Dating back at least to Hilbert (1900) the closure of certain geometric configurations has been linked to the existence of certain automorphisms and thereby to the classification of related algebras. The canonical example is due to Veblen and Young (1916) and relates Desargues configurations in projective space with the existence of central collineations and then to coordinatization by division rings. We explain such connections and present recent work in this spirit. (Received September 24, 2018)