

AN INTRODUCTION  
*Theory of Spinors*

旋量理论导论

MOSHE CARMELI  
SHIMON MALIN

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*Theorys*  
of *Spinors*

AN INTRODUCTION

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AN INTRODUCTION

# Theorys of Spinors

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TO OUR GRANDCHILDREN

*Nadav, Guy, Daniel, Shelly*

and

*Michaela*

# Preface

This is a textbook intended for advanced undergraduate and graduate students in physics and mathematics, as well as a reference for researchers. The book is based on lectures given during the years at the Ben Gurion University, Israel. Spinors are used extensively in physics; it is widely accepted that they are more fundamental than tensors and the easy way to see this fact is the results obtained in general relativity theory by using spinors, results that could not have been obtained by using tensor methods only. The book is written for the general physicist and not only to the workers in general relativity, even though the latter will find it most useful since it includes all what is needed in that theory.

But the foundations of the concept of spinors are groups; spinors appear as representations of groups. In this text we give a wide exposition to the relationship between the spinors and the representations of the groups. As is well known, both the spinors and the representations are widely used in the theory of elementary particles.

After presenting the origin of spinors from representation theory we, nevertheless, apply the theory of spinors to general relativity theory, and a part of the book is devoted to curved spacetime applications.

In the first four chapters we present the group-theoretical foundations of the concept of two-component spinors. Chapter 1 starts with an introduction to group theory emphasizing the rotation group. This followed by discussing representation theory in Chapter 2, including a brief outline of the infinite-dimensional case. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss in detail the Lorentz and the  $SL(2, \mathbb{C})$  groups. Here we give an extensive discussion on how two-component spinors emerge from the finite-dimensional representations of the group  $SL(2, \mathbb{C})$ . Chapter 4 also includes the derivation of infinite-dimensional spinors as a generalization to the two-component spinors.

In Chapters 5 and 6 we apply the two-component spinors to a variety of

problems in curved spacetime. In Chapter 5 we discuss the Maxwell, Dirac and Pauli spinors. Also given in this chapter the passage to the curved spacetime of spinors. The gravitational field spinors are subsequently discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Here we derive the curvature spinor and give the spinors equivalent to the Riemann, Weyl, Ricci and Einstein tensors.

In Chapter 7 we present the gauge field spinors and discuss their geometrical properties. As is well known, gauge fields are extremely important nowadays. The Euclidean gauge field spinors are finally discussed in Chapter 8.

All chapters of the book start with the ordinary physical material before introducing the spinors of that subject. Thus, for instance, the chapters dealing with the Lorentz group and gravitation start with detailed discussion of the theories of special relativity and general relativity.

It is a pleasure to thank our wives Elisheva and Tova for creating the necessary atmosphere and for their patience while writing this book. We are grateful to the many students who attended the courses in spinors during the years for their suggestions which led to a better presentation of the material in the book. We also want to thank Silvia Behar for her help with the Index of the book. Finally, we want to thank Julia Goldbaum for the excellent job of typing the book, preparing the Index, and for the many suggestions for improvements.

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# Contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>1 Introduction to Group Theory</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Review of Group Theory . . . . .	1
1.1.1 Group and Subgroup . . . . .	1
1.1.2 Normal Subgroup and Factor Group . . . . .	3
1.1.3 Isomorphism and Homomorphism . . . . .	3
1.2 The Pure Rotation Group $SO(3)$ . . . . .	4
1.2.1 The Euler Angles . . . . .	4
1.3 The Special Unitary Group $SU(2)$ . . . . .	6
1.3.1 Homomorphism between the Groups $SO(3)$ and $SU(2)$ . . . . .	6
1.4 Invariant Integrals over Groups . . . . .	8
1.4.1 Invariant Integral over the Group $SO(3)$ . . . . .	8
1.4.2 Invariant Integral over the Group $SU(2)$ . . . . .	9
1.5 Problems . . . . .	10
1.6 References for Further Reading . . . . .	10
<b>2 Representation Theory</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 Some Basic Concepts . . . . .	11
2.1.1 Linear Operators . . . . .	11
2.1.2 Finite-Dimensional Representations . . . . .	12
2.1.3 Unitary Representations . . . . .	13
2.2 Representations of $SO(3)$ and $SU(2)$ . . . . .	13
2.2.1 Weyl's Method . . . . .	13
2.2.2 Infinitesimal Generators . . . . .	14
2.2.3 Basic Infinitesimal Operators . . . . .	16
2.2.4 Canonical Basis . . . . .	16
2.2.5 Unitary Matrices Corresponding to Rotations . . . . .	17
2.3 Matrix Elements of Representations . . . . .	18
2.3.1 The Spinor Representation of the Group $SU(2)$ . . . . .	19

2.3.2	Matrix Elements of Representations . . . . .	20
2.3.3	Properties of $D_{mn}^j(u)$ . . . . .	21
2.4	Differential Operators of Rotations . . . . .	22
2.4.1	Representation of $SO(3)$ in Space of Functions . . .	23
2.4.2	The Differential Operators . . . . .	24
2.4.3	Angular Momentum Operators . . . . .	26
2.5	Infinite-Dimensional Representations . . . . .	27
2.5.1	Banach Space . . . . .	27
2.5.2	Hilbert Space . . . . .	29
2.5.3	Operators in a Banach Space . . . . .	30
2.5.4	General Definition of a Representation . . . . .	30
2.5.5	Continuous Representations . . . . .	31
2.5.6	Unitary Representations . . . . .	31
2.6	References for Further Reading . . . . .	32
<b>3</b>	<b>The Lorentz and <math>SL(2, C)</math> Groups</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1	Elements of Special Relativity . . . . .	35
3.1.1	Postulates of Special Relativity . . . . .	35
3.1.2	The Galilean Transformation . . . . .	37
3.1.3	The Lorentz Transformation . . . . .	38
3.1.4	Derivation of the Lorentz Transformation . . . . .	38
3.1.5	The Cosmological Transformation . . . . .	41
3.2	The Lorentz Group . . . . .	44
3.2.1	Orthochronous Lorentz Transformation . . . . .	46
3.2.2	Subgroups of the Lorentz Group . . . . .	46
3.3	The Infinitesimal Approach . . . . .	47
3.3.1	Infinitesimal Lorentz Matrices . . . . .	47
3.3.2	Infinitesimal Operators . . . . .	49
3.3.3	Determination of the Representation by its Infinitesimal Operators . . . . .	51
3.3.4	Conclusions . . . . .	52
3.3.5	Unitarity Conditions . . . . .	53
3.4	The Group $SL(2, C)$ and the Lorentz Group . . . . .	54
3.4.1	The Group $SL(2, C)$ . . . . .	54
3.4.2	Homomorphism of the Group $SL(2, C)$ on the Lorentz Group $L$ . . . . .	56
3.4.3	Kernel of Homomorphism . . . . .	58
3.4.4	Subgroups of the Group $SL(2, C)$ . . . . .	59
3.4.5	Connection with Lobachevskian Motions . . . . .	60
3.5	Problems . . . . .	61

3.6	References for Further Reading . . . . .	62
<b>4</b>	<b>Two-Component Spinors</b> . . . . .	<b>65</b>
4.1	Spinor Representation of $SL(2, \mathbb{C})$ . . . . .	65
4.1.1	The Space of Polynomials . . . . .	65
4.1.2	Realization of the Spinor Representation . . . . .	66
4.1.3	Two-Component Spinors . . . . .	68
4.1.4	Examples . . . . .	71
4.2	Operators of the Spinor Representation . . . . .	73
4.2.1	One-Parameter Subgroups . . . . .	73
4.2.2	Infinitesimal Operators . . . . .	74
4.2.3	Matrix Elements of the Spinor Operator $D(g)$ . . . . .	75
4.2.4	Further Properties of Spinor Representations . . . . .	77
4.3	Infinite-Dimensional Spinors . . . . .	77
4.3.1	Principal Series of Representations . . . . .	77
4.3.2	Infinite-Dimensional Spinors . . . . .	79
4.4	Problems . . . . .	81
4.5	References for Further Reading . . . . .	81
<b>5</b>	<b>Maxwell, Dirac and Pauli Spinors</b> . . . . .	<b>83</b>
5.1	Maxwell's Theory . . . . .	83
5.1.1	Maxwell's Equations in Curved Spacetime . . . . .	86
5.2	Spinors in Curved Spacetime . . . . .	88
5.2.1	Correspondence between Spinors and Tensors . . . . .	88
5.2.2	Raising and Lowering Spinor Indices . . . . .	89
5.2.3	Properties of the $\sigma$ Matrices . . . . .	89
5.2.4	The Metric $g_{AB'CD'}$ and the Minkowskian Metric $\eta_{\mu\nu}$ . . . . .	90
5.2.5	Hermitian Spinors . . . . .	91
5.3	Covariant Derivative of a Spinor . . . . .	92
5.3.1	Spinor Affine Connections . . . . .	92
5.3.2	Spin Covariant Derivative . . . . .	93
5.3.3	A Useful Formula . . . . .	95
5.4	The Electromagnetic Field Spinors . . . . .	95
5.4.1	The Electromagnetic Potential Spinor . . . . .	95
5.4.2	The Electromagnetic Field Spinor . . . . .	96
5.4.3	Decomposition of the Electromagnetic Spinor . . . . .	96
5.4.4	Intrinsic Spin Structure . . . . .	97
5.4.5	Pauli, Dirac and Maxwell Equations . . . . .	98
5.5	Problems . . . . .	100
5.6	References for Further Reading . . . . .	107

MRG42/04

<b>6</b>	<b>The Gravitational Field Spinors</b>	<b>109</b>
6.1	Elements of General Relativity . . . . .	109
6.1.1	Riemannian Geometry . . . . .	110
6.1.2	Principle of Equivalence . . . . .	118
6.1.3	Principle of General Covariance . . . . .	119
6.1.4	Gravitational Field Equations . . . . .	120
6.1.5	The Schwarzschild Solution . . . . .	123
6.1.6	Experimental Tests of General Relativity . . . . .	127
6.1.7	Equations of Motion . . . . .	133
6.1.8	Decomposition of the Riemann Tensor . . . . .	142
6.2	The Curvature Spinor . . . . .	143
6.2.1	Spinorial Ricci Identity . . . . .	144
6.2.2	Symmetry of the Curvature Spinor . . . . .	145
6.3	Relation to the Riemann Tensor . . . . .	146
6.3.1	Bianchi Identities . . . . .	147
6.4	The Gravitational Field Spinors . . . . .	148
6.4.1	Decomposition of the Riemann Tensor . . . . .	148
6.4.2	The Gravitational Spinor . . . . .	150
6.4.3	The Ricci Spinor . . . . .	152
6.4.4	The Weyl Spinor . . . . .	153
6.4.5	The Bianchi Identities . . . . .	157
6.5	Problems . . . . .	157
6.6	References for Further Reading . . . . .	163
<b>7</b>	<b>The Gauge Field Spinors</b>	<b>167</b>
7.1	The Yang-Mills Theory . . . . .	167
7.1.1	Gauge Invariance . . . . .	167
7.1.2	Isotopic Spin . . . . .	168
7.1.3	Conservation of Isotopic Spin and Invariance . . . . .	168
7.1.4	Isotopic Spin and Gauge Fields . . . . .	169
7.1.5	Isotopic Gauge Transformation . . . . .	169
7.1.6	Field Equations . . . . .	171
7.2	Gauge Potential and Field Strength . . . . .	172
7.2.1	The Yang-Mills Spinor . . . . .	172
7.2.2	Energy-Momentum Spinor . . . . .	174
7.2.3	SU(2) Spinors . . . . .	176
7.2.4	Spinor Indices . . . . .	176
7.3	The Geometry of Gauge Fields . . . . .	177
7.3.1	Four-Index Tensor . . . . .	177
7.3.2	Spinor Formulation . . . . .	179

7.3.3	Comparison with the Gravitational Field . . . . .	180
7.3.4	Ricci and Einstein Spinors . . . . .	182
7.4	References for Further Reading . . . . .	183
<b>8</b>	<b>The Euclidean Gauge Field Spinors</b>	<b>185</b>
8.1	Euclidean Spacetime . . . . .	185
8.1.1	The Euclidean Dirac Equation . . . . .	186
8.1.2	Algebra of the Matrices $s_\mu$ . . . . .	188
8.2	The Euclidean Gauge Field Spinors . . . . .	190
8.2.1	$O(4)$ Two-Component Spinors . . . . .	190
8.2.2	Self-Dual and Anti-Self-Dual Fields . . . . .	193
8.3	Problems . . . . .	194
8.4	References for Further Reading . . . . .	194
	<b>Index</b>	<b>197</b>

# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Group Theory

In this chapter a brief discussion on group theory is given. This includes the concept of group and subgroup, normal subgroup and factor group. Isomorphism and homomorphism are subsequently discussed. This then followed by introducing the rotation group and the group  $SU(2)$ , the aggregate of unitary matrices of order two and determinant unity. A homomorphism between the pure rotation group and the group  $SU(2)$  is subsequently established. The chapter is concluded with presenting invariant integrals over the groups.

### 1.1 Review of Group Theory

In this section the fundamental concepts of group theory are briefly presented. For details the reader is referred to the books of Pontrjagin, van der Waerden and others suggested at the end of the chapter.

#### 1.1.1 Group and Subgroup

A non-empty set  $G$  of elements  $a, b, c, \dots$ , such as numbers, mappings, transformations, is called a *group* if the following *axioms* are satisfied:

(1) There exists an operation in the set  $G$  which associates to each two elements  $a$  and  $b$  of  $G$  a third element  $c$  of  $G$ . This operation is called

multiplication, and the element  $c$  is called the *product* of  $a$  and  $b$ , denoted by  $c = ab$ ;

(2) The multiplication is *associative*, namely, if  $a$ ,  $b$  and  $c$  are elements of  $G$ , then  $(ab)c = a(bc)$ ;

(3) The set  $G$  contains a *right identity*, namely, there exists an element  $e$  such that  $ae = a$  for each element  $a$  of  $G$ ; and

(4) For each element  $a$  of  $G$  there exists a *right inverse* element, denoted by  $a^{-1}$ , such that  $aa^{-1} = e$ .

If the set  $G$  is finite, then the group  $G$  is called *finite* and the number of elements of  $G$  is called its *order*. Otherwise, the group  $G$  is called *infinite*. If the product of any two elements  $a$  and  $b$  of  $G$  is commutative, namely,  $ab = ba$ , the group is called *abelian*. In abelian groups the multiplication notation  $ab$  is replaced by an addition notation  $a + b$ , and the group operation is called *addition*. The identity is called *zero* and denoted by  $0$ , and the inverse of  $a$  is called the *negative* of  $a$  and denoted by  $-a$ .

Since the product of group elements is associative, one writes for  $(ab)c = a(bc)$  simply  $abc$  and for  $(a + b) + c = a + (b + c)$  just  $a + b + c$ . The same holds for products of any number of elements. One can easily show (see Problem 1.1) that a right identity  $e$  is also a left identity, namely,  $ea = a$ , for any element  $a$  of  $G$ .

Likewise, a right inverse  $a^{-1}$  of  $a$  is also a left inverse,  $a^{-1}a = e$ . Hence the inverse of  $a^{-1}$  is simply  $a$ . Moreover, it follows that both the identity and the inverse are unique. This allows the use of the notation of the notation of algebra such as  $a^{m+1} = a^m a$ , with  $a^1 = a$ , for any natural number  $m$ . Negative powers of  $a$  are introduced by  $a^{-m} = (a^{-1})^m$ ,  $a^0 = e$ . Hence  $a^p a^q = a^{p+q}$ , and  $(a^p)^q = a^{pq}$ , where  $p$  and  $q$  are integers.

An example of a group is the set of all nonzero rational numbers, if the rule of combination is ordinary multiplication. The identity is the number 1.

Another example of a group whose elements are not numbers is the aggregate of rotations of a plane or of space about a fixed point. Two rotations  $a$  and  $b$  are combined by performing the rotations successively. If  $b$  is carried out first and then  $a$ , the same result, i.e. the same final position of all points of the space, may also be obtained by a single rotation, denoted by  $ab$ . The group of rotations in space is an example of non-abelian group since it is not immaterial whether one performs first the rotation  $a$  and then  $b$ , or first  $b$  and then  $a$ . The identity of the rotation group is the identical transformation that leaves every point in its original position. The inverse of a rotation is the rotation in the opposite sense which cancels the first one.

A set  $H$  of elements of a group  $G$  is called a *subgroup* of  $G$  if it is a group with the same law of multiplication which operates in  $G$ . A necessary and sufficient condition for a subset  $H$  of a group  $G$  to be a subgroup is that if  $H$  contains two elements  $a$  and  $b$  it must also contain the element  $ab^{-1}$  (see Problem 1.2).

### 1.1.2 Normal Subgroup and Factor Group

Let  $G$  be a group and  $H$  a subgroup, and let  $a$  and  $b$  be two elements of  $G$ . One calls  $a$  and  $b$  *equivalent*,  $a \propto b$ , if  $ab^{-1}$  is an element of  $H$ . The group  $G$  is thus divided into classes of equivalent elements each called a *right coset* of  $H$  relative to  $G$ . It follows that if  $A$  is a right coset of  $H$  and  $a$  is an element of  $A$  then  $A = Ha$ . Moreover, every set of the form  $Hb$  is a right coset and the subgroup  $H$  itself is one of the cosets. One can also introduce *left cosets* of  $H$ , written in the form  $aH$ . They are obtained from an equivalence relation such that  $a \propto b$  if  $a^{-1}b$  belongs to  $H$ .

A subgroup  $N$  of a group  $G$  is called an *invariant* or *normal subgroup* of  $G$  if for every element  $n$  of  $N$  and  $a$  of  $G$  the element  $a^{-1}na$  belongs to  $N$ . It follows that a necessary and sufficient condition for right and left cosets of a subgroup  $N$  to coincide is that  $N$  be a normal subgroup. Every group has at least two normal subgroups, the subgroup which includes only the identity, and the subgroup which coincides with the group itself. A group which has no normal subgroup except for these two subgroups is called *simple*.

If  $N$  is a normal subgroup of a group  $G$  and  $A$  and  $B$  are two cosets of  $N$ ,  $A = Na$ ,  $B = Nb$ , then  $AB$  is also a coset of  $N$ . The multiplication of cosets thus defined satisfies the group axioms, and the set of all cosets is called the *factor group* of  $G$  by the normal subgroup  $N$  and is denoted by  $G/N$ .

### 1.1.3 Isomorphism and Homomorphism

A mapping  $f$  of a group  $G$  on another group  $G'$  is called *isomorphism* if (1) is one-to-one; and (2) preserves the multiplication.  $G$  and  $G'$  are then called *isomorphic*. The inverse  $f^{-1}$  of an isomorphism  $f$  is itself an isomorphism. An isomorphism of a group onto itself is called *automorphism*. The aggregate of all automorphisms of a group forms a group.

A mapping  $f$  of a group  $G$  on another group  $G'$  is called *homomorphism* if it preserves the operation of multiplication. The set  $N$  of all elements of  $G$  which go over into the identity of  $G'$  under the homomorphism is called



the *kernel* of the homomorphism. If the kernel coincides with the identity of  $G$  then the homomorphism is an isomorphism. It follows that  $N$  is a normal of  $G$ , and  $G'$  is isomorphic to  $G/N$ . The isomorphism between  $G'$  and  $G/N$  is called the *natural isomorphism*.

The mapping  $f$  of a group  $G$  on  $G/N$  defined by associating with each element  $a$  of  $G$  the element  $f(a) = A$  of  $G/N$  containing  $a$  is a homomorphism, called the *natural homomorphism* of a group on its factor group. If  $f$  is a homomorphism of a group  $G$  on another group  $G'$  and  $H$  is a (normal) subgroup of  $G$ , then  $f(H)$  is a (normal) subgroup of  $G'$ . If  $f$  is a homomorphism of a group  $G$  on another group  $G'$ , and  $g$  is a homomorphism of  $G'$  on a third group  $G''$ , then the mapping  $gf$  is a homomorphism of  $G$  on  $G''$ .

One finally notes that if  $f$  is a homomorphism of a group  $G$  on part of another group  $G'$  then the set of all elements of  $G'$  which are images of elements of  $G$  forms a subgroup of  $G'$ . Also, if  $f^{-1}(H')$  is the set of all elements of  $G$  which go into  $H' \subset G'$  under the homomorphism  $f$ , and if  $H'$  is a (normal) subgroup of the group  $G'$ , then  $f^{-1}(H')$  is also a (normal) subgroup of the group  $G$ .

## 1.2 The Pure Rotation Group $SO(3)$

A linear transformation  $g$  of the variables  $x_1, x_2$ , and  $x_3$ , which leaves the form  $x_1^2 + x_2^2 + x_3^2$  invariant, is called a *three-dimensional rotation*. The aggregate of all such linear transformations  $g$  forms a continuous group, which is isomorphic to the set of all *real orthogonal* (namely,  $gg^t = 1$ , where  $g^t$  is the transposed of  $g$ ) 3-dimensional matrices and is known as the *three-dimensional rotation group*. One can easily show that the determinant of every orthogonal matrix is equal to either  $+1$ , in which case the transformation describes *pure rotation*, or to  $-1$ , in which case it describes a *rotation-reflection*. The aggregate of all pure rotations forms a group, which is a subgroup of the 3-dimensional rotation group, and is known as the *pure rotation group*. We will be concerned with the 3-dimensional pure rotation group. This group is denoted by us by  $SO(3)$ . (For more details, see in the sequel.)

### 1.2.1 The Euler Angles

Let  $g$  be an element of the group  $SO(3)$ , i.e., a 3-dimensional orthogonal matrix with determinant unity. It is well known that one then can express each such element in terms of a set of three parameters. An example of