Semi-Simple Lie Algebras and Their Representations

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Preface

Particle physics has been revolutionized by the development of a new "paradigm", that of gauge theories. The SU(2) x U(1) theory of electroweak interactions and the color SU(3) theory of strong interactions provide the present explanation of three of the four previously distinct forces. For nearly ten years physicists have sought to unify the SU(3) x SU(2) x U(1) theory into a single group. This has led to studies of the representations of SU(5), O(10), and E_6. Efforts to understand the replication of fermions in generations have prompted discussions of even larger groups.

The present volume is intended to meet the need of particle physicists for a book which is accessible to non-mathematicians. The focus is on the semi-simple Lie algebras, and especially on their representations since it is they, and not just the algebras themselves, which are of greatest interest to the physicist. If the gauge theory paradigm is eventually successful in describing the fundamental particles, then some representation will encompass all those particles.

The sources of this book are the classical exposition of Jacobson in his *Lie Algebras* and three great papers of E.B. Dynkin. A listing of the references is given in the Bibliography. In addition, at the end of each chapter, references

are given, with the authors' names in capital letters corresponding to the listing in the bibliography.

The reader is expected to be familiar with the rotation group as it arises in quantum mechanics. A review of this material begins the book. A familiarity with SU(3) is extremely useful and this is reviewed as well. The structure of semi-simple Lie algebras is developed, mostly heuristically, in Chapters III - VII, culminating with the introduction of Dynkin diagrams. The classical Lie algebras are presented in Chapter VIII and the exceptional ones in Chapter IX. Properties of representations are explored in the next two chapters. The Weyl group is developed in Chapter XIII and exploited in Chapter XIV in the proof of Weyl's dimension formula. The final three chapters present techniques for three practical tasks: finding the decomposition of product representations, determining the subalgebras of a simple algebra, and establishing branching rules for representations. Although this is a book intended for physicists, it contains almost none of the particle physics to which it is germane. An elementary account of some of this physics is given in H. Georgi's title in this same series.

This book was developed in seminars at the University of Michigan and the University of California, Berkeley. I benefited from the students in those seminars, especially H. Haber and D. Peterson in Ann Arbor and S. Sharpe in Berkeley. Sharpe, and H.F. Smith, also at Berkeley, are responsible for many improvements in the text. Their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

Table of Contents

I. SU(2) 1
II. SU(3) 9
III. The Killing Form 17
IV. The Structure of Simple Lie Algebras 25
V. A Little about Representations 31
VI. More on the Structure of Simple Lie Algebras 39
VII. Simple Roots and the Cartan Matrix 43
VIII. The Classical Lie Algebras 52
IX. The Exceptional Lie Algebras 64
X. More on Representations 73
XI. Casimir Operators and Freudenthal's Formula 84
XII. The Weyl Group 98
XIII. Weyl's Dimension Formula 102
XIV. Reducing Product Representations 116
XV. Subalgebras 128
XVI. Branching Rules 144
Bibliography 154
Index 156

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Index

A_n, 53, 70
Abelian subalgebra, 14, 22
Ad, 12
Adjoint representation, 12, 31, 39
Algebra, semi-simple, 22
    simple, 22
Allowable set, 64
Alternating function, 104
Angular momentum, 7,79
B_n, 62, 70
Basic representation, 81
Bilinear forms, 29, 135
    invariance, 28, 29
    Killing, 17
    symmetric, 135-139
    anti-symmetric, 135-139
Boerner, H., 83
Branching rules, 144
C_n, 56, 70
Carruthers, P., 16
Cartan matrix, 45
    for A_n, 54
    for B_n, 62
    for C_n, 57
    for D_n, 60
Cartan subalgebra, 14, 19, 25
Casimir operator, 6, 84, 87, 89
Campbell-Baker-Hausdorff theorem, 2
Chain of roots, 117
Character of a representation, 103
Classical Lie algebras, 52
Commutation relations, 11, 30
Commutator, 3
Conjugacy classes, 124
D_n, 60, 70
Dimension of a representation, 111, 112
    for SU(n), 114
Dirac bra-ket notation, 15
Dual space, 15
Dynkin, i, 49-51, 63, 83, 98, 127, 143, 153
    coefficients, 74
    diagram, 49
        for A_n, 54
        for B_n, 62
        for C_n, 57
        for D_n, 60
    extended diagrams, 148
    Method of Parts, 111
    Second Highest Rep. Theorem, 117
E_6, 71
E_7, 71
E_8, 71
Exceptional Lie algebras, 64
    Dynkin digrams for, 70, 71
Extended Dynkin diagram, 131
Extended Weight Scheme, 148
F_4, 71
Freudenthal's Recursion Formula, 91-94
Functional, 15
Fundamental representation, 80
G_2, 70
    Cartan matrix, 48

Representations, 112, 113
Gasiorowicz, S., 16
Gell-Mann matrices, 10, 16
Georgi, H., ii, 83
Golubitsky, M., 134, 143
Gottfried, K., 8
H_0^*, 18
Height of a representation, 139
Hermitian matrix, 7
Ideal, 22
Index of an embedding, 140
Index of a representation, 90
of product representations, 126
Invariance of Killing form, 28
Invariant function, 103
Invariant subspace, 6
Irreducible representation, 6
Jacobi identity, 3
Jacobson, 8, 24, 30, 38, 42, 48, 63, 64, 72, 83, 98, 101, 102, 114
Killing form, 17
invariance of, 28
non-degeneracy of, 23
relation to semi-simplicity, 23
Kostant's formula, 116
Level, 46
Lie algebra, 3
Lie product, 3
Mc Kay, W. B., 143, 146, 153
Maximal subalgebra, 130, 134, 142
Method of Parts, 121
Miller, W., 63
O(7), 81
Orthogonal group, 57
Operators,
Casimir, 6, 84, 87, 89
lowering, 4, 34
raising, 4, 34
Patera, J., 143, 146, 153
Pauli matrices, 8, 10
Positive root, 43
algorithm for finding, 46-47
Product representation, 7, 79, 116
Rank, 45
Reducible representation, 6
Regular element, 26
Regular subalgebra, 129
Representation, 4, 32
adjoint, 32, 39
basic, 81
character of, 103
dimension of, 111
fundamental, 80
index of, 90
irreducible, 6
product, 7, 79, 116
antisymmetric, 80
symmetric, 80
reducible, 6
spinorial, 124
Roots, 15
Σ = set of, 29
positive, 43
simple, 43
Π = set of, 44
Root vectors, 15, 26
Rotation group, 1
Rothschild, B., 134, 143

R-subalgebra, 130
Scalar product on H_0^*, 20
  for SU(3), 21
  in root space, 42
Schensted, I., 83
Second Highest Representation, 117
Semi-simple algebra, 22
Simple algebra, 22
Simple root, 43
Slansky, R., 127, 143
SO(2n),
  Killing form, 59
  Cartan matrix, 60
SO(2n+1),
  Killing form, 61
  Cartan matrix, 62
SO(7), 81
SO(10),
  Dynkin coefficients, 77
  Representations, 113
Sp(2n), 55
  Cartan matrix, 57
Spinorial representation, 124
S-subalgebra, 130
String of weights, 34, 40
SU(2), 1, 7
  Casimir operator for, 88
SU(3), 9
  Adjoint representation, 12
  Cartan matrix, 46
  Dynkin coefficients, 75
  Freudenthal formula applied to, 95
  Killing form, 18
  Root vectors, 21
  Weight vectors, 33
  Weyl group, 99
  27 dimensional representation, 95, 99
SU(n), 53, 114
Subalgebra, 22, 128
  Abelian, 14, 22
  Cartan, 14, 25
  maximal, 130
  proper, 6
  regular, 129
  R-, 130
  S-, 130
Triality, 124
U(3), 22
Unitary matrix, 7
Vector, root, 15, 26
Vector space, 3
  weight, 33, 73
Weight, 33, 73
Weight space, 37, 76
Weight vector, 33,73
Weyl, character formula, 111
  dimension formula, 111, 112
  group, 36, 98
  reflection, 36, 99
Young tableaux, 83, 114, 116, 121
  correspondence with Dynkin diagram, 114