Section 8.5: Congruence Modulo n

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This chapter discusses the previously seen topic of **Congruence Modulo n**, but now with the lens of **Equivalence relations**. Basically, the author proved that every relation on $\mathbb{Z}$ defined by the congruence modulo of some $n \geq 2$ is an equivalence relation with n equivalence classes. This follows from the **Division Algorithm**, namely in the case for $n \geq 2$, any integer m can be expressed uniquely as $m = kn + r$, where $k \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $0 \leq r < n$.

Another interesting idea is the logical equivalence between coditions that define equivalence relations. For example, let R_1 and R_2 be relations on some nonempty set defined by $a\ R_1\ b$ if $P(a,b)$ and $a\ R_2\ b$ if $Q(a,b)$. The fact that $P(a,b) \iff Q(a,b)$ for some other condition $Q(n)$, implies that $R_1 = R_2$. Hence, one can show that two relations have the same distinct equivalence classes by just showing that there is a biconditional relation between the conditions that define them.

Problem 47. The relation R on $\mathbb{Z}$ defined by $a\ R\ b$ if $a^2 \equiv b^2 \pmod 4$ is known to be an equivalence relation. Determine the distinct equivalence classes.

Solution 47. Let's first consider $[0]$. We know that

$$\begin{aligned}[0] &= (x \in \mathbb{Z} : x\ R\ 0) \\ &= \big(x \in \mathbb{Z} : x^2 = 4k,\ k \in \mathbb{Z}\big) \\ &= \big(x \in \mathbb{Z} : 4 \mid x^2\big) = \big(x \in \mathbb{Z} : 2 \mid x^2\big) \\ &= (x \in \mathbb{Z} : 2 \mid x)\,.\end{aligned}$$

Hence, $[0]$ is the set of all even integers. Now we are left with the odd ones, so let's check what are the elements of $[1]$. We know that

$$\begin{aligned}[1] &= (x \in \mathbb{Z} : x\ R\ 1) \\ &= \big(x \in \mathbb{Z} : 4 \mid (x^2 - 1)\big)\end{aligned}$$

We know that x^2 is either even or odd. If it is even, then $x^2 - 1$ is odd (sum of an even and odd integer) which contradicts the assumption that it is a multiple of 4. Hence, we may assume that x^2 is odd. Recall that x^2 is odd if and only if x is odd and so $x = 2k + 1$ for some $k \in \mathbb{Z}$. Hence,

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 - 1 &= (2k+1)^2 - 1 \\ &= 4k^2 + 4k + 1 - 1 = 4(k^2 + k). \end{aligned}$$

Since $k^2 + k$ is an integer, it follows that $4 \mid (x^2 - 1)$. Hence, x being odd is a necessary and sufficient condition for $4 \mid (x^2 - 1)$ to be true, and so [1] is the set of odd integers.