

Minimum distance to the origin from the intersection of a Sphere and a Plane

Consider the sphere $S : (x - x_c)^2 + (y - y_c)^2 + (z - z_c)^2 = r_c^2$ and a plane $P : ax + by + cz + d = 0$. We are interested in finding a point in $S \cap P$ that is closest to the origin. To this end, consider the optimization problem

$$\begin{aligned} \min_{(x,y,z) \in \mathbb{R}^3} \quad & x^2 + y^2 + z^2 \\ \text{subject to} \quad & (x - x_c)^2 + (y - y_c)^2 + (z - z_c)^2 = r_c^2 \\ & ax + by + cz + d = 0 \end{aligned}$$

Formulating the Lagrangian as $L := x^2 + y^2 + z^2 + \lambda_1((x - x_c)^2 + (y - y_c)^2 + (z - z_c)^2 - r_c^2) + \lambda_2(ax + by + cz + d)$, and writing the first order conditions we get

$$\begin{aligned} 2x^* + 2\lambda_1(x^* - x_c) + a\lambda_2 &= 0 \Rightarrow x^* = \frac{-a\lambda_2 + 2\lambda_1 x_c}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \\ 2y^* + 2\lambda_1(y^* - y_c) + b\lambda_2 &= 0 \Rightarrow y^* = \frac{-b\lambda_2 + 2\lambda_1 y_c}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \\ 2z^* + 2\lambda_1(z^* - z_c) + c\lambda_2 &= 0 \Rightarrow z^* = \frac{-c\lambda_2 + 2\lambda_1 z_c}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \end{aligned}$$

Substituting these in P we get

$$\begin{aligned} a \left(\frac{-a\lambda_2 + 2\lambda_1 x_c}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \right) + b \left(\frac{-b\lambda_2 + 2\lambda_1 y_c}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \right) + c \left(\frac{-c\lambda_2 + 2\lambda_1 z_c}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \right) + d &= 0 \\ \Rightarrow 2d - (a^2 + b^2 + c^2)\lambda_2 + 2(ax_c + by_c + cz_c + d)\lambda_1 &= 0 \\ \Rightarrow \lambda_1 + 1 &= \frac{(a^2 + b^2 + c^2)\lambda_2 + 2(ax_c + by_c + cz_c)}{2(ax_c + by_c + cz_c + d)} \end{aligned}$$

Substituting the above in S we get

$$\begin{aligned} (x^* - x_c)^2 + (y^* - y_c)^2 + (z^* - z_c)^2 - r_c^2 &= \left(\frac{2x_c + a\lambda_2}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{2y_c + b\lambda_2}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{2z_c + c\lambda_2}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \right)^2 - r_c^2 = 0 \\ \Rightarrow 4(x_c^2 + y_c^2 + z_c^2) + 4(ax_c + by_c + dz_c)\lambda_2 + (a^2 + b^2 + c^2)\lambda_2^2 - 4r_c^2(\lambda_1 + 1)^2 &= 0 \\ 4r_c^2(\lambda_1 + 1)^2 - (a^2 + b^2 + c^2)\lambda_2^2 - 4(ax_c + by_c + cz_c)\lambda_2 &= 4(x_c^2 + y_c^2 + z_c^2) \end{aligned}$$

Let $\alpha := ax_c + by_c + cz_c + d$, $\beta^2 = a^2 + b^2 + c^2$, $\gamma^2 = x_c^2 + y_c^2 + z_c^2$.

Substituting $\lambda_1 + 1 = \frac{\beta^2 \lambda_2 + 2(\alpha - d)}{2\alpha}$ in S we get

$$4r_c^2 \left(\frac{\beta^2 \lambda_2 + 2(\alpha - d)}{2\alpha} \right)^2 - \beta^2 \lambda_2^2 - 4(\alpha - d)\lambda_2 = 4\gamma^2$$

$$\left(\frac{\beta^2 r_c^2}{\alpha^2} - 1 \right) \beta^2 \lambda_2^2 - 4 \frac{(\alpha^2 - \beta^2 r_c^2)(\alpha - d)}{\alpha^2} \lambda_2 + 4 \frac{r_c^2 (\alpha - d)^2}{\alpha^2} - 4\gamma^2 = 0$$

$$\lambda_2 = \pm \frac{2\alpha \sqrt{(\alpha^2 - \beta^2 r_c^2)((\alpha - d)^2 - \beta^2 \gamma^2)}}{\beta^2 (\alpha^2 - \beta^2 r_c^2)} - \frac{2(\alpha - d)}{\beta^2}$$

$$\lambda_1 + 1 = \pm \frac{\sqrt{(\alpha^2 - \beta^2 r_c^2)((\alpha - d)^2 - \beta^2 \gamma^2)}}{\alpha^2 - \beta^2 r_c^2}$$

$$x^{*2} + y^{*2} + z^{*2} = \left(\frac{-a\lambda_2 + 2\lambda_1 x_c}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{-b\lambda_2 + 2\lambda_1 y_c}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{-c\lambda_2 + 2\lambda_1 z_c}{2\lambda_1 + 2} \right)^2$$

$$= \frac{-2\alpha(\alpha - d) + \beta^2(\gamma^2 + r_c^2) \mp 2\sqrt{(\alpha^2 - \beta^2 r_c^2)((\alpha - d)^2 - \beta^2 \gamma^2)}}{\beta^2}$$