

# SYMMETRY PHENOMENONS IN LINEAR FORMS IN MULTIPLE ZETA VALUES

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*The following text, based on joint work with J. Cresson and S. Fischler [6, 7], corresponds to the talk I gave at Turun Yliopisto in may 2007 during the ANT conference. I warmly thank the organisers of this conference for the invitation, especially Tapani Matala-Aho.*

A generalisation of the Riemann zeta function  $\zeta(s)$  is given by the multiple zeta value (abbreviated as MZV ; note that in french, the word *polyzêtas* is now often used for these series) defined for all integers  $p \geq 1$  and all  $p$ -tuples  $\underline{s} = (s_1, s_2, \dots, s_p)$  of integers  $\geq 1$ , with  $s_1 \geq 2$ , by

$$\zeta(s_1, s_2, \dots, s_p) = \sum_{k_1 > k_2 > \dots > k_p \geq 1} \frac{1}{k_1^{s_1} k_2^{s_2} \dots k_p^{s_p}}.$$

The integers  $p$  and  $s_1 + s_2 + \dots + s_p$  are respectively the depth and the weight of  $\zeta(s_1, s_2, \dots, s_p)$ . MZVs naturally appear when, for example, one considers products of values of the zeta function, e.g  $\zeta(n)\zeta(m) = \zeta(n+m) + \zeta(n, m) + \zeta(m, n)$ . In a certain sense, this enables us to “linearise” these products. Except a few identities such as  $\zeta(2, 1) = \zeta(3)$  (due to Euler), the arithmetical nature of MZVs is no better understood than that of  $\zeta(s)$ . However, the set of MZVs has a very rich structure which is well understood, at least conjecturally. (See [16]). For example, let us consider the  $\mathbb{Q}$ -vector spaces  $\mathcal{Z}_p$  of  $\mathbb{R}$  which are spanned by the  $2^{p-2}$  MZVs of weight  $p \geq 2$ :  $\mathcal{Z}_2 = \mathbb{Q}\zeta(2)$ ,  $\mathcal{Z}_3 = \mathbb{Q}\zeta(3) + \mathbb{Q}\zeta(2, 1)$ ,  $\mathcal{Z}_4 = \mathbb{Q}\zeta(4) + \mathbb{Q}\zeta(3, 1) + \mathbb{Q}\zeta(2, 2) + \mathbb{Q}\zeta(2, 1, 1)$ , etc. Set  $v_p = \dim_{\mathbb{Q}}(\mathcal{Z}_p)$ . We have the following conjecture, whose (i) is due to Zagier and (ii) to Goncharov.

**Conjecture 1.** (i) *For any integer  $p \geq 2$ , we have  $v_p = c_p$ , where  $c_p$  is defined by the linear recursion  $c_{p+3} = c_{p+1} + c_p$ , where  $c_0 = 1$ ,  $c_1 = 0$  and  $c_2 = 1$ .*

(ii) *The  $\mathbb{Q}$ -vector spaces  $\mathbb{Q}$  and  $\mathcal{Z}_p$  ( $p \geq 2$ ) are in direct sum.*

Hence, the sequence  $(v_p)_{p \geq 2}$  should grow like  $\alpha^p$  (where  $\alpha \approx 1,3247$  is a root of the polynomial  $X^3 - X - 1$ ), which is much less than  $2^{p-2}$ . Thus, conjecturally, there exist many linear relations between MZVs of the same weight and none between those of different

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weight: in this direction, the theorem of Goncharov [9] and Terasoma [14] claims that  $v_p \leq c_p$  for all integers  $p \geq 2$ . It remains to prove the opposite inequality to show (i), but no non-trivial lower bound for  $v_p$  is yet known: even if classical relations give  $v_2 = v_3 = v_4 = 1$ , we do not know how to prove that  $v_5 = 2$ , which is equivalent to the irrationality of  $\zeta(5)/(\zeta(3)\zeta(2))$ . Conjecture 1 is also interesting because it implies the following one.

**Conjecture 2.** *The numbers  $\pi, \zeta(3), \zeta(5), \zeta(7), \zeta(9)$ , etc, are algebraically independent over  $\mathbb{Q}$ .*

This conjecture seems completely out of reach. A number of diophantine results have been proved in weight 1, i.e, in the case of the Riemann zeta function (see [8]) :

- (i) The number  $\zeta(3)$  is irrational (Apéry [1]);
- (ii) The dimension of the vector space spanned over  $\mathbb{Q}$  by  $1, \zeta(3), \zeta(5), \dots, \zeta(A)$  (with  $A$  odd) grows at least as fast as  $\log(A)$  ([2, 12]);
- (iii) At least one of the four numbers  $\zeta(5), \zeta(7), \zeta(9), \zeta(11)$  is irrational (Zudilin [19]).

These results can be proved by the study of certain series of the form

$$\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{P(k)}{(k)_{n+1}^A} \quad (0.1)$$

where  $P(X) \in \mathbb{Q}[X]$ ,  $n \geq 0$ ,  $A \geq 1$ . Here, we use the Pochhammer symbol, defined by  $(k)_\alpha = k(k+1)\dots(k+\alpha-1)$ . The above series can be written as a linear combination over  $\mathbb{Q}$  of 1 and the values of zeta at integers. The crucial point is we can find special polynomials  $P$  such that in these combinations only certain value of zeta occur:  $\zeta(3)$  in case (i), values  $\zeta(s)$  with  $s$  odd in cases (ii) and (iii). This comes from (in the last two cases, and also in certain proofs of (i)) a symmetry property linked to the very-well-poised aspect of the series (0.1) (see [2] ou [12]):

**Theorem 1.** *Let  $P \in \mathbb{Q}[X]$  of degree at most  $A(n+1) - 2$ , such that*

$$P(-n - X) = (-1)^{A(n+1)+1} P(X).$$

*Then, the series (0.1) is a linear combination, with rational coefficients, of 1 and  $\zeta(s)$  with  $s$  an odd integer between 3 and  $A$ .*

Our aim is to present two generalisations, in arbitrary depth, of this symmetry phenomenon, and whose proofs are given in [7]. We hope that such generalisations will make new diophantine results (irrationality or linear independence) for the underlying MZVs possible.

Our first result deals with “uncoupled” series, i.e, series over all  $p$ -tuples  $(k_1, \dots, k_p) \in \mathbb{N}^{*p}$  :

**Theorem 2.** *Consider integers  $p \geq 1$ ,  $n \geq 0$  and  $A \geq 1$ . Let  $P \in \mathbb{Q}[X_1, \dots, X_p]$  be a polynomial of degree  $\leq A(n+1) - 2$  with respect to each of the variables, such that*

$$\begin{aligned} P(X_1, \dots, X_{j-1}, -X_j - n, X_{j+1}, \dots, X_p) \\ = (-1)^{A(n+1)+1} P(X_1, \dots, X_{j-1}, X_j, X_{j+1}, \dots, X_p) \end{aligned}$$

for any  $j \in \{1, \dots, p\}$ . Then, the multiple series

$$\sum_{k_1, \dots, k_p \geq 1} \frac{P(k_1, \dots, k_p)}{(k_1)_{n+1}^A \cdots (k_p)_{n+1}^A} \quad (0.2)$$

is a polynomial with rational coefficients, of degree at most  $p$ , in the  $\zeta(s)$ , for  $s$  an odd integer between 3 and  $A$ .

For example, when  $A = 3$  or  $A = 4$ , this series is a polynomial in  $\zeta(3)$ . When  $p = 1$ , we exactly obtain Theorem 1 (for all  $A$ ).

From the point of view of diophantine applications, the main drawback of Theorem 2 is that the summation of  $k_1, \dots, k_p$  is uncoupled. We now describe three disadvantages of uncoupled series.

First of all, uncoupled series always give polynomials in values of  $\zeta$  at integers, even if we omit the symmetry condition in Theorem 2. This remark shows that MZVs cannot really appear in this setup.

Secondly, let us consider Ball’s series

$$S_n = n!^2 \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \left(k + \frac{n}{2}\right) \frac{(k-n)_n (k+n+1)_n}{(k)_{n+1}^4}.$$

For all integer  $n$ ,  $S_n$  is a linear form in 1 and  $\zeta(3)$ ; this follows from Theorem 1. (The series  $S_n$  exactly coincides with the linear forms used by Apéry to prove the irrationality of  $\zeta(3)$ ; without going into details, let us mention that this coincidence is not all trivial and is the first application of the *denominators conjecture* proved in [11].) For all integers  $p \geq 1$ , the series  $S_n^p$  is obviously an uncoupled series of the the form considered in Theorem 2 with

$$\begin{aligned} P(X_1, \dots, X_p) \\ = n!^{2p} (X_1 + \frac{n}{2}) \cdots (X_p + \frac{n}{2}) (X_1 - n)_n \cdots (X_p - n)_n (X_1 + n + 1)_n \cdots (X_p + n + 1)_n \end{aligned}$$

and  $A = 4$ . Therefore,  $S_n^p$  is a polynomial in  $\zeta(3)$  of degree (at most)  $p$ , from which we could hope to deduce the transcendence of  $\zeta(3)$ . However,  $S_n^p$  does not contain anymore diophantine information than  $S_n$  and it can only gives the irrationality of  $\zeta(3)$ .

Finally, the multiple series which appear in irrationality proofs are generally of the form

$$\sum_{k_1 \geq \dots \geq k_p \geq 1} \frac{P(k_1, \dots, k_p)}{(k_1)_{n+1}^A \cdots (k_p)_{n+1}^A}, \quad (0.3)$$

i.e, the summation is over ordered indices; it is to this kind of series that one can apply the algorithm decribed in [6]. For example, when  $p = 2$ ,  $A = 2$  and

$$P(X_1, X_2) = n!(X_1 - X_2 + 1)_n (X_2 - n)_n (X_2)_{n+1},$$

Sorokin [13] shows that the sum (0.3) is exactly the linear form in 1 and  $\zeta(3)$  used by Apéry. More generally, a conjecture of Vasilyev [15] claimed that a certain multiple integral, equals to

$$n!^{p-\varepsilon} \sum_{k_1 \geq \dots \geq k_p \geq 1} \frac{(k_1 - k_2 + 1)_n \cdots (k_{p-1} - k_p + 1)_n (k_p - n)_n}{(k_1)_{n+1}^2 \cdots (k_{p-1})_{n+1}^2 (k_p)_{n+1}^{2-\varepsilon}}, \quad (0.4)$$

is a rational linear form in zeta values at integers  $\geq 2$  of the same parity as  $\varepsilon \in \{0, 1\}$ . The integral formulation of this conjecture was proved in [20] and a refined version was proved in [11]: the method is to prove that the series (0.4) is also equal to a simple series to which Theorem 1 applies. Zlobin [18] recently obtained a completely different proof by a direct study of the series (0.4), in the spirit of the combinatorial methods developped in [6, 7]. It is then possible to prove results of essentially the same nature as those of [2, 12]: this confirms our feeling that multiple series with ordered indices are the interesting ones.

We showed in [6] that any convergent series of the form (0.3) can be written as a rational linear form in MZVs of weight at most  $pA$  and of depth at most  $p$  (this result was also obtained independently by Zlobin [17]). Furthermore, we produced an algorithm, implemented [5] in Pari, to explicitly compute such a linear combination. This enabled us to discover the symmetry property that we now describe in the special case of depth 2 for the reader's convenience.

**Theorem 3.** *Consider integers  $n \geq 0$  et  $A \geq 1$ , with  $n$  even. Let  $P \in \mathbb{Q}[X_1, X_2]$  be a polynomial in two variables, of degree  $\leq A(n+1) - 2$  in each one, such that*

$$\begin{cases} P(X_1, X_2) = -P(X_2, X_1) \\ P(-n - X_1, X_2) = (-1)^{A(n+1)+1} P(X_1, X_2) \\ P(X_1, -n - X_2) = (-1)^{A(n+1)+1} P(X_1, X_2) \end{cases} \quad (0.5)$$

*Then, the double series (0.3) is a linear combination, with rational coefficients,*

- of 1,
- of the values  $\zeta(s)$  with  $s$  an odd integer such that  $3 \leq s \leq 2A$ ,
- of the differences  $\zeta(s, s') - \zeta(s', s)$  with  $s, s'$  odd integers such that  $3 \leq s < s' \leq A$ .

(Let us note here that in the series (0.3), the variables  $k_1, \dots, k_p$  are linked by non-strict inequalities, as in [6], but contrary to the definition of MZVs. This does not cause any problems, since it is easy to go from statements with non-strict inequalities to statements with strict inequalities, and vice-versa.)

Of course, in (0.5), the third condition is a consequence of the first two. If  $A = 4$ , this theorem shows that the double series

$$\sum_{k_1 \geq k_2 \geq 1} \frac{P(k_1, k_2)}{(k_1)_{n+1}^4 (k_2)_{n+1}^4}$$

is a linear form in 1,  $\zeta(3)$ ,  $\zeta(5)$  and  $\zeta(7)$  (which was far from obvious a priori since this a double series). For  $A = 3$ , we get a linear form in 1,  $\zeta(3)$ ,  $\zeta(5)$ . Finally, for  $A = 2$ , we get a linear form in 1 and  $\zeta(3)$ .

To state our main result in arbitrary depth, we need the following notation. For integers  $p \geq 0$  and  $s_1, \dots, s_p \geq 2$ , we set

$$\zeta^{\text{as}}(s_1, \dots, s_p) = \sum_{\sigma \in \mathfrak{S}_p} \varepsilon_\sigma \zeta(s_{\sigma(1)}, \dots, s_{\sigma(p)}),$$

where  $\varepsilon_\sigma$  is the signature of the permutation  $\sigma$ . We call such a linear combination of MZVs an *antisymmetric MZV* (even if, for  $p \geq 2$ , it is not an MZV in general). These are convergent series since each  $s_i$  is supposed  $\geq 2$ . For  $p = 1$ , we have  $\zeta^{\text{as}}(s) = \zeta(s)$ . The natural convention is to set  $\zeta^{\text{as}}(s_1, \dots, s_p) = 1$  when  $p = 0$  because there exists one unique bijection of the empty set onto itself. For  $p = 2$ , we have  $\zeta^{\text{as}}(s_1, s_2) = \zeta(s_1, s_2) - \zeta(s_2, s_1)$  and, when  $p = 3$ ,

$$\begin{aligned} & \zeta^{\text{as}}(s_1, s_2, s_3) \\ &= \zeta(s_1, s_2, s_3) + \zeta(s_2, s_3, s_1) + \zeta(s_3, s_1, s_2) - \zeta(s_2, s_1, s_3) - \zeta(s_1, s_3, s_2) - \zeta(s_3, s_2, s_1). \end{aligned}$$

By definition, for all  $\sigma \in \mathfrak{S}_p$ , we have

$$\zeta^{\text{as}}(s_{\sigma(1)}, \dots, s_{\sigma(p)}) = \varepsilon_\sigma \zeta^{\text{as}}(s_1, \dots, s_p),$$

and  $\zeta^{\text{as}}(s_1, \dots, s_p) = 0$  once two of the  $s_i$ 's are equal. It seems reasonable to us that in general an antisymmetric MZV is not a polynomial in values of the Riemann zeta function. However, any ‘‘symmetric’’ MZV (defined as  $\zeta^{\text{as}}(s_1, \dots, s_p)$  but omitting the signature  $\varepsilon_\sigma$ ) is a polynomial in  $\zeta(s)$  (by [10], Theorem 2.2).

Let  $\mathcal{A}_p$  denotes the set of polynomials  $P(X_1, \dots, X_p) \in \mathbb{Q}[X_1, \dots, X_p]$  such that:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{For all } \sigma \in \mathfrak{S}_p, \text{ we have} \\ \quad P(X_{\sigma(1)}, X_{\sigma(2)}, \dots, X_{\sigma(p)}) = \varepsilon_\sigma P(X_1, X_2, \dots, X_p). \\ \\ \text{For all } j \in \{1, \dots, p\}, \text{ we have} \\ \quad P(X_1, \dots, X_{j-1}, -X_j - n, X_{j+1}, \dots, X_p) \\ \quad = (-1)^{A(n+1)+1} P(X_1, \dots, X_{j-1}, X_j, X_{j+1}, \dots, X_p). \end{array} \right.$$

There are redundances in these conditions. If the first one is satisfied, then it is enough to check the second one for one single value of  $j$ . For example,  $\mathcal{A}_2$  is exactly the set of polynomials  $P$  satisfying the conditions (0.5). Moreover, if  $P \in \mathcal{A}_p$  then  $P$  has the same degree in each variable  $X_1, \dots, X_p$ . Clearly, the definition of  $\mathcal{A}_p$  also depends on the parity of  $A(n+1)$ . We can now state our main result.

**Theorem 4.** *Consider integers  $n \geq 0$  and  $A, p \geq 1$ , with  $n$  even. Let  $P \in \mathcal{A}_p$  be of degree  $\leq A(n+1) - 2$  in each of the variables. Then, the series*

$$\sum_{k_1 \geq \dots \geq k_p \geq 1} \frac{P(k_1, \dots, k_p)}{(k_1)_{n+1}^A \dots (k_p)_{n+1}^A} \quad (0.6)$$

is a rational linear combination of products of the form

$$\zeta(s_1) \dots \zeta(s_q) \zeta^{\text{as}}(s'_1, \dots, s'_{q'}),$$

where

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} q, q' \geq 0 \text{ integers such that } 2q + q' \leq p, \\ s_1, \dots, s_q, s'_1, \dots, s'_{q'} \text{ odd integers } \geq 3, \\ s_i \leq 2A - 1 \text{ for all } i \in \{1, \dots, q\}, \\ s'_i \leq A \text{ for all } i \in \{1, \dots, q'\}. \end{array} \right. \quad (0.7)$$

When  $q' = 0$ , the antisymmetric MZV  $\zeta^{\text{as}}(s'_1, \dots, s'_{q'})$  is equal to 1 and we obtain a product of values of  $\zeta$  at odd integers. When  $q = q' = 0$ , this product is empty and we obtain 1.

If  $p = 1$ , Theorem 4 states that (0.6) is a linear combination of 1 and the  $\zeta(s)$  with odd  $s$  such that  $3 \leq s \leq A$ : this is just Theorem 1.

If  $p = 2$ , we obtain exactly Theorem 3.

If  $p = 3$ , the theorem states that the series is a linear combination of

- products of at most two values of  $\zeta$  at odd integers  $\geq 3$ ,
- antisymmetric MZVs  $\zeta^{\text{as}}(s_1, s_2)$  with  $s_1, s_2 \geq 3$  odd,
- antisymmetric MZVs  $\zeta^{\text{as}}(s_1, s_2, s_3)$  with  $s_1, s_2, s_3 \geq 3$  odd.

In depth  $p \geq 4$ , terms such as  $q \geq 1$  and  $q' \geq 2$  can appear: it seems that the series is not always the sum of a polynomial in values of  $\zeta(s)$  (with  $s$  odd) and of a linear combination of antisymmetric MZVs  $\zeta^{\text{as}}(s_1, \dots, s_q)$  with  $s_1, \dots, s_q$  odd.

When  $A \leq 2$ , we necessarily have  $q' = 0$  in all the products, which implies the following corollary.

**Corollary 1.** *Under the hypotheses of Theorem 4, if  $A \leq 2$ , then the series (0.6) is a polynomial in  $\zeta(3)$  with rational coefficients.*

Theorem 4 also contains, for example, the following special case.

**Corollary 2.** *Consider integers  $n, r, t, \varepsilon \geq 0$  and  $A, p \geq 1$ , with  $n$  even, such that*

$$\varepsilon \equiv (A + 1)(n + 1) + 1 \pmod{2}$$

and

$$\varepsilon + (4r + 2)p + 2t \leq (A - 1)(n + 1) + 4r.$$

Then, the convergent series

$$\sum_{k_1 \geq \dots \geq k_p \geq 1} \left[ \prod_{i=1}^p \left( k_i + \frac{n}{2} \right) \right]^\varepsilon \frac{\left[ \prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq p} (k_i - k_j - r)_{2r+1} (k_i + k_j + n - r)_{2r+1} \right] \left[ \prod_{i=1}^p (k_i - t)_{2t+n+1} \right]}{(k_1)_{n+1}^A \cdots (k_p)_{n+1}^A}$$

is a linear combination as described in Theorem 4.

An example of application of this corollary is the following series (in which we take  $t = 0$  and the Pochhammer symbols  $(k_i)_{n+1}$  at the numerator cancel out with those at the denominator):

$$\begin{aligned} & \sum_{k_1 \geq k_2 \geq k_3 \geq 1} \left( k_1 + \frac{1}{2} \right) \left( k_2 + \frac{1}{2} \right) \left( k_3 + \frac{1}{2} \right) \\ & \quad \times \frac{(k_1 - k_2)(k_2 - k_3)(k_1 - k_3)(k_1 + k_2 + 1)(k_1 + k_3 + 1)(k_2 + k_3 + 1)}{(k_1)_2^4 (k_2)_2^4 (k_3)_2^4} \\ & \quad = -\frac{1}{4} - \zeta(3) + \frac{1}{4} \zeta(5) + \zeta(3)^2 - \frac{1}{4} \zeta(7). \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} & \sum_{k_1 \geq k_2 \geq 1} \left( k_1 + \frac{1}{2} \right) \left( k_2 + \frac{1}{2} \right) \frac{(k_1 - k_2 - 1)_3 (k_1 + k_2)_3 (k_1 - 1)_4 (k_2 - 1)_4}{(k_1)_2^7 (k_2)_2^7} \\ & \quad = -1156 + 891 \zeta(3) + \frac{189}{2} \zeta(5) + 78(\zeta(5, 3) - \zeta(3, 5)). \end{aligned}$$

Finally, let us mention that the series described in the above theorems are related to multiple hypergeometric series related to root systems: see [3, 4] for example as well as the discussion in [7].

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