

3. Wedderburn's theorem

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vectors and they therefore belong to the centre of D since the eigenvectors span D . Each eigenvalue is a root of $f(X)$ so the degree of $g(X)$ is no larger than that of $f(X)$. But $g(\theta) = 0$ so we must have $g(X) = f(X)$. Since each θ_i must be a root of the minimal polynomial of T_θ this proves

(2.4) *The minimal polynomial of T_θ is $f(X)$.*

As immediate consequences we have

(2.5) $\dim_F D = \dim_K F = \text{degree of } f = m.$

(2.6) $\dim_K D = m^2.$

Finally, we prove

(2.7) *If $E = K(\theta')$ and $f(\theta') = 0$, then for some non-zero element d of D , $d E d^{-1} \subseteq F$.*

To see this, consider the linear transformation $T_{\theta'}$. Since $f(T_{\theta'}) = 0$ there is an eigenvalue $\lambda \in F$ of $T_{\theta'}$ and a corresponding eigenvector d such that $d \theta' = \lambda d$; it follows that $d E d^{-1} \subseteq F$.

Remark. The assumption on the field F amounts to supposing that F/K is a finite Galois extension and the proof of (2.4) shows that $N(F)^\# / F^\#$ is isomorphic to its Galois group. (Where $F^\#$ denotes the set of non-zero elements of F .)

3. WEDDERBURN'S THEOREM

This proof follows van der Waerden [14, p. 203]. The counting argument was used by Artin [1] in his proof of the same theorem.

THEOREM. *Every finite division ring is a field.*

Proof. Suppose that D is a finite division ring with centre K and maximal subfield F . If the order of F is q , then the elements of F constitute all the roots of the polynomial $X^q - X$; hence any two finite fields of the same order are isomorphic. The multiplicative group of a finite field is cyclic, so $F = K(\theta)$ for some θ . Any element of D is contained in a maximal subfield, which by (2.5) has the same order as F and hence by (2.7) any element of the multiplicative group G of non-zero elements of D belongs to a conjugate of H , the multiplicative group of non-zero elements of F . The

number of conjugates of a subgroup is the index of its normalizer, so H has at most $|G : H|$ conjugates in G and hence the union of the conjugates contains at most $|G : H| (|H| - 1) + 1 = |G| - |G : H| + 1$ elements. This number is less than $|G|$ except when $G = H$. Hence $D = F$ is a field.

4. FROBENIUS' THEOREM

Let \mathbf{R} denote the field of real numbers, \mathbf{C} the field of complex numbers and \mathbf{H} the division ring of quaternions. The following proof makes use of the fundamental theorem that every polynomial with coefficients in \mathbf{C} has a root in \mathbf{C} .

THEOREM. Let D be a division ring which contains the real numbers \mathbf{R} in its centre and suppose that every element of D satisfies a polynomial with coefficients in \mathbf{R} . Then D is isomorphic to one of \mathbf{R} , \mathbf{C} or \mathbf{H} .

Proof. Suppose that D is not isomorphic to \mathbf{R} or \mathbf{C} . It follows that the maximal subfield F of D is isomorphic to \mathbf{C} , the centre K of D is isomorphic to \mathbf{R} and $F = K(i)$ where $i^2 = -1$. Let j be an eigenvector of T_i corresponding to the eigenvalue $-i$. Then $ji = -ij$ and j^2 commutes with j and F . From (2.2) and (2.3) the elements 1 and j form an F -basis for D and therefore $j^2 = \alpha$ belongs to K . If $\alpha = \beta^2$ for some $\beta \in K$ then $(j - \beta)(j + \beta) = 0$ and j belongs to K , which is not the case; hence $\alpha = -\beta^2$ for some $\beta \in K$. Replacing j by $j\beta^{-1}$ we obtain a K -basis 1, i , j , ij for D such that $i^2 = j^2 = -1$ and $ij = -ji$. That is, D is isomorphic to \mathbf{H} .

An almost identical argument shows that if the dimension of D over its centre K is 4 and the characteristic is not 2, then D has a K -basis 1, i , j , ij where $i^2 = \alpha$, $j^2 = \beta$ and $ij = -ji$ for some $\alpha, \beta \in K$.

5. OTHER PROOFS OF WEDDERBURN'S THEOREM

The original proofs of the theorem of §3 were given first by Wedderburn [15] in 1905 and then by Dickson [5] in the same year; they depend on certain divisibility properties of the integers. The neatest proof along these lines is that of Witt [16]. Elementary proofs which avoid the use of such number theory have been given by Artin [1] and Herstein [7]. And