An unexpected encounter, unexpected connections

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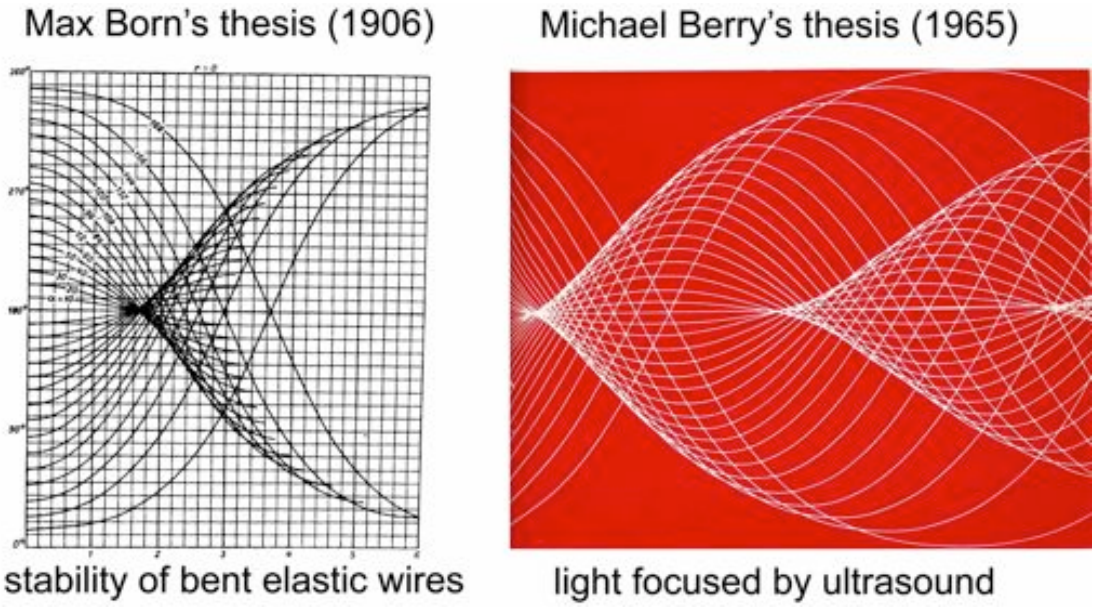
A delightful bonus of my public lecture at the Institute of Physics in London on 4 March was meeting Gustav Born FRS, the son of the quantum pioneer Max Born. Gustav, now 91, is himself a scientist, distinguished for research in pharmacology.

Preparing for my lecture ('How quantum physics democratised music'), I discovered a remarkable similarity of pictures from Max Born's thesis and mine half a century later.



The apparently unrelated subjects illustrated one of my themes: that the same mathematics can describe very different physics.

I also realised that an unfortunate event in the Born family was indirectly responsible for my arrival in Bristol. Maurice Pryce, head of our Bristol phsyics department from 1954 until 1964, was married to one of Max Born's daughters, Gustav's sister Gritli. Their divorce prompted Pryce to leave Bristol, opening a professorial vacancy filled by the appointment of John Ziman. At that time I was intending to move from St Andrew's to take up a postdoctoral fellowship at Sussex, but reading one of Ziman's books inspired me visit him, leading to a friendly meeting and an invitation to come to Bristol, where I have remained.