Section 4

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Contents

1 Vector Fields

- A vector field in $\mathbb{R}^n$ is an assignment that goes from $\mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}^n$, where the former is viewed as a bunch of points, and the latter is a bunch of vectors
  - Two examples: a force field (*e.g.* gravity, electrostatic, magnetic) or a velocity field (*e.g.* fluid mechanics)
- *Ex.* A gravitational field, with two masses, one fixed (M), and one floating (m)
  - The pull = magnitude $\cdot$ direction $\to G\dfrac{Mm}{|\overline{d}|^2} \cdot \dfrac{\overline{d}}{|\overline{d}|} = G\dfrac{Mm}{|\overline{d}|^3}\overline{d}$
- *Ex.* Gradient vector fields
  - $f(\overline{x}) \to \nabla f = \left\langle \dfrac{\delta f}{\delta x_1}, \dfrac{\delta f}{\delta x_2}, \cdots, \dfrac{\delta f}{\delta x_n} \right\rangle$
  - Not every vector field can be realized as a gradient vector field of some function
  - The 'del' operator is as follows: $\nabla := \left\langle \dfrac{\delta}{\delta x_1}, \dfrac{\delta}{\delta x_2}, \cdots, \dfrac{\delta}{\delta x_n} \right\rangle$
  - Apply ∇ to a function f to obtain a gradient vector field (use dot product)
  - $\nabla \cdot F = \dfrac{\delta F_1}{\delta x_1} + \dfrac{\delta F_2}{\delta x_2} + \cdots + \dfrac{\delta F_n}{\delta x_n} = \text{div}(F)$
    - This is the divergence of F
  - $\nabla \times F$ describes the curl of F (how the vector field curls in three dimensions)

Using the ∇ operator:

input	output	significance
function f	∇f	gradient of f (a vector field)
vector field of f	$\nabla \cdot f$	divergence of f (a function)
$n = 3$ vector field of f	$\nabla \times f$	curl of f (a vector field)

- To view 2D vector fields as 3D vector fields, convert $F = \langle P(x,y), Q(x,y) \rangle \to \langle P(x,y), Q(x,y), 0 \rangle$
- The curl of a two dimensional vector field, converted to three dimensions, is $\text{curl}(F) = Q_x - P_y$