S_{FP}^{(m^2=2\Lambda/3)} = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -\frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho \varphi_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\rho \varphi^{\mu\nu} + \nabla_\rho \varphi_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\mu \varphi^{\rho\nu} - \nabla_\mu \varphi \nabla_\nu \varphi^{\mu\nu} + \frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho \varphi \nabla^\rho \varphi \right. \\ \left. + \Lambda \left( \varphi_{\mu\nu} \varphi^{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2} \varphi^2 \right) - \frac{\Lambda}{3} \left( \varphi_{\mu\nu} \varphi^{\mu\nu} - \varphi^2 \right) \right]$$

$$S_{\phi\chi}[g, \phi, \chi] = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ \frac{1}{2} e^{-\sqrt{2/3}\chi/\bar{M}_p} (\nabla_\mu \chi \nabla^\mu \chi - \nabla_\mu \phi \nabla^\mu \phi) \right. \\ \left. - \Lambda \bar{M}_p^2 \left( 1 - e^{\sqrt{2/3}\phi/\bar{M}_p} \right)^2 - \frac{m_0^2}{2} \frac{3\bar{M}_p^2}{2} e^{-2\sqrt{2/3}\chi/\bar{M}_p} \left( 1 - e^{\sqrt{2/3}\phi/\bar{M}_p} \right)^2 \right]$$

- $f_{\mu\nu}$  splits into 1 partially massless graviton (4 dof) + 1 scalar dof
- Enhanced symmetry:  $\delta\varphi_{\mu\nu} = \nabla_\mu \nabla_\nu \xi(x) + \frac{\Lambda}{3} \xi(x)$
- The compatible metric background is  $\bar{R}_{\mu\nu} = \Lambda \bar{g}_{\mu\nu}$

## Case $\Lambda > 0$

---

We can also take the limit  $\alpha \rightarrow \infty$  and kill of the interactions in the spin-0 sector

In summary, if the cosmological constant is non-zero (and positive), in the limits  $\beta, \alpha \rightarrow \infty$  we get a free theory whose degrees of freedom are

massless graviton (2 dofs) + partially massless graviton (4 dofs) + 2 scalars

# Summary

---

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( M_p^2 (R - 2\Lambda) + \frac{\alpha}{6} R^2 - \frac{\beta}{2} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \right)$$

- There are strong theoretical and experimental motivations to work on Quadratic Gravity
- Some remarks on its quantization(s) [things I still don't fully understand]
- I asked the question:  $\lim_{\beta, \alpha \rightarrow \infty} S = ?$

# Summary

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- Renormalizability + ghost-like nature of spin-2  $\Rightarrow$  limit  $\beta \rightarrow \infty$  is regular
- The limits  $\beta, \alpha \rightarrow \infty$  depend non-trivially on  $\Lambda$
- When  $\Lambda \neq 0$ : structure of degrees of freedom is different (but same number); the limits kill all the interactions

# Physical implications?

---

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( M_p^2 (R - 2\Lambda) + \frac{\alpha}{6} R^2 - \frac{\beta}{2} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \right)$$

- Can the result of the limits  $\beta, \alpha \rightarrow \infty$  help understand the high-energy behavior of the spin-2 ghost? [in relation to Percacci's work ?]
- Does a  $\Lambda \neq 0$  affect current quantization approaches to Quadratic Gravity?
- Role of the cosmological constant in quantum gravity?

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- Can the result of the limits  $\beta, \alpha \rightarrow \infty$  help understand the high-energy behavior of the spin-2 ghost? [in relation to Percacci's work ?]
- Does a  $\Lambda \neq 0$  affect current quantization approaches to Quadratic Gravity?
- Role of the cosmological constant in quantum gravity?

A nice formula:

$$\Lambda = \frac{3}{2} m_2^2 \frac{\beta - M_p^2/m_2^2}{\beta + 2M_p^2/m_0^2}$$



...Extra Slides...



# Motivations

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Einstein's General Relativity:

$$S_{EH} = \frac{M_p^2}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} (R - 2\Lambda)$$

## Issues:

1. Theoretical: perturbatively non-renormalizable
2. Observational: cannot explain CMB anisotropies (early times physics)

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Einstein's General Relativity:

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Issues:

1. Theoretical: perturbatively non-renormalizable
2. Observational: cannot explain CMB anisotropies (early times physics)

Simplest model to explain 2. :

$$S = S_{EH} + S_\phi + \dots, \quad S_\phi \equiv \text{inflaton action}$$

# Motivations

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‘Unique’ (strictly) renormalizable QFT of gravity in  $D = 4$ :

[Stelle, PRD (1977)]

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massive spin-0,  $\alpha \sim 10^{10}$

Natural explanation for inflation!

[Starobinsky, 1980+]



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Spin-2 massive ghost

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massive spin-0,  $\alpha \sim 10^{10}$   
**Natural explanation for inflation!**  
[Starobinsky, 1980+]

**Spin-2 massive ghost**

[Salvio & Strumia 2015+;  
Anselmi & Piva 2017+;  
Donoghue & Menezes 2018+;  
Holdom 2015+, etc...]

# Quadratic Gravity as Quantum Gravity

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( M_p^2 (R - 2\Lambda) + \frac{\alpha}{6} R^2 - \frac{\beta}{2} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \right)$$

Cosmological constant:  $\Lambda \sim 10^{-122} M_p^2$

Natural candidate for inflaton:  $\alpha \sim 10^{10}$

[Starobinsky, 1980+]

In my opinion, if we accept these facts very important implications follow:

1. The framework of perturbative QFT and the criterion of renormalizability (as a tool to select theories) are quite successful also when applied to gravity!
2. CMB observations have provided for the first time a test of higher-curvature gravity and an 'indirect' proof of quantized gravity (the scalar field is a gravitational dof)!!
3. Contrary to some beliefs, Starobinsky inflation is not just a model!

# Motivations

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Obvious question: What about the spin-2 massive ghost?

1. Throw the entire theory away just because maybe we don't know how to deal with the spin-2 ghost?
2. Or, instead, after appreciating the achievements described before, should we feel very motivated to understand the role of the ghost at a deeper level?

**I opt for the 2nd option!**

# Recent proposals to recover unitarity with ghost

S-matrix unitarity and optical theorem:

$$S^+ S = 1, \quad S = 1 + iT, \\ 1 = \sum_{\{n\}} c_n |n\rangle\langle n| \quad \Rightarrow \quad 2\text{Im}\{\langle a|T|a\rangle\} = \sum_{\{n\}} c_n |\langle n|T|a\rangle|^2$$

Interesting approaches

- Quantize the ghost with negative norms ( $c_n < 0$  for ghost states but positive energies) [Salvio, Strumia (2014+); Holdom (2021+); etc]
- Loop corrections make the ghost decay after times of order  $\tau \sim M_p^2/m_2^3$ : treat the ghost as an unstable particle, unitarity restored for  $t > \tau$  [Donoghue, Menezes (2018+)]
- Replace the Feynman  $i\epsilon$  with the *Fakeon* prescription and convert the ghost into a purely virtual particle (LHS=0 for ghost cuts and  $c_n = 0$  for ghost states) [Anselmi & Piva 2017+]

## Case $\Lambda = 0$

---

It is a massless limit:

$$\beta \rightarrow \infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad m_2^2 = \frac{M_p^2}{\beta} \rightarrow 0$$

NB: typically, the massless limit in theories of Massive Gravity can lead to strong coupling even below  $M_p$ . [Reviews by Hinterbichler (2011) and de Rham (2014)]

# Digression on Massive Gravity with $\Lambda = 0$

$$S_{MG} = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -\frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho f_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\rho f^{\mu\nu} + \nabla_\rho f_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\mu f^{\rho\nu} - \nabla_\mu f \nabla_\nu f^{\mu\nu} + \frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho f \nabla^\rho f \right. \\ \left. - \frac{m_2^2}{2} (f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} - f^2) + O(f^3) \right]$$

Naively, the limit  $m_2^2 \rightarrow 0$  seems to give a *massless* spin-2 with 2 dofs

$$S_{MG}^{(2)} = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -\frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho f_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\rho f^{\mu\nu} + \nabla_\rho f_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\mu f^{\rho\nu} - \nabla_\mu f \nabla_\nu f^{\mu\nu} + \frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho f \nabla^\rho f \right]$$

Gauge symmetry gives 2 dofs

$$\delta f_{\mu\nu}(x) = \nabla_\mu \xi_\nu(x) + \nabla_\nu \xi_\mu(x),$$

# Digression on Massive Gravity with $\Lambda = 0$

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Stückelberg formalism:

$$f_{\mu\nu} = \varphi_{\mu\nu} + \frac{1}{m_2} (\nabla_\mu A_\nu + \nabla_\nu A_\mu) + \frac{2}{m_2^2} \nabla_\mu \nabla_\nu \chi,$$

Gauge symmetries:

$$\begin{aligned} \delta\varphi_{\mu\nu} &= \nabla_\mu \xi_\nu + \nabla_\nu \xi_\mu, \\ \delta A_\mu &= -m_2 \xi_\mu + \nabla_\mu \xi, \\ \delta\chi &= -m_2 \xi, \end{aligned}$$

Massless limit (2+2+1 = 5 dofs):

$$S_{MG}[\varphi, A, \chi] = S_{FP}^{(m_2=0)}[\varphi] + \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( -\frac{1}{2} F^{\mu\nu} F_{\mu\nu} - 3 \nabla_\rho \chi \nabla^\rho \chi \right) + O(f^3)$$

Possible strong coupling from helicity-0 interactions:  $O(f^3) \sim \frac{1}{m_2} O(\chi^3) \rightarrow \infty$



# Limit $\beta \rightarrow \infty$ with $\Lambda = 0$ : massless limit

Does a strong coupling (below  $M_p$ ) arise in quadratic gravity?

[first asked by Hinterbichler & Saravani (2016)]

A strong coupling in the limit  $m_2^2 \rightarrow 0$  (i.e.,  $\beta \rightarrow \infty$ ) can be avoided *only* in  $D = 4$ !

Stückelberg decomposition for  $\Lambda = 0$  and in  $D$  dimensions:

$$f_{\mu\nu} = \tilde{f}_{\mu\nu} + \frac{1}{m_2} (\nabla_\mu \tilde{A}_\nu + \nabla_\nu \tilde{A}_\mu), \quad \tilde{A}_\mu = A_\mu + \frac{1}{m_2} \nabla_\mu \chi$$

$$\begin{aligned} \Rightarrow S'_2[g, f] &= \frac{M_p^{D-2}}{2} \int d^D x \sqrt{-g} R + \int d^D x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -M_p^{\frac{D-2}{2}} G_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} + \frac{m_2^2}{2} (f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} - f^2) \right] \\ &= \frac{M_p^{D-2}}{2} \int d^D x \sqrt{-g} R + \int d^D x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -M_p^{\frac{D-2}{2}} G_{\mu\nu} \tilde{f}^{\mu\nu} + \frac{m_2^2}{2} (\tilde{f}_{\mu\nu} \tilde{f}^{\mu\nu} - \tilde{f}^2) \right. \\ &\quad \left. + \frac{1}{2} F^{\mu\nu} F_{\mu\nu} + 2m_2 \tilde{f}^{\mu\nu} (\nabla_\mu \tilde{A}_\nu - g_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\rho \tilde{A}_\rho) - 2R^{\mu\nu} \tilde{A}_\mu \tilde{A}_\nu \right], \end{aligned}$$

Possible strong coupling from  $R^{\mu\nu} \tilde{A}_\mu \tilde{A}_\nu \sim \frac{1}{m_2^2} R^{\mu\nu} \nabla_\mu \chi \nabla_\nu \chi$  ???

# Limit $\beta \rightarrow \infty$ with $\Lambda = 0$ : massless limit

Make a field redefinition:

$$\tilde{f}_{\mu\nu} \rightarrow \tilde{f}_{\mu\nu} + a \tilde{A}_\mu \tilde{A}_\nu + b g_{\mu\nu} \tilde{A}_\rho \tilde{A}^\rho$$

In the massless limit  $m_2^2 \rightarrow 0$  ( $\beta \rightarrow \infty$ ,  $\Lambda = 0$ ) we get

$$\begin{aligned} \Rightarrow S'_2[g, \tilde{f}, \tilde{A}] = & \frac{M_p^{D-2}}{2} \int d^D x \sqrt{-g} R + \int d^D x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -M_p^{\frac{D-2}{2}} G_{\mu\nu} \tilde{f}^{\mu\nu} + \frac{m_2^2}{2} (\tilde{f}_{\mu\nu} \tilde{f}^{\mu\nu} - \tilde{f}^2) + \frac{1}{2} F^{\mu\nu} F_{\mu\nu} \right. \\ & + 2m_2 \tilde{f}^{\mu\nu} (\nabla_\mu \tilde{A}_\nu - g_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\rho \tilde{A}_\rho) + m_2^2 a \tilde{f}^{\mu\nu} \tilde{A}_\mu \tilde{A}_\nu + m_2^2 [b(1-D) - a] \tilde{f} \tilde{A}_\rho \tilde{A}^\rho \\ & - \left( a M_p^{\frac{D-2}{2}} + 2 \right) R^{\mu\nu} \tilde{A}_\mu \tilde{A}_\nu + M_p^{\frac{D-2}{2}} \left( \left( 1 - \frac{D}{2} \right) b - \frac{a}{2} \right) R \tilde{A}_\rho \tilde{A}^\rho \\ & \left. - m_2 (2b(1-D) - 3a) \tilde{A}_\mu \tilde{A}_\nu \nabla^\mu \tilde{A}^\nu - \frac{m_2^2}{2} (b^2 D(1-D) + 2ab(1-D)) (\tilde{A}_\rho \tilde{A}^\rho)^2 \right] \end{aligned}$$

4 conditions to avoid strong coupling in the massless limit:

$$a M_p^{\frac{D-2}{2}} + 2 = 0, \quad 2b(1-D) - 3a = 0,$$

$$\left( 1 - \frac{D}{2} \right) b - \frac{a}{2} = 0, \quad b^2 D(1-D) + 2ab(1-D) = 0$$

can be simultaneously satisfied  
only in  $D = 4$  !!!

$$a = -\frac{2}{M_p} = -2b,$$

# Digression on Massive Gravity with $\Lambda > 0$

$$S_{MG} = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -\frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho f_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\rho f^{\mu\nu} + \nabla_\rho f_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\mu f^{\rho\nu} - \nabla_\mu f \nabla_\nu f^{\mu\nu} + \frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho f \nabla^\rho f \right. \\ \left. + \Lambda \left( f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2} f^2 \right) - \frac{m_2^2}{2} \left( f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} - f^2 \right) + O(f^3) \right]$$

Naively, the limit  $m_2^2 \rightarrow \frac{2}{3} \Lambda$  seems to give a *partially massless* spin-2 with 4 dofs

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Scalar gauge symmetry (10-4-2=4 dofs)

$$\delta f_{\mu\nu}(x) = \nabla_\mu \nabla_\nu \zeta(x) + \frac{\Lambda}{3} g_{\mu\nu} \zeta(x),$$

# Digression on Massive Gravity with $\Lambda > 0$

$$S_{MG} = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -\frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho f_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\rho f^{\mu\nu} + \nabla_\rho f_{\mu\nu} \nabla^\mu f^{\rho\nu} - \nabla_\mu f \nabla_\nu f^{\mu\nu} + \frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho f \nabla^\rho f \right. \\ \left. + \Lambda \left( f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2} f^2 \right) - \frac{m_2^2}{2} \left( f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} - f^2 \right) + O(f^3) \right]$$

Stückelberg trick

$$f_{\mu\nu} = \varphi_{\mu\nu} + \sqrt{\frac{3}{\Lambda}} \frac{1}{\Delta} \left( \nabla_\mu \nabla_\nu \chi + g_{\mu\nu} \frac{\Lambda}{3} \chi \right) \\ \Delta \equiv m_2^2 - \frac{2}{3} \Lambda$$

Gauge symmetries:

$$\delta \varphi_{\mu\nu} = \nabla_\mu \nabla_\nu \zeta + \frac{\Lambda}{3} g_{\mu\nu} \zeta, \\ \delta \chi = -\sqrt{\frac{\Lambda}{3}} \Delta \zeta,$$

Partially massless limit  $\Delta \rightarrow 0$  (4+1=5 dofs):

$$S_{MG}[\varphi, \chi] = S_{FP}^{(\Delta=0)}[\varphi] + 3 \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( -\frac{1}{2} \nabla_\rho \chi \nabla^\rho \chi - \frac{m_\chi^2}{2} \chi^2 \right) + O(f^3), \quad m_\chi^2 \equiv -\frac{4}{3} \Lambda$$

Possible strong coupling from  $\chi$  interactions:  $O(f^3) \sim \frac{1}{\Delta} O(\chi^3) \rightarrow \infty$

## Case $\Lambda > 0$

Stückelberg formalism:

$$f_{\mu\nu} = \varphi_{\mu\nu} + \frac{1}{\sqrt{\Lambda}\sqrt{m_2^2 - 2\Lambda/3}} \left( \nabla_\mu \nabla_\nu \chi + \frac{\Lambda}{3} g_{\mu\nu} \chi \right)$$

$$\begin{aligned} \lim_{\beta \rightarrow \infty} S &= \frac{\tilde{M}_p^2}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} (R - 2\Lambda) \\ &+ \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -\tilde{M}_p (G_{\mu\nu} + \Lambda g_{\mu\nu}) \varphi^{\mu\nu} + \frac{\Lambda}{3} (\varphi_{\mu\nu} \varphi^{\mu\nu} - \varphi^2) \right] + S_{\phi\chi} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} S_{\phi\chi}[g, \phi, \chi] &= \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ \frac{1}{2} e^{-\sqrt{2/3}\chi/\bar{M}_p} (\nabla_\mu \chi \nabla^\mu \chi - \nabla_\mu \phi \nabla^\mu \phi) \right. \\ &\quad \left. - \Lambda \bar{M}_p^2 \left( 1 - e^{\sqrt{2/3}\phi/\bar{M}_p} \right)^2 - \frac{m_0^2}{2} \frac{3\bar{M}_p^2}{2} e^{-2\sqrt{2/3}\chi/\bar{M}_p} \left( 1 - e^{\sqrt{2/3}\phi/\bar{M}_p} \right)^2 \right] \end{aligned}$$

$f_{\mu\nu}$  splits into 1 partially massless graviton (4 dof) + 1 scalar dof

## Case $\Lambda > 0$

Interaction couplings:  $\frac{1}{\tilde{M}_p} \sim \frac{1}{\sqrt{\Lambda\beta}}$  for spin-2 sector &  $\frac{1}{\tilde{M}_p}$  for spin-0 sector

- Expand in  $\varphi_{\mu\nu}$  and  $g_{\mu\nu} = \bar{g}_{\mu\nu} + \frac{2}{\tilde{M}_p} h_{\mu\nu}$
- Diagonalize kinetic term for  $h_{\mu\nu}$  and  $\varphi_{\mu\nu}$

$$\lim_{\beta \rightarrow \infty} S = S_{EH}^{(2)}[\bar{g}, h] - S_2^{(2)}[\bar{g}, \varphi] \Big|_{m_2^2 = \frac{2}{3}\Lambda} + S_{\phi\chi}[\bar{g}, \phi, \chi]$$

Spin-2 sector completely decouples!

The only compatible metric background is

$$\bar{R}_{\mu\nu} = \Lambda \bar{g}_{\mu\nu}$$

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Resulting interacting theory:

$$S_{\phi\chi}[g, \phi, \chi] = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ \frac{1}{2} e^{-\sqrt{2/3}\chi/\bar{M}_p} (\nabla_\mu \chi \nabla^\mu \chi - \nabla_\mu \phi \nabla^\mu \phi) \right. \\ \left. - \Lambda \bar{M}_p^2 \left( 1 - e^{\sqrt{2/3}\phi/\bar{M}_p} \right)^2 - \frac{m_0^2}{2} \frac{3\bar{M}_p^2}{2} e^{-2\sqrt{2/3}\chi/\bar{M}_p} \left( 1 - e^{\sqrt{2/3}\phi/\bar{M}_p} \right)^2 \right]$$

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Field redefinitions:

$$\phi = -\sqrt{\frac{3}{2}} \bar{M}_p \log\left(\frac{\tilde{\chi} + \tilde{\phi}}{\tilde{\chi} - \tilde{\phi}}\right), \quad \chi = -\sqrt{\frac{3}{2}} \bar{M}_p \log\left(\frac{\tilde{\chi}^2 - \tilde{\phi}^2}{6\bar{M}_p^2}\right)$$

$$S_{\phi\chi}[g, \tilde{\phi}, \tilde{\chi}] = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ \frac{1}{2} (\partial_\mu \tilde{\chi} \partial^\mu \tilde{\chi} - \partial_\mu \tilde{\phi} \partial^\mu \tilde{\phi}) - V(\tilde{\phi}, \tilde{\chi}) \right]$$

$$V(\tilde{\phi}, \tilde{\chi}) = \frac{\Lambda}{36\bar{M}_p^2} (\tilde{\chi}^2 - \tilde{\phi}^2 - 6\bar{M}_p^2)^2 + \frac{m_0^2}{36\bar{M}_p^2} \tilde{\phi}^2 (\tilde{\chi} + \tilde{\phi})^2$$

# Spectrum

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( M_p^2 (R - 2\Lambda) + \frac{\alpha}{6} R^2 - \frac{\beta}{2} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \right)$$

Massless graviton:

$g_{\mu\nu}$  (2 dofs)

Massive spin-0:

$\phi$  (1 dof)

$$m_0^2 = \frac{M_p^2}{\alpha}$$

Massive spin-2 ghost:

$f_{\mu\nu}$  (5 dofs)

$$m_2^2 = \frac{\tilde{M}_p^2}{\beta}$$

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$\beta \rightarrow \infty \quad \Rightarrow$

$\Lambda = 0: \quad m_2^2 \rightarrow 0$  (massless limit)

$\Lambda \neq 0: \quad m_2^2 \rightarrow \frac{2}{3} \Lambda$  (partially massless limit)

# Action in canonical form

$$S[g, \phi, f] = \frac{\tilde{M}_p^2}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} (R - 2\Lambda) + S_0[g, \phi] + S_2[g, f],$$

$$S_0[g, \phi] = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ -\frac{1}{2} \nabla^\mu \phi \nabla_\mu \phi - \frac{m_0^2}{2} \frac{3\bar{M}_p^2}{2} \left( 1 - e^{\sqrt{2/3} \phi / \bar{M}_p} \right)^2 \right] \Bigg|_{g=2f/\tilde{M}_p}$$

$$\begin{aligned} S_2[g, f] = & -S_{PF}[g, f] - \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ (2f_\mu^\rho f_{\rho\nu} - f f_{\mu\nu}) R^{\mu\nu} + \left( \Lambda - \frac{R}{2} \right) \left( f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{2} f^2 \right) \right] \\ & - \frac{1}{2} \frac{m_2^2}{\tilde{M}_p} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} [5f_{\mu\nu} f^{\mu\nu} f - 4f^{\mu\nu} f_\mu^\rho f_{\rho\nu} - f^3] \\ & + \frac{8}{3} \frac{1}{M_p^2} \frac{1}{\tilde{M}_p} \int d^4x d^4y d^4z \frac{\delta^{(3)} S_{EH}}{\delta g_{\mu\nu}(x) \delta g_{\rho\sigma}(y) \delta g_{\alpha\beta}(z)} f_{\mu\nu}(x) f_{\rho\sigma}(y) f_{\alpha\beta}(z) + O(f^4) \end{aligned}$$

$$\bar{M}_p^2 \equiv M_p^2 + \frac{4}{3} \alpha \Lambda$$

$$\tilde{M}_p^2 \equiv M_p^2 + \frac{2}{3} (2\alpha + \beta) \Lambda$$

# Couplings

spin-2 sector coupling:

$$\frac{1}{\tilde{M}_p} = \frac{1}{M_p} \left( \frac{1}{1 + 2\Lambda(2\alpha + \beta)/3M_p^2} \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

spin-0 sector coupling:

$$\frac{1}{\bar{M}_p} = \frac{1}{M_p} \left( \frac{1}{1 + 4\Lambda\alpha/3M_p^2} \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

Couplings dependence on  $\Lambda$   $\Rightarrow$  additional dependence on  $\alpha, \beta$  !

## Features of the limit $\beta \rightarrow \infty$

$$S = \frac{1}{2} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left( M_p^2 (R - 2\Lambda) + \frac{\alpha}{6} R^2 - \frac{\beta}{2} C_{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} C^{\mu\nu\rho\sigma} \right)$$

$$\lim_{\beta \rightarrow \infty} S = ?$$

- The limit distinguishes  $\Lambda = 0$  &  $\Lambda \neq 0$   
(couplings, particle spectrum, enhanced gauge symmetry)
- Limit is regular only in  $D = 4$
- When  $\Lambda \neq 0$  the resulting theory is much simpler



## Result of the limit $\beta \rightarrow \infty$ ( $\Lambda > 0$ )

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- Massless spin-2 and  $\pm 2, \pm 1$  helicities of massive spin-2 ghost decouple
- Massive spin-0 ( $\tilde{\phi}$ ) & helicity-0 ( $\tilde{\chi}$ ) of spin-2 ghost survive

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$$S_{\phi\chi}[g, \tilde{\phi}, \tilde{\chi}] = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ \frac{1}{2} (\partial_\mu \tilde{\chi} \partial^\mu \tilde{\chi} - \partial_\mu \tilde{\phi} \partial^\mu \tilde{\phi}) - V(\tilde{\phi}, \tilde{\chi}) \right]$$

$$V(\tilde{\phi}, \tilde{\chi}) = \frac{\Lambda}{36\bar{M}_p^2} (\tilde{\chi}^2 - \tilde{\phi}^2 - 6\bar{M}_p^2)^2 + \frac{m_0^2}{12\bar{M}_p^2} \tilde{\phi}^2 (\tilde{\chi} + \tilde{\phi})^2$$

$$\bar{M}_p^2 = M_p^2 + \frac{4}{3} \alpha \Lambda$$