

## Some varieties with points only in a field extension

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We are interested in the following problem. Let  $\Gamma$  be an irreducible algebraic variety of degree  $d$ , in projective  $n$ -space  $\mathbb{P}^n$ , defined over a field  $k$ ; and suppose  $K$  is a finite extension of  $k$  with  $[K:k]$  prime to  $d$ . If  $\Gamma$  has a point defined over  $K$ , then does it necessarily have a point defined over  $k$ ?

Several instances of this phenomenon are known, in particular when  $\Gamma$  is a quadric in  $\mathbb{P}^n$  [12], or a cubic plane curve [11]. Brumer [3] and Amer [1] have shown that the result holds for the intersection of two quadrics, while Pfister [10] has shown that results of this nature do not continue to generalize by giving an example of three quadrics in  $\mathbb{P}^2$  having a zero in  $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt[3]{2})$ , but no zero in  $\mathbb{Q}$ . Further such counterexamples involving systems of quadrics are given by Cassels [4] and Coray [5].

Cassels and Swinnerton-Dyer have conjectured that if  $\Gamma$  is a cubic hypersurface in  $\mathbb{P}^n$ , then the existence of a point defined over  $K$  with  $[K:k]$  prime to 3, implies the existence of a  $k$ -rational point on  $\Gamma$ . This conjecture is still unresolved, but Coray [6] has shown that when  $n = 3$ , then a point on  $\Gamma$  defined over such a field  $K$  implies that  $\Gamma$  has a point over a field extension  $L$  of  $k$  with  $[L:k] = 1, 4$ , or 10. Finally, Coray in [6] gives an example of a quartic curve over  $\mathbb{Q}$  possessing no rational point (because it possesses no 5-adic point), yet having a point over a cubic extension of  $\mathbb{Q}$ .

We give in this note some further examples of instances where points on a variety defined over an extension field do not imply the existence of points defined over the base field. In (I) we give two cubics in  $\mathbb{P}^2$  defined over  $\mathbb{Q}$ , having a common zero over a quadratic extension of  $\mathbb{Q}$ , but having no common zero in  $\mathbb{Q}$ . In (II) and (III) we are concerned with quartic curves in  $\mathbb{P}^2$ . Coray [6] has shown [Cor. 6.5] that a point on such a curve  $\Gamma$  defined over a field  $K$  where  $[K:k]$  is odd, implies that  $\Gamma$  has a point over a field extension  $L$  of  $k$  with  $[L:k] = 1$  or 3. In (II) we give an example of such a curve in  $\mathbb{P}^2$  which is everywhere locally solvable, has no point defined over  $\mathbb{Q}$ , but does have a point defined over a cubic extension of  $\mathbb{Q}$ . In (III) we give two similar examples defined over the function field  $\mathbb{Q}(t)$ . In (IV) we give a quartic form in 16 variables with a point over a cubic extension of  $\mathbb{Q}$ , but with no point actually in  $\mathbb{Q}$ .

I. Let  $\Gamma$  be the intersection of the two cubics:

$$x^3 + y^3 + z^3 = 0, \quad x y^2 - z(y^2 - yz + z^2) = 0.$$

Then  $\Gamma$  contains the point  $(x, y, z) = (0, \omega, 1)$  where  $\omega = \frac{1 + \sqrt{-3}}{2}$ . But as is well known

[9], any rational point on  $\Gamma$  must have  $xyz = 0$ , and it is immediate to deduce that  $x = y = z = 0$ .

**II (a).** Let  $\Gamma$  be the quartic curve over  $\mathbb{Q}$  defined by

$$(1) \quad \Gamma: 3x^4 + 4y^4 = 19z^4.$$

Now (1) is everywhere locally solvable. Indeed, it represents a curve of genus 3, so by Weil's estimate [13] the number  $N_p$  of points modulo  $p$  on (1) satisfies the inequality

$$N_p \geq p + 1 - [6\sqrt{p}],$$

and thus there is a  $p$ -adic point on  $\Gamma$  provided  $p \geq 37$ . It is easy to check solvability for the remaining primes.

Define the cubic irrational  $\theta$  by

$$\theta^3 + 2\theta^2 + 2\theta - 32 = 0.$$

Then by direct calculation,  $(x, y, z) = (\theta^2 + 2, 3\theta, 6)$  is a point on  $\Gamma$ . However we now show that  $\Gamma$  has no points defined over  $\mathbb{Q}$ .

We work in the extension  $K = \mathbb{Q}(\alpha)$ , where  $\alpha^4 = -12$ . The following facts about  $K$  are relegated to an appendix. An integral basis is  $\{1, \alpha, \omega_1, \omega_2\}$  where  $\omega_1 = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4}\alpha^2$ ,  $\omega_2 = \frac{1}{2}\alpha + \frac{1}{4}\alpha^3$  (notice that  $\omega_1$  is a root of unity); the class number of  $K$  is 1; a fundamental unit is  $\varepsilon = -3 + 4\omega_1 + 2\omega_2$ ; and there are the ideal factorizations

$$(2) = \mathfrak{p}_2^2, \quad (19) = (4 - \sqrt{-3})(4 + \sqrt{-3}) = (4 - \sqrt{-3})\mathfrak{p}_{19}\bar{\mathfrak{p}}_{19},$$

$$(4 + \alpha - 4\omega_1 - 2\omega_2) = \mathfrak{p}_2\mathfrak{p}_{19}.$$

We now suppose  $x, y, z$  are integers with no common factor, and satisfy (1). Then

$$(2) \quad x \equiv z \equiv 1 \pmod{2}, \quad y \equiv 0 \pmod{2}.$$

Write (1) in the form

$$\text{Norm}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(2y + x\alpha) = 2^2 \cdot 19z^4.$$

Since the only possible common ideal factor of  $(2y + x\alpha)$  and its conjugates is  $\mathfrak{p}_2$ , we deduce the ideal equation

$$(3) \quad (2y + x\alpha) = \mathfrak{p}_2\mathfrak{p}_{19}\mathfrak{a}^4$$

for some integral ideal  $\mathfrak{a}$  of  $K$  (where we have chosen the sign of  $x$  to ensure divisibility by  $\mathfrak{p}_{19}$ ). Since  $K$  has class number 1, then (3) takes the non-ideal form

$$(4) \quad \pm(2y + x\alpha) = (4 + \alpha - 4\omega_1 - 2\omega_2)\varepsilon^r\omega_1^s A^4,$$

where  $\omega_1$  is the primitive root of unity in  $K$ ,  $r$  and  $s$  are integers, and  $A$  is an integer of  $K$  with norm equal to  $z$ . Using  $\omega_1 = \omega_1^4$  then (4) may be written

$$(5) \quad \pm(2y + x\alpha) = (4 + \alpha - 4\omega_1 - 2\omega_2)\varepsilon^r A^4$$

where without loss of generality,  $0 \leq r \leq 3$ . Then modulo 4, we obtain from (2) and (5),

using the fact that  $\alpha \cdot 2\omega_2 = 4\omega_1 - 8$ ,

$$(6) \quad \begin{aligned} \pm x\alpha &\equiv (\alpha - 2\omega_2)(1 + 2\omega_2)^r A^4 \\ &\equiv (\alpha - 2\omega_2) A^4. \end{aligned}$$

Then modulo 2,  $\alpha \equiv \alpha A^4$ , whence  $A^4 \equiv 1 \pmod{p_2}$ . However,  $\text{Norm } p_2 = 4$  and  $(A, p_2) = 1$  imply  $A^3 \equiv 1 \pmod{p_2}$ ; thus  $A \equiv 1 \pmod{p_2}$  from which it follows that  $A^4 \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ . Equation (6) now gives

$$\pm x\alpha \equiv \alpha - 2\omega_2 \pmod{4},$$

a contradiction on comparing coefficients of  $\omega_2$ .

**R e m a r k .** Let  $p$  be a prime,  $p \equiv 3 \pmod{16}$ , satisfying the condition

$$4p = \text{Norm}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(2r + s\alpha + 2t\omega_1 + u\omega_2)$$

where  $r, s, t, u$  are integers with  $u \equiv 2 \pmod{4}$ ,  $s \equiv 1 \pmod{2}$ . Such primes include 19, 163, 403, ... Then a similar argument to the above shows there can be no rational point on the curve

$$\Gamma_p: 3x^4 + 4y^4 = pz^4.$$

However it is not clear whether in general  $\Gamma_p$  contains points defined over some cubic extension of  $\mathbb{Q}$ ; it is possible for a rational quartic curve with points over  $\mathbb{R}$  not to possess points over any cubic extension of  $\mathbb{Q}$  (and hence to possess points only over extension fields of  $\mathbb{Q}$  of even degree).

**II(b).** Another quartic curve with the properties of (1) is

$$\Gamma: 4x^4 + 97y^4 = z^4.$$

This has the point  $(x, y, z) = (\theta^2, 3\theta, 5\theta + 96)$  over the cubic extension  $\mathbb{Q}(\theta)$  where  $\theta^3 + 2\theta^2 - 60\theta - 576 = 0$ . But  $\Gamma$  has no rational points; we do not give the details.

Notice that there are obvious maps from  $\Gamma$  to each of the three elliptic curves

$$\begin{aligned} E_1: 4X^2 + 97Y^4 &= z^4 \\ E_2: 4x^4 + 97Y^2 &= z^4 \\ E_3: 4x^4 + 97y^4 &= Z^2. \end{aligned}$$

Each of these curves has positive rational rank for it may be checked that the following are points of infinite order on each  $E_i$  respectively:

$$\begin{aligned} (X, y, z) &= (24, 1, 7) \\ (x, Y, z) &= (66, 1751, 139) \\ (x, y, Z) &= (2, 3, 89). \end{aligned}$$

So certainly  $\Gamma$  is trying hard to have rational points! This phenomenon occurs also in **II(a)** in virtue of the identities:

$$\begin{aligned} 3 \cdot 10^2 + 4 \cdot 1^4 &= 19 \cdot 2^4 \\ 3 \cdot 1^4 + 4 \cdot 2^2 &= 19 \cdot 1^4 \\ 3 \cdot 5^4 + 4 \cdot 8^4 &= 19 \cdot 31^2. \end{aligned}$$

See Bremner and Morton [2] for further examples of this type.

**III (a).** Let  $\Gamma$  be the quartic curve over the function field  $\mathbb{Q}(t)$  defined by

$$\begin{aligned} X^4 + (4t^3 - 4t^2 + 1)^2(4t^6 - 6t^4 + 16t^3 - 12t^2 + 3)Y^4 \\ = (t^8 + 16t^3 - 16t^2 + 4)Z^4. \end{aligned}$$

Define  $\theta$  by

$$\theta^3 + (4t^3 - 4t^2 + 1)\theta^2 + 2t^3(4t^3 - 4t^2 + 1)\theta - 2(4t^3 - 4t^2 + 1)^2 = 0.$$

Since this polynomial is irreducible over  $\mathbb{Q}(t)$  (by considering, for example, specialization at  $t = 1$ ),  $\theta$  is cubic over  $\mathbb{Q}(t)$ . And calculation shows that the following is a point of  $\Gamma$ :

$$(X, Y, Z) = (\theta^2 + t^2(4t^3 - 4t^2 + 1), \theta, 4t^3 - 4t^2 + 1).$$

However, specialization of  $\Gamma$  at  $t = \frac{1}{2}$  results in the equation

$$(7) \quad 3(4x)^4 + 4(3y)^4 = 19(3z)^4$$

where  $x = X(\frac{1}{2})$ ,  $y = Y(\frac{1}{2})$ ,  $z = Z(\frac{1}{2})$ ; and by example II (a), equation (7) has no non-trivial rational solution. Accordingly,  $\Gamma$  has no point defined over  $\mathbb{Q}(t)$ .

**III (b).** Let  $\Gamma$  be the quartic curve over  $\mathbb{Q}(t)$  defined by

$$\begin{aligned} 4(3t^2 - 8t + 6)(t^3 - 2t^2 + 2)^2 X^4 \\ + (4t^4 - 16t^3 + 16t^2 + 8t - 15)Y^4 = Z^4. \end{aligned}$$

Define  $\theta$  by

$$\theta^3 - 2t(t^3 - 2t^2 + 2)\theta + 4(t^3 - 2t^2 + 2)^2 = 0.$$

By considering specialization at  $t = 0$ ,  $\theta$  is cubic over  $\mathbb{Q}(t)$ . And the following is a point of  $\Gamma$ :

$$(X, Y, Z) = (\theta, 2(t^3 - 2t^2 + 2), \theta^2 - 2(t^3 - 2t^2 + 2)).$$

However, specialization of  $\Gamma$  at  $t = 3$  results in an equation

$$(8) \quad 484x^4 + 5y^4 = 9z^4$$

and we now show that (8) has no non-trivial rational solution, whence  $\Gamma$  has no point over  $\mathbb{Q}(t)$ . A similar argument may be used to that of II (a), working with the quartic field  $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt[4]{-2420})$ , but instead we give a more elementary proof along lines suggested by Cassels.

Certainly in (8) we may suppose  $(x, y, z) = 1$ ; and it follows that  $x \equiv y \equiv z \equiv 1 \pmod{2}$ . Then

$$\begin{aligned} (3z^2 + 22x^2)(3z^2 - 22x^2) &= 5y^4 \quad \text{and} \\ (3z^2 + 22x^2, 3z^2 - 22x^2) &= (3z^2 + 22x^2, 6z^2) = 1, \end{aligned}$$

so that there exist odd, coprime integers  $u, v$  satisfying

$$\begin{aligned} 3z^2 \pm 22x^2 &= 5u^4 \\ 3z^2 \mp 22x^2 &= v^4 \\ y &= uv. \end{aligned}$$

Modulo 8, the upper sign is impossible, and so

$$\begin{aligned}v^4 + 5u^4 &= 6z^2 \\v^4 - 5u^4 &= 44x^2.\end{aligned}$$

Write the latter equation in the form

$$(v^2 - 15u^2 - 22x)^2 = 2(4v^2 - 5u^2 + 22x)(7v^2 + 5u^2 - 44x).$$

The highest common factor of the three terms divides

$$\begin{vmatrix} 1 & -15 & -22 \\ 4 & -5 & 22 \\ 7 & 5 & -44 \end{vmatrix} = -2 \cdot 5^2 \cdot 11^2.$$

Now certainly  $v^2 \equiv 4u^2 \pmod{11}$ , and the sign of  $x$  may be chosen so that  $v^2 \equiv 2x \pmod{5}$ . Then each term is divisible by 55, and since  $u, v$  are odd, then  $4v^2 - 5u^2 + 22x \equiv 1 \pmod{2}$ . Thus

$$\begin{aligned}v^2 - 15u^2 - 22x &= 110R \\(9) \quad 4v^2 - 5u^2 + 22x &= 55S \\7v^2 + 5u^2 - 44x &= 110T\end{aligned}$$

where  $R^2 = ST$ ; and then

$$\begin{aligned}u^2 &= -6R - S + 2T \\v^2 &= -2R + 7S + 8T \\x &= -R + S - T.\end{aligned}$$

Since  $(u, v) = 1$  then  $(S, T) = 1$  and so there exist coprime integers  $a, b$  with  $R = ab$ ,  $S = \pm b^2$ ,  $T = \pm a^2$ . Then from (9) using a congruence modulo 4, it must be the case that  $S = -b^2$ ,  $T = -a^2$ . But now

$$v^2 = -8a^2 - 2ab - 7b^2$$

forcing  $a = b = 0$ ,  $v = u = 0$ , impossible.

**R e m a r k .** As in II (b), each of the three elliptic curves associated with (8) has positive rational rank, in virtue of the arithmetic identities:

$$\begin{aligned}484.11^2 + 5.11^4 &= 9.11^4 \\484.1^4 + 5.7^4 &= 9.3^4 \\484.1^4 + 5.4^4 &= 9.14^2.\end{aligned}$$

We have not been able to verify whether the elliptic curves over  $\mathbb{Q}(t)$  associated with the examples of III, also have positive rank.

**IV.** Consider the quartic surface  $V$  defined by  $F = 0$  where

$$F(x, y, z, t) = x^4 + 511y^4 - 134z^4 - 14t^4.$$

Then  $V$  contains the point  $(x, y, z, t) = (\theta^2 - 2, 2, \theta, \theta)$  where  $\theta$  is the cubic irrational given by  $\theta^3 + 2\theta^2 + 2\theta + 32 = 0$ . However, modulo 5 we have that  $F(x, y, z, t) \equiv x^4 + y^4 + z^4 + t^4$ , and consequently  $V$  cannot contain a rational point. It is now evident that the form

$$F(x_1, y_1, z_1, t_1) + 5F(x_2, y_2, z_2, t_2) + 5^2F(x_3, y_3, z_3, t_3) + 5^3F(x_4, y_4, z_4, t_4),$$

cannot represent zero over  $\mathbb{Q}$ , but does contain a point defined over the cubic extension  $\mathbb{Q}(\theta)$ . For diagonal quartic forms this is best possible in view of the result of Davenport and Lewis [7] which states that a diagonal quartic form over  $\mathbb{Q}$  in at least seventeen variables, has a zero over  $\mathbb{Q}$ .

**Appendix.** We give now the arithmetic details of the number field  $K = \mathbb{Q}(\alpha)$ ,  $\alpha^4 = -12$ . That  $\{1, \alpha, \omega_1, \omega_2\}$  is an integral basis can be seen as follows. Certainly  $\omega_1 = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4}\alpha^2 = \frac{1 + \sqrt{-3}}{2}$ ,  $\omega_2 = \alpha\omega_1$ , are integers of  $K$ . The discriminant of the basis  $\{1, \alpha, \omega_1, \omega_2\}$  is  $2^6 3^3$ ; since the prime (3) is totally ramified in  $K$ , it suffices to show that if

$$(10) \quad r + s\alpha + t\omega_1 + u\omega_2 \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$$

for integers  $r, s, t, u$ , then  $r \equiv s \equiv t \equiv u \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ .

Now  $(2) = \mathfrak{p}_2^2$  in  $K$ , with  $\alpha \equiv 0 \pmod{\mathfrak{p}_2}$ , and thus from (10) we have  $r + t\omega_1 \equiv 0 \pmod{\mathfrak{p}_2}$ , whence  $r \equiv t \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ . Then  $s + u\omega_1 \equiv 0 \pmod{\mathfrak{p}_2}$  and  $s \equiv u \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ .

As regards the class number of  $K$ , the Minkowski bound gives that every ideal class contains an ideal of norm at most 6. But  $(2) = (\alpha + 2\omega_1)^2$ ,  $(3) = (1 - 2\omega_1 + \omega_2)^4$ , and (5) remains prime; so the class number of  $K$  is indeed one. Finally, note that  $\varepsilon = -3 + 4\omega_1 + 2\omega_2$  has norm 1, so is a unit of  $K$ . Further,  $|\varepsilon| = 7.32\dots$ ; but by a result of Delone and Faddeev [8], p. 371, there exists a fundamental unit in  $K$  with absolute value greater than  $2^4\sqrt[4]{11} = 3.64\dots$  and hence it is clear that  $\varepsilon$  is itself a fundamental unit.

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