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Simplicial gerbes need not admit connections in general. A sufficient condition for the existence of a connection is that the δ -cohomology of the double complex $\Omega^k(M_n)$ vanishes in bidegrees $(1, 2)$ and $(2, 1)$. In particular, this holds true for bundle gerbes: Indeed it is shown in [24] that for any surjective submersion $\pi: X \rightarrow M$ the sequence

$$(2.1) \quad 0 \longrightarrow \Omega^k(M) \xrightarrow{\pi^*} \Omega^k(X) \xrightarrow{\delta} \Omega^k(X^{[2]}) \xrightarrow{\delta} \Omega^k(X^{[3]}) \xrightarrow{\delta} \dots$$

is exact, so the δ -cohomology vanishes in *all* degrees.

Thus, every bundle gerbe $\mathcal{G} = (X, L, t)$ over a manifold M (and in particular every Chatterjee-Hitchin gerbe) admits a connection. One defines the *3-curvature* $\eta \in \Omega^3(M)$ of the bundle gerbe connection by $\pi^*\eta = dB \in \ker \delta$. It can be shown that its cohomology class is the image of the Dixmier-Douady class $[\mathcal{G}]$ under the map $H^3(M, \mathbf{Z}) \rightarrow H^3(M, \mathbf{R})$. Similarly, if \mathcal{G} admits a pseudo-line bundle $\mathcal{L} = (E, s)$, one can always choose a pseudo-line bundle connection ∇^E . The difference $\frac{1}{2\pi i} \text{curv}(\nabla^E) - B$ is δ -closed and one defines the *error 2-form* of this connection by

$$\pi^*\omega = \frac{1}{2\pi i} \text{curv}(\nabla^E) - B.$$

It is clear from the definition that $d\omega + \eta = 0$.

REMARK 2.7. There is a notion of holonomy around surfaces for gerbe connections (cf. Hitchin [18] and Murray [24]), and in fact gerbe connections can be defined in terms of their holonomy (see Mackaay-Picken [20]).

2.4 EQUIVARIANT BUNDLE GERBES

Suppose G is a Lie group acting on X and on M , and that $\pi: X \rightarrow M$ is a G -equivariant surjective submersion. Then G acts on all fiber products $X^{[p]}$. We will say that a bundle gerbe $\mathcal{G} = (X, L, t)$ is *G -equivariant*, if L is a G -equivariant line bundle and t is a G -invariant section. An equivariant bundle gerbe defines a gerbe over the Borel construction¹⁾ $X_G = EG \times_G X \rightarrow M_G = EG \times_G M$, hence has an *equivariant* Dixmier-Douady class in $H^3(M_G, \mathbf{Z}) = H_G^3(M, \mathbf{Z})$. Similarly, we say that a pseudo-line bundle (E, s) for (X, L, t) is *equivariant*, provided E carries a G -action and s is an invariant section.

¹⁾ We have not discussed bundle gerbes over infinite-dimensional spaces such as M_G . Recall however [4] that the classifying bundle $EG \rightarrow BG$ may be approximated by finite-dimensional principal bundles, and that equivariant cohomology groups of a given degree may be computed using such finite dimensional approximations.

REMARK 2.8. As pointed out in Mathai-Stevenson [21], this notion of equivariant bundle gerbe is sometimes 'really too strong': For instance, if $X = \coprod U_a$, for an open cover $\mathcal{U} = \{U_a, a \in A\}$, a G -action on X would amount to the cover being G -invariant. Brylinski [9] on the other hand gives a definition of equivariant Chatterjee-Hitchin gerbes that does not require invariance of the cover.

To define equivariant connections and curvature, we will need some notions from equivariant de Rham theory [15]. Recall that for a compact group G , the equivariant cohomology $H_G^*(M, \mathbf{R})$ may be computed from Cartan's complex of equivariant differential forms $\Omega_G^*(M)$, consisting of G -equivariant polynomial maps $\alpha: \mathfrak{g} \rightarrow \Omega(M)$. The grading is the sum of the differential form degree and twice the polynomial degree, and the differential reads

$$(d_G \alpha)(\xi) = d \alpha(\xi) - \iota(\xi_M) \alpha(\xi),$$

where $\xi_M = \frac{d}{dt}|_{t=0} \exp(-t\xi)$ is the generating vector field corresponding to $\xi \in \mathfrak{g}$. Given a G -equivariant connection ∇^L on an equivariant line bundle, one defines [3, Chapter 7] a d_G -closed equivariant curvature $\text{curv}_G(\nabla^L) \in \Omega_G^2(M)$.

A equivariant connection on a G -equivariant bundle gerbe (X, L, t) over M is a pair (∇^L, B_G) , where ∇^L is an invariant connection and $B_G \in \Omega_G^2(X)$ an equivariant 2-form, such that $\delta \nabla^L t = 0$ and $\delta B_G = \frac{1}{2\pi i} \text{curv}_G(\nabla^L)$. Its equivariant 3-curvature $\eta_G \in \Omega_G^3(M)$ is defined by $\pi^* \eta_G = d_G B_G$. Given an *invariant* pseudo-line bundle connection ∇^E on a equivariant pseudo-line bundle (E, s) , one defines the equivariant error 2-form ω_G by

$$\pi^* \omega_G = \frac{1}{2\pi i} \text{curv}_G(\nabla^E) - B_G.$$

Clearly, $d_G \omega_G + \eta_G = 0$.

3. GERBES FROM PRINCIPAL BUNDLES

The following well-known example [7], [24] of a gerbe will be important for our construction of the basic gerbe over G . Suppose $U(1) \rightarrow \widehat{K} \rightarrow K$ is a central extension, and (Γ, τ) the corresponding simplicial gerbe over $B_* K$. Given a principal K -bundle $\pi: P \rightarrow B$, one constructs a bundle gerbe (P, L, t) , sometimes called the lifting bundle gerbe. Observe that

$$E_n P = P \times_K E_n K,$$