

Lagrange Duality

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Outline

- 1 Lagrangian
- 2 Dual Function
- 3 Dual Problem
- 4 Weak and Strong Duality
- 5 KKT conditions

Lagrangian

- Consider an optimization problem in standard form (not necessarily convex)

primal problem

$$\begin{aligned} & \underset{\mathbf{x}}{\text{minimize}} && f_0(\mathbf{x}) \\ & \text{subject to} && f_i(\mathbf{x}) \leq 0 \quad i = 1, \dots, m \\ & && h_i(\mathbf{x}) = 0 \quad i = 1, \dots, p \end{aligned}$$

with variable $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$, domain \mathcal{D} , and optimal value p^*

- The *Lagrangian* is a function $L : \mathbb{R}^n \times \mathbb{R}^m \times \mathbb{R}^p \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$, with $\text{dom } L = \mathcal{D} \times \mathbb{R}^m \times \mathbb{R}^p$, defined as

primal variable \leftarrow \rightarrow dual variable

$$L(\mathbf{x}, \lambda, \nu) = f_0(\mathbf{x}) + \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i f_i(\mathbf{x}) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i h_i(\mathbf{x})$$

where λ_i is the Lagrange multiplier associated with $f_i(\mathbf{x}) \leq 0$ and ν_i is the Lagrange multiplier associated with $h_i(\mathbf{x}) = 0$.

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Lagrange Dual Function I

- The *Lagrange dual function* is defined as the infimum of the Lagrangian over \mathbf{x} : $g : \mathbb{R}^m \times \mathbb{R}^p \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$,

$$\begin{aligned} g(\boldsymbol{\lambda}, \boldsymbol{\nu}) &= \inf_{\mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{D}} L(\mathbf{x}, \boldsymbol{\lambda}, \boldsymbol{\nu}) \\ &= \inf_{\mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{D}} \left(f_0(\mathbf{x}) + \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i f_i(\mathbf{x}) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i h_i(\mathbf{x}) \right) \end{aligned}$$

- Observe that:

- the infimum is unconstrained (as opposed to the original constrained minimization problem)
- g is concave regardless of original problem (infimum of affine functions) λ, ν
- g can be $-\infty$ for some $\boldsymbol{\lambda}, \boldsymbol{\nu}$

lect. 2 - P18

Recall: pointwise supremum: if (x, y) is convex
in x for each $y \in A$, then

$$g(x) = \sup_{y \in A} f(x, y)$$

Lagrange Dual Function II

• **Lower bound property:** if $\lambda \succeq 0$, then $g(\lambda, \nu) \leq p^*$.

Proof. $L(x; \lambda, \nu) = f_0(\tilde{x}) + \underbrace{\sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i f_i(\tilde{x})}_{\leq 0} + \underbrace{\sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i h_i(\tilde{x})}_{=0}$

Suppose \tilde{x} is feasible and $\lambda \succeq 0$. Then,

$$p^* = f_0(\tilde{x}) \geq L(\tilde{x}, \lambda, \nu) \geq \inf_{x \in \mathcal{D}} L(x, \lambda, \nu) = g(\lambda, \nu)$$

Now choose minimizer of $f_0(\tilde{x})$ over all feasible \tilde{x} to get $p^* \geq g(\lambda, \nu)$. \square

• We could try to find the best lower bound by maximizing $g(\lambda, \nu)$.
This is in fact the dual problem.

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Dual Problem

- The *Lagrange dual problem* is defined as

$$\begin{array}{ll} \underset{\lambda, \nu}{\text{maximize}} & g(\lambda, \nu) \\ \text{subject to} & \lambda \succeq 0 \end{array} \quad \leq p^* \quad \Rightarrow \quad \begin{array}{ll} \text{minimize} & -g(\lambda, \nu) \\ \text{subject to} & \lambda \succeq 0 \end{array}$$

- This problem finds the best lower bound on p^* obtained from the dual function
- It is a convex optimization (maximization of a concave function and linear constraints)
- The optimal value is denoted d^*
- λ, ν are dual feasible if $\lambda \succeq 0$ and $(\lambda, \nu) \in \text{dom } g$ (the latter implicit constraints can be made explicit in problem formulation)

Example: Least-Norm Solution of Linear Equations I

- Consider the problem

$$\begin{array}{ll} \underset{x}{\text{minimize}} & x^T x \\ \text{subject to} & Ax = b \end{array}$$

- The Lagrangian is

convex in x

$$L(x, \nu) = x^T x + \nu^T (Ax - b)$$

- To find the dual function, we need to solve an unconstrained minimization of the Lagrangian. We set the gradient equal to zero

$$\underbrace{\nabla_x L(x, \nu)} = 2x + A^T \nu = 0 \implies \underbrace{x = -\frac{1}{2} A^T \nu}$$

Example: Least-Norm Solution of Linear Equations II

and we plug the solution in L to obtain g : *dual function*

$$g(\nu) = L\left(-\frac{1}{2}A^T\nu, \nu\right) = -\frac{1}{4}\nu^T \underbrace{AA^T}_{\text{psd}} \nu - b^T \nu$$

concave in ν

- The function g is, as expected, a concave function of ν .
- From the lower bound property, we have

$$p^* \geq -\frac{1}{4}\nu^T AA^T \nu - b^T \nu \text{ for all } \nu$$

- The dual problem is the QP

$$\underset{\nu}{\text{maximize}} \quad \underbrace{-\frac{1}{4}\nu^T AA^T \nu - b^T \nu}$$

Example: Standard Form LP I

- Consider the problem

$$\begin{array}{ll} \underset{x}{\text{minimize}} & c^T x \\ \text{subject to} & Ax = b, \quad \underline{x \succeq 0} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{l} -x \leq 0 \\ \text{w} \end{array}$$

- The Lagrangian is

$$\begin{aligned} L(x, \lambda, \nu) &= c^T x + \nu^T (Ax - b) - \lambda^T x \\ &= (\underbrace{c + A^T \nu - \lambda}_a)^T x - b^T \nu \end{aligned}$$

- L is a linear function of x and it is unbounded if the term multiplying x is nonzero.

$$g(\lambda, \nu) = \inf_{x \in \mathbb{R}^m} L(x; \lambda, \nu)$$

$$a^T x = \sum_i a_i x_i$$

$$= \begin{cases} 0, & a_i = 0, i=1, \dots, n \\ -\infty, & \exists a_i \neq 0 \end{cases}$$

Example: Standard Form LP II

• Hence, the dual function is

$$g(\lambda, \nu) = \inf_x L(x, \lambda, \nu) = \begin{cases} -b^T \nu & \underline{c + A^T \nu - \lambda = 0} \\ -\infty & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

• The function g is a concave function of (λ, ν) as it is linear on an affine domain.

• From the lower bound property, we have

$$p^* \geq -b^T \nu \quad \text{if } \underline{c + A^T \nu \preceq 0} \quad \lambda \succeq 0$$

• The dual problem is the LP

$$\begin{array}{ll} \underset{\nu}{\text{maximize}} & -b^T \nu \\ \text{subject to} & c + A^T \nu \preceq 0 \end{array}$$

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Weak and Strong Duality I

- From the lower bound property, we know that $g(\lambda, \nu) \leq p^*$ for feasible (λ, ν) . In particular, for a (λ, ν) that solves the dual problem.
Handwritten: λ, ν
- Hence, **weak duality** always holds (even for nonconvex problems):

$$d^* \leq p^*$$

- The difference $p^* - d^*$ is called **duality gap**.
- Solving the dual problem may be used to find nontrivial lower bounds for difficult problems.

• Even more interesting is when equality is achieved in weak duality. This is called **strong duality**:

$$d^* = p^* \quad \text{A.}$$

Weak and Strong Duality II

• Strong duality means that the duality gap is zero.

• Strong duality:

• is very desirable (we can solve a difficult problem by solving the dual)

• does not hold in general

• usually holds for convex problems

• conditions that guarantee strong duality in convex problems are called constraint qualifications.

A non-convex problem also holds sometimes ?!
(HW)

Slater's Constraint Qualification I

- Slater's constraint qualification is a very simple condition that is satisfied in most cases and ensures strong duality for convex problems.
- Strong duality holds for a convex problem

$$\begin{array}{ll}\underset{x}{\text{minimize}} & f_0(x) \\ \text{subject to} & f_i(x) \leq 0 \quad i = 1, \dots, m \\ & Ax = b\end{array}$$

if it is strictly feasible, i.e.,

$$\exists \underline{x} \in \text{int } \mathcal{D} : \quad f_i(\underline{x}) < 0 \quad i = 1, \dots, m, \quad A\underline{x} = b$$

- There exist many other types of constraint qualifications.

Example: Inequality Form LP

- Consider the problem

$$\begin{array}{ll}\text{minimize} & c^T x \\ \text{subject to} & Ax \preceq b\end{array}$$

- The dual problem is

$$\begin{array}{ll}\text{maximize} & -b^T \lambda \\ \text{subject to} & A^T \lambda + c = 0, \quad \lambda \succeq 0\end{array}$$

- From Slater's condition: $p^* = d^*$ if $\underbrace{A\tilde{x} \prec b}$ for some \tilde{x} .
- In this case, in fact, $p^* = d^*$ except when primal and dual are infeasible.

$$\underline{c^T x + b^T \lambda = 0} \quad \Delta$$

Example: Convex QP

- Consider the problem (assume $P \succeq 0$)

$$\begin{array}{ll}\underset{x}{\text{minimize}} & x^T P x \\ \text{subject to} & Ax \preceq b\end{array}$$

- The dual problem is

$$\begin{array}{ll}\underset{\lambda}{\text{maximize}} & -\frac{1}{4}\lambda^T A P^{-1} A^T \lambda - b^T \lambda \\ \text{subject to} & \lambda \succeq 0\end{array}$$

- From Slater's condition: $p^* = d^*$ if $A\tilde{x} \prec b$ for some \tilde{x} .

- In this case, in fact, $p^* = d^*$ always.

Complementary Slackness

- Assume strong duality holds, x^* is primal optimal and (λ^*, ν^*) is dual optimal. Then

$$\begin{aligned}
 \checkmark f_0(x^*) &= g(\lambda^*, \nu^*) \stackrel{\text{def.}}{=} \inf_x \left(f_0(x) + \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i^* f_i(x) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i^* h_i(x) \right) \\
 &\stackrel{\text{strong duality}}{\leq} f_0(x^*) + \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i^* f_i(x^*) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i^* h_i(x^*) \\
 &\stackrel{Q \text{ ":-"} }{\leq} f_0(x^*) \quad \underbrace{\sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i^* f_i(x^*)}_{\leq 0} + \underbrace{\sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i^* h_i(x^*)}_{=0}
 \end{aligned}$$

- Hence, the two inequalities must hold with equality. Implications:

A x^* minimizes $L(x, \lambda^*, \nu^*)$

- $\lambda_i^* f_i(x^*) = 0$ for $i = 1, \dots, m$; this is called **complementary slackness**:

A

$$\lambda_i^* > 0 \implies f_i(x^*) = 0, \quad f_i(x^*) < 0 \implies \lambda_i^* = 0$$

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Karush-Kuhn-Tucker (KKT) Conditions

KKT conditions (for differentiable f_i, h_i):

1 primal feasibility:

$$f_i(\mathbf{x}) \leq 0, \quad i = 1, \dots, m, \quad h_i(\mathbf{x}) = 0, \quad i = 1, \dots, p$$

2 dual feasibility: $\lambda \succeq 0$

3 complementary slackness: $\lambda_i f_i(\mathbf{x}) = 0$ for $i = 1, \dots, m$

4 zero gradient of Lagrangian with respect to \mathbf{x} :

$$\nabla f_0(\mathbf{x}) + \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i \nabla f_i(\mathbf{x}) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i \nabla h_i(\mathbf{x}) = \mathbf{0}$$

KKT condition

• We already know that if strong duality holds and x, λ, ν are optimal, then they must satisfy the KKT conditions.

• What about the opposite statement?

A! • If x, λ, ν satisfy the KKT conditions for a convex problem, then they are optimal.

$$L(\hat{x}; \lambda, \nu) = f_0(\hat{x}) + \underbrace{\sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i f_i(\hat{x})}_{=0} + \underbrace{\sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i h_i(\hat{x})}_{=0}$$

Proof.

From complementary slackness, $f_0(\hat{x}) = L(\hat{x}, \lambda, \nu)$ and, from 4th KKT condition and convexity, $g(\lambda, \nu) = L(\hat{x}, \lambda, \nu)$. Hence, $f_0(x) = g(\lambda, \nu)$. \square

$$\nabla_{\hat{x}} L(x; \lambda, \nu) = 0, \quad g(\lambda, \nu) = \inf_x L(x; \lambda, \nu)$$

Theorem

If a problem is convex and Slater's condition is satisfied, then x is optimal if and only if there exists λ, ν that satisfy the KKT conditions.

cvx - begin

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{convex} \\ \text{optimization} \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} \text{minimize } f_0(x) \\ \text{subject to } f_i(x) \leq 0, i=1, \dots, n \\ Ax = 0 \end{array}$$

cvx - end

⇓ cvx step 1: transformation

conic optimization (primal-dual problem)

$$\text{minimize } C^T x$$

$$\text{subject to } Ax + s = b$$

$$(x, s) \in \underbrace{\mathbb{R}^n \times K}_D$$

convex cone

$$\text{maximize } -b^T y$$

$$\text{subject to } -A^T y + r = c$$

$$(r, y) \in \{0\}^n \times \underline{K^*}$$

dual cone of K^*

proof: minimize $C^T X$
 $(X, S) \in D$
 subject to $Ax + S = b$

dual function:

$$g(y) = \inf_{(X, S) \in D} C^T X + \underline{\langle y, Ax + S - b \rangle}$$

$$= -b^T y + \inf_{(X, S) \in D} [\langle C, X \rangle + \langle y, Ax + S \rangle]$$

$$= -b^T y + \underbrace{\inf_{X \in \mathcal{R}^n} \langle C + A^T y, X \rangle}_{\textcircled{1} \checkmark} + \underbrace{\inf_{S \in K} \langle y, S \rangle}_{\textcircled{2}}$$

$$\textcircled{1} \inf_{X \in \mathcal{R}^n} \langle C + A^T y, X \rangle = \begin{cases} 0, & \underline{C + A^T y = 0} \checkmark \\ -\infty, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

$$\textcircled{2} \inf_{S \in K} \langle y, S \rangle = \begin{cases} 0, & \text{if } \underline{y \in K^\circ} \\ -\infty, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

(Definition) convex cone K : for all $x \in K$,
 $\lambda x \in K, \forall \lambda > 0$.

Dual cone K^* : $K^* = \{z \in \mathbb{R}^n, \underbrace{\langle z, x \rangle}_{\geq 0}, \forall x \in K\}$

$$1) \underline{y \in K^*} \Rightarrow \underline{\langle y, s \rangle} \geq 0, \quad \underline{\forall s \in K}$$

\Downarrow

$$\lambda s \in K, \quad \forall \lambda > 0$$

$$\langle y, \underline{\lambda s} \rangle = \lambda \underbrace{\langle y, s \rangle}_{\geq 0} \geq 0$$

$\Downarrow \lambda \rightarrow 0$

$$\inf_{s \in K} \langle y, s \rangle = 0$$

$$2) y \notin K^* \Rightarrow \langle y, s \rangle \underline{< 0}, \quad \exists s \in K$$

$$\Downarrow \lambda s \in K, \quad \forall \lambda > 0$$

$$\langle y, \lambda s \rangle = \lambda \underbrace{\langle y, s \rangle}_{< 0}$$

$\Downarrow \lambda \rightarrow +\infty$

$$\inf_{s \in K} \langle y, s \rangle = -\infty.$$

KKT Conditions

- 1) - primal feasible: $AX + S = b$, $X \in \mathcal{R}^n$, $S \in \mathcal{K}$
- 2) - dual feasible: $A^T y + C = v$, $v = 0$, $y \in \mathcal{K}^*$
- 3) - Complementary slackness: $C^T X + b^T y = 0$
 $(y^T S = 0) \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad \underline{\text{strong duality}} \quad \Delta$



KKT system

$$\begin{array}{lcl} A^T y + C z & = & v \\ -AX + b z & = & S \\ C^T X + b^T y + x & = & 0 \end{array} \quad \left| \begin{array}{ll} \text{homogeneous} & \text{self-dual} \\ \text{embedding} & \text{system} \end{array} \right.$$

$$(X, S, z, v, y, x) \in \underbrace{\mathcal{R}^n \times \mathcal{K} \times \mathcal{R}_+}_C \times \underbrace{\{0\}^n \times \mathcal{K}^* \times \mathcal{R}_+}_{C^*}$$

$(z, x > 0)$

\Downarrow solver: SDPT3, MOSEK, SeDuMi

SCS (ADMM)

Any solution of the self-dual embedding,

$(X, S, \underline{z}, r, y, \underline{x})$ falls into one of three cases:

1. $z > 0, x = 0$. The point

$$(\hat{x}, \hat{y}, \hat{z}) = \left(-\frac{x}{2}, \frac{y}{2}, \frac{z}{2} \right)$$

satisfies the KKT conditions \Rightarrow

a primal-dual optimal solution

2. $z = 0, x > 0 \Rightarrow C^T x + b^T y < 0 \Rightarrow$
either primal or dual infeasible !

Theorem: Certificates of infeasibility (Section 5.8)

If strong duality holds, then exactly one of the sets:

① $P = \{ (x, s) : Ax + s = b, s \in K \}$: encodes primal feasibility

② $D = \{ y : A^T y = 0, y \in K^*, b^T y < 0 \}$: is non-empty
encodes dual feasibility

Theorem of Strong Alternatives:

Any dual variable $y \in D$ serves as a proof or certificate that the set P is empty, i.e., the problem is primal infeasible.

similarly, exactly one of the following two sets is non-empty:

① $\tilde{P} = \{x : -Ax \in X, C^T x < 0\}$

② $\tilde{D} = \{y : A^T y = -c, y \in X^*\}$: encodes dual feasibility

claim: any primal variable $x \in \tilde{P}$ is a certificate of dual infeasibility.

2. $z=0, K > 0 \Rightarrow C^T x + b^T y < 0 \Rightarrow$
either primal or dual infeasible !

1) if $b^T y < 0$, then $\hat{y} = \frac{y}{-b^T y}$ is a certificate of A .

primal infeasibility (i.e., D is non-empty), since

$$\underline{A^T \hat{y} = \frac{r}{-b^T y} = 0}, \quad \hat{y} \in Y^*, \quad \underline{b^T \hat{y} = -1 < 0} \quad \triangleleft$$

2) if $C^T x < 0$, then $\hat{x} = \frac{x}{-C^T x}$ is a certificate of dual infeasibility (i.e., \tilde{P} is non-empty), since

$$\underline{-A \hat{x} = \frac{s}{-C^T x} \in X}, \quad \underline{C^T \hat{x} = -1 < 0} \quad \triangleright.$$

3) $C^T x < 0, b^T y < 0 \Rightarrow$ both primal and dual infeasible
strong duality assumption is violated!

3. $z = \infty = 0$, nothing can be concluded, can be avoided.

Reference

Chapter 5 of:

- Stephen Boyd and Lieven Vandenberghe, *Convex Optimization*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004.