

2. Orthogonal representations of p-groups

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We can identify the irreducible faithful $\mathbf{Q}[\mathbf{Z}/p]$ -Module $\mathbf{Q}^{p-1}$ with $\mathbf{Q}(\zeta_p)$ (ζ_p : primitive p -th root of unity, $1 \in \mathbf{Z}/p$ acts on $\mathbf{Q}(\zeta_p)$ by multiplication with ζ_p). Any symmetric σ -invariant bilinear form is given by $\text{tr}_{\mathbf{Q}(\zeta_p)/\mathbf{Q}}(axy\bar{y})$ with $a \in \mathbf{Q}(\zeta_p + \zeta_p^{-1})$ (cf. [4] or [6]). We write γ_a for the σ -invariant bilinear form corresponding to $a \in \mathbf{Q}(\zeta_p + \zeta_p^{-1})$.

(1.2) LEMMA. *The discriminant of γ_a in $\mathbf{Q}/\mathbf{Q}^{*2}$ is equal to $p \bmod \mathbf{Q}^{*2}$.*

Proof. Since $a \in \mathbf{L} := \mathbf{Q}(\zeta_p + \zeta_p^{-1})$ we have: $\gamma_a = \text{tr}_{\mathbf{L}/\mathbf{Q}}(\text{tr}_{\mathbf{Q}(\zeta_p)/\mathbf{L}}axy\bar{y})$. An easy computation shows that $\text{tr}_{\mathbf{Q}(\zeta_p)/\mathbf{L}}(axy\bar{y})$ is a 2-dimensional symmetric $\mathbf{L}$ -bilinearform with discriminant $4 - (\zeta_p + \zeta_p^{-1})^2 \bmod \mathbf{L}^{*2} \in \mathbf{L}/\mathbf{L}^{*2}$. Applying [7, Lemma 2.2] we conclude that the discriminant of γ_a is independant of $a \in \mathbf{L}$. Consider now the matrix representation of σ given before (σ : irreducible faithful $\mathbf{Q}$ -representation of $\mathbf{Z}/p$). Let C be the $(p-1) \times (p-1)$ -matrix given by:

$$C := \begin{bmatrix} 2 & -1 & & & \\ -1 & 2 & -1 & & \\ & -1 & 2 & -1 & \\ & & & \ddots & \ddots \\ & & & -1 & 2 \end{bmatrix}$$

It is easy to check that C is the matrix of a σ -invariant symmetric bilinear form. The Lemma follows since the determinant of C is equal to p .

2. ORTHOGONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF p -GROUPS

Let $p > 2$ be an odd prime. The integer $l_{\mathbf{Q}}(p)$ is defined by

$$l_{\mathbf{Q}}(p) := \text{g.c.d.} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} m > 1 \\ \left| \begin{array}{l} \text{the } m\text{-fold direct sum } \sigma \oplus \dots \oplus \sigma \text{ of the irre-} \\ \text{ducible faithful } \mathbf{Q}\text{-representation } \sigma \text{ of } \mathbf{Z}/p \text{ is} \\ \text{equivalent to an orthogonal representation} \end{array} \right. \end{array} \right\}$$

The importance played by cyclic groups in the investigation of representations of p -groups is given by the following result (cf. [1, Theorem (1.10)]):

(2.1) PROPOSITION. *Let G be a finite p -group ($p > 2$) and let ρ be an irreducible $\mathbf{Q}$ -representation of G . Then either ρ is induced from a representation θ of a normal subgroup of index p , or ρ factors through a $\mathbf{Q}$ -representation of $\mathbf{Z}/p$.*

The degree of an irreducible non trivial $\mathbf{Q}$ -representation of a finite p -group is therefore of the form $p^k(p-1)$ ($k=0, 1, 2, \dots$), cf. [1, Corollary (1.11)].

(2.2) PROPOSITION. Let G be a p -group ($p>2$) and $\rho: G \rightarrow SO_{2m}(\mathbf{Q})$ a representation of G with $2m \not\equiv 0 \pmod{l_{\mathbf{Q}}(p) \cdot (p-1)}$. Then ρ has a fixed point (i.e. $\rho = 1 \oplus \tau$ where 1 is the unique 1-dimensional $\mathbf{Q}$ -representation of G).

We will need the following lemma for the proof of (2.2):

(2.3) LEMMA. Let $\rho: G \rightarrow GL_m(\mathbf{Q})$ be an irreducible non trivial representation of the p -group G ($p>2$) and let ψ be a ρ -invariant symmetric bilinear form. If we write σ for the irreducible faithful representation of $\mathbf{Z}/p$, then there exist σ -invariant bilinear forms $\Gamma_1, \dots, \Gamma_s$ such that ψ is equivalent to the orthogonal sum $\Gamma_1 \perp \dots \perp \Gamma_s$.

Proof. Let $p^k(p-1)$ be the degree of ρ . We prove the lemma by induction on k . For $k=0$, ρ factors through the irreducible faithful representation σ of $\mathbf{Z}/p$. Every ρ -invariant symmetric bilinear form ψ is therefore σ -invariant. For $k>0$, ρ is induced by a representation θ of a normal subgroup H of index p . The restriction ρ_H of ρ to H splits in a direct sum: $\rho = \theta_1 \oplus \dots \oplus \theta_p$ with $\theta = \theta_1$ and θ_i is irreducible for $i=1, \dots, p$. By (1.1) we can assume that $\mathbf{Q}^m$ is the orthogonal sum of the corresponding irreducible invariant subspaces. The assertion follows by induction.

Proof of (2.2). If $G = \mathbf{Z}/p$, we split ρ in a direct sum: $\rho = n_0 1 \oplus n_1 \sigma$ (1 : one dimensional representation of $\mathbf{Z}/p$; σ : irreducible faithful representation of $\mathbf{Z}/p$). If $n_0 = 0$ then n_1 must be a multiple of $l_{\mathbf{Q}}(p)$, i.e. we have $2m \equiv 0 \pmod{(p-1)l_{\mathbf{Q}}(p)}$. Contradiction.

If G is not $\mathbf{Z}/p$, we split ρ in a direct sum of irreducible representations: $\rho = \rho_1 \oplus \dots \oplus \rho_t$, chosen in such a way that $\mathbf{Q}^{2m}$ is the orthogonal sum of the corresponding invariant subspaces. Suppose now that ρ has no fixed points. Then all ρ_i are non trivial and it follows from (2.3) that any ρ -invariant symmetric bilinear form is equivalent to an orthogonal sum of σ -invariant symmetric bilinear forms. We can therefore construct a representation $\mathbf{Z}/p \rightarrow SO_{2m}(\mathbf{Q})$ without fixed points, what contradicts the first part of the proof.

The rest of the section is devoted to the computation of $l_{\mathbf{Q}}(p)$, p odd prime.

(2.4) PROPOSITION.
$$l_{\mathbf{Q}}(p) = \begin{cases} 2 & \text{if } p \not\equiv 7 \pmod{8} \\ 4 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Proof. For each $a \in \mathbf{Q}(\zeta_p + \zeta_p^{-1})$, the discriminant of γ_a is not a square in $\mathbf{Q}$ (cf. lemma (1.2)). Therefore $l_{\mathbf{Q}}(p)$ must be even. The 4-fold orthogonal sum of a $\mathbf{Q}$ -bilinear form is equivalent to the standard bilinear form, since every integer is sum of four squares. Let C be the matrix considered in the proof of lemma (1.2). If it is possible to find two rational numbers u and v such that the matrix $X_{u,v}$

$$X_{u,v} := \begin{bmatrix} uC & 0 \\ 0 & vC \end{bmatrix}$$

represents a bilinear form $\xi_{u,v}$ which is equivalent to the standard one, then the representation $\sigma \oplus \sigma$ is equivalent to an orthogonal representation. This sufficient condition is also necessary if $p \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$ (cf. [5]). For a prime p , let $\mathbf{Q}_p$ be the field of p -adic numbers and write $\mathbf{Q}_{\infty}$ for $\mathbf{R}$ as usual. For $a, b \in \mathbf{Q}$ and for $v = 2, 3, 5, 7, \dots, \infty$ we write $(a, b)_v$ for the Hilbert symbol of a and b relatively to $\mathbf{Q}_v$. For a bilinearform α given in an orthogonal base by the diagonal matrix

$$\begin{bmatrix} a_1 & & & \\ & \cdot & & \\ & & \cdot & \\ & & & a_n \end{bmatrix}$$

we write $H_v(\alpha)$ ($v = 2, 3, \dots, \infty$) for the Hasse invariant, which is defined by

$$H_v(\alpha) = \prod_{i < j} (a_i, a_j)_v$$

Using the formulas given for example by [9] to compute the Hilbert symbol, one check that:

$$\begin{aligned} H_v(\xi_{1,1}) &= 1 & \text{if } p \not\equiv 3 \pmod{4} & & \text{for } v = 2, 3, 5, 7, \dots, \infty, \\ H_2(\xi_{u,v}) &= -1 & \text{if } p \equiv 7 \pmod{8} & & \text{for any } u \text{ and any } v, \\ H_v(\xi_{2p,1}) &= 1 & \text{if } p \equiv 1 \pmod{8} & & \text{for } v = 2, 3, 5, 7, \dots, \infty. \end{aligned}$$

Since the discriminant of $\xi_{u,v}$ is $1 \in \mathbf{Q}/\mathbf{Q}^{*2}$ and since $\xi_{u,v}$ is positive definit for any u and any v , it follows that $\sigma \oplus \sigma$ is equivalent to an orthogonal representation if and only if $p \not\equiv 7 \pmod{8}$. It remains to show that, for $p \equiv 7 \pmod{8}$, the $2n$ -fold orthogonal sum μ given by the matrix H :

$$H := \begin{bmatrix} u_1 C & & & \\ & \cdot & & \\ & & \cdot & \\ & & & \cdot \\ & & & & u_{2n} C \end{bmatrix}$$

is isomorphic to the standard bilinear form if and only if n is even. Let u_{odd} and u_{even} defined by:

$$u_{\text{even}} := \prod_{k=1}^n u_{2k} \quad u_{\text{odd}} := \prod_{k=1}^n u_{2k-1};$$

an easy computation shows that $H_v(\xi_{u_{\text{even}}, u_{\text{odd}}}) = H_v(\mu)$ if n is odd. The proposition follows.

3. PROOF OF THE MAIN THEOREM

(3.1) LEMMA. Let p be a prime number ($p > 2$). For every integer m satisfying $2m \not\equiv 0 \pmod{(p-1) \cdot l_{\mathbf{Q}}(p)}$ we have $F_{\mathbf{Q}}(m, p) = 1$.

Proof. Let G be a p -group, $p > 2$. It follows from (2.2) that any representation ρ of G splits: $\rho = 1 \oplus \tau$ (1 is the 1-dimensional representation of G). Then we have $e(\rho) = e(1)e(\tau) = 0$.

We are now able to prove the main theorem. It has been showed in [3] that $F_{\mathbf{Q}}(n) = 4$ if n is odd. If n is even, four cases have to be distinguished. If $p = 2$ then the $n/2^{N-2}$ -fold sum of the irreducible faithful representation of $\mathbf{Z}/2^N$, where 2^N is the 2-primary part of $\text{den}(B_n/n)$, is an orthogonal representation with Euler class of order 2^N (cf. [1]). Let now p be an odd prime. Since the irreducible faithful representation v of $\mathbf{Z}/p^r$ ($r \geq 1$) is induced by the irreducible faithful representation of $\mathbf{Z}/p \subset \mathbf{Z}/p^r$, the M -fold sum of v is equivalent to an orthogonal representation if and only if $l_{\mathbf{Q}}(p)$ divides M . Write $n = Np^k(p-1)$ with $\text{g.c.d.}(N, p) = 1$. If N is even, the $2N$ -fold sum of the irreducible faithful representation of $\mathbf{Z}/p^{k+1}$ is orthogonal and has Euler class of order p^{k+1} (cf. [1]); if N is odd and $p \not\equiv 7 \pmod{8}$ then the $2N$ -fold sum of the irreducible faithful representation of $\mathbf{Z}/p^{k+1}$ is orthogonal and has Euler class of order p^{k+1} (cf. [1]). In the three cases, the statement follows from the well known characterization of $\text{den}(B_n/n)$ (cf. [1] for example). Eventually, applying (3.1) we see that $F_{\mathbf{Q}}(n, p) = 1$ if N is odd and $p \equiv 7 \pmod{8}$.