

Bounds on ψ -epistemic explanations of quantum indistinguishability from noncontextuality inequalities

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Introduction

Epistemic vs. ontic

Classical states

Bohr and Einstein:
 ψ -epistemicists

Interpretations

Overlap

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

Introduction

Introduction

Epistemic vs. ontic

Classical states

Bohr and Einstein:
 ψ -epistemicists

Interpretations

Overlap

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

- *Ontic state*: a state of reality.
 - *ψ -ontic*: the quantum state is ontic.

- *Epistemic state*: a state of knowledge or information.
 - *ψ -epistemic*: the quantum state is epistemic.

Classical states

Introduction

Epistemic vs. ontic

Classical states

Bohr and Einstein:

ψ -epistemicists

Interpretations

Overlap

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

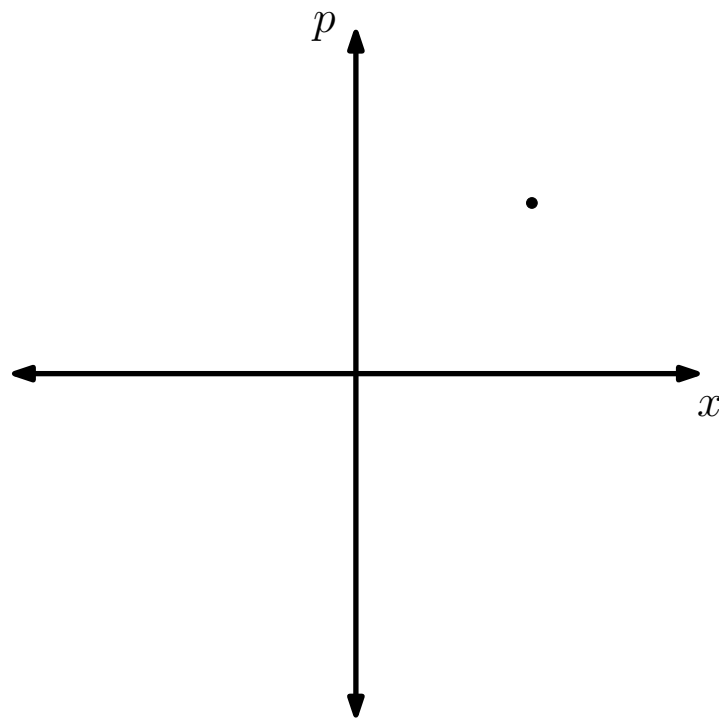
Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

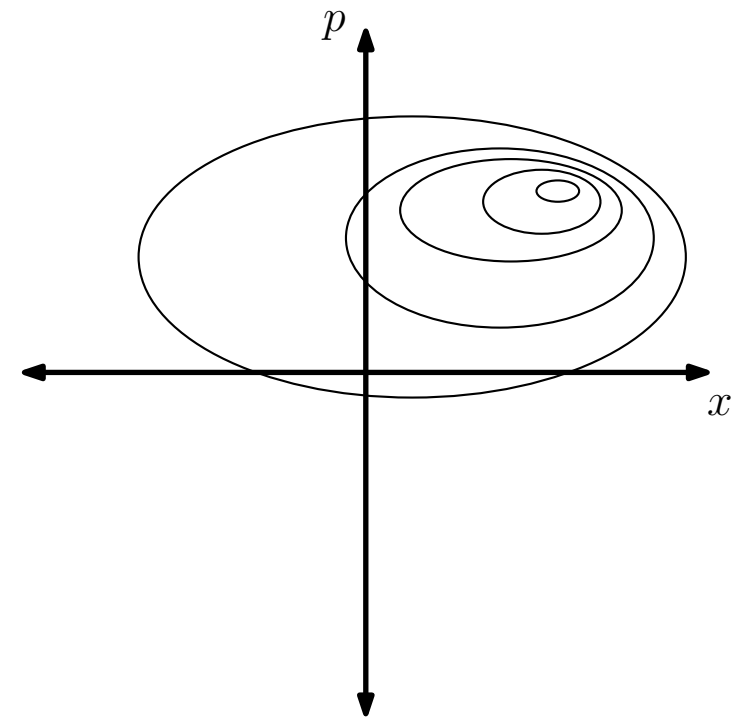
Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

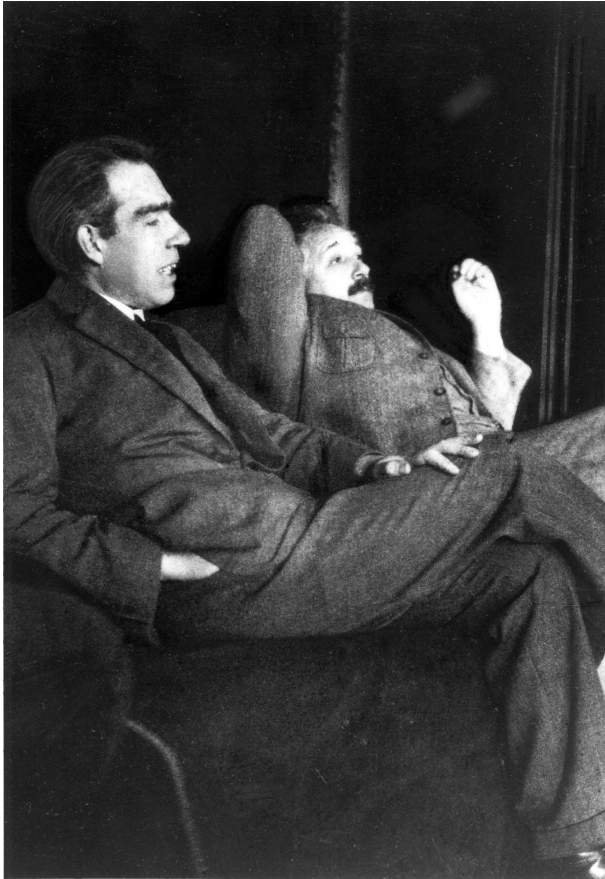
Ontic state



Epistemic state



Bohr and Einstein: ψ -epistemicists



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/>

There is no quantum world. There is only an abstract quantum physical description. It is wrong to think that the task of physics is to find out how nature is. Physics concerns what we can say about nature. — Niels Bohr^a

[t]he ψ -function is to be understood as the description not of a single system but of an ensemble of systems. — Albert Einstein^b

^aQuoted in A. Petersen, “The philosophy of Niels Bohr”, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 19, No. 7 (1963)

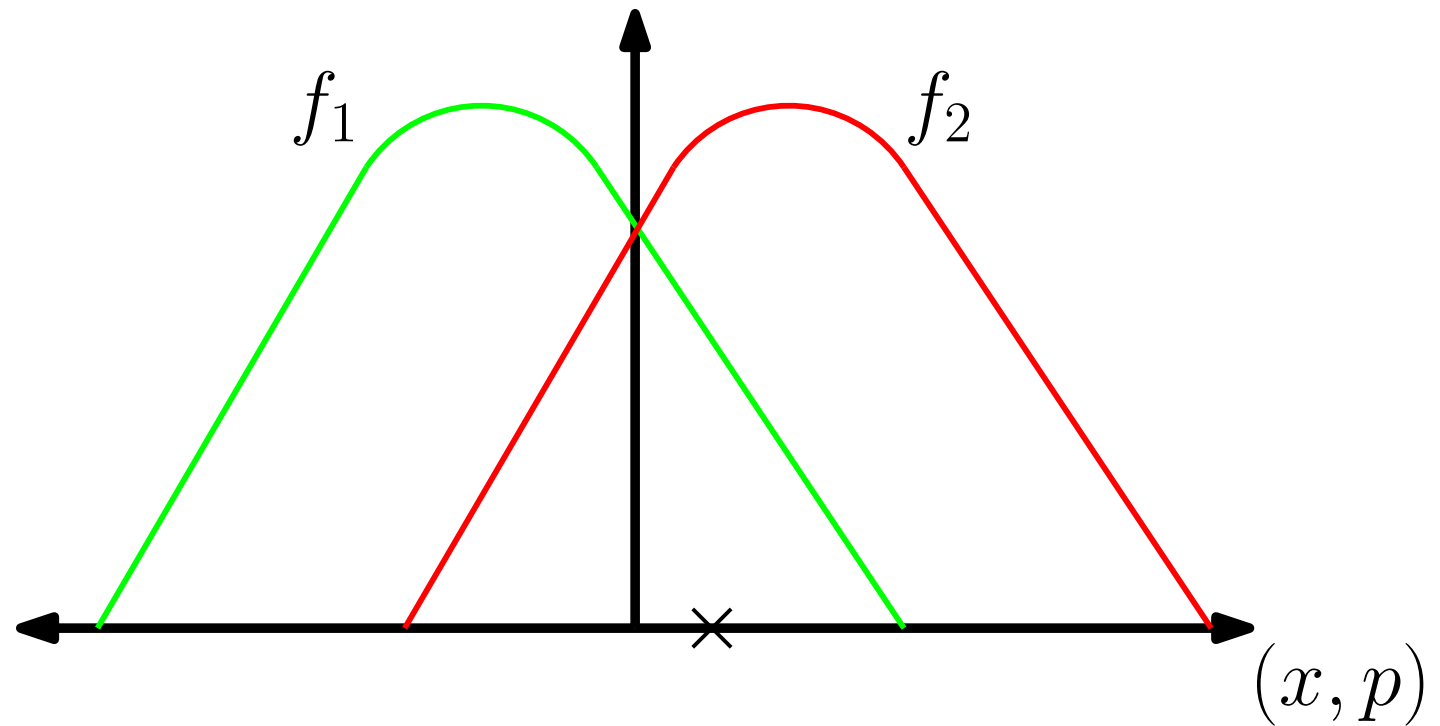
^bP. A. Schilpp, ed., *Albert Einstein: Philosopher Scientist* (Open Court, 1949)

Interpretations of quantum theory

	ψ -epistemic	ψ -ontic
Anti-realist	Copenhagen neo-Copenhagen (e.g. QBism, Peres, Zeilinger, Healey)	
Realist	Einstein Ballentine? Spekkens ?	Dirac-von Neumann Many worlds Bohmian mechanics Spontaneous collapse Modal interpretations

Epistemic states overlap

- Introduction
- Epistemic vs. ontic
- Classical states
- Bohr and Einstein:
 ψ -epistemicists
- Interpretations
- Overlap
- Ontological Models
- ψ -ontology theorems
- Overlap bounds
- Overlap bounds from
contextuality
- Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities
- Conclusions



Introduction

Ontological Models

Quantum description

Ontic description

Formal definition

ψ -ontic vs.

ψ -epistemic

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

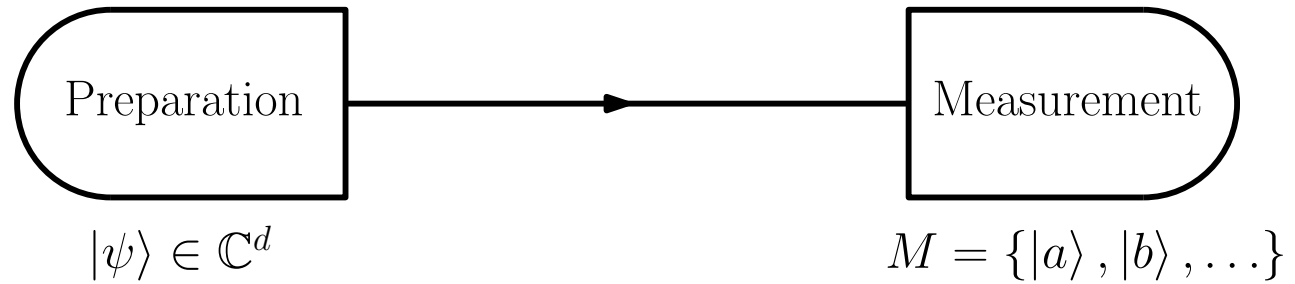
Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

Ontological Models

Prepare-and-measure experiments: Quantum description

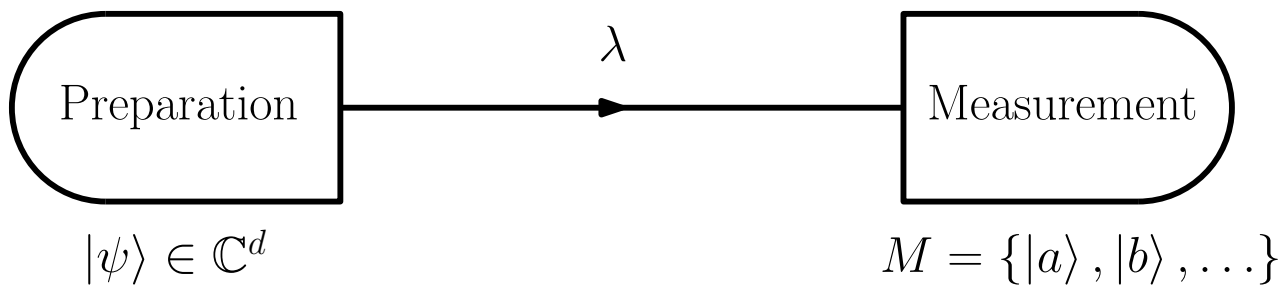
- Introduction
- Ontological Models
- Quantum description
- Ontic description
- Formal definition
- ψ -ontic vs. ψ -epistemic
- ψ -ontology theorems
- Overlap bounds
- Overlap bounds from contextuality
- Antidistinguishability-based inequalities
- Conclusions



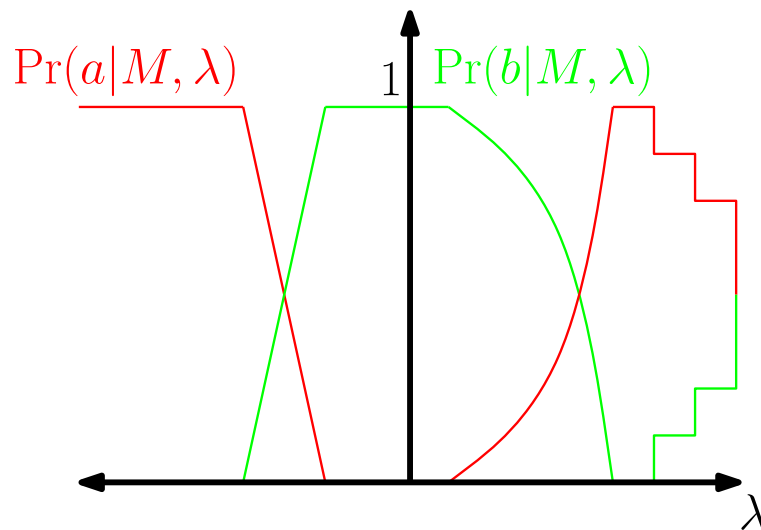
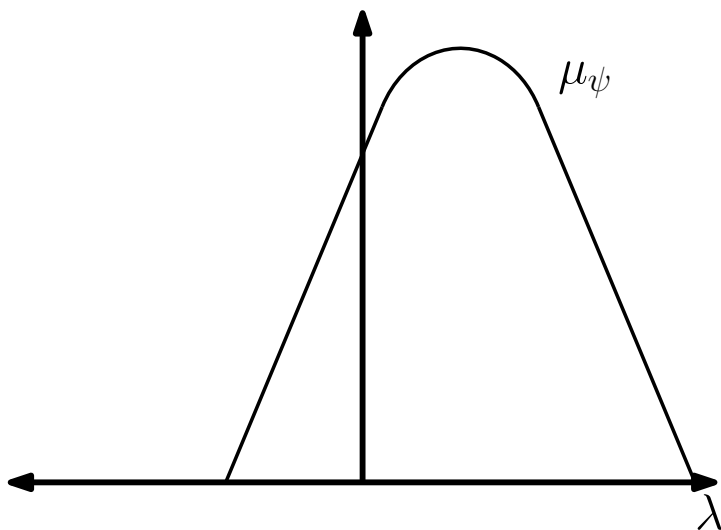
$$\text{Prob}(a|\psi, M) = |\langle a|\psi\rangle|^2$$

Prepare-and-measure experiments: Ontological description

- Introduction
- Ontological Models
- Quantum description
- Ontic description
- Formal definition
- ψ -ontic vs. ψ -epistemic
- ψ -ontology theorems
- Overlap bounds
- Overlap bounds from contextuality
- Antidistinguishability-based inequalities
- Conclusions



$$\text{Prob}(a|\psi, M) = |\langle a|\psi\rangle|^2$$



$$\text{Prob}(a|\psi, M) = \int \text{Pr}(a|M, \lambda) d\mu_\psi$$

Introduction

Ontological Models

Quantum description

Ontic description

Formal definition

ψ -ontic vs.

ψ -epistemic

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

An ontological model for \mathbb{C}^d consists of:

- A measurable space (Λ, Σ) .

Introduction

Ontological Models

Quantum description

Ontic description

Formal definition

ψ -ontic vs.
 ψ -epistemic

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

An ontological model for \mathbb{C}^d consists of:

- A measurable space (Λ, Σ) .
- For each state $|\psi\rangle \in \mathbb{C}^d$, a probability measure $\mu_\psi : \Sigma \rightarrow [0, 1]$.

Introduction

Ontological Models

Quantum description

Ontic description

Formal definition

ψ -ontic vs.
 ψ -epistemic

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

An ontological model for \mathbb{C}^d consists of:

- A measurable space (Λ, Σ) .
- For each state $|\psi\rangle \in \mathbb{C}^d$, a probability measure $\mu_\psi : \Sigma \rightarrow [0, 1]$.
- For each orthonormal basis $M = \{|a\rangle, |b\rangle, \dots\}$, a set of conditional probability functions $\Pr(a|M, \cdot) : \Lambda \rightarrow [0, 1]$ satisfying

$$\forall M, \lambda, \sum_{|a\rangle \in M} \Pr(a|M, \lambda) = 1.$$

Introduction

Ontological Models

Quantum description

Ontic description

Formal definition

ψ -ontic vs.
 ψ -epistemic

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

An ontological model for \mathbb{C}^d consists of:

- A measurable space (Λ, Σ) .
- For each state $|\psi\rangle \in \mathbb{C}^d$, a probability measure $\mu_\psi : \Sigma \rightarrow [0, 1]$.
- For each orthonormal basis $M = \{|a\rangle, |b\rangle, \dots\}$, a set of conditional probability functions $\Pr(a|M, \cdot) : \Lambda \rightarrow [0, 1]$ satisfying

$$\forall M, \lambda, \sum_{|a\rangle \in M} \Pr(a|M, \lambda) = 1.$$

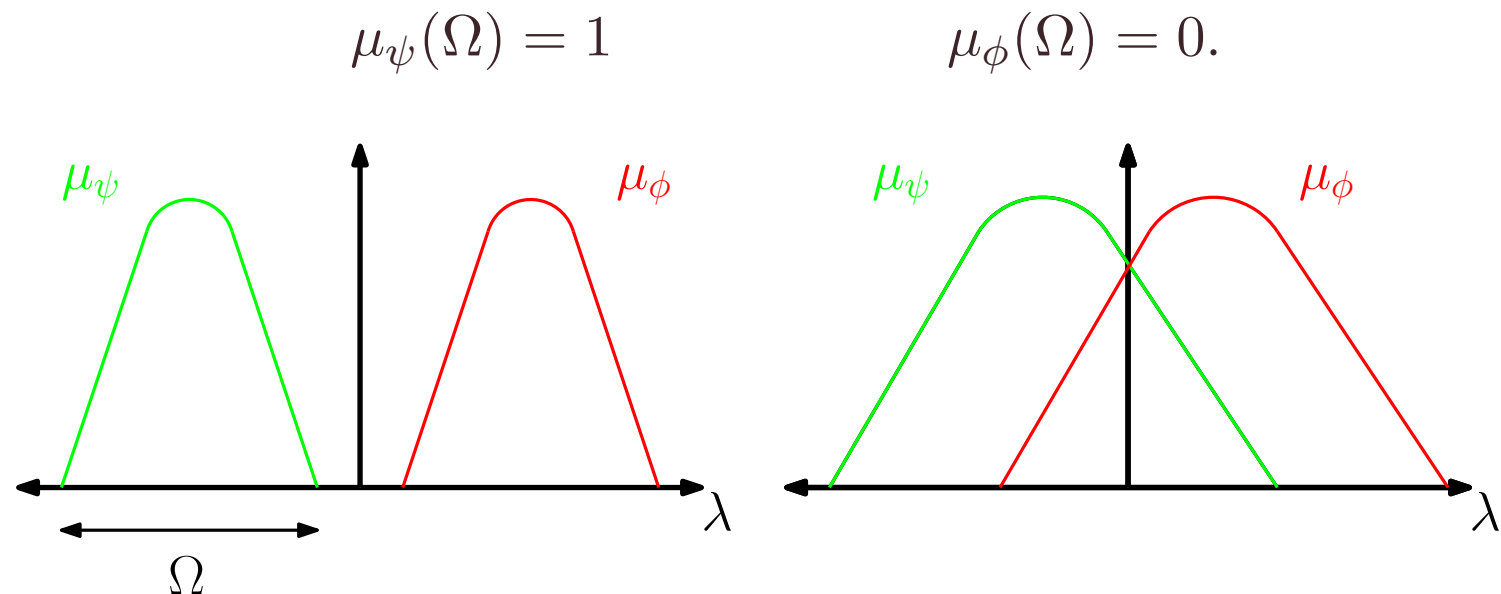
The model is required to reproduce the quantum predictions, i.e.

$$\int_{\Lambda} \Pr(a|M, \lambda) d\mu_\psi = |\langle a|\psi\rangle|^2.$$

ψ -ontic and ψ -epistemic models

- Introduction
- Ontological Models
 - Quantum description
 - Ontic description
 - Formal definition
 - ψ -ontic vs. ψ -epistemic
- ψ -ontology theorems
- Overlap bounds
- Overlap bounds from contextuality
- Antidistinguishability-based inequalities
- Conclusions

- $|\psi\rangle$ and $|\phi\rangle$ are *ontologically distinct* in an ontological model if there exists $\Omega \in \Sigma$ s.t.



- An ontological model is *ψ -ontic* if every pair of states is ontologically distinct. Otherwise it is *ψ -epistemic*.

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

ψ -ontology theorems

The Kochen-Specker
model

Models for arbitrary
finite dimension

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

ψ -ontology theorems

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

ψ -ontology theorems

The Kochen-Specker model

Models for arbitrary finite dimension

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

- The Colbeck-Renner theorem: R. Colbeck and R. Renner, arXiv:1312.7353 (2013).
- Hardy's theorem: L. Hardy, *Int. J. Mod. Phys. B*, 27:1345012 (2013) arXiv:1205.1439
- The Pusey-Barrett-Rudolph theorem: M. Pusey et. al., *Nature Physics*, 8:475–478 (2012) arXiv:1111.3328

The Kochen-Specker model for a qubit

- Introduction

- Ontological Models

- ψ -ontology theorems

- ψ -ontology theorems

- The Kochen-Specker model

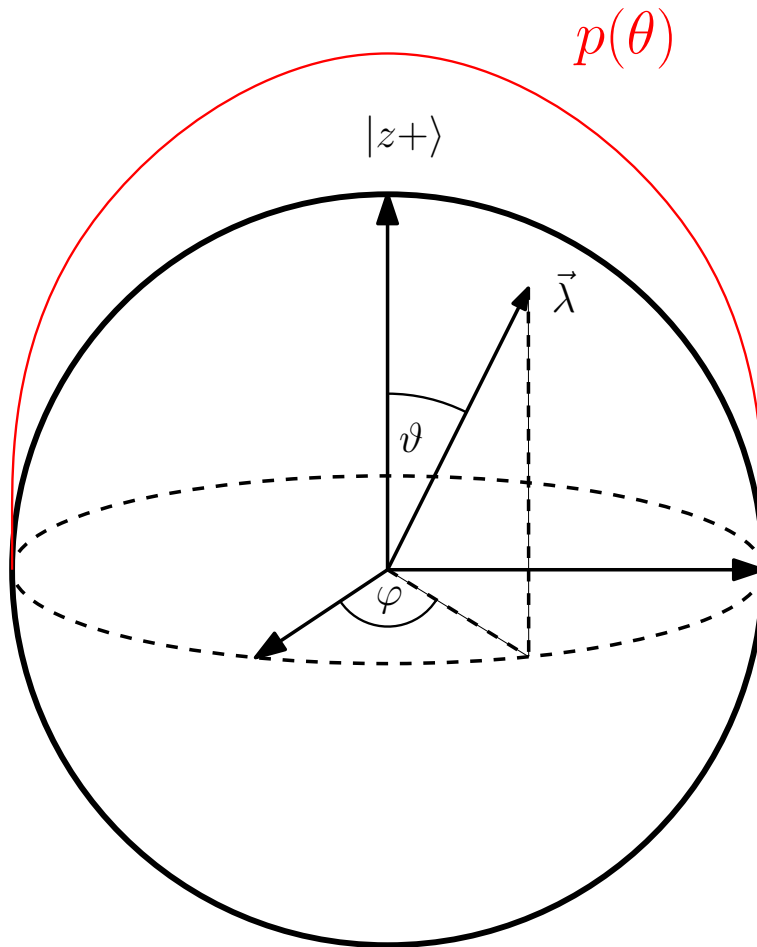
- Models for arbitrary finite dimension

- Overlap bounds

- Overlap bounds from contextuality

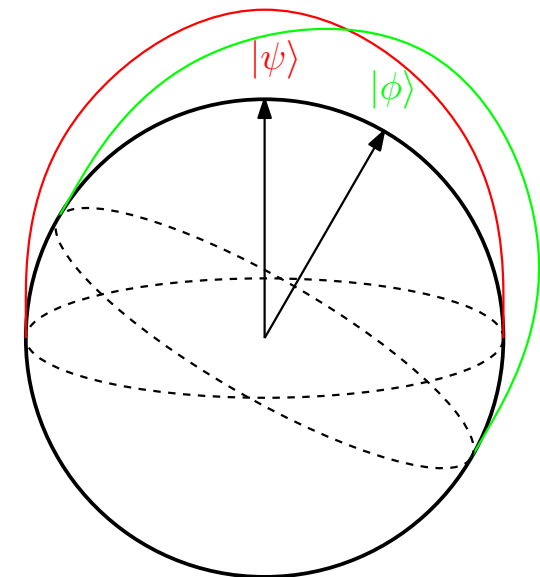
- Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

- Conclusions



$$\mu_{z+}(\Omega) = \int_{\Omega} p(\vartheta) \sin \vartheta d\vartheta d\varphi$$

$$p(\vartheta) = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{\pi} \cos \vartheta, & 0 \leq \vartheta \leq \frac{\pi}{2} \\ 0, & \frac{\pi}{2} < \vartheta \leq \pi \end{cases}$$



S. Kochen and E. Specker, *J. Math. Mech.*, 17:59–87 (1967)

Models for arbitrary finite dimension

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

ψ -ontology theorems

The Kochen-Specker model

Models for arbitrary finite dimension

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

- Lewis et. al. provided a ψ -epistemic model for all finite d .
 - P. G. Lewis et. al., *Phys. Rev. Lett.* 109:150404 (2012)
arXiv:1201.6554
- Aaronson et. al. provided a similar model in which every pair of nonorthogonal states is ontologically indistinct.
 - S. Aaronson et. al., *Phys. Rev. A* 88:032111 (2013)
arXiv:1303.2834
- These models have the feature that, for a fixed inner product, the amount of overlap decreases with d .

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Classical overlap

Quantum Symmetric
overlap

ψ -ontology measures

Previous results

Distinguishability deficit

Experiment

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

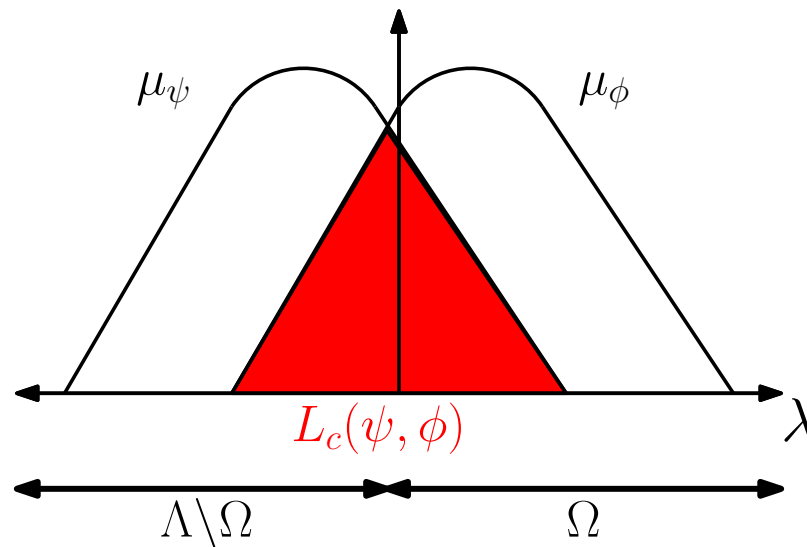
Conclusions

Overlap bounds

- Introduction
- Ontological Models
- ψ -ontology theorems
- Overlap bounds
- Classical overlap
- Quantum Symmetric overlap
- ψ -ontology measures
- Previous results
- Distinguishability deficit
- Experiment
- Overlap bounds from contextuality
- Antidistinguishability-based inequalities
- Conclusions

■ *Classical overlap:*

$$L_c(\psi, \phi) := \inf_{\Omega \in \Sigma} [\mu_\psi(\Omega) + \mu_\phi(\Lambda \setminus \Omega)]$$



■ Optimal success probability of distinguishing $|\psi\rangle$ and $|\phi\rangle$ if you know λ :

$$p_c(\psi, \phi) = \frac{1}{2} (2 - L_c(\psi, \phi))$$

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Classical overlap

Quantum Symmetric overlap

ψ -ontology measures

Previous results

Distinguishability deficit

Experiment

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

- *Classical overlap:*

$$L_c(\psi, \phi) := \inf_{\Omega \in \Sigma} [\mu_\psi(\Omega) + \mu_\phi(\Lambda \setminus \Omega)]$$

- *Quantum overlap:*

$$\begin{aligned} L_q(\psi, \phi) &:= \inf_{0 \leq E \leq I} [\langle \psi | E | \psi \rangle + \langle \phi | (I - E) | \phi \rangle] \\ &= 1 - \sqrt{1 - |\langle \phi | \psi \rangle|^2} \end{aligned}$$

- Optimal success probability of distinguishing $|\psi\rangle$ and $|\phi\rangle$ based on a quantum measurement:

$$p_q(\psi, \phi) = \frac{1}{2} (2 - L_q(\psi, \phi))$$

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Classical overlap

Quantum Symmetric overlap

ψ -ontology measures

Previous results

Distinguishability deficit

Experiment

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

- Given a set V of states, and another state $|\psi\rangle$, we can upper bound the average overlap

$$\langle L_c \rangle = \frac{1}{|V|} \sum_{|a\rangle \in V} L_c(\psi, a).$$

- Most works use this to bound the ratio:

$$k = \frac{\langle L_c \rangle}{\langle L_q \rangle}.$$

- Better to use the difference:

- *Overlap deficit*: $\Delta L = \langle L_q \rangle - \langle L_c \rangle$

Previous results

- Introduction
- Ontological Models
- ψ -ontology theorems
- Overlap bounds
 - Classical overlap
 - Quantum Symmetric overlap
- ψ -ontology measures
- Previous results
 - Distinguishability deficit
 - Experiment
- Overlap bounds from contextuality
- Antidistinguishability-based inequalities
- Conclusions

	Dimension	$ V $	$\langle L_c \rangle$	$\langle L_q \rangle$
Barrett et. al. ¹	Prime power $d \geq 4$	d^2	$1/d^2$	$1 - \sqrt{1 - 1/d}$
Leifer ² (Branciard's version) ³	$d \geq 3$	2^{d-1}	$1/2^{d-1}$	$1 - \sqrt{1 - 1/d}$
Branciard ³	$d \geq 4$	$n \geq 2$	$1/n$	$1 - \sqrt{1 - \frac{1}{4}n^{-1/(d-2)}}$

¹J. Barrett et. al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 112, 250403 (2014)

²ML, Phys. Rev. Lett. 112, 160404 (2014)

³C. Branciard, Phys. Rev. Lett. 113, 020409 (2014)

Optimizing for distinguishability deficit

- Introduction
- Ontological Models
- ψ -ontology theorems
- Overlap bounds
 - Classical overlap
 - Quantum Symmetric overlap
- ψ -ontology measures
- Previous results
- Distinguishability deficit
- Experiment
- Overlap bounds from contextuality
- Antidistinguishability-based inequalities
- Conclusions

	Optimal dimension	Optimal $ V $	ΔL
Barrett et. al.	4	16	0.0715
Leifer (Branciard's version)	5	16	0.385
Branciard	4	$n \rightarrow \infty$	0.134

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Classical overlap

Quantum Symmetric overlap

ψ -ontology measures

Previous results

Distinguishability deficit

Experiment

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

- Ringbauer et. al.⁴ experiment (based on Branciard's construction) obtained:

$$k \leq 0.690 \pm 0.001$$

$$\Delta L \geq 0.047 \pm 0.010$$

- My analysis suggests larger ΔL should be obtainable from my construction (with Branciard's analysis).

⁴M. Ringbauer et. al. Nature Physics 11, 249–254 (2015).

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Noncontextuality

Overlap bounds

General results

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Kochen-Specker noncontextuality

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Noncontextuality

Overlap bounds

General results

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

- Let \mathcal{M} be a set of orthonormal bases in \mathbb{C}^d .
- An ontological model for \mathcal{M} is *Kochen Specker noncontextual* if it is
 - *Outcome deterministic*: $\Pr(a|M, \lambda) \in \{0, 1\}$
 - *Measurement noncontextual*: If there exist $M, N \in \mathcal{M}$ and $|a\rangle$ such that $|a\rangle \in M$ and $|a\rangle \in N$ then

$$\Pr(a|M, \cdot) = \Pr(a|N, \cdot).$$

- Define:

$$\Gamma_a^M = \{\lambda \in \Lambda | \Pr(a|M, \lambda) = 1\} \quad \Gamma_a = \bigcap_{\{M \in \mathcal{M} | |a\rangle \in M\}} \Gamma_a^M$$

Theorem: There exists a KS noncontextual model for \mathcal{M} iff there exists a model where, for all $|\psi\rangle$, $M \in \mathcal{M}$, $|a\rangle \in M$,

$$\int_{\Lambda} \Pr(a|M, \lambda) d\mu_{\psi}(\lambda) = \mu_{\psi}(\Gamma_a).$$

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Noncontextuality

Overlap bounds

General results

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

- For a (finite) set V of states, a noncontextuality inequality is a bound of the form

$$\sum_{|a\rangle \in V} \mu_\psi(\Gamma_a) \leq \gamma.$$

- Let \mathcal{M} be a covering set of bases for V . We have

$$\int_{\Lambda} \Pr(a|M, \lambda) d\mu_a(\lambda) = |\langle a|a\rangle|^2 = 1$$

and since $\Pr(a|M, \lambda) \leq 1$ this implies that $\mu_a(\Gamma_a^M) = 1$.

- Since $\Gamma_a = \bigcap_{M \in \mathcal{M} \mid |a\rangle \in M} \Gamma_a^M$ is a finite intersection of measure one sets, we also have

$$\mu_a(\Gamma_a) = 1.$$

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Noncontextuality

Overlap bounds

General results

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

■ Now,

$$\begin{aligned} L_c(\psi, a) &= \inf_{\Omega \in \Sigma} [\mu_\psi(\Omega) + \mu_a(\Lambda \setminus \Omega)] \\ &\leq \mu_\psi(\Gamma_a) + \mu_a(\Lambda \setminus \Gamma_a) \end{aligned}$$

■ We just showed that $\mu_a(\Gamma_a) = 1$, so $\mu_a(\Lambda \setminus \Gamma_a) = 0$, and hence

$$L_c(\psi, a) \leq \mu_\psi(\Gamma_a).$$

■ Hence,

$$\sum_{|a\rangle \in V} L_c(\psi, a) \leq \sum_{|a\rangle \in V} \mu_\psi(\Gamma_a) \leq \gamma.$$

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Noncontextuality

Overlap bounds

General results

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

- Using Cabello, Severini and Winter's results⁵, for a set of states V , we can derive

$$\frac{1}{|V|} \sum_{|a\rangle \in V} L_c(\psi, a) \leq \frac{\alpha(G)}{|V|},$$

where $\alpha(G)$ is the *independence number* of the *orthogonality graph* of V .

- Better bounds come from a different technique, introduced by Barrett et. al.⁶, that was not based on contextuality.
- It turns out that their method is contextuality in disguise though.

⁵A. Cabello, S. Severini, A. Winter, Phys. Rev. Lett. 112:040401 (2014).

⁶J. Barrett et. al., Phys. Rev. Lett. 112, 250403 (2014)

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Antidistinguishability

Implication

Bonferroni inequalities

Noncontextuality
inequalities

Generalization

Conclusions

Antidistinguishability-based noncontextuality inequalities

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Antidistinguishability

Implication

Bonferroni inequalities

Noncontextuality inequalities

Generalization

Conclusions

- Definition: A set $V = \{|a_j\rangle\}_{j=1}^d$ of states in \mathbb{C}^d is *antidistinguishable* if there exists an orthonormal basis $\{|a_j^\perp\rangle\}_{j=1}^d$ such that, for all j ,

$$\left| \langle a_j^\perp | a_j \rangle \right|^2 = 0.$$

- Example:

$$\begin{aligned} |a_1\rangle &= (1, 0, 0) & |a_1^\perp\rangle &= (0, 1, 0) \\ |a_2\rangle &= (1, 1, 1) & |a_2^\perp\rangle &= (1, 0, -1) \\ |a_3\rangle &= (-1, 1, 1) & |a_3^\perp\rangle &= (1, 0, 1) \end{aligned}$$

Implication for ontological models

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Antidistinguishability

Implication

Bonferroni inequalities

Noncontextuality
inequalities

Generalization

Conclusions

- Theorem: If V is antidistinguishable then

$$\bigcap_{j=1}^d \Gamma_{a_j} = \emptyset.$$

- Proof: Because ontic states in $\bigcap_{j=1}^d \Gamma_{a_j}$ would have to assign probability 0 to all of the measurement outcomes $|a_j^\perp\rangle$.

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Antidistinguishability

Implication

Bonferroni inequalities

Noncontextuality inequalities

Generalization

Conclusions

- On any measure space, the inclusion-exclusion principle states:

$$\mu(\cup_j X_j) = \sum_j \mu(X_j) - \sum_{j < k} \mu(X_j \cap X_k) + \sum_{j < k < m} \mu(X_j \cap X_k \cap X_m) - \dots$$

- Bonferroni: Terminating this sequence gives an alternating sequence of upper and lower bounds, e.g.

$$\mu(\cup_j X_j) \leq \sum_j \mu(X_j)$$

$$\mu(\cup_j X_j) \geq \sum_j \mu(X_j) - \sum_{j < k} \mu(X_j \cap X_k).$$

- Set $X_j = \Gamma_\psi \cap \Gamma_{a_j}$ and note that $\mu_\psi(\Gamma_\psi) = 1$. Second inequality gives

$$1 \geq \sum_j \mu_\psi(\Gamma_{a_j}) - \sum_{j < k} \mu(\Gamma_\psi \cap \Gamma_{a_j} \cap \Gamma_{a_k})$$

Noncontextuality inequalities

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Antidistinguishability

Implication

Bonferroni inequalities

Noncontextuality inequalities

Generalization

Conclusions

- From previous slide:

$$1 \geq \sum_j \mu_\psi(\Gamma_{a_j}) - \sum_{j < k} \mu(\Gamma_\psi \cap \Gamma_{a_j} \cap \Gamma_{a_k})$$

- So, if $\{|\psi\rangle, |a_j\rangle, |a_k\rangle\}$ are antidistinguishable for all $j \neq k$, we get

$$\sum_j \mu_\psi(\Gamma_{a_j}) \leq 1.$$

- Example: Yu-Oh inequality⁷

$$|\psi\rangle = (1, 0, 0)^T$$

$$|a_0\rangle = (1, 1, 1)$$

$$|a_2\rangle = (1, -1, 1)$$

$$|a_1\rangle = (-1, 1, 1)$$

$$|a_3\rangle = (1, 1, -1)$$

⁷S. Yu, C. Oh, Phys. Rev. Lett. 108, 030402 (2012)

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Antidistinguishability

Implication

Bonferroni inequalities

Noncontextuality inequalities

Generalization

Conclusions

- Let,

$$|\psi\rangle = (1, 0, 0, \dots, 0).$$

- For $\mathbf{x} \in \{0, 1\}^d$, let

$$|a_{\mathbf{x}}\rangle = (-1^{x_1}, -1^{x_2}, \dots, -1^{x_n}).$$

- Then, $\{|\psi\rangle, |a_{\mathbf{x}}\rangle, |a_{\mathbf{x}'}\rangle\}$ is antidistinguishable for $\mathbf{x} \neq \mathbf{x}'$, so

$$\sum_{\mathbf{x}} \mu_{\psi}(\Gamma_{a_{\mathbf{x}}}) \leq 1$$

- In contrast, using CSW method on this set only gives

$$\sum_{\mathbf{x}} \mu_{\psi}(\Gamma_{a_{\mathbf{x}}}) \leq (2 - \epsilon)^d$$

for some $\epsilon > 0$.

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

Summary and Open
questions

What now for
 ψ -epistemicists?

References

Conclusions

Summary and Open questions

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

Summary and Open questions

What now for ψ -epistemicists?

References

■ Summary:

- Several bounds exist showing $k \rightarrow 0$. Harder to get $\Delta L \approx 1$. Best current bound is $\Delta L \approx 0.385$.
- Any noncontextuality inequality is an overlap bound.
- Methods developed to bound overlaps yield new contextuality inequalities, sometimes with much tighter bounds.

■ Open questions:

- Error analysis for arbitrary noncontextuality-based overlap bounds.
- What is the best possible bound on ΔL ?
- Applications in quantum information.

What now for ψ -epistemicists?

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

Summary and Open
questions

What now for
 ψ -epistemicists?

References

- Become neo-Copenhagen.
- Adopt a more exotic ontology:
 - Nonstandard logics and probability theories.
 - Ironic many-worlds.
 - Retrocausality.
 - Relationalism.

What now for ψ -epistemicists?

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

Summary and Open
questions

What now for
 ψ -epistemicists?

References

- Become neo-Copenhagen.
- Adopt a more exotic ontology:
 - Nonstandard logics and probability theories.
 - Ironic many-worlds.
 - Retrocausality.
 - Relationalism.
- Explanatory conservatism: If there is a natural explanation for a quantum phenomenon then we should adopt an interpretation that incorporates it.
 - Suggests exploring exotic ontologies.

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

Summary and Open
questions

What now for
 ψ -epistemicists?

References

■ Review articles:

- ML, “Is the quantum state real? An extended review of ψ -ontology theorems”, *Quanta* 3:67–155 (2014), arXiv:1409.1570.
- D. Jennings and ML, “No Return to Classical Reality”, *Contemp. Phys.* 56 (2015). arXiv:1501.03202.

■ Overlap bounds and contextuality:

- ML and O. Maroney, “Maximally epistemic interpretations of the quantum state and contextuality”, *Phys. Rev. Lett.* 110:120401 (2013) arXiv:1208.5132.
- ML, “ ψ -epistemic models are exponentially bad at explaining the distinguishability of quantum states” *Phys. Rev. Lett.* 112:160404 (2014) arXiv:1401.7996.
- ML, “Bounds on the epistemic interpretation of the quantum state from contextuality inequalities” in preparation.

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

Additional slides

Penrose: ψ -ontologist

Spekkens' toy theory

No cloning

Other arguments

ψ -ontic arguments

Example

Additional slides



It is often asserted that the state-vector is merely a convenient description of ‘our knowledge’ concerning a physical system—or, perhaps, that the state-vector does not really describe a single system but merely provides probability information about an ‘ensemble’ of a large number of similarly prepared systems. Such sentiments strike me as unreasonably timid concerning what quantum mechanics has to tell us about the *actuality* of the physical world. — Sir Roger Penrose⁸

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⁸R. Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind* pp. 268–269 (Oxford, 1989)

Spekkens' toy theory

- Introduction

- Ontological Models

- ψ -ontology theorems

- Overlap bounds

- Overlap bounds from contextuality

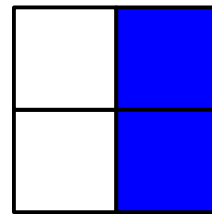
- Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

- Conclusions

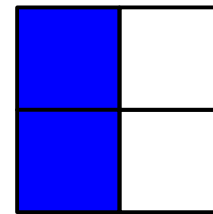
- Additional slides

- Penrose: ψ -ontologist
- Spekkens' toy theory
- No cloning
- Other arguments
- ψ -ontic arguments
- Example

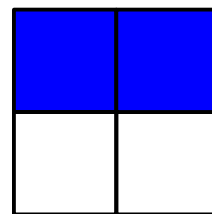
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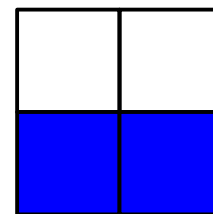
$|x+\rangle$



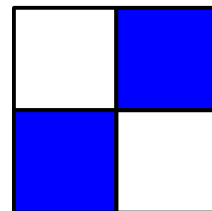
$|x-\rangle$



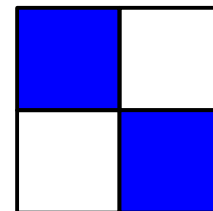
$|y+\rangle$



$|y-\rangle$

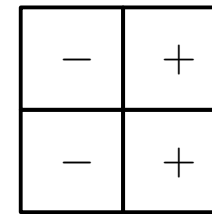


$|z+\rangle$

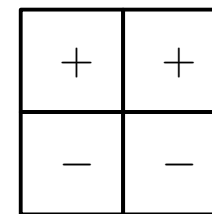


$|z-\rangle$

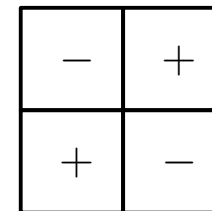
Measurements



X



Y



Z

R. W. Spekkens, *Phys. Rev. A* 75(3):032110 (2007) arXiv:quant-ph/0401052

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

Additional slides

Penrose: ψ -ontologist

Spekkens' toy theory

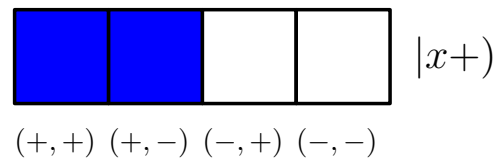
No cloning

Other arguments

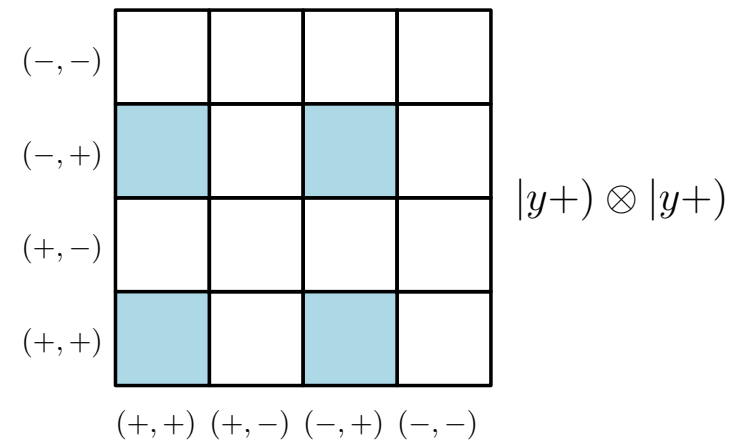
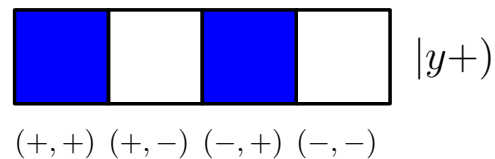
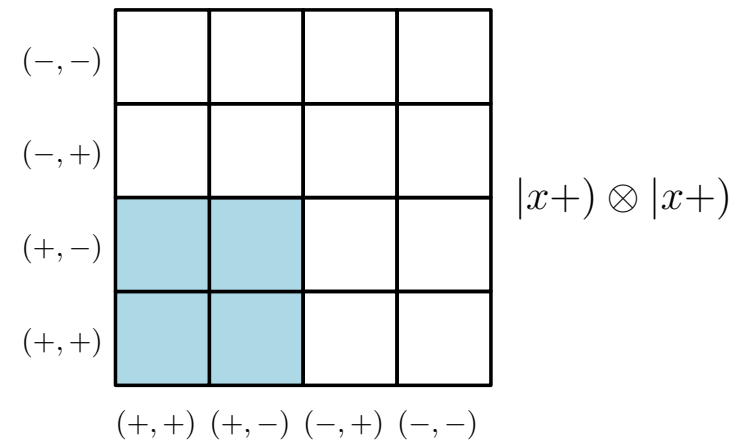
ψ -ontic arguments

Example

Input



Output



Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

Additional slides

Penrose: ψ -ontologist

Spekkens' toy theory

No cloning

Other arguments

ψ -ontic arguments

Example

- Collapse of the wavefunction
- Generalized probability theory
- Excess baggage

See ML Quanta 3:67–155 (2014) for more details.

Arguments for ontic quantum states

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from
contextuality

Antidistinguishability-
based
inequalities

Conclusions

Additional slides

Penrose: ψ -ontologist

Spekkens' toy theory

No cloning

Other arguments

ψ -ontic arguments

Example

- Interference
- Eigenvalue-eigenstate link
- Lack of imagination
- Quantum computing

See ML Quanta 3:67–155 (2014) for more details.

Example: Klyachko inequality

Introduction

Ontological Models

ψ -ontology theorems

Overlap bounds

Overlap bounds from contextuality

Antidistinguishability-based inequalities

Conclusions

Additional slides

Penrose: ψ -ontologist

Spekkens' toy theory

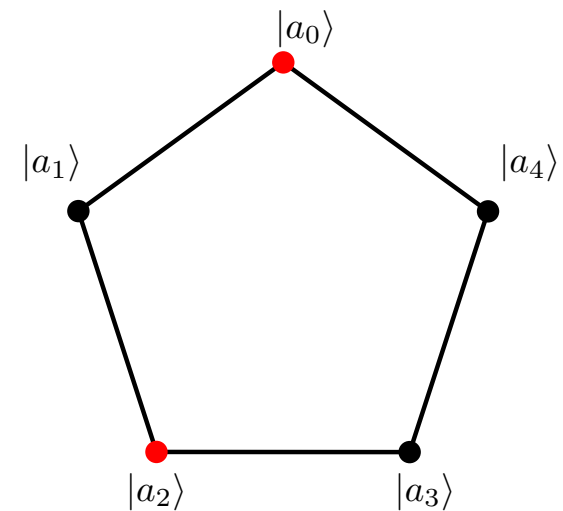
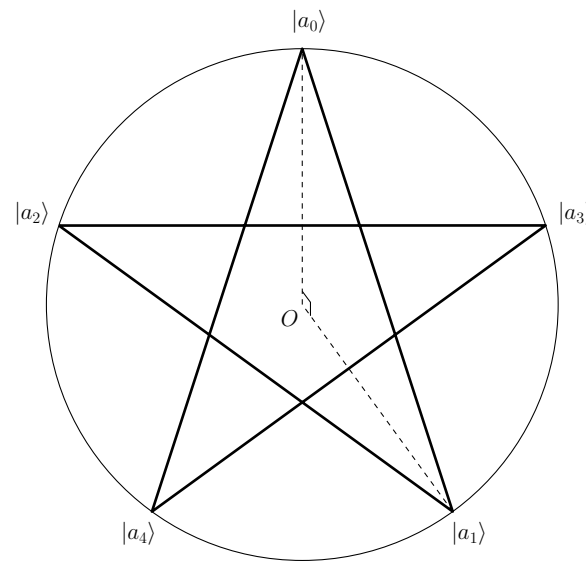
No cloning

Other arguments

ψ -ontic arguments

Example

- Usual proofs of contextuality inequalities use $\Gamma_a \cap \Gamma_b = \emptyset$ when $|\langle a|b\rangle|^2 = 0$.
- Example:
 - $|a_j\rangle = \sin \vartheta \cos \varphi_j |0\rangle + \sin \vartheta \sin \varphi_j |1\rangle + \cos \vartheta |2\rangle$
 - $\varphi_j = \frac{4\pi j}{5}$ and $\cos \vartheta = \frac{1}{\sqrt[4]{5}}$



$$\langle L_c \rangle = \frac{1}{5} \sum_{j=0}^4 L_c(a_j, \psi) \leq \frac{2}{5}$$