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# Theory of Stein Spaces

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*Dedicated to Karl Stein*

# Contents

Introduction . . . . .	XV
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## Chapter A. Sheaf Theory

§ 0. Sheaves and Presheaves . . . . .	1
1. Sheaves and Sheaf Mappings . . . . .	1
2. Sums of Sheaves, Subsheaves, and Restrictions . . . . .	1
3. Sections . . . . .	2
4. Presheaves and the Section Functor $\Gamma$ . . . . .	2
5. Going from Presheaves to Sheaves. The Functor $\tilde{\Gamma}$ . . . . .	3
6. The Sheaf Conditions $\mathcal{S}1$ and $\mathcal{S}2$ . . . . .	3
7. Direct Products . . . . .	4
8. Image Sheaves . . . . .	4
9. Gluing Sheaves . . . . .	5
§ 1. Sheaves with Algebraic Structure . . . . .	5
1. Sheaves of Groups, Rings, and $\mathcal{A}$ -Modules . . . . .	5
2. Sheaf Homomorphisms and Subsheaves . . . . .	6
3. Quotient Sheaves . . . . .	7
4. Sheaves of Local $k$ -Algebras . . . . .	8
5. Algebraic Reduction . . . . .	8
6. Presheaves with Algebraic Structure . . . . .	9
7. On the Exactness of $\tilde{\Gamma}$ and $\Gamma$ . . . . .	9
§ 2. Coherent Sheaves and Coherent Functors . . . . .	10
1. Finite Sheaves . . . . .	10
2. Finite Relation Sheaves . . . . .	11
3. Coherent Sheaves . . . . .	11
4. Coherence of Trivial Extensions . . . . .	12
5. The Functors $\bigoplus^p$ and $\bigwedge^p$ . . . . .	12
6. The Functor $\mathcal{H}om$ and Annihilator Sheaves . . . . .	13
7. Sheaves of Quotients . . . . .	14
§ 3. Complex Spaces . . . . .	14
1. $k$ -Algebraized Spaces . . . . .	15
2. Differentiable and Complex Manifolds . . . . .	15
3. Complex Spaces and Holomorphic Maps . . . . .	16
4. Topological Properties of Complex Spaces . . . . .	18
5. Analytic Sets . . . . .	18
6. Dimension Theory . . . . .	19
7. Reduction of Complex Spaces . . . . .	20
8. Normal Complex Spaces . . . . .	21

§ 4. Soft and Flabby Sheaves . . . . .	22
1. Soft Sheaves . . . . .	22
2. Softness of the Structure Sheaves of Differentiable Manifolds . . . . .	23
3. Flabby Sheaves . . . . .	25
4. Exactness of the Functor $\Gamma$ for Flabby and Soft Sheaves . . . . .	25

## Chapter B. Cohomology Theory

§ 1. Flabby Cohomology Theory . . . . .	28
1. Cohomology of Complexes . . . . .	28
2. Flabby Cohomology Theory . . . . .	30
3. The Formal de Rham Lemma . . . . .	32
§ 2. Čech Cohomology . . . . .	33
1. Čech Complexes . . . . .	34
2. Alternating Čech Complexes . . . . .	35
3. Refinements and the Čech Cohomology Modules $\check{H}^q(X, S)$ . . . . .	35
4. The Alternating Čech Cohomology Modules $\check{H}_a^q(X, S)$ . . . . .	37
5. The Vanishing Theorem for Compact Blocks . . . . .	37
6. The Long Exact Cohomology Sequence . . . . .	38
§ 3. The Leray Theorem and the Isomorphism Theorems . . . . .	40
1. The Canonical Resolution of a Sheaf Relative to a Cover . . . . .	40
2. Acyclic Covers . . . . .	42
3. The Leray Theorem . . . . .	43
4. The Isomorphism Theorem $\check{H}_a^q(X, \mathcal{S}) \cong \check{H}^q(X, \mathcal{S}) \cong H^q(X, \mathcal{S})$ . . . . .	43

## Chapter I. Coherence Theory for Finite Holomorphic Maps

§ 1'. Finite Maps and Image Sheaves . . . . .	45
1. Closed and Finite Maps . . . . .	45
2. The Bijection $f_*(\mathcal{S})_y \rightarrow \prod_{j=1}^i \mathcal{S}_{x_i}$ . . . . .	46
3. The Exactness of the Functor $f_*$ . . . . .	46
4. The Isomorphisms $H^q(X, \mathcal{S}) = H^q(Y, f_*(\mathcal{S}))$ . . . . .	47
5. The $\mathcal{O}_Y$ -Module Isomorphism $\check{f}: f_*(\mathcal{S})_y \rightarrow \prod_{j=1}^i \mathcal{S}_{x_i}$ . . . . .	48
§ 2. The General Weierstrass Division Theorem and the Weierstrass Isomorphism . . . . .	48
1. Continuity of Roots . . . . .	48
2. The General Weierstrass Division Theorem . . . . .	49
3. The Weierstrass Homomorphism $\mathcal{O}_B^b \simeq \pi_*(\mathcal{O}_A)$ . . . . .	50
4. The Coherence of the Direct Image Functor $\pi_*$ . . . . .	51
§ 3. The Coherence Theorem for Finite Holomorphic Maps . . . . .	52
1. The Projection Theorem . . . . .	52
2. Finite Holomorphic Maps (Local Case) . . . . .	53
3. Finite Holomorphic Maps and Coherence . . . . .	54

**Chapter II. Differential Forms and Dolbeault Theory**

§ 1. Complex Valued Differential Forms on Differentiable Manifolds . . . . .	56
1. Tangent Vectors . . . . .	56
2. Vector Fields . . . . .	58
3. Complex $r$ -vectors . . . . .	59
4. Lifting $r$ -vectors . . . . .	60
5. Complex Valued Differential Forms . . . . .	60
6. Exterior Derivative . . . . .	62
7. Lifting Differential Forms . . . . .	62
8. The de Rham Cohomology Groups . . . . .	63
§ 2. Differential Forms on Complex Manifolds . . . . .	64
1. The Sheaves $\mathcal{A}^{1,0}$ , $\mathcal{A}^{0,1}$ and $\Omega^1$ . . . . .	64
2. The Sheaves $\mathcal{A}^{p,q}$ and $\Omega^p$ . . . . .	66
3. The Derivatives $\partial$ and $\bar{\partial}$ . . . . .	67
4. Holomorphic Liftings of $(p, q)$ -forms . . . . .	70
§ 3. The Lemma of Grothendieck . . . . .	71
1. Area Integrals and the Operator $T$ . . . . .	72
2. The Commutivity of $T$ with Partial Differentiation . . . . .	73
3. The Cauchy Integral Formula and the Equation $(\partial/\partial\bar{z})(Tf) = f$ . . . . .	74
4. A Lemma of Grothendieck . . . . .	75
§ 4. Dolbeault Cohomology Theory . . . . .	77
1. The Solution of the $\bar{\partial}$ -problem for Compact Product Sets . . . . .	77
2. The Dolbeault Cohomology Groups . . . . .	79
3. The Analytic de Rham Theory . . . . .	80
Supplement to Section 4.1. A Theorem of Hartogs . . . . .	81

**Chapter III. Theorems A and B for Compact Blocks  $\mathbb{C}^m$** 

§ 1. The Attaching Lemmas of Cousin and Cartan . . . . .	83
1. The Lemma of Cousin . . . . .	83
2. Bounded Holomorphic Matrices . . . . .	85
3. The Lemma of Cartan . . . . .	87
§ 2. Attaching Sheaf Epimorphisms . . . . .	89
1. An Approximation Theorem of Runge . . . . .	90
2. The Attaching Lemma for Epimorphisms of Sheaves . . . . .	92
§ 3. Theorems A and B . . . . .	95
1. Coherent Analytic Sheaves on Compact Blocks . . . . .	96
2. The Formulations of Theorems A and B and the Reduction of Theorem B to Theorem A . . . . .	96
3. The Proof of Theorem A for Compact Blocks . . . . .	98

**Chapter IV. Stein Spaces**

§ 1. The Vanishing Theorem $H^q(X, \mathcal{S}) = 0$ . . . . .	100
1. Stein Sets and Consequences of Theorem B . . . . .	100
2. Construction of Compact Stein Sets Using the Coherence Theorem for Finite Maps . . . . .	101

3. Exhaustions of Complex Spaces by Compact Stein Sets . . . . .	102
4. The Equations $H^q(H, \mathcal{S}) = 0$ for $q \geq 2$ . . . . .	103
5. Stein Exhaustions and the Equation $H^1(X, \mathcal{S}) = 0$ . . . . .	104
 § 2. Weak Holomorphic Convexity and Stones . . . . .	108
1. The Holomorphically Convex Hull . . . . .	108
2. Holomorphically Convex Spaces . . . . .	109
3. Stones . . . . .	111
4. Exhaustions by Stones and Weakly Holomorphically Convex Spaces . . . . .	112
5. Holomorphic Convexity and Unbounded Holomorphic Functions . . . . .	113
 § 3. Holomorphically Complete Spaces . . . . .	116
1. Analytic Blocks . . . . .	116
2. Holomorphically Spreadable Spaces . . . . .	117
3. Holomorphically Convex Spaces . . . . .	117
 § 4. Exhaustions by Analytic Blocks are Stein Exhaustions . . . . .	118
1. Good Semi-norms . . . . .	118
2. The Compatibility Theorem . . . . .	119
3. The Convergence Theorem . . . . .	120
4. The Approximation Theorem . . . . .	121
5. Exhaustions by Analytic Blocks are Stein Exhaustions . . . . .	123
 <b>Chapter V. Applications of Theorems A and B</b>	
 § 1. Examples of Stein Spaces . . . . .	125
1. Standard Constructions . . . . .	125
2. Stein Coverings . . . . .	127
3. Differences of Complex Spaces . . . . .	128
4. The Spaces $\mathbb{C}^2 \setminus \{0\}$ and $\mathbb{C}^3 \setminus \{0\}$ . . . . .	130
5. Classical Examples . . . . .	134
6. Stein Groups . . . . .	136
 § 2. The Cousin Problems and the Poincaré Problem . . . . .	136
1. The Cousin I Problem . . . . .	136
2. The Cousin II Problem . . . . .	138
3. Poincaré Problem . . . . .	139
4. The Exact Exponential Sequence $0 \rightarrow \mathbb{Z} \rightarrow \mathcal{O} \rightarrow \mathcal{O}^* \rightarrow 1$ . . . . .	142
5. Oka's Principle . . . . .	144
 § 3. Divisor Classes and Locally Free Analytic Sheaves of Rank 1 . . . . .	146
1. Divisors and Locally-Free Sheaves of Rank 1 . . . . .	146
2. The Isomorphism $H^1(X, \mathcal{O}^*) \rightarrow LF(X)$ . . . . .	147
3. The Group of Divisor Classes on a Stein Space . . . . .	148
 § 4. Sheaf Theoretical Characterization of Stein Spaces . . . . .	150
1. Cycles and Global Holomorphic Functions . . . . .	150
2. Equivalent Criteria for a Stein Space . . . . .	152
3. The Reduction Theorem . . . . .	152
4. Differential Forms on Stein Manifolds . . . . .	154
5. Topological Properties of Stein Spaces . . . . .	156



§ 5. A Sheaf Theoretical Characterization of Stein Domains in $\mathbb{C}^m$	157
1. An Induction Principle	157
2. The Equations $H^1(B, \mathcal{O}_B) = \cdots = H^{m-1}(B, \mathcal{O}_B) = 0$	159
3. Representation of 1.	161
4. The Character Theorem	162
§ 6. The Topology on the Module of Sections of a Coherent Sheaf	163
0. Fréchet Spaces	163
1. The Topology of Compact Convergence	164
2. The Uniqueness Theorem	165
3. The Existence Theorem	166
4. Properties of the Canonical Topology	168
5. The topologies for $C^q(\mathcal{U}, \mathcal{S})$ and $Z^q(\mathcal{U}, \mathcal{S})$	170
6. Reduced Complex Spaces and Compact Convergence	170
7. Convergent Series	171
§ 7. Character Theory for Stein Algebras	176
1. Characters and Character Ideals	176
2. Finiteness Lemma for Character Ideals	177
3. The Homeomorphism $\Xi: X \rightarrow \mathcal{X}(T)$	180
4. Complex Analytic Structure on $\mathcal{X}(T)$	181

## Chapter VI. The Finiteness Theorem

§ 1. Square-integrable Holomorphic Functions	187
1. The Space $\mathcal{O}_h(B)$	187
2. The Bergman Inequality	188
3. The Hilbert Space $\mathcal{O}_h^k(B)$	189
4. Saturated Sets and the Minimum Principle	190
5. The Schwarz Lemma	190
§ 2. Monotone Orthogonal Bases	191
1. Monotonicity	191
2. The Subdegree	192
3. Construction of Monotone Orthogonal Bases by Means of Minimal Functions	193
§ 3. Resolution Atlases	194
1. Existence	194
2. The Hilbert Space $C_k^q(\mathcal{U}, \mathcal{S})$	196
3. The Hilbert Space $Z_k^q(\mathcal{U}, \mathcal{S})$	197
4. Refinements	198
§ 4. The Proof of the Finiteness Theorem	200
1. The Smoothing Lemma	200
2. Finiteness Lemma	201
3. Proof of the Finiteness Theorem	202

## Chapter VII. Compact Riemann Surfaces

§ 1. Divisors and Locally Free Sheaves	204
0. Divisors	205
1. Divisors of Meromorphic Sections	205

2. The Sheaves $\mathcal{F}(D)$ . . . . .	206
3. The Sheaves $\mathcal{O}(D)$ . . . . .	207
§ 2. The Existence of Global Meromorphic Sections . . . . .	208
1. The Sequence $0 \rightarrow \mathcal{F}(D) \rightarrow \mathcal{F}(D') \rightarrow \mathcal{F} \rightarrow 0$ . . . . .	208
2. The Characteristic Theorem and the Existence Theorem . . . . .	209
3. The Vanishing Theorem . . . . .	210
4. The Degree Equation . . . . .	210
§ 3. The Riemann–Roch Theorem (Preliminary Version) . . . . .	211
1. The Genus of Riemann–Roch . . . . .	211
2. Applications . . . . .	212
§ 4. The Structure of Locally Free Sheaves . . . . .	213
1. Locally Free Subsheaves . . . . .	213
2. The Existence of Locally Free Subsheaves . . . . .	214
3. The Canonical Divisors . . . . .	214
Supplement to Section 4. The Riemann–Roch Theorem for Locally Free Sheaves . . . . .	215
1. The Chern Function . . . . .	215
2. Properties of the Chern Function . . . . .	216
3. The Riemann–Roch Theorem . . . . .	216
§ 5. The Equation $H^1(X, \mathcal{M})$ . . . . .	217
1. The $\mathbb{C}$ -homomorphism $\mathcal{O}(np)(X) \rightarrow \text{Hom}(H^1(X, \mathcal{O}(D)), H^1(X, \mathcal{O}(D + np)))$ . . . . .	217
2. The Equation $H^1(X, \mathcal{O}(D + np)) = 0$ . . . . .	218
3. The Equation $H^1(X, \mathcal{M}) = 0$ . . . . .	218
§ 6. The Duality Theorem of Serre . . . . .	219
1. The Principal Part Distributions with Respect to a Divisor . . . . .	219
2. The Equation $H^1(X, \mathcal{O}(D)) = I(D)$ . . . . .	220
3. Linear Forms . . . . .	221
4. The Inequality $\text{Dim}_{\mathcal{M}(X)} J \leq 1$ . . . . .	221
5. The Residue Calculus . . . . .	222
6. The Duality Theorem . . . . .	223
§ 7. The Riemann–Roch Theorem (Final Version) . . . . .	225
1. The Equation $i(D) = l(K - D)$ . . . . .	225
2. The Formula of Riemann–Roch . . . . .	226
3. Theorem B for Sheaves $\mathcal{O}(D)$ . . . . .	227
4. Theorem A for Sheaves $\mathcal{O}(D)$ . . . . .	227
5. The Existence of Meromorphic Differential Forms . . . . .	228
6. The Gap Theorem . . . . .	229
7. Theorems A and B for Locally Free Sheaves . . . . .	229
8. The Hodge Decomposition of $H^1(X, \mathbb{C})$ . . . . .	231
§ 8. The Splitting of Locally Free Sheaves . . . . .	232
1. The Number $\mu(\mathcal{F})$ . . . . .	232
2. Maximal Subsheaves . . . . .	233
3. The Inequality $\mu(\mathcal{G}) = \mu(\mathcal{F}) + 2g$ . . . . .	234
4. The Splitting Criterion . . . . .	235
5. Grothendieck’s Theorem . . . . .	237

<b>Contents</b>	<b>XIII</b>
6. Existence of the Splitting . . . . .	237
7. Uniqueness of the Splitting . . . . .	238
<b>Bibliography . . . . .</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>Subject Index . . . . .</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Table of Symbols . . . . .</b>	<b>248</b>

## Introduction

1. The classical theorem of Mittag-Leffler was generalized to the case of several complex variables by Cousin in 1895. In its one variable version this says that, if one prescribes the principal parts of a meromorphic function on a domain in the complex plane  $\mathbb{C}$ , then there exists a meromorphic function defined on that domain having exactly those principal parts. Cousin and subsequent authors could only prove the analogous theorem in several variables for certain types of domains (e.g. product domains where each factor is a domain in the complex plane). In fact it turned out that this problem can not be solved on an arbitrary domain in  $\mathbb{C}^m$ ,  $m \geq 2$ . The best known example for this is a “notched” bicylinder in  $\mathbb{C}^2$ . This is obtained by removing the set  $\{(z_1, z_2) \in \mathbb{C}^2 \mid |z_1| \geq \frac{1}{2}, |z_2| \leq \frac{1}{2}\}$ , from the unit bicylinder,  $\Delta := \{(z_1, z_2) \in \mathbb{C}^2 \mid |z_1| < 1, |z_2| < 1\}$ . This domain  $D$  has the property that every function holomorphic on  $D$  continues to a function holomorphic on the entire bicylinder. Such a phenomenon never occurs in the theory of one complex variable. In fact, given a domain  $G \subset \mathbb{C}$ , there exist functions holomorphic on  $G$  which are singular at *every* boundary point of  $G$ . In several complex variables one calls such domains (i.e. domains on which there exist holomorphic functions which are singular at every boundary point) *domains of holomorphy*. H. Cartan observed in 1934 that every domain in  $\mathbb{C}^2$  where the above “Cousin problem” is always solvable is necessarily a domain of holomorphy. A proof of this was communicated by Behnke and Stein in 1937. Meanwhile it was conjectured that Cousin’s theorem should hold on any domain of holomorphy. This was in fact proved by Oka in 1937: For every prescription of principal parts on a domain of holomorphy  $D \subset \mathbb{C}^m$ , there exists a meromorphic function on  $D$  having exactly those principal parts. In the same year, via the example of  $\mathbb{C}^3 \setminus \{0\}$ , H. Cartan showed that it is possible for the Cousin theorem to be valid on domains which are not domains of holomorphy.

As the theory of functions of several complex variables developed, it was often the case that, in order to have a chance of carrying over important one variable results, it was necessary to restrict to domains of holomorphy. This was particularly true with respect to the analog of the Weierstrass product theorem. Formulated as a question, it is as follows: Given a domain  $D$  in  $\mathbb{C}^m$ , can one prescribe the zeros (counting multiplicity) of a holomorphic function on  $D$ ? It was soon realized that in some cases it is impossible to find even a continuous function which does the job. Conditions for the existence of a continuous solution of this

problem, the so-called “second Cousin problem,” were discussed by K. Stein in 1941. In fact he gave a sufficient condition which could actually be checked in particular examples. Nowadays this is stated in terms of the vanishing of the Chern class of the prescribed zero set. Stein, however, stated this in a dual and more intuitively geometric way. His condition is as follows: The “intersection number” of the zero surface (counting multiplicity) with any 2-cycle in  $D$  should always be zero.

It was similarly necessary to restrict to domains of holomorphy in order to prove the appropriate generalizations of the facts that, on a domain in  $\mathbb{C}$ , every meromorphic function is the ratio of (globally defined) analytic functions and, if the domain is simply connected, holomorphic functions can be uniformly approximated by polynomials (i.e. the Runge approximation theorem). Poincaré first posed the question about meromorphic functions of several variables being quotients of globally defined relatively prime holomorphic functions. He in fact answered this positively in certain interesting cases (e.g. for  $\mathbb{C}^m$  itself).

2. It is not at all straightforward to generalize the notion of a Mittag-Leffler distribution (i.e. prescriptions of principal parts) to the several variable case. The main difficulty is that the set on which the desired function is to have poles is no longer discrete. In fact, in the case of domains in  $\mathbb{C}^m$ ,  $m \geq 2$ , this set is a  $(2m - 2)$ -dimensional real (possibly singular) surface. Thus one can no longer just prescribe points and pieces of Laurent series. This can be circumvented as follows: If  $G$  is a domain in  $\mathbb{C}^m$  and  $\mathcal{U} = \{U_i\}$ ,  $i \in I$ , is an open covering of  $G$ , then the family  $\{U_i, h_i\}$  is called an *additive Cousin distribution* on  $G$ , whenever each  $h_i$  is a meromorphic function on  $U_i$ , and on  $U_{i_0 i_1} := U_{i_0} \cap U_{i_1}$  the difference  $h_{i_0} - h_{i_1}$  is holomorphic for all choices of  $i_0$  and  $i_1$ . In the case of  $m = 1$ , this means that  $h_{i_0}$  and  $h_{i_1}$  have the same principal parts. Thus one obtains a Mittag-Leffler distribution from the Cousin distribution. A meromorphic function  $h$  is said to have the Cousin distribution for its principal parts if  $h - h_i$  is holomorphic on  $U_i$  for all  $i$ .

Different Cousin distributions can, on the same covering, define the same distribution of principal parts. This difficulty is overcome by introducing an equivalence relation. For this let  $x \in G$ . Let  $U$  be an open neighborhood of  $x$  in  $G$  and suppose that  $h$  is meromorphic on  $U$ . Then the pair  $(U, h)$  is called a *locally meromorphic function* at  $x$ . Two such pairs  $(U_1, h_1)$  and  $(U_2, h_2)$  are called equivalent if there exists a neighborhood  $V$  of  $x$  with  $V \subset U_1 \cap U_2$  and  $h_1 - h_2$  holomorphic on  $V$ . Each equivalence class is called a *germ of a principal part*. The set of all germs of principal parts at  $x$  is denoted by  $\mathcal{H}_x$ . We define  $\mathcal{H} := \bigcup_{x \in X} \mathcal{H}_x$  and

denote by  $\pi: \mathcal{H} \rightarrow G$  the map which associates to every germ its base point  $x \in G$ . If  $U \subset G$  is open and  $h$  is meromorphic on  $U$  then, for every  $x \in U$ , one has the associated principal part of  $h$  at  $x$ ,  $\bar{h}_x \in \mathcal{H}_x$ . Consequently there exists a map  $s_h: U \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ ,  $x \mapsto \bar{h}_x$ , such that  $\pi \circ s_h = \text{id}$ . It is easy to check that sets of the form  $s_h(U)$ , where  $U$  is any open set in  $G$  and  $h$  is any meromorphic function on  $U$ , form a basis for a topology on  $\mathcal{H}$ . Further, in this topology,  $\pi: \mathcal{H} \rightarrow G$  is seen to be continuous and a local homeomorphism. In such a situation one calls  $\mathcal{H}$  a sheaf over  $G$ . The fibers of  $\pi$  should be thought of as stalks with the open sets looking

like transversal surfaces given by the maps  $s_h$ . The map  $s_h: U \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$  is called a local section over  $U$ . Every Cousin distribution  $\{U_i, h_i\}$  defines a *global* continuous map (section)  $s: G \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$  with  $\pi \cdot s = id$ . This is locally defined by  $s|_{U_i} := s_{h_i}$ . The condition that, for all  $i$  and  $j$ ,  $h_i - h_j$  is holomorphic on  $U_i \cap U_j$  is equivalent to the fact that  $s$  is well-defined. Two Cousin distributions have the same principal parts if and only if they correspond to the same section in  $D$  over  $G$ . A meromorphic function  $h$  is a “solution” of the Cousin distribution  $s$  (i.e. has exactly the same principal parts as were prescribed) exactly when  $s_h = s$ .

It is clear from the above that the sheaf theoretic language is the ideal medium for the statement of the generalization of the Mittag-Leffler problem to the several variable situation. Of course for domains in  $\mathbb{C}^n$  Oka had solved this without explicit use of sheaves. But even in this case the language of sheaves isolated the real problems and made the seemingly complicated techniques of Oka more transparent. This was also true in the case of the second Cousin problem, the Poincaré problem, etc. Furthermore this language was ideal for formulating new problems and for paving the road toward possible obstructions to their solutions. Theorems about sheaves themselves later gave rise to numerous interesting applications.

3. The germs of holomorphic functions form a sheaf which is usually denoted by  $\mathcal{C}$ . It has already been pointed out that the zero sets of analytic functions are important even in the study of the Cousin problems. Thus it should be expected that analytic sets, which are just sets of simultaneous zeros of finitely many holomorphic functions on domains in the various  $\mathbb{C}^m$ , would play an important role in the early development of the theory. In fact the totality of germs of holomorphic functions which vanish on a particular analytic set form a subsheaf of  $\mathcal{C}$  which frequently comes into play in present day complex analysis. In 1950 Oka himself used the idea of distributions of ideals in rings of local holomorphic functions (*idéaux de domaines indéterminés*). This notion, which at the time of its conception seemed difficult and mysterious, just corresponds to the simple idea of a sheaf of ideals.

The use of germs and the idea of sheaves go back to the work of J. Leray. Sheaves have been systematically applied in the theory of functions of several complex variables ever since 1950/51. The idea of *coherence* is very important for many considerations in several complex variables. Roughly speaking, a sheaf of  $\mathcal{C}$ -modules is coherent if it is locally free except possibly on some small set where it is still finitely generated with the ring of relations again being finitely generated. Even in the early going it was necessary to prove the coherence of many sheaves. This was often quite difficult, because there were really no techniques around and most work had to be done from scratch. The most important coherence theorems originated with H. Cartan and K. Oka. After the foundations had been laid, coherent sheaves quickly enriched the theory of domains of holomorphy with new important results. In the meantime, in his memorable work “Analytische Funktionen mehrerer komplexer Veränderlichen zu vorgegebenen Periodizitätsmoduln und das zweite Cousinsche Problem,” Math. Ann. **123**(1951), 201–222, K. Stein had discovered complex manifolds which have basic (elementary) properties simi-

lar to domains of holomorphy. A domain  $G \subset \mathbb{C}$  is indeed a domain of holomorphy if and only if it is a *Stein manifold*. The main point is that many theorems about coherent sheaves on domains of holomorphy can as well be proved for Stein manifolds. Cartan and Serre recognized that the language of sheaf cohomology, which had been developed only shortly before, is particularly suitable for the formulation of the main results: For every coherent sheaf  $\mathcal{S}$  over a Stein manifold  $X$ , the following two theorems hold:

**Theorem A.** The  $\mathcal{O}(X)$ -module of global sections  $\mathcal{S}(X)$  generates every stalk  $\mathcal{S}_x$  as an  $\mathcal{O}_x$ -module for all  $x \in X$ .

**Theorem B.**  $H^q(X, \mathcal{S}) = 0$  for all  $q \geq 1$ .

These famous theorems, which were first proved in the *Seminaire Cartan* 1951/52, contain, among many others, the results pertaining to the Cousin problems.

4. Following the original definition, a *paracompact* complex manifold is called a *Stein manifold* if the following three axioms are satisfied:

**Separation Axiom:** Given two distinct points  $x_1, x_2 \in X$ , there exists a function  $f$  holomorphic on  $X$  such that  $f(x_1) \neq f(x_2)$ .

**Local Coordinates Axiom:** If  $x_0 \in X$  then there exists a neighborhood  $U$  of  $x_0$  and functions  $f_1, \dots, f_m$  which are holomorphic on  $X$  such that the restrictions  $z_i := f_i|_U$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, m$ , give local coordinates on  $U$ .

**Holomorphic Convexity Axiom:** If  $\{x_i\}$  is a sequence which “goes to  $\infty$  in  $X$ ” (i.e. the set  $\{x_i\}$  is discrete) then there exists a function  $f$  holomorphic on  $X$  which is unbounded on  $\{x_i\}$ :  $\sup |f(x_i)| = \infty$ .

It is clear that a domain in  $\mathbb{C}^m$  is a Stein manifold if and only if it is holomorphically convex. However if one wants to study non-schlicht domains over  $\mathbb{C}^m$  (i.e. ramified covers of domains in  $\mathbb{C}^m$ ), then it is not apriori clear that two points lying over the same base point can be separated by global holomorphic functions. Likewise it is not obvious that neighborhoods of ramification points have local coordinates which are restrictions of global holomorphic functions. If one allows points which are not locally uniformizable (i.e. points where there is a genuine singularity and the “domain” is not even a manifold, as is the case at the point  $(0, 0, 0) \in V := \{(x, y, z) \in \mathbb{C}^3 \mid x^2 = yz\}$ , which is spread over the  $(y, z)$ -plane by projection) then the above definition is meaningless, because we assumed that  $X$  is a manifold. However, even in the non-locally uniformizable situation above, the following significant weakening of the separation and local coordinate axioms still holds:

**Weak Separation Axiom:** *For every point  $x_0 \in X$  there exist functions  $f_1, \dots, f_n \in \mathcal{C}(X)$  so that  $x_0$  is an isolated point in  $\{x \in X \mid f_1(x) = \dots = f_n(x) = 0\}$ .*

Among other things, this allows the consideration of spaces with singularities. Due to the maximum principle, this weak separation implies that *every compact analytic subspace of  $X$  is finite*.

It turns out that, without losing the main results, the convexity axiom can also be somewhat weakened:

**Weak Convexity Axiom:** *Let  $K$  be a compact set in  $X$  and  $W$  an open neighborhood of  $K$  in  $X$ . Then  $\hat{K} \cap W$  is compact, where  $\hat{K}$  denotes the holomorphic hull of  $K$  in  $X$ :*

$$\hat{K} := \{x \in X \mid |f(x)| \leq \sup_{y \in K} |f(y)|, \text{ for all } f \in \mathcal{C}(X)\}.$$

One way of strengthening the axiom immediately above is to require that  $\hat{K}$  be compact in  $X$ . If one does this and further considers only the case where  $X$  is a manifold, then, without the use of deep techniques, one can show that the strengthened axiom is equivalent to the holomorphic convexity axiom (see Theorems IV.2.4 and IV.2.12).

For the purposes of this book, a Stein space is a *paracompact (not necessarily reduced) complex space for which Theorem B is valid*. It is proved that this condition is equivalent to the validity of Theorem A, and is also equivalent to the above weakened axioms. In particular it follows that if  $X$  is a manifold, the weakened axioms imply Stein's original axioms.

We will always assume that a complex space has *countable topology* and is thus *paracompact*. With a bit of work one can show that any irreducible complex space which satisfies the weak separation axiom is *eo ipso* paracompact (see 16, 24).

5. We conclude our introductory remarks with a short description of the contents of this book. We begin with two brief preliminary chapters (Chapters A and B) where we assemble the important information from sheaf theory and the related cohomology theories. The idea of coherence is explained in these chapters. A reader who is really interested in coherence proofs, can find such in our book, "Coherent Analytic Sheaves," which is presently in preparation. Complex spaces are introduced as special  $\mathbb{C}$ -algebraized spaces. Further we develop cohomology from the point of view of alternating (Čech) cochains as well as via flabby resolutions. Proofs which are easily accessible in the literature (e.g. [SCV], [TF], or [TAG]) are in general not carried out.

In Chapter I a short direct proof of the coherence theorem for finite holomorphic maps is given. It is based primarily on the Weierstrass division theorem and Hensel's lemma for convergent power series.

The Dolbeault cohomology theory is presented in Chapter II. As a consequence we obtain Theorem B for the structure sheaf  $\mathcal{C}$  over a compact euclidean block (i.e. an  $m$ -fold product of rectangles),  $K$ , in  $\mathbb{C}^m$ . In other words, for  $q \geq 1$ ,  $H^q(K, \mathcal{C}) = 0$ . It should be noted that, although we want to introduce Dolbeault



cohomology in any case, this result follows directly and with less difficulty via the Čech cohomology.

Chapter III contains the proofs for Theorems A and B for coherent sheaves over euclidean blocks  $K \subset \mathbb{C}^m$ . One of the key ingredients for the proofs is the fact that, for every coherent sheaf  $\mathcal{S}$ , the cohomology groups,  $H^q(K, \mathcal{S})$ , vanish for all  $q$  large enough. The deciding factor in proving Theorem A is the “Heftungslemma” of Cartan. This is proved quite easily if while solving the Cousin problem, one simultaneously estimates the attaching functions.

In Chapter IV Theorems A and B are proved for an arbitrary Stein space,  $X$ . A summary of the proof is the following: First it is shown that  $X$  is exhausted by analytic blocks. (An analytic block is a compact set in  $X$  which can be mapped by a finite, proper, holomorphic map into an euclidean block in some  $\mathbb{C}^m$ .) The coherence theorem for finite maps along with the results in Chapter III yield the desired theorem free of charge. In order to obtain such theorems in the limit (i.e. for spaces exhausted by analytic blocks), an approximation technique, which is a generalization of the usual Runge idea, is needed.

Applications and illustrations of the main theorems, as well as examples of Stein manifolds, are given in Chapter V. The canonical Fréchet topology on the space of global sections  $\mathcal{S}(X)$  of a coherent analytic sheaf is described in Section 4. By means of the normalization theorem, which we do not prove in this book, we give a simple proof for the fact that, for a reduced complex space  $X$ , the canonical Fréchet topology on  $H^0(X, \mathcal{O})$  is the topology of compact convergence.

Chapter VI is devoted to proving that, for a coherent analytic sheaf  $\mathcal{S}$  on a compact complex space  $X$ ,  $H^q(X, \mathcal{S})$ ,  $q \geq 0$ , are finite dimensional  $\mathbb{C}$ -vector space (Théorème de finitude of Cartan and Serre). In this proof we work with the Hilbert space of square-integrable holomorphic functions and make use of the orthonormal basis which was introduced by S. Bergman. The classical Schwarz lemma plays an important role, replacing the lemma of L. Schwartz on linear compact maps between Fréchet spaces.

In Chapter VII we attempt to entertain the reader with a presentation of the theory of compact Riemann surfaces which results from, among other considerations, the finiteness theorem of Chapter V. The celebrated Riemann-Roch and Serre duality theorems are proved. The flow of the proof is more or less like that in Serre [35], except that, in the analytic case, a real argument for  $H^1(X, \mathcal{M}) = 0$  is needed. This is done in a simple way using an idea of R. Kiehl. The book closes with a proof of the Grothendieck theorem on the splitting of vector bundles over  $\mathbb{C}P_1$ .

The reader should be advised that, while the English version is not a word for word translation of *Theorie der Steinschen Räume*, there are no significant changes in the mathematics. There are a number of strategies for reading this book, depending on the experience and viewpoint of the reader. Those who are not currently working the field might first browse through the chapter on applications (Chapter V).

It gives us great pleasure to be able to dedicate this book to Karl Stein, who initiated the theory as well as collaborated in its development. Various prelimin-

ary versions of our texts were already in existence in the middle 60's. We would like to thank W. Barth for his help at that time.

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