A RAY OF NUMERICAL FUNCTIONS OF
\( r \) ARGUMENTS*

BY E. T. BELL

1. Introduction. Starting with any set \( \Sigma \) of elements we
may combine them according to rules having the formal
properties (commutativity, associativity, distributivity) of
algebraic addition \((A)\), multiplication \((M)\), subtraction \((S)\),
and division \((D)\), provided the resulting combinations can
be assigned self-consistent interpretations. Assuming this
to be the case for a given \( \Sigma \), we may then investigate the
properties of systems \( \Sigma' \) closed under one or more of \( A, M, D, S \). It is not necessary to consider the properties of
\( \Sigma' \) with respect to those of \( A, M, D, S \) that are omitted.
There are thus conceivable precisely 15 systems \( \Sigma' \). So far
as systems \( \Sigma' \) consisting of numbers (rational integers,
rational numbers, algebraic numbers, algebraic integers) are
concerned, it appears that 4 of the possible 15 have been
deemed of sufficient interest to receive technical names.
These are as follows: \( AS \), module (Modul); \( AMDS \), field
(Körper); \( AMS \), ring (Ring); \( MD \), ray (Strahl), the last
being due to Fueter.†

The elements of \( \Sigma' \) need not be numbers to ensure in­
teresting results, for example the algebra of classes and that
of the relative product. Further significant theories have
evolved from mere ova of \( \Sigma'' \)s; thus the theory of partitions
is the \( \Sigma' \) generated by a sort of parthenogenesis by \( A \)
alone from given rational integers. Doubtless with the con­
tinued evolution of arithmetic the neglected 11 will also be
born, baptized, and investigated. Should this indeed come
to pass it is fortunate that algebra has but 4, not 4000,
fundamental operations.

* Presented to the Society, January 1, 1926.
† Introduced in his Dissertation; now current. Cf. *Synthetische Zahlen-
theorie* (Göschen's Lehrbücherei, 1921).
The ray isolates those properties of numbers and functions which are commonly called multiplicative.

The present note extends to \( r > 1 \) arguments the ray devised in a former paper* to codify and extend the multiplicative properties of integers. The ray here relates to sets of \( r \) integers, \( r \geq 1 \). As in the case \( r = 1 \) it was pointed out that the elements taken as arguments of the functions concerned could be identified with the elements of any abelian group, so here there is easily obtainable the obvious generalization to functions whose arguments are taken from \( r \) abelian groups. Except in the special case when the numerical functions of \( r > 1 \) arguments are products of \( r \) functions each of a single argument, there is no longer, as in the case \( r = 1 \), a second isomorphism with algebraic functions in \( r \) variables. The properties of integers to which the case \( r > 1 \) refers in general are genuine properties of a set of \( r \) arbitrary constant integers, and they constitute an extension to such sets of the multiplicative properties of a single integer (rational or algebraic; if the latter, resolved into ideal factors). An instance of a function of \( r > 1 \) arguments which is not essentially the product of \( r \) functions of \( r \) single arguments is the G. C. D. of \( r \) integers.

The multiplication and division in the ray are specific operations having the abstract properties of \( MD \), but not identical, in relation to the arguments, with the \( MD \) of common arithmetic.

2. Multiplication. Call \( f = f(x_1, \ldots, x_r) \) a numerical function of \( x_1, \ldots, x_r \) if \( f \) takes a single finite value when each \( x_i \) is an integer \( \neq 0 \), and if further \( f(1, 1, \ldots, 1) \neq 0 \).

Let \( N_r = (n_1, n_2, \ldots, n_r) \) be an ordered set of \( r \) arbitrary constant integers each \( > 0 \). Resolve \( n_i \) into \( t \) integral factors each \( \geq 1 \),

\[
\left( i = 1, 2, \ldots, r \right).
\]

Let \( f_j(x_1, \ldots, x_r), (j = 1, 2, \ldots, t) \) be numerical functions. The \( r \)-fold sum

(2) \[ \sum_{\text{all } n_{ti}(j=1, \ldots, t; i=1, \ldots, r)} f_1(n_{t1}, n_{t2}, \ldots, n_{tr}) \cdot \cdot \cdot f_t(n_{t1}, n_{t2}, \ldots, n_{tr}), \]

in which \( \sum \) refers to all \( n_{ti} \) as defined which satisfy (1), will be written

(3) \[ f_1 f_2 \cdot \cdot \cdot f_t \]

and will be called the product of \( f_1, f_2, \ldots, f_r \) for the parameter \( N_r \), or, when \( N_r \) is understood, simply the product.

The number of terms in (3) when distributed as a sum of terms each of the form (2) is

\[ \prod_{j=1}^{t} \nu(n_j) \{ \nu(n_j) - 1 \} \cdot \cdot \cdot \{ \nu(n_j) - t+1 \}, \]

where \( \nu(n) \) = the number of divisors of \( n \).

From (1), (2) it follows that the multiplication just defined is commutative and associative.

The unit of this multiplication is the numerical function

\[ u = u(x_1, \cdot \cdot \cdot, x_r), \]

which vanishes except when \( x_j = 1(j=1, \ldots, r) \), in which case \( u = 1 \). By (3), if \( f \) is any numerical function,

(4) \[ uf = f. \]

In (4), as in every equality between numerical functions, it is understood that the functions have the same parameter; thus the parameter of \( uf \) and of \( f \) is \( N_r \).

The zero of multiplication is the numerical function \( w \) which vanishes for all parameters. Hence from (3),

(5) \[ wf = w. \]

3. Division. Precisely as in the case of functions of a single argument* it can be shown that for \( f \) any given

*Tôhoku Mathematical Journal, vol. 17 (1920), pp. 221–231; or more readily by an immediate extension of the method of generators for the algebras called \( D, E \) in the Transactions of this Society, vol. 25 (1923), pp. 135–154. The generator of (3) is the ordinary product of \( r \)-fold Dirichlet series," such a series being

\[ Df = \sum f(m_1, m_2, \ldots, m_r), \]

where \( \Sigma \) refers to \( m_1, m_2, \ldots, m_r \) each ranging from 1 to \( \infty \), and \( s_1, s_2, \ldots, \)
numerical function \( \neq w \) there exists a unique \( f' \), called the reciprocal of \( f \), such that
\[
(6) \quad ff' = u.
\]

4. The Ray \( \{f, g, h, \cdots \} \). From §§ 2, 3, it follows that the totality of numerical functions \( f, g, h, \cdots \) of \( r \) arguments form a ray when multiplication and division are as above defined.

5. Examples. As a first example we state and prove an extension of Dedekind’s inversion \( (r = 1) \) to \( r > 1 \). Let \( \xi \) be the numerical function whose value is 1 for all values of the parameter, and let \( \xi' \) be the reciprocal of \( \xi \), so that \( \xi\xi' = u \), the unit function. Then evidently
\[
\xi(n_1, n_2, \cdots, n_r) = \xi_1(n_1)\xi_2(n_2) \cdots \xi_r(n_r),
\]
and the explicit definition of \( \xi' \) is easily seen to be as follows: \( \xi' = 0 \) if any integer in the parameter is divisible by a square > 1, otherwise \( \xi' = 1 \) or \(-1\) according as the number of those integers in the parameter which are divisible by an odd number of primes is even or odd, and hence
\[
\xi'(n_1, n_2, \cdots, n_r) = \xi'(n_1)\xi'(n_2) \cdots \xi'(n_r).
\]

Let \( f \) be any element of \( \{f, g, h, \cdots \} \). Then by § 4, \( \xi f \) is in the ray and, by what precedes,
\[
(7) \quad F = \xi f \quad \text{implies} \quad f = \xi' F,
\]
the extension in question.

As a second example, let \( a, b, f, g, h, k \) be elements of \( \{f, g, h, \cdots \} \) between which there are the relations
\[
(8) \quad af = bg, \quad ah = bk.
\]
Then, the indicated products being in the ray, we may eliminate \( a, b \) as follows,
\[
\frac{af}{ah} = \frac{bg}{bk}, \quad \frac{f}{h} = \frac{g}{k};
\]
\( s_r \) are independent ordinary parameters. The generator of \( u \) is \( D_u = 1 \); that of \( f' \) in (6) is \( 1/D_f \). The generator of (3) is \( HD_f \), where \( H \) extends to \( f_1, f_2, f_3, \cdots, f_r \). The condition \( f(1, 1, \cdots, 1) \neq 0 \) imposed in the definition in §2 is necessary to make the division of §3 always possible.
that is, (8) implies

(9) \[ f^k = gh . \]

It may be of interest to state (8), (9) in ordinary notation: the equations

\[
\sum a(n_{11}, \ldots, n_{1r}) f(n_{21}, \ldots, n_{2r}) = \sum b(n_{11}, \ldots, n_{1r}) g(n_{21}, \ldots, n_{2r}),
\]

\[
\sum a(n_{11}, \ldots, n_{1r}) h(n_{21}, \ldots, n_{2r}) = \sum b(n_{11}, \ldots, n_{1r}) g(n_{21}, \ldots, n_{2r}),
\]

in which \( \sum \) refers for \( n_1, \ldots, n_r \) fixed to all positive integer solutions of

\[ n_i = n_{1i} n_{2i} \quad (i = 1, 2, \ldots, r) , \]

together imply, for the same \( \sum \),

\[
\sum f(n_{11}, \ldots, n_{1r}) k(n_{21}, \ldots, n_{2r}) = \sum g(n_{11}, \ldots, n_{1r}) h(n_{21}, \ldots, n_{2r}).
\]

For \( r=1 \) this theorem is well known (due to Liouville).

With certain precautions and modifications (particularly as to the definition of zero elements) it is possible to construct for \( f, g, h, \cdots \) a theory of each of the 15 possible types mentioned in the introduction. The ray however seems to be the only natural sequent to existing properties of numerical functions in the case \( r=1 \).

The University of Washington