Vector bundles as direct images of line bundles

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Dedicated to the memory of Professor K G Ramanathan

Abstract. Let $X$ be a smooth irreducible projective variety over an algebraically closed field $K$ and $E$ a vector bundle on $X$. We prove that, if $\dim X \geq 1$, there exist a smooth irreducible projective variety $Z$ over $K$, a surjective separable morphism $f: Z \to X$ which is finite outside an algebraic subset of codimension $\geq 3$ in $X$ and a line bundle $L$ on $X$ such that the direct image of $L$ by $f$ is isomorphic to $E$. When $X$ is a curve, we show that $Z$, $f$, $L$ can be so chosen that $f$ is finite and the canonical map

$$H^1(Z, \mathcal{O}) \to H^1(X, \text{End } E)$$

is surjective.

Keywords. Projective variety; algebraic vector bundle; line bundle; direct image; finite morphism.

1. Introduction

Let $X$ be a smooth irreducible projective variety over an algebraically closed field and $E$ a vector bundle on $X$. We prove in this paper first that, if $\dim X \geq 1$, $E$ is the direct image of a line bundle $L$ on a smooth irreducible projective variety $Z$ by a morphism $f: Z \to X$ which is finite outside an algebraic subset of codimension $\geq 3$ in $X$. Moreover one can choose the morphism $f$ to be separable and to have the property that all higher direct images of $L$ by $f$ are zero [Theorem 4.2].

In particular if $\dim X \leq 2$ the morphism $f$ may be chosen to be finite. In the case of surfaces this result has been proved by R.L.E. Schwarzenberger for rank two vector bundles [5, Theorem 3]. We also give an example of a vector bundle on $\mathbb{P}_3$ which cannot be obtained as the direct image of a line bundle on a smooth variety by a finite morphism.

In the second part of the paper we consider the case when $X$ is a curve. We prove in this case that $Z$, $L$ and $f$ can be so chosen that the canonical homomorphism (see 5.1)

$$H^1(Z, \mathcal{O}_Z) \to H^1(X, \text{End } E)$$

is surjective (Theorem 6.4). This result was proved for a “very stable” vector bundle $E$ by Beauville-Narasimhan-Ramanan in the case of a curve over $\mathbb{C}$ by using the Hitchin map [3]. (For the significance of this result see Remark 6.5).
Let \( \pi : \mathbb{P}(E) \to X \) be the projective bundle associated to \( E \). The variety \( Z \) is constructed as the subscheme (of \( \mathbb{P}(E) \)) of zeros of a generic section of the tangent bundle along the fibres of \( \pi \) twisted by a suitable ample line bundle on \( X \) pulled up to \( \mathbb{P}(E) \); the line bundle \( L \) is simply taken to be the restriction of \( \mathcal{O}(1) \) to \( Z \).

The scheme \( Z \) is essentially the scheme of 'eigenstates' of a generic twisted endomorphism of \( E \). However, in general, \( Z \) is not the spectral variety of the twisted endomorphism; the canonical map from the spectral variety into \( X \) is always a finite morphism.

2. Sections of the tangent bundle of a projective space

Let \( V \) be a finite dimensional vector space of dimension \( \geq 2 \) over an algebraically closed field \( K \) and \( \mathbb{P} = \mathbb{P}(V) \) the projective space of hyperplanes in \( V \). We have the exact sequences of vector bundles on \( \mathbb{P}(E) \):

\[
0 \to \Omega^1(1) \to V_p \to \mathcal{O}(1) \to 0
\]

and

\[
0 \to \mathcal{O}_p \to V_p^* \otimes \mathcal{O}(1) \to \Theta \to 0,
\]

where \( \Theta \) denotes the tangent bundle of \( \mathbb{P} \) and \( V^* \) the dual of \( V \). We obtain an exact sequence of vector spaces

\[
0 \to K \to V^* \otimes V \to H^0(\mathbb{P}, \Theta) \to 0.
\]

If \( \text{End}^0(V) := \text{End}(V)/(\text{Scalar endomorphisms}) \) we have \( \text{End}^0(V) = H^0(\mathbb{P}, \Theta) \).

If an endomorphism \( T \) of \( V \) leaves a hyperplane \( \xi \) invariant, \( T \) induces an endomorphism of the one dimensional space \( V/\xi \). The subspace \( (V/\xi)^* \) of \( V^* \) is an eigenspace of the transpose of \( T \). If \( s_T \) is the section of \( \Theta \) defined by \( T \), we have \( s_T(\xi) = 0 \) if and only if \( T(\xi) = \xi \). Thus we can view the subscheme \( Z = Z_T \) of zeros of \( s_T \) as the scheme of "eigenstates" of \( T \). Moreover the "eigenvalue" of \( T \) is a section of \( \mathcal{O}_Z \); in fact it is the section of \( \mathcal{O}_Z \) corresponding to the morphism \( \mathcal{O}_Z(1) \to \mathcal{O}_Z(1) \) induced by \( T \) from:

\[
0 \to \Omega^1(1) \to V_p \to \mathcal{O}(1) \to 0
\]

\[
\downarrow T
\]

\[
V_p \to \mathcal{O}(1) \to 0.
\]

Observe that the scheme \( Z_T \) has dimension \( \geq 1 \) if and only if the transpose of \( T \) has an eigenspace of dimension \( \geq 2 \) corresponding to some eigenvalue.

**Proposition 2.1**

Consider the exact sequence of vector bundles

\[
0 \to F \to \text{End}^0(V)_p \to \Theta \to 0
\]

(\( F \) being defined as the kernel of homomorphism \( \text{End}^0(V)_p \to \Theta \)). Let \( p : F \to \text{End}^0(V) \) be the restriction to \( F \) of the projection \( \text{End}^0(V) \times \mathbb{P} \to \text{End}^0(V) \). Then there exists an open subset \( \Omega \) in \( \text{End}^0(V) \), whose complement is of codimension \( \geq 3 \), such that the morphism \( p : p^{-1}(\Omega) \to \Omega \) is finite.
Proof. Consider the commutative diagram

\[
\begin{array}{ccccccc}
0 & 0 \\
\downarrow & \downarrow \\
K_P & K_P \\
\downarrow & \downarrow \\
0 & \to & F^1 & \to & \text{End}(V)_P & \to & \Theta & \to & 0 \\
\downarrow & \downarrow & \downarrow & || \\
0 & \to & F & \to & \text{End}^0(V)_P & \to & \Theta & \to & 0 \\
\downarrow & \downarrow \\
0 & 0
\end{array}
\]

Let \( q: F^1 \to \text{End}(V) \) be the projection. We shall show that there exists an open set \( U \) of \( \text{End}(V) \) which is saturated for the map \( \text{End}(V) \to \text{End}^0(V) \) and whose complement is of codimension \( \geq 3 \) such that the morphism \( q: q^{-1}(U) \to U \) is finite. This will prove the proposition.

For each subspace \( W \) of dimension \( k \geq 2 \) of \( V^* \), consider the subspace of \( \text{End}(V^*) \) consisting of those endomorphisms whose restriction to \( W \) is a scalar endomorphism of \( W \). The dimension of this space is \( 1 + (r - k)^2 + k(r - k) \). Varying \( W \) over the Grassmannian \( G(r, k) \) we get a vector bundle \( W(r, k) \) over \( G(r, k) \) and the dimension of the total space of this bundle is

\[ 1 + (r - k)^2 + k(r - k) + k(r - k) = 1 + r^2 - k^2. \]

We have a natural morphism \( \pi_k: W(r, k) \to \text{End}(V) \) which maps an endomorphism to its transpose. If \( S_k = \pi_k(W(r, k)) \), we have \( \dim S_k \leq (1 + r^2 - k^2) \) and \( \text{codim} S_k \geq k^2 - 1 \geq 3 \). Let \( S = \bigcup_{2 \leq k < r} S_k \) and \( U = \text{End}(V) - S \). We have \( \text{codim} S \geq 3 \) and \( S \) is saturated for the map \( \text{End}(V) \to \text{End}^0(V) \). The fibres of \( q: q^{-1}(U) \to U \) are finite and \( q \) is proper. Hence \( q \) is a finite morphism.

3. Sections of the (twisted) relative tangent bundle of a projective bundle

Let \( E \) be a vector bundle of rank \( r \geq 2 \) on a smooth irreducible projective variety \( X \) of dimension \( \geq 1 \) over \( K \). Let \( \pi: \mathbb{P}(E) \to X \) be the associated projective bundle. We have the exact sequences on \( \mathbb{P}(E) \):

\[ 0 \to \Omega^*_\pi(1) \to \pi^*(\mathcal{E}) \to \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(E)}(1) \to 0 \]

and

\[ 0 \to \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(E)} \to \pi^*(\mathcal{E}^*) \otimes \mathcal{O}(1) \to \Theta_\pi \to 0 \]

where \( \Theta_\pi \) (resp. \( \Omega^*_\pi(1) \)) denotes the relative tangent (resp. cotangent) bundle along the fibres of \( \pi \). Let \( \text{End}^0(E) \) denote the vector bundle \( \text{End}(E)/\mathcal{O}_X \). We have an exact sequence of vector bundles on \( \mathbb{P}(E) \):

\[ 0 \to F \to \pi^*(\text{End}^0(E)) \to \Theta_\pi \to 0. \]
Let $M$ be a line bundle on $X$. We obtain the exact sequence:

$$0 \to F \otimes \pi^*(M) \to \pi^*(\text{End}^0(E) \otimes M) \to \Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M) \to 0$$

**PROPOSITION 3.1**

Let $p : F \otimes \pi^*(M) \to \text{End}^0(E) \otimes M$ be the canonical morphism (of total spaces of geometric vector bundles over $\mathbb{P}(E)$ and $X$ respectively). Then there exists an open subset $\Omega$ of $\text{End}^0(E) \otimes M$ whose complement is of codimension $\geqslant 3$ such that the morphism $p : p^{-1}(\Omega) \to \Omega$ is finite.

**Proof.** This follows from Proposition 2.1.

**PROPOSITION 3.2**

There exists an ample line bundle $M$ on $X$ such that a generic section $s$ of $\Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M)$ (i.e. for $s$ in a non-empty open subset of $H^0(\mathbb{P}(E), \Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M))$) satisfies the following conditions:

(a) The scheme $Z$ of zeros of $s$ is smooth and irreducible.
(b) The morphism $\pi|Z : Z \to X$ is surjective and separable.
(c) There exists a closed subset $S$ of $X$ of codimension $\geqslant 3$ such that the morphism

$$\pi : Z \setminus \pi^{-1}(S) \to X \setminus S$$

is finite.

**Proof.** Let $\xi$ be an ample line bundle on $X$. Then the line bundle $\pi^*(\xi^k) \otimes O(1)$ is very ample on $\mathbb{P}(E)$ for $k \geqslant k_0$. [4, II, Prop. 7.10, p. 161]. We may also assume that for $k \geqslant k_0$, the bundle $\xi^k \otimes E^*$ is generated by its sections. Let $M = \xi^{2k}$. Since the sections of the very ample line bundle $\pi^*(\xi^k) \otimes O(1)$ generate its first order jet bundle and $\pi^*(\xi^{2k} \otimes E^*)$ is generated by its sections, we see that the sections of $\pi^*(M \otimes E^*) \otimes O(1)$ generate its first order jet bundle [7, Lemma 5]. Since $\Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M)$ is a quotient bundle of $\pi^*(M \otimes E^*) \otimes O(1)$, the sections of $\Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M)$ generate its first order jet bundle. Now by [7, Theorem 1] the zero scheme $Z$ of a generic section $s$ of $\Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M)$ is smooth. We will prove in the next proposition (Proposition 4.1) that $Z$ is irreducible.

Let $x_0 \in X$ and $S := \pi^{-1}(x_0)$ the fibre over $x_0$. Let $W$ be the image of the homomorphism

$$H^0(\mathbb{P}(E), \Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M)) \to H^0(S, \Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M)|S).$$

(We may even assume that $W = H^0(S, \Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M))|S$, by choosing $k$ large enough). Then the first order jets of elements of $W$ generate the first order jet bundle of $\Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M)|S$; hence, again by [7, Theorem 1]; for a generic element $\sigma$ of $W$, the zero subscheme of $S$ defined by $\sigma$ is smooth. Thus we see that for a generic section of $\Theta_x \otimes \pi^*(M)$ the zero scheme $Z$ is smooth and irreducible and $Z$ intersects $S$ transversally. It follows that there exists a point $z_0 \in Z \cap S$ such that the differential of $\pi|Z$ at $z_0$ is an isomorphism. This proves that $\pi|Z : Z \to X$ is surjective and (assuming $Z$ to be irreducible) separable. (Observe that $Z$ intersects every fibre $\pi^{-1}(x), x \in X$.}
for otherwise the tangent bundle of the projective space $\pi^{-1}(x)$ would contain a trivial line bundle.)

Let $\Sigma = H^0(\mathcal{P}(E), \pi^*(M) \otimes \Theta_z) = H^0(X, M \otimes \pi_*(\Theta_z)) = H^0(X, M \otimes \text{End}^0(E))$.

Consider the morphisms

$$
\phi: \Sigma \times X \to M \otimes \text{End}^0(E)
\downarrow p_X
X.
$$

where the evaluation map $\phi$ is a smooth morphism, being a surjection of vector bundles. Let $\Omega$ be the open subset of $M \otimes \text{End}^0(E)$ defined in Proposition 3.1 and $N$ its complement. Then

$$\dim \phi^{-1}(N) \leq \dim \Sigma + \dim X - 3.$$

By considering $p_X: \phi^{-1}(N) \to X$ we see that for a generic section $s$ of $M \otimes \text{End}^0(E)$ we have

$$\dim(\phi^{-1}(N) \cap \{s \times X\}) \leq (\dim X) - 3.$$

Let $S \subset X$ be defined to be $p_X(\phi^{-1}(N) \cap \{s \times X\})$. Then $\dim S \leq (\dim X) - 3$ and

$$\pi_1|Z: Z \setminus \pi^{-1}(S) \to X \setminus S$$

is finite.

Thus for a generic section $s$ of $\Theta_z \otimes \pi^*(M)$ all the conditions a), b) and c) are satisfied.

4. Koszul resolution of the zero scheme $Z$

Proof of Theorem 4.2

PROPOSITION 4.1

Let $s$ be a section of $\Theta_z \otimes \pi^*(M)$ over $\mathcal{P}(E)$ such that the zero scheme $Z$ of $s$ is smooth. We then have

a) $\pi_*(\mathcal{O}_Z \otimes \mathcal{O}_{\mathcal{P}(E)}(1)) \simeq E$ and $R^i\pi_*(\mathcal{O}_Z(1)) = 0$ for $i \geq 1$.

b) $\pi_*(\mathcal{O}_Z)$ has a filtration

$$0 = F_0 \subset F_1 \subset F_2 \subset \cdots \subset F_i \subset \cdots \subset F_r = \pi_*(\mathcal{O}_Z)$$

such that $F_i/F_{i-1} \simeq M^{-(-1)}(= (M^*)^{\otimes (-1)})$ for $1 \leq i \leq r$ (in particular $F_1 \simeq \mathcal{O}_Z$).

c) $Z$ is irreducible (if $\dim X \geq 1$ and $M$ is ample).

Proof. Using our assumption on $Z$, we have a Koszul resolution for $\mathcal{O}_z$ on $\mathcal{P}(E)$: [1, Ch I, Lemma 4.2 and Ch. III, Propositions 4.10 and 4.11]

$$0 \to \Lambda (\Omega^1_{z} \otimes \pi^*(M^*)) \to \Lambda (\Omega^1_{z} \otimes \pi^*(M^*)) \to \Omega^1_{\pi} \otimes \pi^*(M^*) \to \mathcal{O}_{\mathcal{P}(E)} \to \mathcal{O}_Z \to 0$$
and also a resolution of $\mathcal{O}_Z(1)$:

$$(B) \quad 0 \rightarrow \Omega^{r-1}_x \otimes (\pi^*(M^*))^r \otimes \mathcal{O}(1) \rightarrow \cdots \rightarrow \Omega^1 \otimes \pi^*(M^*) \otimes \mathcal{O}(1) \rightarrow \mathcal{O}(1) \rightarrow \mathcal{O}(1)_Z \rightarrow 0$$

Now we have, for the projective space $\mathbb{P}$, the Bott vanishing theorem:

$$H^i(\mathbb{P}, \Omega^p(1)) = 0 \text{ for } p \geq 1 \text{ and all } i \ [6, \text{ Théorème 1}].$$

Hence we have

$$R^i \pi_* (\Omega^p_x \otimes \pi^*((M^*)^p) \otimes \mathcal{O}(1)) = 0$$

for $p \geq 1$ and all $i$. Splitting $B$ into short exact sequences we deduce that

$$\pi_* (\mathcal{O}_Z(1)) = \pi_* (\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}}(1)) = E$$

and $R^i \pi_* (\mathcal{O}_Z(1)) = 0$ for $i > 0$.

For proving (b) we observe that $R^q \pi_* (\Omega_x^p) = 0$ for $p \neq q$ and

$$R^p \pi_* (\Omega_x^p) = \mathcal{O}_X \text{ for } 0 \leq p \leq (r-1) \ [6].$$

Splitting (A) into short exact sequences we obtain (b).

To prove (c), since dim $X \geq 1$ and $M$ is ample we have $H^0(X, M^{-k}) = 0$ for $k > 0$. Using the filtration of $\pi_* (\mathcal{O}_Z)$ given in (b), we see that

$$H^0(Z, \mathcal{O}_Z) = H^0(X, \pi_* (\mathcal{O}_Z)) = H^0(X, \mathcal{O}_X) = K.$$

Since $Z$ is smooth it follows that $Z$ is irreducible.

**Theorem 4.2** Let $X$ be a smooth irreducible projective variety of dimension $\geq 1$ over an algebraically closed field $K$. Let $E$ be a vector bundle on $X$. Then there exist a smooth irreducible projective variety $Z$ over $K$, a line bundle $L$ on $Z$ and a surjective separable morphism $f: Z \rightarrow X$ having in addition the following properties:

1) there exists a closed subset $S$ in $X$ of codimension $\geq 3$ such that the morphism

$$f: Z \setminus f^{-1}(S) \rightarrow X \setminus S$$

is finite.

2) we have $f_* (L) \cong E$ and $R^i f_* (L) = 0$ for $i > 0$.

**Proof.** We may assume that $E$ is of rank $\geq 2$. Choose an ample line bundle $M$ on $X$ satisfying the conditions of Proposition 3.2. Let $L$ be the restriction of $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(E)}(1)$ to $Z$ and $f$ be the restriction of $\pi: \mathbb{P}(E) \rightarrow X$ to $Z$. Then by Proposition 4.1(a) we have

$$f_* (L) \cong E \text{ and } R^i f_* (L) = 0 \text{ for } i > 0.$$

5. The map $D$

Let $f: Z \rightarrow X$ be a morphism and $L$ a line bundle on $Z$ such that $f_* (L) = E$ is a vector bundle of rank $r$ on $X$. The morphism $f^* (f_* (L)) \rightarrow L$ gives rise to a morphism

$$f_* (\mathcal{O}_Z) \otimes E \rightarrow f_* (L) = E.$$


Vector bundles as direct images of line bundles

which may be viewed as a morphism

\[ D: f_* (\mathcal{O}_Z) \to E^* \otimes E. \]

\((D\) gives the canonical \(f_* (\mathcal{O}_Z)\)-module structure on \(f_* (L)\).

Suppose that \(f: Z \to X\) is a finite surjective morphism of smooth varieties. Then \(f\) is flat [1, Ch. V, Cor. 3.6]. We have

\[ H^1 (Z, \mathcal{O}_Z) = H^1 (X, f_* (\mathcal{O}_Z)). \]

The homomorphism

\[ D_* : H^1 (Z, \mathcal{O}_Z) \to H^1 (X, \text{End } E) \] (5.1)

induced by \(D\) is the infinitesimal deformation map (at \(L\)) for the variation of the direct image bundles as \(L\) deforms as a line bundle on \(X\) [2, Lemma 1.3.1].

Since \(f\) is finite, the map \(f^*(E) \to L\) is surjective and we have an exact sequence

\[ 0 \to N \to f^*(E) \to L \to 0 \]

of vector bundles on \(Z\). From this we get an exact sequence of vector bundles.

\[ 0 \to \mathcal{O}_Z \to f^*(E^*) \otimes L \to N^* \otimes L \to 0. \]

Since \(f\) is flat and finite, \(f_* (\mathcal{O}_Z)\) is a vector bundle on \(X\) of rank \(r\) and \(f_* (N^* \otimes L)\) is a vector bundle. So we have an exact sequence of vector bundles on \(X\):

\[ 0 \to f_* (\mathcal{O}_Z) \to E^* \otimes E \to f_* (N^* \otimes L) \to 0. \]

Observe that \(f_* (\mathcal{O}_Z)/\mathcal{O}_X\) is a vector subbundle of rank \((r - 1)\) of the vector bundle \(\text{End}(E)/\mathcal{O}_X = \text{End}^0 (E)\). Thus we have

**Lemma 5.2** Let \(f: Z \to X\) be a finite morphism of smooth varieties and \(L\) a line bundle on \(Z\). If \(E := f_* (L)\) is a vector bundle of rank \(r\), then the vector bundle \(\text{End}^0 (E)\) contains a vector subbundle of rank \((r - 1)\).

Let us get back to the situation in \(\S\) 3 and \(\S\) 4.

**PROPOSITION 5.3**

Let \(s\) be a section of \(\Theta_s \otimes \pi^*(M)\) and \(Z\) the zero subscheme of \(s\) with the property that the canonical map \(E = \pi_* (\mathcal{O}_{P(E)}(1)) \to f_* (\mathcal{O}_Z(1))\) is an isomorphism, where \(f = \pi|Z\). Suppose that \(T\) is a section of \(\text{End}(E) \otimes M\) such that the image of \(T\) in \(H^0 (\mathcal{P}(E), \Theta_s \otimes \pi^*(M))\) is \(s\). Then there is a homomorphism \(\mu: M^{-1} \to f_* (\mathcal{O}_Z)\) and a commutative diagram

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\mathcal{O}_Z & \xrightarrow{D} & \text{End } E \\
\mu \downarrow & & \downarrow T \\
M^{-1} & \xrightarrow{T} & \\
\end{array}
\]

where \(D\) is defined at the beginning of this section (\(\S\) 5).
Proof. Consider the diagram

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
0 & \rightarrow & \Omega_x^1 \otimes \pi^*(M)^{-1} & \rightarrow & \pi^*(E \otimes M^{-1}) & \rightarrow & \mathcal{O}(1) \otimes \pi^*(M^{-1}) & \rightarrow & 0 \\
\downarrow \tilde{T} & & & & & & & & \\
0 & \rightarrow & \Omega_x^1 & \rightarrow & \pi^*(E) & \rightarrow & \mathcal{O}(1) & \rightarrow & 0
\end{array}
\]

where \( \tilde{T} \) is induced by \( T \). The homomorphism \( g \circ \tilde{T} \circ \pi : \Omega_x^1 \otimes M^{-1} \rightarrow \mathcal{O}(1) \) gives the section \( s \) of \( \mathcal{O}_x \otimes \pi^*(M) \). So \( \tilde{T} \) induces on \( Z \) a homomorphism \( \lambda : \mathcal{O}_Z(1) \otimes f^*(M^{-1}) \rightarrow \mathcal{O}_Z(1) \) and we have a commutative diagram

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\pi^*(E) \otimes \pi^*(M^{-1}) & \rightarrow & \mathcal{O}_Z(1) \otimes \pi^*(M^{-1}) \\
\downarrow \tilde{T} & & \downarrow \lambda \\
\pi^*(E) & \rightarrow & \mathcal{O}_Z(1)
\end{array}
\]

Considering \( \lambda \) as a section of \( \mathcal{O}_Z \otimes \pi^*(M) \) we obtain the section \( \pi_x(\lambda) \) of \( M \otimes \pi_x(\mathcal{O}_Z) \) which we view as a homomorphism \( \mu : M^{-1} \rightarrow f^*(\mathcal{O}_Z) \). Since by assumption \( E \rightarrow \pi_x(\mathcal{O}_Z(1)) \) is an isomorphism, it follows, from the above diagram, that \( T \) corresponds to \( \pi_x(\lambda) : M^{-1} \otimes E \rightarrow E \). But by the definitions of \( D \) and \( \mu \) we see that \( \pi_x(\lambda) \) corresponds to \( D \circ \mu \). This means that \( T = D \circ \mu \).

6. Vector bundles on curves

Lemma 6.1. Let \( X \) be a smooth, projective irreducible curve over \( K \) and \( F \) a vector bundle of rank \( \geq 2 \) on \( X \). Let \( \xi \) be an ample line bundle on \( X \). Then there exists an integer \( l_0 \) such that for \( l \geq l_0, \xi^{-l} \) is a subbundle of \( F \) and the induced homomorphism \( H^1(X, \xi^{-l}) \rightarrow H^1(X, F) \) is surjective.

Proof. Let first \( F \) be of rank 2. Since for all large \( l, \xi^l \otimes F^* \) contains a trivial line subbundle, we get an exact sequence

\[
0 \rightarrow \xi^{-l} \rightarrow F \rightarrow \xi^l \otimes \det F \rightarrow 0.
\]

Choose \( l \) large enough so that \( H^1(X, \xi^l \otimes \det F) = 0 \).

Now suppose that \( F \) is a vector bundle of rank \( \geq 3 \). Then we can find a filtration of \( F \) by subbundles

\[
0 \subset F_1 \subset F_2 \ldots \subset F_i \subset \ldots F_{r-1} = F
\]

such that rank \( (F_i) = i + 1 \) (in particular rank \( F_1 = 2 \)) and such that \( H^1(X, F_{i}/F_{i-1}) = 0 \), for \( i \geq 2 \). Now choose a line subbundle \( \xi^{-l} \) of \( F_i \) with \( H^1(F_1/\xi^{-l}) = 0 \). We see easily, by induction on \( i \), that \( H^1(X, F/\xi^{-l}) = 0 \).

Remark 6.2. Note that \( H^1(X, \xi^{-l}) \rightarrow H^1(X, F) \) is surjective if and only if \( H^1(F/\xi^{-l}) = 0 \), as \( H^2(X, \xi^{-l}) = 0 \).
COROLLARY 6.3

Let $F$ be a vector bundle on $X$. Then there exists an integer $l_0$ such that, for $l \geq l_0$, for a generic section $\sigma$ of $\xi^l \otimes F$ the map $H^1(X, \xi^l) \to H^1(X, F)$ induced by $\sigma$ is surjective.

Theorem 6.4 Let $X$ be a smooth projective irreducible curve over an algebraically closed field $K$ and let $E$ be a vector bundle on $X$. Then there exist a smooth projective irreducible curve $Z$ over $K$, a line bundle $L$ on $Z$ and a finite surjective separable morphism $f: Z \to X$ such that

1) $f_*(L) \cong E$
2) and the homomorphism (defined in 5.1)

$$H^1(Z, \mathcal{O}_Z) \to H^1(X, \text{End } E)$$

is surjective.

Proof. Choose an ample line bundle $M$ as in the proof of Theorem 4.2. We may also choose $M$ to have the further properties:

a) $H^1(X, M) = 0$

and

b) a generic section $\sigma$ of $H^0(X, \text{End } E \otimes M)$ verifies the condition that the homomorphism

$$H^1(X, M^{-1}) \to H^1(X, \text{End } E)$$

is surjective (use Corollary 6.3).

By condition a) the map

$$H^0(X, \text{End } E \otimes M) \to H^0(X, \text{End}^0 E \otimes M)$$

is surjective.

Now a generic section $s$ of $H^0(P(E), \Theta_* \otimes \pi^*(M)) = H^0(X, \text{End}^0(E) \otimes M)$ is the image of a section $T$ of $\text{End}(E) \otimes M$ with the property that the homomorphism

$$H^1(X, M^{-1}) \to H^1(X, \text{End } E)$$

induced by $T$ is surjective and satisfies conditions a), b) and c) of Proposition 3.2. Choose $Z, L, f$ as in the proof of Theorem 4.2. Then $f_*(L) = E$.

To prove 2), observe that the factorisation, given in Proposition 5.3,

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
\mu & \downarrow & T \\
M^{-1} & \nearrow & \\
& f_*(\mathcal{O}_Z) & \xrightarrow{D} \text{End } E
\end{array}$$

induces a commutative diagram:

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
H^1(Z, \mathcal{O}_Z) & = & H^1(X, f_*(\mathcal{O}_Z)) \\
& \xrightarrow{\mu_*} & H^1(X, M^{-1}) \\
& \xrightarrow{T_*} & H^1(X, \text{End } E)
\end{array}$$

Since, by choice, $T_*$ is surjective, the homomorphism $D_*$ is forced to be surjective.
Remark 6.5 If $E$ is a stable bundle on $X$ and if $Z, f$ and $L$ are chosen as in Theorem 6.4, we see that $f_*$ gives a dominant separable rational morphism from an appropriate component of $\text{Pic}(Z)$ into the moduli space of vector bundles on $X$ of rank $r = \text{rk}E$ and degree $d = \text{deg}E$ (compare [3]). We thus obtain ‘most’ stable bundles of a given rank and degree as direct images of line bundles on a fixed covering $Z$ of $X$.

7. The example

We now give an example of a rank 2 vector bundle on the projective space $\mathbb{P}_3(\mathbb{C})$ which cannot be obtained as the direct image of a line bundle by a finite morphism $f: Z \to \mathbb{P}_3(\mathbb{C})$, with $Z$ smooth.

Let $E$ be a stable vector bundle of rank 2 on $\mathbb{P}_3(\mathbb{C})$ with $c_1(E) = 0$ and $c_2(E) > 0$. If $E$ were the direct image of a line bundle by $f: Z \to X$, with $Z$ smooth and $f$ finite, the bundle $\text{End}^0(E)$ would contain a line subbundle $L$ by Lemma 5.2. If $\xi = L^{-1}$, we would have

$$c_3(\xi \otimes \text{End}^0E) = 0.$$ We have

$$c_3(\xi \otimes \text{End}^0E) = 4c_1(\xi)c_2(E) + c_1(\xi)^3.$$ But the bundle $L$ and hence $\xi$, is non-trivial, since $h^0(\mathbb{P}_3, \text{End}^0E) = 0$, $E$ being stable. So $c_1(\xi) \neq 0$ and we would have

$$c_1(\xi)(4c_2(E) + c_1(\xi)^2) = 0,$$

a contradiction.

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