

Lie Algebras

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1 Lecture 1

The material for this class will roughly come from Humphrey, Chapters 1 to 5. There is also a useful appendix which has been uploaded to the ELC system online.

1.1 Overview

Here is a short overview of the topics we expect to cover:

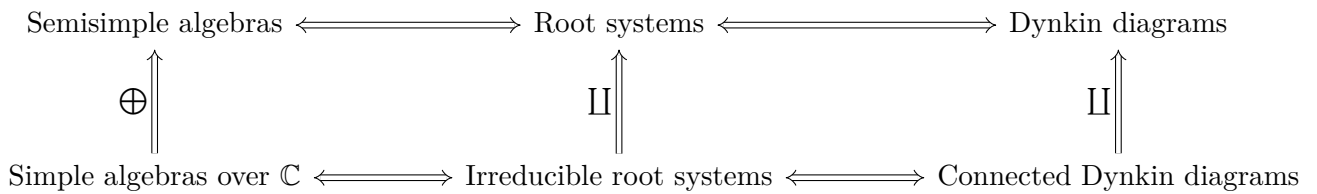
1.1.1 Chapter 2

- Ideals, solvability, and nilpotency
- Semisimple Lie algebras

- These have a particularly nice structure and representation theory
- Determining if a Lie algebra is semisimple using Killing forms
- Weyl's theorem for complete reducibility for finite dimensional representations
- Root space decompositions

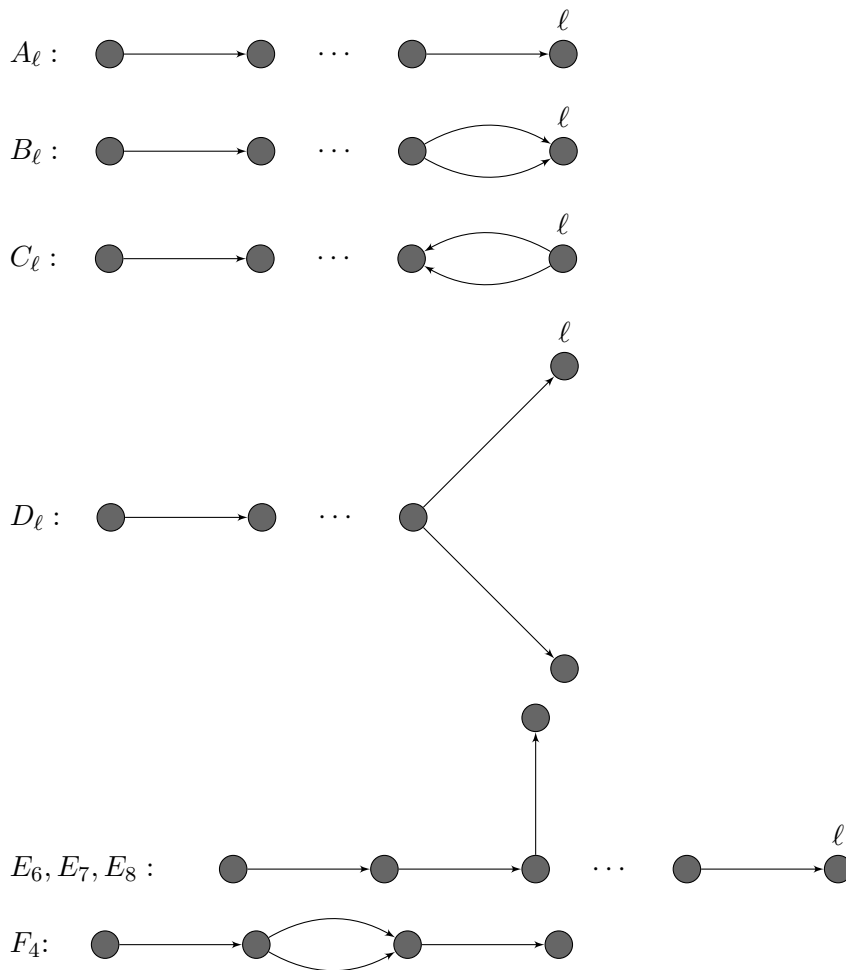
1.1.2 Chapter 3-4

We will describe the following series of correspondences:



1.2 Classification

The classical Lie algebras can be essentially classified by certain classes of diagrams:



1.3 Chapters 4-5

These cover the following topics:

- Conjugacy classes of Cartan subalgebras
- The PBW theorem for the universal enveloping algebra
- Serre relations

1.3.1 Chapter 6

Some important topics include:

- Weight space decompositions
- Finite dimensional modules
- Character and the Harish-Chandra theorem
- The Weyl character formula
 - This will be computed for the specific Lie algebras seen earlier

We will also see the type A_ℓ algebra used for the first time; however, it differs from the other types in several important/significant ways.

1.3.2 Chapter 7

Skip!

1.3.3 Topics

Time permitting, we may also cover the following extra topics:

- Infinite dimensional Lie algebras [Carter 05]
- BGG Cat- \mathcal{O} [Humphrey 08]

1.4 Content

Fix F a field of characteristic zero – note that prime characteristic is closer to a research topic.

Definition 1. A **Lie Algebra** \mathfrak{g} over F is an F -vector space with an operation denoted the Lie bracket,

$$\begin{aligned} [\cdot, \cdot] : \mathfrak{g} \times \mathfrak{g} &\rightarrow \mathfrak{g} \\ (x, y) &\mapsto [x, y]. \end{aligned}$$

satisfying the following properties:

- $[\cdot, \cdot]$ is bilinear
- $[x, x] = 0$
- The Jacobi identity:

$$[x, [y, z]] + [y, [x, z]] + [z, [x, y]] = \mathbf{0}.$$

Exercise 1. Show that $[x, y] = -[y, x]$.

Definition 2. Two Lie algebras $\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}'$ are said to be isomorphic if $\varphi([x, y]) = [\varphi(x), \varphi(y)]$.

1.5 Linear Lie Algebras

Let $V = \mathbb{F}^n$, and define $\text{End}(V) = \{f : V \rightarrow V \mid f \text{ is linear}\}$. We can then define $\mathfrak{gl}(n, V)$ by setting $[x, y] = (x \circ y) - (y \circ x)$.

Exercise 2. Verify that V is a Lie algebra.

Definition 3. Define

$$\mathfrak{sl}(n, V) = \{f \in \mathfrak{gl}(n, V) \mid \text{Tr}(f) = 0\}.$$

(Note the different in definition compared to the lie *group* $\text{SL}(n, V)$.)

Definition 4. A *subalgebra* of a Lie algebra is a vector subspace that is closed under the bracket.

Definition 5. The symplectic algebra

$$\mathfrak{sp}(2\ell, F) = \left\{ A \in \mathfrak{gl}(2\ell, F) \mid MA - A^T M = 0 \right\} \text{ where } M = \left(\begin{array}{c|c} 0 & I_n \\ \hline -I_n & 0 \end{array} \right)$$

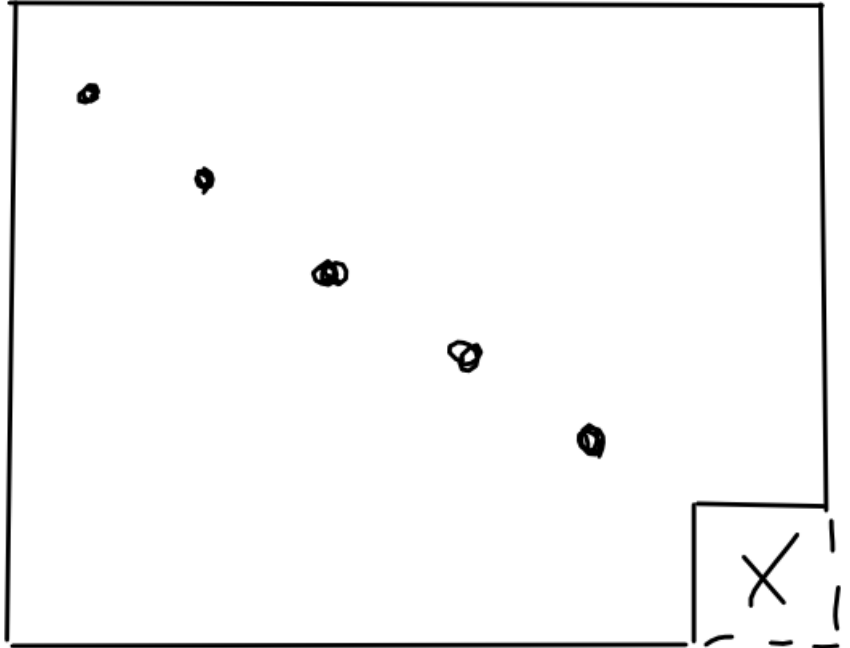
Definition 6. The orthogonal algebra

$$\mathfrak{so}(2\ell, F) = \left\{ A \in \mathfrak{gl}(2\ell, F) \mid MA - A^T M = 0 \right\} \text{ where}$$

$$M = \begin{cases} \left(\begin{array}{c|c|c} 1 & 0 & \\ \hline 0 & 0 & I_n \\ \hline & -I_n & 0 \end{array} \right) & n = 2\ell + 1 \text{ odd,} \\ \left(\begin{array}{c|c} 0 & I_n \\ \hline -I_n & 0 \end{array} \right) & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

Proposition 1. The dimensions of these algebras can be computed;

- The dimension of $\mathfrak{gl}(n, \mathbb{F})$ is n^2 , and has basis $\{e_{i,j}\}$ the matrices if a 1 in the i, j position and



zero elsewhere.

- For type A_ℓ , we have $\dim \mathfrak{sl}(n, \mathbb{F}) = (\ell + 1)^2 - 1$.
- For type C_ℓ , we have $\dim \mathfrak{sp}(n, \mathbb{F}) = \ell^2 + 2 \left(\frac{\ell(\ell+1)}{2} \right)$, and so elements here

$$\begin{pmatrix} A & B = B^t \\ C = C^t & A^t \end{pmatrix}.$$

- For type D_ℓ we have

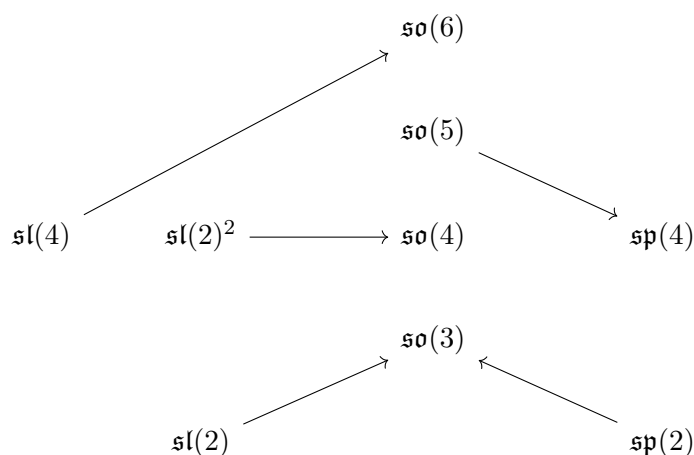
$$\dim \mathfrak{so}(2\ell, \mathbb{F}) = \dim \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} A & B = -B^t \\ C = -C^t & -A^t \end{pmatrix} \right\},$$

which turns out to be $2\ell^2 - \ell$.

- For type B_ℓ , we have $\dim \mathfrak{so}(2\ell, \mathbb{F}) = 2\ell^2 - \ell + 2\ell = 2\ell^2 + \ell$, with elements of the form

$$\left(\begin{array}{c|cc} 0 & M & N \\ \hline -N^t & A & C = C^t \\ -M^t & B = B^t & -A^t \end{array} \right).$$

Exercise 3. Use the relation $MA = A^{tM}$ to reduce restrictions on the blocks.



Theorem 1. These are *all* of the isomorphisms between any of these types of algebras, in any dimension.

2 Lecture 2

Recall from last time that a Lie Algebra is a vector space with a bilinear bracket, which importantly satisfies the Jacobi identity:

$$[x, [y, z]] + [y, [x, z]] + [z, [x, y]] = \mathbf{0}.$$

Also recall the examples from last time:

- $A_\ell \iff \mathfrak{sl}(\ell + 1, F)$
- $B_\ell \iff \mathfrak{so}(2\ell + 1, F)$
- $C_\ell \iff \mathfrak{sp}(2\ell, F)$
- $D_\ell \iff \mathfrak{so}(2\ell, F)$

Exercise 4. Characterize these matrix subalgebras in terms of basis elements, and compute their dimensions.

2.1 Lie Algebras of Derivations

Definition 7. An F -algebra A is an F -vector space endowed with a bilinear map $A^2 \rightarrow A$, $(x, y) \mapsto xy$.

Definition 8. An algebra is **associative** if $x(yz) = (xy)z$.

Modern interest: simple Lie algebras, which have a good representation theory. Take a look at Erdmann-Wildon (Springer) for an introductory look at 3-dimensional algebras.

Definition 9. Any map $\delta : A^2 \rightarrow A$ that satisfies the Leibniz rule is called a **derivation** of A , where the rule is given by $\delta(xy) = \delta(x)y + x\delta(y)$.

Definition 10. We define $\text{Der}(A) = \{\delta \mid \delta \text{ is a derivation}\}$.

Any Lie algebra \mathfrak{g} is an F -algebra, since $[\cdot, \cdot]$ is bilinear. Moreover, \mathfrak{g} is associative iff $[x, [y, z]] = 0$.

Exercise 5. Show that $\text{Der } \mathfrak{g} \leq \mathfrak{gl}(\mathfrak{g})$ is a Lie subalgebra. One needs to check that $\delta_1, \delta_2 \in \mathfrak{g} \implies [\delta_1, \delta_2] \in \mathfrak{g}$.

Exercise 6 (Turn in). Define the adjoint by $\text{ad}_x : \mathfrak{g} \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}, y \mapsto [x, y]$. Show that $\text{ad}_x \in \text{Der}(\mathfrak{g})$.

2.2 Abstract Lie Algebras

Fact: Every finite-dimensional Lie algebra is isomorphic to a linear Lie algebra, i.e. a subalgebra of $\mathfrak{gl}(V)$. Each isomorphism type can be specified by certain *structure constants* for the Lie bracket.

Example 1. Any F -vector space can be made into a Lie algebra by setting $[x, y] = 0$; such algebras are referred to as *abelian*.

Attempting to classify Lie algebras of dimension at most 2.

- 1 dimensional: We can write $\mathfrak{g} = Fx$, and so $[x, x] = 0 \implies [\cdot, \cdot] = 0$. So every bracket must be zero, and thus every Lie algebra is abelian.
- 2 dimensional: Write $\mathfrak{g} = Fx \oplus Fy$, the only nontrivial bracket here is $[x, y]$. Some cases:
 - $[x, y] = 0 \implies \mathfrak{g}$ is abelian.
 - $[x, y] = ax + by \neq 0$. Assume $a \neq 0$ and set $x' = ax + by, y' = \frac{y}{a}$. Now compute $[x', y'] = [ax + by, \frac{y}{a}] = [x, y] = ax + by = x'$. Punchline: $\mathfrak{g} \cong Fx' \oplus Fy', [x', y'] = x'$.

We can fill in a table with all of the various combinations of brackets:

$[\cdot, \cdot]$	x'	y'
x'	0	x'
y'	$-x'$	0

Example 2. Let $V = \mathbb{R}^3$, and define $[a, b] = a \times b$ to be the usual cross product.

Exercise 7. Look at notes for basis elements of $\mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$,

$$e = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad h = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix}, \quad f = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Compute the matrices of $\text{ad}(e), \text{ad}(h), \text{ad}(f)$ with respect to this basis.

2.3 Ideals

Definition 11. A subspace $I \subseteq \mathfrak{g}$ is called an **ideal**, and we write $I \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$, if $x, y \in I \implies [x, y] \in I$.

Note that there is no need to distinguish right, left, or two-sided ideals. This can be shown using $[x, y] = [-y, x]$.

Exercise 8. Check that the following are all ideals of \mathfrak{g} :

- $\{0\}, \mathfrak{g}$.
- $\mathfrak{z}(\mathfrak{g}) = \{z \in \mathfrak{g} \mid [x, z] = 0 \quad \forall x \in \mathfrak{g}\}$
- The commutator (or derived) algebra $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}] = \{\sum_i [x_i, y_i] \mid x_i, y_i \in \mathfrak{g}\}$.
 - Moreover, $[\mathfrak{gl}(n, F), \mathfrak{gl}(n, F)] = \mathfrak{sl}(n, F)$.

Fact: If $I, J \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$, then

- $I + J = \{x + y \mid x \in I, y \in J\} \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$

- $I \cap J \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$
- $[I, J] = \{\sum_i [x_i, y_i] \mid x_i \in I, y_i \in J\} \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$

Definition 12. A Lie algebra is **simple** if $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}] \neq 0$ (i.e. when \mathfrak{g} is not abelian) and has no non-trivial ideals. Note that this implies that $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}] = \mathfrak{g}$.

Theorem 2. Suppose that $\text{char } F \neq 2$, then $\mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$ is not simple.

Proof. Recall that we have a basis of $\mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$ given by $B = \{e, h, f\}$ where

- $[e, f] = h,$
- $[h, e] = 2e,$
- $[h, f] = -2f.$

So think of $[h, e] = \text{ad}_h$, so h is an eigenvector of this map with eigenvalues $\{0, \pm 2\}$. Since $\text{char } F \neq 2$, these are all distinct. Suppose $\mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$ has a nontrivial ideal I ; then pick $x = ae + bh + cf \in I$. Then $[e, x] = 0 - 2be + ch$, and $[e, [e, x]] = 0 - 0 + 2ce$. Again since $\text{char } F \neq 2$, then if $c \neq 0$ then $e \in I$. Now you can show that $h \in I$ and $f \in I$, but then $I = \mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$, a contradiction. So $c = 0$.

Then $x = bh \neq 0$, so $h \in I$, and we can compute

$$\begin{aligned} 2e = [h, e] \in I &\implies e \in I, \\ 2f = [h, -f] \in I &\implies f \in I. \end{aligned}$$

which implies that $I = \mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$ and thus it is simple. □

Note that there is a homework coming due next Monday, about 4 questions.

3 Lecture 3

Last time, we looked at ideals such as $0, \mathfrak{g}, Z(\mathfrak{g})$, and $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}]$.

Definition: If $I \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$ is an ideal, then the quotient \mathfrak{g}/I also yields a Lie algebra with the bracket given by $[x + I, y + I] = [x, y] + I$.

Exercise: Check that this is well-defined, so that if $x + I = x' + I$ and $y + I = y' + I$ then $[x, y] + I = [x', y'] + I$.

3.1 Homomorphisms and Representations

Definition 13. A linear map $\phi : \mathfrak{g}_1 \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}_2$ is a *Lie homomorphism* if $\phi[x, y] = [\phi(x), \phi(y)]$.

Remark. $\ker \phi \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}_1$ and $\text{im } \phi \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}_2$ is a subalgebra.

Fact: There is a canonical way to set up a 1-to-1 correspondence $\{I \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}\} \iff \{\text{hom } \phi : \mathfrak{g} \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}'\}$ where $I \mapsto (x \mapsto x + I)$ and the inverse is given by $\phi \mapsto \ker \phi$.

Theorem (Isomorphism theorem for Lie algebras):

- If $\phi : \mathfrak{g}_1 \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}_2$ is a Lie algebra homomorphism, then $\mathfrak{g}/\ker \phi \cong \text{im } \phi$
- If $I, J \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$ are ideals and $I \subset J$ then $J/I \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}/I$ and $(\mathfrak{g}/I)/(J/I) \cong \mathfrak{g}/J$.
- If $I, J \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$ then $(I + J)/J \cong I/(I \cap J)$.

Definition: A *representation* of a Lie algebra \mathfrak{g} is a Lie algebra homomorphism $\phi : \mathfrak{g} \rightarrow \mathfrak{gl}(V)$ into a linear Lie algebra for some vector space V .

We call V a \mathfrak{g} -module with action $g \cdot v = \phi(g)(v)$.

Example: The *adjoint representation*:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ad} : \mathfrak{g} &\rightarrow \mathfrak{gl}(\mathfrak{g}) \\ x &\mapsto [x, \cdot]. \end{aligned}$$

Corollary 1. Any simple Lie algebra is isomorphic to a linear Lie algebra.

Proof: Since \mathfrak{g} is simple, the center $Z(\mathfrak{g}) = 0$. We can rewrite the center as

$$\begin{aligned} Z(\mathfrak{g}) &= \{x \in \mathfrak{g} \mid \text{ad}_{x(y)} = 0 \quad \forall y \in \mathfrak{g}\} \\ &= \ker \text{ad}_x. \end{aligned}$$

Using the first isomorphism theorem, we have $\mathfrak{g}/Z(\mathfrak{g}) \cong \text{im ad} \subseteq \mathfrak{gl}(\mathfrak{g})$. But $\mathfrak{g}/Z(\mathfrak{g}) = \mathfrak{g}$ here, so we are done.

3.2 Automorphisms

Definition: An automorphism of \mathfrak{g} is an isomorphism $\mathfrak{g} \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}$, and we define

$$\text{Aut}(\mathfrak{g}) = \{\phi : \mathfrak{g} \rightarrow \mathfrak{g} \mid \phi \text{ is an isomorphism}\}.$$

Proposition: If $\delta \in \text{Der}(\mathfrak{g})$ is nilpotent, then

$$\exp(\delta) := \sum \frac{\delta^n}{n!} \in \text{Aut}(\mathfrak{g}).$$

This is well-defined because δ is nilpotent, and a binomial formula holds:

$$\frac{\delta^n([x, y])}{n!} = \sum_{i=0}^n \left[\frac{\delta^i(x)}{i!}, \frac{\delta^{n-i}(y)}{(n-i)!} \right].$$

and for $n = 1$, $\delta([x, y]) = [x, \delta(y)] + [\delta(x), y]$.

Exercise: Show that

$$[(\exp \delta)(x), (\exp \delta)(y)] = \sum_{n=0}^{k-1} \frac{\delta^n([x, y])}{n!}$$