

## THE COSMOLOGICAL SINGULARITY

Written for researchers focusing on general relativity, supergravity, and cosmology, this is a self-contained exposition of the structure of the cosmological singularity in generic solutions of the Einstein equations, and an up-to-date mathematical derivation of the theory underlying the Belinski–Khalatnikov–Lifshitz (BKL) conjecture on this field.

Part I provides a comprehensive review of the theory underlying the BKL conjecture. The generic asymptotic behavior near the cosmological singularity of the gravitational field, and fields describing other kinds of matter, is explained in detail. Part II focuses on the billiard reformulation of the BKL behavior. Taking a general approach, this section does not assume any simplifying symmetry conditions and applies to theories involving a range of matter fields and space-time dimensions, including supergravities.

Overall, this book will equip theoretical and mathematical physicists with the theoretical fundamentals of the Big Bang, Big Crunch, Black Hole singularities, their billiard description, and emergent mathematical structures.

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# The Cosmological Singularity

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Part I BKL Analysis</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1 Basic Structure of Cosmological Singularity</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Synchronous Reference System	7
1.2 The Gravitational Field Equations	9
1.3 General Solution	10
1.4 Definition of Cosmological Singularity	11
1.5 Kasner-Like Singularities of Power Law Asymptotics	13
1.6 Instability of Kasner Dynamics	17
1.7 Transition to the New Regime	20
1.8 Oscillatory Nature of the Generic Singularity	24
1.9 Rotation of Kasner Axes	27
1.10 Final Comments	30
<b>2 Homogeneous Cosmological Models</b>	<b>32</b>
2.1 Homogeneous Models of Bianchi Types IX and VIII	32
2.2 Equations of Motion for Homogeneous Models	33
2.3 Models of Types IX and VIII with Fixed Kasner Axes	38
2.4 Models of Types IX and VIII with Rotating Axes	41
2.5 On the Extension to the Inhomogeneous Case	46
<b>3 On the Cosmological Chaos</b>	<b>48</b>
3.1 Stochasticity of the Oscillatory Regime	48
3.2 Historical Remarks	51
3.3 Gravitational Turbulence	53

<b>4</b>	<b>On the Influence of Matter and Space-Time Dimension</b>	<b>57</b>
4.1	Introduction	57
4.2	Perfect Fluid	61
4.3	Perfect Fluid of Stiff Matter Equation of State	65
4.4	Yang–Mills and Electromagnetic Fields	71
4.5	Scalar Field	80
4.6	Pure Gravity in Higher Dimensions	81
4.7	Generalized Kasner Solutions: Rigorous Results	87
4.8	On the Influence of Viscous Matter	88
<b>Part II</b>	<b>Cosmological Billiards</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>The Billiard of Four-Dimensional Vacuum Gravity</b>	<b>97</b>
5.1	Hamiltonian Form of the Action	97
5.2	Supermetric	99
5.3	More on Hyperbolic Space $\mathbb{H}_2$	104
5.4	Kasner Solution Revisited	109
5.5	Hamiltonian in Pseudo-Gaussian Gauge	116
5.6	BKL Limit and Emergence of Billiard Description	120
5.7	Collision Law	127
5.8	Miscellanea	132
5.9	Chaos and Volume of the Billiard Table	136
5.10	Coxeter Group for Pure Gravity in Four Dimensions	138
<b>6</b>	<b>General Cosmological Billiards</b>	<b>145</b>
6.1	Models – Hamiltonian Form of the Action	145
6.2	Geometry of the Space of Scale Factors	148
6.3	Hyperbolic Space in $M$ Dimensions	154
6.4	Hamiltonian in Iwasawa Variables and BKL Limit	158
6.5	Walls	161
6.6	Chapter 4 Revisited	165
6.7	Miscellanea	167
<b>7</b>	<b>Hyperbolic Coxeter Groups</b>	<b>170</b>
7.1	Introduction	170
7.2	Convex Polyhedra in Hyperbolic Space	171
7.3	Coxeter Groups: General Considerations	174
7.4	Coxeter Groups: Examples	176
7.5	Coxeter Groups and Weyl Groups	182
7.6	Coxeter Groups Associated with Gravitational Theories	188
7.7	The Kac–Moody Symmetry Conjecture	198

<b>Appendices</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>A Various Technical Derivations</b>	<b>203</b>
A.1 Perturbations to Kasner-Like Asymptotics	203
A.2 Frame Components of the Ricci Tensor	205
A.3 Exact Solution for Transition Between Two Kasner Epochs	206
A.4 The Derivation of the Rotation Effect of the Kasner Axes	208
<b>B Homogeneous Spaces and Bianchi Classification</b>	<b>213</b>
B.1 Homogeneous Three-Dimensional Spaces	213
B.2 Bianchi Classification	215
B.3 Frame Vectors	217
B.4 On the Freezing Effect in Bianchi IX Model	219
<b>C Spinor Field</b>	<b>221</b>
C.1 Equations of the Gravitational and Spinor Fields	222
C.2 An Exact Homogeneous Solution for the Massless Case	224
C.3 The General Solution in the Vicinity of the Singularity	228
<b>D Lorentzian Kac–Moody Algebras</b>	<b>231</b>
D.1 Definitions	231
D.2 Roots	233
D.3 The Chevalley Involution	234
D.4 Three Examples	234
D.5 The Affine Case	236
D.6 The Invariant Bilinear Form	237
D.7 The Weyl Group	240
D.8 Hyperbolic Kac–Moody Algebras	243
D.9 Overextensions of Finite-Dimensional Lie Algebras	247
<i>References</i>	252
<i>Index</i>	261



## Preface

The first exactly solvable cosmological models of Einstein's theory revealed the presence of a very striking phenomenon: the Big Bang singularity. Since the time it was discovered in 1922 by Alexander Friedmann, a fundamental question has arisen as to whether this phenomenon is due to the special simplifying assumptions underlying the exactly solvable models or whether a singularity is a general property of the Einstein equations. This question was formulated for the first time by L. Landau in 1959.

The question was answered by V. Belinski, I. Khalatnikov and E. Lifshitz (BKL) in 1969. The BKL work showed that a singularity is a general property of a generic cosmological solution of the classical gravitational equations and not a consequence of the special symmetric structure of the exact models. Most importantly, BKL were able to find the analytical structure of this generic solution and show that its behavior is of an extremely complex oscillatory character, of chaotic type. Because it provides the description of a general solution of the Einstein equations (i.e., a solution depending on sufficiently many freely adjustable functions of space), the BKL analysis sheds light on intrinsic properties of Einstein gravity. Given the nonlinear character of the Einstein equations and the difficulty of finding exact solutions without symmetries, the BKL results are quite notable. They have a fundamental significance not only for cosmology but also for the evolution of collapsing matter forming a black hole. The last stage of collapsing matter will follow in general the BKL regime.

The chaotic oscillations discovered by BKL can be understood in terms of a "cosmological billiard" system, where the cosmological evolution is described at each spatial point as the relativistic motion of a fictitious billiard ball in the Lorentzian space of the logarithmic scale factors. This reformulation of the BKL behavior can be naturally extended to arbitrary matter couplings and dimensions of space-time, enabling one to show that the BKL regime is inherent not only to General Relativity but also to more general physical theories containing gravity, such as supergravity models. The dimension of the billiard table and the nature

of the walls that bound it depend on the theory, but the billiard description remains universally valid.

The billiard point of view provides a remarkably simple description of the gravitational field in the vicinity of a spacelike singularity. In spite of the complexity of the Einstein-matter field equations, the asymptotic behavior of the fields near a cosmological singularity can be phrased in surprisingly elementary terms involving finite-dimensional dynamical systems. This description is valid generically, i.e., without making any symmetry assumption.

The billiard point of view has also unexpectedly led to the discovery of a remarkable connection with one of the most beautiful and active subjects of modern mathematics, namely hyperbolic Coxeter groups and the theory of indefinite Kac–Moody algebras. This connection emerges because the billiard region in which the cosmological billiard ball moves turns out to possess exceptional properties, which imply that the group of reflections in the billiard walls is a simplex crystallographic hyperbolic Coxeter group for the known theories containing gravity. This intriguing fact opens up the fascinating perspective that an underlying infinite-dimensional symmetry algebra might play a central role in the fundamental formulation of gravity. However, at the time of writing this book, a complete proof of the presence of such algebras has not been found, so that the origin of the observed emergence of the hyperbolic Coxeter groups in the BKL description remains something of a mystery.

The purpose of this book is to explain at length the BKL analysis, starting from the early work on the subject and going all the way to the most modern developments.

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