

# An Interesting Question About The Rationals $\mathbb{Q}$

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## Axiom

For any  $q \in \mathbb{Q}$ , let  $Z(q)$  denote the set  $\{zq | z \in \mathbb{Z}\}$ . Then for any proper subgroup  $H$  of the rationals  $\mathbb{Q}$  under addition, there exists  $q \in \mathbb{Q} - H$  such that  $Z(q) \cap H$  is the trivial subgroup of  $\mathbb{Q}$ .

## The Problem

Show that no proper subgroup  $H$  of  $\mathbb{Q}$  is maximal.

If  $q \in \mathbb{Q} - H$ , it is easy to show that  $H + Z(q)$  properly contains  $H$  and is a subgroup of  $\mathbb{Q}$ . Let  $q \in \mathbb{Q} - H$  be an element of  $\mathbb{Q}$  such that  $Z(q) \cap H$  is the trivial group. This can be done by the axiom above.

What remains to be shown is that  $H + Z(q)$  is a proper subgroup of  $\mathbb{Q}$ . Suppose  $\mathbb{Q} = H + Z(q)$ . Notice that  $q/2 \notin H$ , (since this would imply that  $q \in H$ ), and  $q/2 \notin Z(q)$ . Yet we must have  $q/2 = zq + h$  for some  $h \in H$  and  $z \in \mathbb{Z}$ . Rearranging, we have  $2h = (1 - 2z)q$ . Now since  $2h \in H$  and  $(1 - 2z)q \in Z(q)$ , we must have  $2h = (1 - 2z)q \in Z(q) \cap H$  which implies that  $h = 0$  and  $q = 0$ . But this contradicts the facts that  $q \notin H$  and  $q/2 \notin Z(q)$ . So  $H + Z(q)$  is a proper subgroup of  $\mathbb{Q}$ .