

Section 5.2

The Characteristic Equation

The Invertible Matrix Theorem

Addenda

We have a couple of new ways of saying “ A is invertible” now:

The Invertible Matrix Theorem

Let A be a square $n \times n$ matrix, and let $T: \mathbf{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{R}^n$ be the linear transformation $T(x) = Ax$. The following statements are equivalent.

1. A is invertible.
2. T is invertible.
3. A is row equivalent to I_n .
4. A has n pivots.
5. $Ax = 0$ has only the trivial solution.
6. The columns of A are linearly independent.
7. T is one-to-one.
8. $Ax = b$ is consistent for all b in \mathbf{R}^n .
9. The columns of A span \mathbf{R}^n .
10. T is onto.
11. A has a left inverse (there exists B such that $BA = I_n$).
12. A has a right inverse (there exists B such that $AB = I_n$).
13. A^T is invertible.
14. The columns of A form a basis for \mathbf{R}^n .
15. $\text{Col } A = \mathbf{R}^n$.
16. $\dim \text{Col } A = n$.
17. $\text{rank } A = n$.
18. $\text{Nul } A = \{0\}$.
19. $\dim \text{Nul } A = 0$.
19. The determinant of A is *not* equal to zero.
20. The number 0 is *not* an eigenvalue of A .

The Characteristic Polynomial

Let A be a square matrix.

λ is an eigenvalue of $A \iff Ax = \lambda x$ has a nontrivial solution

$\iff (A - \lambda I)x = 0$ has a nontrivial solution

$\iff A - \lambda I$ is not invertible

$\iff \det(A - \lambda I) = 0$.

This gives us a way to compute the eigenvalues of A .

Definition

Let A be a square matrix. The **characteristic polynomial** of A is

$$f(\lambda) = \det(A - \lambda I).$$

The **characteristic equation** of A is the equation

$$f(\lambda) = \det(A - \lambda I) = 0.$$

Important

The eigenvalues of A are the roots of the characteristic polynomial $f(\lambda) = \det(A - \lambda I)$.

The Characteristic Polynomial

Example

Question: What are the eigenvalues of

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} 5 & 2 \\ 2 & 1 \end{pmatrix}?$$

Answer: First we find the characteristic polynomial:

$$\begin{aligned} f(\lambda) &= \det(A - \lambda I) = \det \left[\begin{pmatrix} 5 & 2 \\ 2 & 1 \end{pmatrix} - \begin{pmatrix} \lambda & 0 \\ 0 & \lambda \end{pmatrix} \right] = \det \begin{pmatrix} 5 - \lambda & 2 \\ 2 & 1 - \lambda \end{pmatrix} \\ &= (5 - \lambda)(1 - \lambda) - 2 \cdot 2 \\ &= \lambda^2 - 6\lambda + 1. \end{aligned}$$

The eigenvalues are the roots of the characteristic polynomial, which we can find using the quadratic formula:

$$\lambda = \frac{6 \pm \sqrt{36 - 4}}{2} = 3 \pm 2\sqrt{2}.$$

The Characteristic Polynomial

Example

Question: What is the characteristic polynomial of

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix}?$$

Answer:

$$\begin{aligned} f(\lambda) &= \det(A - \lambda I) = \det \begin{pmatrix} a - \lambda & b \\ c & d - \lambda \end{pmatrix} = (a - \lambda)(d - \lambda) - bc \\ &= \lambda^2 - (a + d)\lambda + (ad - bc) \end{aligned}$$

What do you notice about $f(\lambda)$?

- ▶ The constant term is $\det(A)$, which is zero if and only if $\lambda = 0$ is a root.
- ▶ The linear term $-(a + d)$ is the negative of the sum of the diagonal entries of A .

Definition

The **trace** of a square matrix A is $\text{Tr}(A) = \text{sum of the diagonal entries of } A$.

Shortcut

The characteristic polynomial of a 2×2 matrix A is

$$f(\lambda) = \lambda^2 - \text{Tr}(A)\lambda + \det(A).$$

The Characteristic Polynomial

Example

Question: What are the eigenvalues of the rabbit population matrix

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 6 & 8 \\ \frac{1}{2} & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \frac{1}{2} & 0 \end{pmatrix}?$$

Answer: First we find the characteristic polynomial:

$$\begin{aligned} f(\lambda) &= \det(A - \lambda I) = \det \begin{pmatrix} -\lambda & 6 & 8 \\ \frac{1}{2} & -\lambda & 0 \\ 0 & \frac{1}{2} & -\lambda \end{pmatrix} \\ &= 8 \left(\frac{1}{4} - 0 \cdot -\lambda \right) - \lambda \left(\lambda^2 - 6 \cdot \frac{1}{2} \right) \\ &= -\lambda^3 + 3\lambda + 2. \end{aligned}$$

We know from before that one eigenvalue is $\lambda = 2$: indeed,
 $f(2) = -8 + 6 + 2 = 0$. Doing polynomial long division, we get:

$$\frac{-\lambda^3 + 3\lambda + 2}{\lambda - 2} = -\lambda^2 - 2\lambda - 1 = -(\lambda + 1)^2.$$

Hence $\lambda = -1$ is also an eigenvalue.

Algebraic Multiplicity

Definition

The **(algebraic) multiplicity** of an eigenvalue λ is its multiplicity as a root of the characteristic polynomial.

This is not a very interesting notion *yet*. It will become interesting when we also define *geometric* multiplicity later.

Example

In the rabbit population matrix, $f(\lambda) = -(\lambda - 2)(\lambda + 1)^2$, so the algebraic multiplicity of the eigenvalue 2 is 1, and the algebraic multiplicity of the eigenvalue -1 is 2.

Example

In the matrix $\begin{pmatrix} 5 & 2 \\ 2 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$, $f(\lambda) = (\lambda - (3 - 2\sqrt{2}))(\lambda - (3 + 2\sqrt{2}))$, so the algebraic multiplicity of $3 + 2\sqrt{2}$ is 1, and the algebraic multiplicity of $3 - 2\sqrt{2}$ is 1.

The Characteristic Polynomial

Poll

Fact: If A is an $n \times n$ matrix, the characteristic polynomial

$$f(\lambda) = \det(A - \lambda I)$$

turns out to be a polynomial of degree n , and its roots are the eigenvalues of A :

$$f(\lambda) = (-1)^n \lambda^n + a_{n-1} \lambda^{n-1} + a_{n-2} \lambda^{n-2} + \cdots + a_1 \lambda + a_0.$$

Poll

If you count the eigenvalues of A , with their algebraic multiplicities, you will get:

- A. Always n .
- B. Always at most n , but sometimes less.
- C. Always at least n , but sometimes more.
- D. None of the above.

The answer depends on whether you allow *complex* eigenvalues. If you only allow real eigenvalues, the answer is B. Otherwise it is A, because any degree- n polynomial has exactly n *complex* roots, counted with multiplicity. Stay tuned.

Similarity

Definition

Two $n \times n$ matrices A and B are **similar** if there is an invertible $n \times n$ matrix C such that

$$A = CBC^{-1}.$$

What does this mean? Say the columns of C are v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n . These form a basis $\mathcal{B} = \{v_1, v_2, \dots, v_n\}$ for \mathbf{R}^n because C is invertible. If $x = c_1 v_1 + c_2 v_2 + \dots + c_n v_n$ then

$$[x]_{\mathcal{B}} = \begin{pmatrix} c_1 \\ c_2 \\ \vdots \\ c_n \end{pmatrix} \implies x = c_1 v_1 + c_2 v_2 + \dots + c_n v_n = C[x]_{\mathcal{B}}.$$

Since $x = C[x]_{\mathcal{B}}$ we have $[x]_{\mathcal{B}} = C^{-1}x$.

$$B[x]_{\mathcal{B}} = [y]_{\mathcal{B}} \implies Ax = CBC^{-1}x = CB[x]_{\mathcal{B}} = C[y]_{\mathcal{B}} = y.$$

A acts on the standard coordinates of x in the same way that B acts on the \mathcal{B} -coordinates of x : $B[x]_{\mathcal{B}} = [Ax]_{\mathcal{B}}$.

Similarity

Example

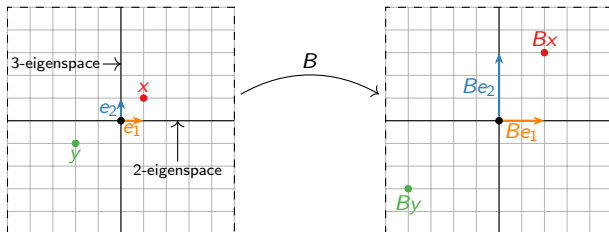
$$A = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ -1 & 4 \end{pmatrix} \quad B = \begin{pmatrix} 2 & 0 \\ 0 & 3 \end{pmatrix} \quad C = \begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad \implies \quad A = CBC^{-1}.$$

What does B do geometrically? It scales the x -direction by 2 and the y -direction by 3.

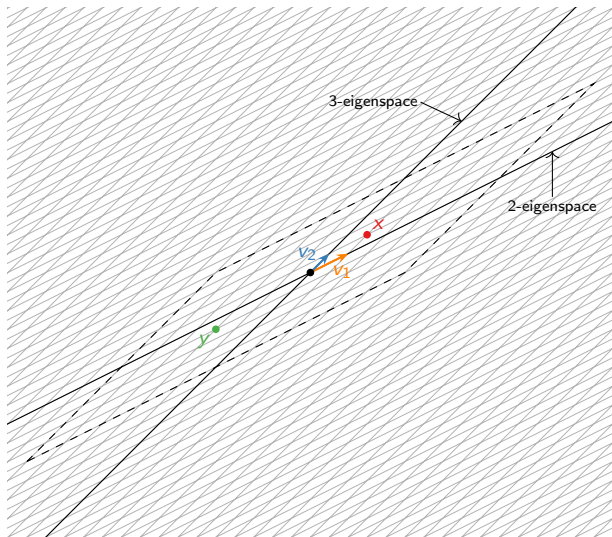
So A does to the standard coordinates what B does to the \mathcal{B} -coordinates, where

$$\mathcal{B} = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \right\}.$$

B acting on the usual coordinates



A does to the usual coordinates what B does to the \mathcal{B} -coordinates



$$\left. \begin{array}{l} \mathbf{v}_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \\ \mathbf{v}_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \end{array} \right\} \text{vectors in } \mathcal{B}$$

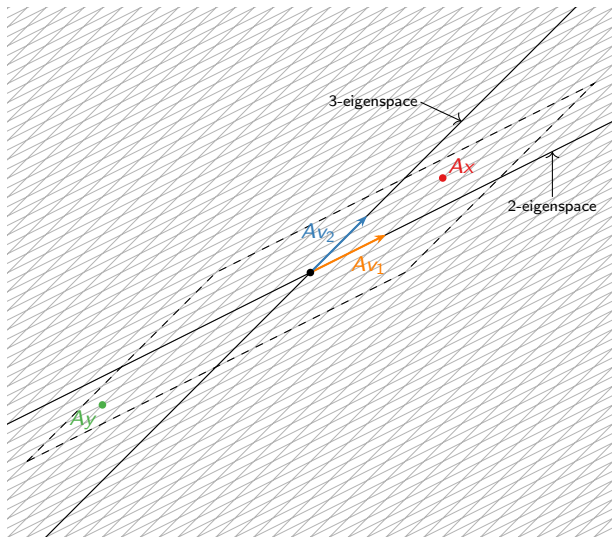
$$[\mathbf{x}]_{\mathcal{B}} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{v}_1 + \mathbf{v}_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$[\mathbf{y}]_{\mathcal{B}} = \begin{pmatrix} -2 \\ -1 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{y} &= -2\mathbf{v}_1 - \mathbf{v}_2 \\ &= \begin{pmatrix} -5 \\ -3 \end{pmatrix} \end{aligned}$$

A does to the usual coordinates what B does to the \mathcal{B} -coordinates



$$Av_1 = 2v_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 4 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$Av_2 = 3v_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 3 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$B[x]_{\mathcal{B}} = \begin{pmatrix} 2 \\ 3 \end{pmatrix} = [Ax]_{\mathcal{B}}$$

$$Ax = 2v_1 + 3v_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 7 \\ 5 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$B[y]_{\mathcal{B}} = \begin{pmatrix} -4 \\ -3 \end{pmatrix} = [Ay]_{\mathcal{B}}$$

$$Ay = -4v_1 - 3v_2 = \begin{pmatrix} -11 \\ -7 \end{pmatrix}$$

Check: $Ax = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ -1 & 4 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 7 \\ 5 \end{pmatrix}$ $Ay = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ -1 & 4 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} -5 \\ -3 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} -11 \\ -7 \end{pmatrix}$ ✓

Similar Matrices Have the Same Characteristic Polynomial

Fact: If A and B are similar, then they have the same characteristic polynomial.

Why? Suppose $A = CBC^{-1}$.

$$\begin{aligned}A - \lambda I &= CBC^{-1} - \lambda I \\&= CBC^{-1} - C(\lambda I)C^{-1} \\&= C(B - \lambda I)C^{-1}.\end{aligned}$$

Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned}\det(A - \lambda I) &= \det(C(B - \lambda I)C^{-1}) \\&= \det(C) \det(B - \lambda I) \det(C^{-1}) \\&= \det(B - \lambda I),\end{aligned}$$

because $\det(C^{-1}) = \det(C)^{-1}$.

Consequence: similar matrices have the same eigenvalues!
(But different eigenvectors in general.)

Similarity

Caveats

Warning

1. Matrices with the same eigenvalues need not be similar.
For instance,

$$\begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 2 \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad \begin{pmatrix} 2 & 0 \\ 0 & 2 \end{pmatrix}$$

both only have the eigenvalue 2, but they are not similar.

2. Similarity has nothing to do with row equivalence. For instance,

$$\begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 2 \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

are row equivalent, but they have different eigenvalues.