

A QUICKSTART GUIDE TO DERIVED FUNCTORS

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ABSTRACT. These notes give a self-contained exposition of the basic theory on derived functors. They are aimed at students who have seen Ext or Tor appearing once or twice and want to know more about those derived functors. No prior knowledge of homological algebra is assumed, however, one should be familiar with the notions of exact sequences and chain complexes, as for instance provided by a first course on algebraic topology.

IN A NUTSHELL

Let $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ be a left-exact functor between abelian categories (for instance, categories of modules). Let $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow Z \rightarrow 0$ be a short exact sequence in \mathcal{A} . Then the induced sequence $0 \rightarrow FX \rightarrow FY \rightarrow FZ$ is only exact at the first two terms, the morphism $FY \rightarrow FZ$ may fail to be an epimorphism. It is therefore a natural question how to extend this sequence on the right to obtain an exact sequence. The *right-derived functors* of F answer this question: There is a long exact sequence

$$0 \rightarrow F(X) \rightarrow F(Y) \rightarrow F(Z) \rightarrow R^1F(X) \rightarrow R^1F(Y) \rightarrow R^1F(Z) \rightarrow R^2F(X) \rightarrow \dots$$

depending functorially on the given short exact sequence. To construct $R^nF(X)$, one picks an *injective resolution* $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow I^\bullet$ of X and sets $R^nF(X) := H^n(F(I^\bullet))$.

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REFERENCES

Standard textbooks on homological algebra include:

- Weibel. *An Introduction to Homological Algebra*.
- Gelfand, Manin. *Methods of Homological Algebra*.

Beware of mathematical typos in the latter. For a comprehensive reference, turn to the *Stacks Project*, and don't forget to check *MathOverflow* in case of questions.

1. ABELIAN CATEGORIES

Example 1.1. The prototypical example of an abelian category is the category of abelian groups.

Example 1.2. More generally, the category of modules over some ring is an abelian category.

Definition 1.3. An *abelian category* \mathcal{A} is a category together with abelian group structures on the hom-sets $\text{Hom}_{\mathcal{A}}(X, Y)$ such that composition is bilinear and:

- (1) There exists a *zero object*, and for any pair of objects X and Y , there exists a *biproduct* $X \oplus Y$ (simultaneously a coproduct and a product).
- (2) For any morphism $f : X \rightarrow Y$, there exists a *kernel* $K \hookrightarrow X$ and a *cokernel* $Y \twoheadrightarrow K$.
- (3) An appropriate formulation of the homomorphism theorem holds.

Of course, since one cannot naively talk about elements of arbitrary categories, the axioms have to be formulated in a purely categorical way with universal properties. This is entirely possible, but for the purposes of these notes not necessary, since in any concrete abelian category which will appear here, there will be an obvious notion of kernel and cokernel.

Non-example 1.4. The category of sets, the category of topological spaces and the category of all (not necessarily commutative) groups are not abelian categories.

Example 1.5. Let \mathcal{A} be an abelian category. Then the category of (cochain) complexes in \mathcal{A} , $\text{Kom}(\mathcal{A})$, is an abelian category with componentwise addition of morphisms and componentwise kernels and cokernels.

Example 1.6. Let X be a topological space. Then the category of sheaves of abelian groups on X , $\text{AbSh}(X)$, is an abelian category. The kernel of a morphism of such sheaves is calculated as its naive presheaf kernel, the cokernel is the sheafification of the naive presheaf cokernel.

Abelian categories are a natural setting for talking about exact sequences. The usual lemmas on exact sequences, for instance the *five lemma* and the lemma on the existence of a connecting homomorphism, hold in any abelian category. In fact, there is the following metatheorem, which is very practical for working with abelian categories.

Theorem 1.7. For the purposes of performing diagram chases in an abelian category \mathcal{A} , we may pretend that \mathcal{A} is the category of modules over some ring. In particular, we may freely employ naive element-based proofs to verify statements about \mathcal{A} – even though there need not be a notion of elements for objects of \mathcal{A} .

This can be made precise in several ways; check the *Freyd–Mitchell embedding theorem* and (the first page of) Bergman’s article *A note on abelian categories – translating element-chasing proofs, and exact embedding in abelian groups*.

The main use of abelian categories in homological algebra is as *categories of coefficient objects* (for taking cohomology in, for example) and as source and target categories of functors to be derived. To this end, the following definition is crucial.

Definition 1.8. A functor $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ between abelian categories is *additive* if and only if the induced maps $\mathrm{Hom}_{\mathcal{A}}(X, Y) \rightarrow \mathrm{Hom}_{\mathcal{B}}(FX, FY)$ are homomorphisms of groups. An additive functor F is *exact* if and only if, for any short exact sequence $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow Z \rightarrow 0$ in \mathcal{A} , the induced sequence $0 \rightarrow FX \rightarrow FY \rightarrow FZ \rightarrow 0$ is exact in \mathcal{B} . It is *left-exact* if at least $0 \rightarrow FX \rightarrow FY \rightarrow FZ$ is still exact and *right-exact* if at least $FX \rightarrow FY \rightarrow FZ \rightarrow 0$ is exact.

Example 1.9. Let T be an A -module. The functor $\mathrm{Mod}(A) \rightarrow \mathrm{Ab}, M \mapsto M \otimes_A T$ is always right-exact. It is exact if and only if T is flat over A .

Example 1.10. Let T be an object of an arbitrary abelian category \mathcal{A} . The functor $\mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathrm{Ab}, X \mapsto \mathrm{Hom}_{\mathcal{A}}(T, X)$ is left-exact. (It is exact if and only if T is a *projective object*, see below.) The contravariant Hom functor $X \mapsto \mathrm{Hom}_{\mathcal{A}}(X, T)$, regarded as a covariant functor $\mathcal{A}^{\mathrm{op}} \rightarrow \mathrm{Ab}$, is left-exact as well. (It is exact if and only if T is *injective*.)

Lemma 1.11. Let $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ be a left-exact functor. Let $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow Z$ be an exact sequence in \mathcal{A} (note the missing zero at the right end). Then the induced sequence $0 \rightarrow FX \rightarrow FY \rightarrow FZ$ is exact. The dual statement for right-exact functors holds as well.

Lemma 1.12. An additive functor between abelian categories is left-exact if and only if it preserves finite limits. It is right-exact if and only if it preserves finite colimits.

2. INJECTIVES AND PROJECTIVES

For the theory of derived functors, injective and projective objects are very important. We’ll discuss why below.

Definition 2.1. An object I of an abelian category is *injective* if and only if, for any monomorphism $X \hookrightarrow Y$ and any morphism $X \rightarrow I$, there exists a lift of that morphism to Y .

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} 0 & \longrightarrow & X & \hookrightarrow & Y \\ & & \downarrow & \nearrow & \\ & & I & & \end{array}$$

Dually, an object P is *projective* if and only if, for any epimorphism $X \twoheadrightarrow Y$ and any morphism $P \rightarrow X$, there exists a co-lift of that morphism to Y .

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} X & \twoheadrightarrow & Y & \twoheadrightarrow & 0 \\ & \nwarrow & \uparrow & & \\ & & P & & \end{array}$$

Note that no uniqueness of the lifts is required.

Example 2.2. In the category of vector spaces over some field, assuming the axiom of choice, any object I is injective: Simply take a basis of X , extend it to a basis of Y , and define $Y \rightarrow I$ by zero on the extended zero. This gives further indication that categories of vector spaces are not very interesting from a homological point of view.

Example 2.3. *Baer's criterion* states that in the category of abelian groups, assuming the axiom of choice, a group G is injective if and only if it is *divisible*, i. e. if for any $x \in G$ and $n \geq 1$ there exists an element $y \in G$ such that $x = ny$.¹ For example, the groups \mathbb{Q} and \mathbb{Q}/\mathbb{Z} are injective.

Injective objects are generally regarded as huge, unwieldy objects. They are important for the theory, but no practical calculations are made with them. Projective objects, on the other hand, are often much more accessible. This is of course a purely social statement, since the injective objects in an abelian category \mathcal{A} are precisely the projective objects in \mathcal{A}^{op} .

Example 2.4. In the category of modules over some ring, any finite free module P is projective: Choose a basis of P and pick preimages under $X \twoheadrightarrow Y$ of the images of the basis vectors in Y . Use these preimages to define the co-lift $P \rightarrow X$. More generally, assuming the axiom of choice, any (not necessarily finite) free module is projective. The precise characterization is that a module is projective if and only if it is a direct summand of a free module.²

Example 2.5. Assuming the axiom of choice, any vector space is free and thus projective.

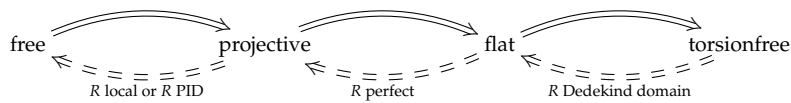
Example 2.6. An easy example of a projective module which is not free is the $\mathbb{Z}/(6)$ -module $\mathbb{Z}/(2)$. It is projective because there is the direct sum decomposition $\mathbb{Z}/(6) \cong \mathbb{Z}/(2) \oplus \mathbb{Z}/(3)$. It is not free because its number of elements is not a multiple of 6.

Example 2.7. Let $\mathfrak{m} = (3, 1 + \sqrt{-5})$ be the famous example of an ideal of $R = \mathbb{Z}[\sqrt{-5}]$ which is locally, but not globally principal. Considered as an R -module, it is projective but not free.

Example 2.8. By the *Serre–Swan theorem*, vector bundles provide a systematic source of projective modules. Let M be a module over a ring R . Then the induced quasicoherent module M^\sim on $\text{Spec } R$ is a vector bundle (i. e. a finite free sheaf of modules) if and only if M is projective and finitely generated. It is a trivial bundle if and only if M is finite free. There is an analogous relation in the smooth setting: The category of smooth vector bundles on a compact manifold M is, by taking

¹The “only if” direction is easy: Let $x \in G$ and $n \geq 1$. Then consider the injective map $\mathbb{Z} \xrightarrow{n} \mathbb{Z}$. The sought element y can be obtained as the image of 1 under a lift of the map $\mathbb{Z} \rightarrow G, 1 \mapsto x$.

²The relationship to other properties of R -modules is as follows:



global sections, equivalent to the category of finitely generated projective modules over $\mathcal{C}^\infty(M)$.

The reason why injective and projective objects are important in homological algebra is that they *have great exactness properties*. The following lemma makes one of this properties precise. Injective and projective objects thus form the building blocks by which other objects are *resolved by* – see the next section.

Lemma 2.9. *Let $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ be an additive functor between abelian categories. Let X^\bullet be a bounded below complex of injective objects or a bounded above complex of projective objects. If X^\bullet is acyclic, then $F(X^\bullet)$ is acyclic as well (!).*

Note that the statement is totally false without the injectivity or projectivity assumption.

Proof. One can show that that such a complex is homotopy equivalent to the zero complex. Any additive functor preserves homotopy equivalences.³ Therefore the image complex is too homotopy equivalent to zero and in particular acyclic.

The already interesting special case of three-term complexes, i. e. short exact sequences, can be proved by a simpler argument: If $0 \rightarrow A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow 0$ is a short exact sequence with A injective or C projective, one can construct a retraction of $A \rightarrow B$ respectively a section of $B \rightarrow C$. Therefore the sequence splits. The claim follows since additive functors preserve biproducts.⁴ \square

- Check statement about vector bundles

3. RESOLUTIONS

Definition 3.1. An *injective resolution* of an object X in an abelian category is an exact sequence of the form $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow I^0 \rightarrow I^1 \rightarrow \dots$, where the objects I^n are all injective. A short notation is $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow I^\bullet$. Dually, a *projective resolution* is an exact sequence $P^\bullet \rightarrow X \rightarrow 0$ with the P^{-n} , $n \geq 0$, projective.

Example 3.2. Let M be an A -module. Picking some set of generators, we obtain a surjective map $A^{(I)} \twoheadrightarrow M$. If the chosen family is linearly independent, this map is an isomorphism and $0 \rightarrow A^{(I)} \twoheadrightarrow M \rightarrow 0$ is a projective resolution of M . (Recall that free modules are projective, assuming the axiom of choice.) But in general, the *module of relations* K_0 , the kernel of $A^{(I)} \twoheadrightarrow M$, will be nontrivial. Picking generators for K_0 , we obtain a surjective map $A^{(I)} \twoheadrightarrow K_0$ which we can compose with the

³Additive functors preserve homotopies between morphisms of complexes, since they carry the defining relation “ $f - g = dh + hd$ ” into an equation of similar kind.

⁴Formally, a biproduct of two objects X and Y consists of morphisms $\iota_X : X \rightarrow X \oplus Y$, $\iota_Y : Y \rightarrow X \oplus Y$, $\pi_X : X \oplus Y \rightarrow X$, $\pi_Y : X \oplus Y \rightarrow Y$ such that $(X \oplus Y, \iota_X, \iota_Y)$ is a categorical coproduct of X and Y and such that $(X \oplus Y, \pi_X, \pi_Y)$ is a product of X and Y . This can also be characterized using the group structure on the hom-sets: The morphisms should satisfy the five relations $\pi_X \circ \iota_X = \text{id}_X$, $\pi_Y \circ \iota_Y = \text{id}_Y$, $\pi_Y \circ \iota_X = 0$, $\pi_X \circ \iota_Y = 0$, $\iota_X \circ \pi_X + \iota_Y \circ \pi_Y = \text{id}_{X \oplus Y}$. Additive functors carry these equations into equations of a similar kind.

inclusion $K_0 \hookrightarrow A^{(I)}$. In this way, the top row in the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} A^{(J)} & \longrightarrow & A^{(I)} & \twoheadrightarrow & M \rightarrow 0 \\ & \searrow & \nearrow & & \\ & & K_0 & & \end{array}$$

is exact. If the chosen generators for K_0 are linearly independent, we can tack the zero module at the front and obtain in this manner a projective resolution of M . But in general, there will be nontrivial relations between the chosen generators – *second syzygies* – and even higher syzygies. Therefore we have to repeat this process ad infinitum.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \cdots & \longrightarrow & A^{(K)} & \longrightarrow & A^{(J)} & \longrightarrow & A^{(I)} \twoheadrightarrow M \rightarrow 0 \\ & & \nearrow & & \searrow & & \nearrow \\ & & \cdots & & K_1 & & K_0 \end{array}$$

Example 3.3. A projective resolution of the \mathbb{Z} -module $\mathbb{Z}/(2)$, obtained by the method just sketched, is $0 \rightarrow \mathbb{Z} \xrightarrow{2} \mathbb{Z} \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}/(2) \rightarrow 0$.

Example 3.4. *Koszul resolutions* are an important source of resolutions in algebraic geometry. Let f_1, \dots, f_r be a *regular sequence* of elements of some ring A .⁵ Denote by $\Lambda^n M$ the n -th exterior power of M . Then $\Lambda^\bullet A^r \rightarrow A/(f_1, \dots, f_r) \rightarrow 0$ is a free resolution. The differential sends $\vec{v}_1 \wedge \cdots \wedge \vec{v}_n$ to $\sum_{i=0}^r (-1)^i (\vec{v} \cdot \vec{f}) \vec{v}_1 \wedge \cdots \wedge \widehat{\vec{v}_i} \wedge \cdots \wedge \vec{v}_n$ (scalar product). Switching toposes, Koszul resolutions can be used to construct locally free resolutions of structure sheaves of closed subschemes.

We can think of a projective resolution $P^\bullet \rightarrow X \rightarrow 0$ as providing us with successively improving approximations: A zeroth approximation of X is P^0 . But this disregards possible relations between the generators (we are employing a module-theoretic metaphor here), so a better approximation is “ $P^0 - P^{-1}$ ”. If there are relations between the relations, we subtract too much in this expression; an even better approximation is “ $P^0 - P^{-1} + P^{-2}$ ”. Taking all the higher corrections into account, we obtain the symbolic identity “ $X = P^0 - P^{-1} \pm \dots$ ”.⁶

⁵This means that f_1 is regular in A , f_2 is regular in $A/(f_1)$, f_3 is regular in $A/(f_1, f_2)$ and so on. A ring element s is *regular* if and only if multiplication by s is injective. If A is a ring of functions, for instance $A = k[x, y]$, regularity of the sequence is intuitively a requirement on the equations “ $f_1 = 0, \dots, f_n = 0$ ” to be independent.

⁶The arithmetic operations with objects should be conceived in a purely figurative way. But in fact, there is a way to make these calculations completely rigorous. Namely, we can attach to any abelian category \mathcal{A} a very nice invariant, its *K-theory group* $K(\mathcal{A})$ (also called *Grothendieck group*). It is the abelian group freely generated by the objects of \mathcal{A} modulo the relation $X = X' + X''$ for any short exact sequence $0 \rightarrow X' \rightarrow X \rightarrow X'' \rightarrow 0$ in \mathcal{A} . One can then check that, if $P^\bullet \rightarrow X \rightarrow 0$ is a bounded resolution (projective or otherwise), the identity $X = \sum_n (-1)^n P^n$ holds in $K(\mathcal{A})$.

Here are four tangential remarks on the K-theory. (1) The map $(\mathcal{A}, \oplus) \rightarrow (K(\mathcal{A}), +)$ is the *universal additive invariant* of \mathcal{A} . (2) For a bounded complex X^\bullet , one can define its *Euler characteristic* as $\chi(X^\bullet) := \sum_n (-1)^n X^n \in K(\mathcal{A})$. Denoting by $H^\bullet(X^\bullet)$ its associated cohomology complex (with zero differentials), one can check that $\chi(X^\bullet) = \chi(H^\bullet(X^\bullet))$. (3) The K-theory of the category of vector spaces over some field is zero, by the *Eilenberg–Mazur swindle*. The K-theory of the category of finite-dimensional vector

Definition 3.5. An abelian category is said to have *enough injectives* if and only if for any object X there exists a monomorphism $X \hookrightarrow I$ into an injective object, i. e. if any object can be embedded into an injective object. Dually, an abelian category has *enough projectives* if and only if any object is a quotient of a projective object.

Lemma 3.6. Let \mathcal{A} be an abelian category with enough injectives or enough projectives. Then any object possesses an injective respectively a projective resolution.

Proof. The method sketched in Example 3.2 depended only on the fact that any module admits a surjection from a free module. This fact can be substituted by the hypothesis on the existence of enough projectives. The statement about injective resolutions is the formal dual. \square

Remark 3.7. Let \mathcal{A} be an abelian category with enough injectives and projectives. We say that its *homological dimension* $\leq n$ if and only if any object possesses a projective (equivalently, injective) resolution of length n , i. e. comprising objects P^0 to P^{-n} .⁷ The homological dimension is one way to measure the homological complexity of a category. For instance, the category of vector spaces over a field has homological dimension zero, since any object is projective (and injective). More generally, there is an intriguing relation between the homological dimension of the category of modules over a ring and its Krull dimension: If the ring is a *regular ring*, they coincide. For instance, the homological dimension of the category of $k[x_1, \dots, x_n]$ -modules, where k is a field, is n . Relatedly, the category of coherent sheaves on a smooth projective variety of dimension n has homological dimension n .

The following lemma investigates the functorial properties of injective and projective resolutions.

Lemma 3.8. Let $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow I^\bullet$ be a resolution by arbitrary objects in an abelian category. Let $0 \rightarrow Y \rightarrow J^\bullet$ be a resolution by injective objects. Let $f : X \rightarrow Y$ be a morphism. Then there exists a lift of f to the resolutions, i. e. a morphism $I^\bullet \rightarrow J^\bullet$ of complexes compatible with the maps $X \rightarrow I^0$ and $Y \rightarrow J^0$. Furthermore, this lift is unique up to homotopy.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 0 & \longrightarrow & X & \longrightarrow & I^0 & \longrightarrow & I^2 \longrightarrow \dots \\ & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ 0 & \longrightarrow & Y & \longrightarrow & J^0 & \longrightarrow & J^2 \longrightarrow \dots \end{array}$$

Proof. We obtain a morphism $I^0 \rightarrow J^0$ by lifting the morphism $X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow J^0$ along the monomorphism $X \rightarrow I^0$. This is possible by the injectivity of J^0 . The induction step is a bit more complicated. \square

Corollary 3.9. Any two injective resolutions of an object are homotopy equivalent.

spaces is \mathbb{Z} , by associating to a vector space its dimension. (4) The K-theory group of the category of coherent sheaves of modules on a scheme carries important information about the intersection theory of the scheme.

⁷The equivalence is not entirely trivial. One can use the *dimension shifting trick* and the characterization of injective objects as those objects I such that $\text{Ext}^1(T, I) = 0$ for all objects T ; dually, an object P is projective if and only if $\text{Ext}^1(P, T) = 0$ for all objects T .

Proof. Let $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow I^\bullet$ and $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow J^\bullet$ be injective resolutions. By the previous lemma, the identity $\text{id}_X : X \rightarrow X$ lifts to morphisms $I^\bullet \rightarrow J^\bullet$ and $J^\bullet \rightarrow I^\bullet$. The composition of these lifts is a lift of id_X to $I^\bullet \rightarrow I^\bullet$ respectively $J^\bullet \rightarrow J^\bullet$. By the uniqueness statement, these compositions are homotopic to the identity, since id_{I^\bullet} respectively id_{J^\bullet} are trivially lifts of id_X . \square

Injective resolutions allow us to replace badly behaved objects by (complexes of) injective objects, which, thanks to their great exactness properties, mix much better with additive functors. This is the reason why injective (and dually, projective) resolutions are important. No information about morphisms is lost in this process, since morphisms between objects lift to morphisms between resolutions.

For future reference, we want to precisely state the relation between an object X – considered as a complex $X[0]$ concentrated in degree zero – and an associated injective resolution I^\bullet . Namely, the augmentation $X \rightarrow I^0$ gives rise to a morphism $X[0] \rightarrow I^\bullet$ of complexes which is a *quasi-isomorphism* by the following definition.

Definition 3.10. A morphism of complexes $K^\bullet \rightarrow L^\bullet$ is a *quasi-isomorphism* if the induced morphisms $H^n(K^\bullet) \rightarrow H^n(L^\bullet)$ in cohomology are isomorphisms for all n .⁸

4. DERIVED FUNCTORS

Definition 4.1. Let $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ be a left-exact functor between abelian categories. Assume that \mathcal{A} has enough injectives. Then $\mathbb{R}F(X)$, the *total right-derived functor* of F evaluated at an object X of \mathcal{A} , is the complex

$$\mathbb{R}F(X): \quad \cdots \rightarrow 0 \rightarrow F(I^0) \rightarrow F(I^1) \rightarrow \cdots,$$

where $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow I^\bullet$ is an injective resolution of X . The *n -th right-derived functor* of F evaluated at X is the n -th cohomology of this complex: $R^n F(X) := H^n(\mathbb{R}F(X)) = H^n(F(I^\bullet))$.

So, to calculate $R^n F(X)$, we take an injective resolution of X , apply F to this complex (be sure to strip the leading “ $F(X)$ ”), and then take cohomology. Note that, even though the complex I^\bullet is not acyclic only at position zero, the complex $F(I^\bullet)$ may have cohomology in arbitrary high degrees (!). There is an analogous definition for the left-derived functors of right-exact functors, using projective instead of injective resolutions.

Since we made the arbitrary choice of an injective resolution, we have to discuss well-definedness of course. If $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow J^\bullet$ is a second injective resolution, there is a homotopy equivalence $I^\bullet \simeq J^\bullet$ by Corollary 3.9. This equivalence is preserved by the functor F , so the complexes $F(I^\bullet)$ and $F(J^\bullet)$ are homotopy equivalent as well. In particular, they are quasi-isomorphic and have isomorphic cohomology.

⁸Note that if $K^\bullet \rightarrow L^\bullet$ is a quasi-isomorphism, there is usually no quasi-isomorphism in the opposite direction. For instance, there is no quasi-isomorphism $(\mathbb{Z}/(2))[0] \rightarrow P^\bullet$ when $P^\bullet \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}/(2) \rightarrow 0$ is the projective resolution of Example 3.3. Accordingly, we say that two complexes K^\bullet and L^\bullet are *quasi-isomorphic* not when there exists a quasi-isomorphism between them, but when there exists a *zigzag* of quasi-isomorphisms $K^\bullet \rightarrow Z_0^\bullet \leftarrow Z_1^\bullet \rightarrow Z_2^\bullet \leftarrow \cdots \rightarrow Z_n^\bullet \leftarrow Y^\bullet$. This complication is a source of technical difficulties. Note that to say that K^\bullet and L^\bullet are quasi-isomorphic is slightly stronger than to say that they have isomorphic cohomology. In the latter case, there is no guarantee that the isomorphisms are induced by a (zigzag of) morphisms of complexes.

Summing up, the complex $\mathbb{R}F(X)$ is well-defined up to quasi-isomorphism and $R^n F(X)$ is well-defined up to isomorphism. For reasons to be stated below, we don't want to stress that with our definition, $\mathbb{R}F(X)$ is actually even well-defined up to homotopy equivalence.

Suppose we fix an injective resolution for every object of \mathcal{A} . Then the rule $X \mapsto R^n F(X)$ can be made into an additive functor $R^n F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$, since a morphism $X \rightarrow Y$ between objects induces, by Lemma 3.8, a morphism between their associated injective resolutions (unique up to homotopy) and therefore a well-defined morphism $R^n F(X) \rightarrow R^n F(Y)$.

Different choices of resolutions lead to naturally isomorphic right-derived functors.

Example 4.2. We have $R^0 F(X) \cong F(X)$, naturally in X . To verify this, pick an injective resolution $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow I^\bullet$ and apply F to the exact sequence $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow I^0 \rightarrow I^1$.

It is in this sense that the $R^n F$ are “derived” functors of F ; $R^0 F$ coincides with F and the higher derived functors bear some relation with F . But note that $R^{n+1} F$ is *not* the first derived functor of $R^n F$ (indeed, in general the higher derived functors are neither left- nor right-exact, so we cannot derive $R^n F$) and that there is no Leibniz rule to be found.

Example 4.3. Assume F to even be exact. Then the higher derived functors of F vanish, i. e. $R^n F(X) = 0$ for all objects X and $n > 0$. To verify this, use Lemma ??.

This suggests the following motto: *Derived functors measure the failure of a functor to be exact.*

Example 4.4. Consider the dualization functor $F : \text{Ab}^{\text{op}} \rightarrow \text{Ab}$, $M \mapsto \text{Hom}(M, \mathbb{Z})$. Since F is an instance of a Hom functor, it is left-exact. To ensure that the contravariance doesn't cause unnecessary difficulties, we spell out precisely what this means: If $0 \rightarrow M \rightarrow N \rightarrow P \rightarrow 0$ is a short exact sequence in Ab^{op} (this really means that we have a short exact sequence $0 \leftarrow M \leftarrow N \leftarrow P \leftarrow 0$ in Ab), then $0 \rightarrow F(M) \rightarrow F(N) \rightarrow F(P)$ is exact in Ab . To compute $\mathbb{R}F(\mathbb{Z}/(2))$, we use the projective (even free) resolution

$$0 \longrightarrow \mathbb{Z} \xrightarrow{2} \mathbb{Z} \longrightarrow \mathbb{Z}/(2) \longrightarrow 0,$$

which corresponds to an injective resolution in Ab^{op} . The total derived functor is therefore the complex

$$0 \longrightarrow F(\mathbb{Z}) \xrightarrow{2} F(\mathbb{Z}) \longrightarrow 0,$$

which can be simplified using $F(\mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ to

$$0 \longrightarrow \mathbb{Z} \xrightarrow{2} \mathbb{Z} \longrightarrow 0.$$

Thus we obtain $R^0 F(\mathbb{Z}) \cong F(\mathbb{Z}) = 0$ and $R^1 F(\mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}/(2)$. Note that the torsion did not vanish, but instead moved to R^1 .

Many important functors are derived functors. For instance,

- the right derived functors of $\text{Hom}(X, _) : \mathcal{A}^{\text{op}} \rightarrow \text{Ab}$ are the *Ext functors* $\text{Ext}^n(X, _)$,

- the left derived functors of $M \otimes_A _ : \text{Mod}(A) \rightarrow \text{Ab}$ are the *Tor functors* $\text{Tor}_n(M, _)$,
- the right derived functors of the global sections functor $\Gamma : \text{AbSh}(X) \rightarrow \text{Ab}$ calculate *sheaf cohomology*, and
- the right derived functors of the functor $\text{Mod}(G) \rightarrow \text{Ab}$ which associates to a G -module its subset of G -invariant elements calculate *group cohomology*.

The raison d'être for derived functors is given by the following lemma.

Lemma 4.5. *Let $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ be a left-exact functor between abelian categories. Assume that \mathcal{A} has enough injectives. Then, for any short exact sequence $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow Z \rightarrow 0$ in \mathcal{A} , there is an induced long exact sequence*

$$0 \rightarrow F(X) \rightarrow F(Y) \rightarrow F(Z) \rightarrow R^1F(X) \rightarrow R^1F(Y) \rightarrow R^1F(Z) \rightarrow R^2F(X) \rightarrow \cdots,$$

depending functorially on the short exact sequence.

Proof. Use the *horseshoe lemma* to obtain a short exact sequence relating injective resolutions of X , Y , and Z . Then perform the usual diagram chase to construct the connecting morphisms. \square

Note that the lemma shows very visibly that F is exact if and only if $R^1F = 0$.

In practice, calculating the higher derived functors can be quite hard. There are two main techniques: One can use exact sequences (and spectral sequences) to draw some conclusions about the derived functors, or hope that there are more amenable resolutions than resolutions by unwieldy injectives available. To this end, the following lemma is crucial:

Lemma 4.6. *Let $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ be a left-exact functor between abelian categories. Assume that \mathcal{A} has enough injectives. Let X be an object of \mathcal{A} . Let $0 \rightarrow X \rightarrow U^\bullet$ be a resolution of X by F -acyclic objects, i. e. objects such that $R^{\geq 1}F(U^m) = 0$. Then $\mathbb{R}F(X)$ is quasi-isomorphic to $F(U^\bullet)$ and in particular $R^nF(X) \cong H^n(F(U^\bullet))$.⁹*

In other words, we may use resolutions by F -acyclic objects instead of injective objects to calculate the derived functors. For instance, we can use flat resolutions to calculate Tor and flabby resolutions to calculate sheaf cohomology.

Derived functors can be used to fix several defects in the original functors. The paramount defect of a non-exact functor is, of course, its failure to preserve exactness. This is fixed by the long exact sequence. But derived functors also fix the failure of certain identities. For instance, if M is an arbitrary A -module, in general it does not hold that

$$M^{\vee\vee} := \text{Hom}(\text{Hom}(M, A), A) \cong M.¹⁰$$

But, denoting by $(_)^\vee$ the total derived functor of the dualization functor, the complex $M^{\vee\vee}$ is quasi-isomorphic to M (regarded as a complex concentrated in

⁹Note that $\mathbb{R}F(X)$ will in general *not* be homotopy equivalent to $F(U^\bullet)$. This is the reason why we identify $\mathbb{R}F(X)$ up to quasi-isomorphism and not up to homotopy equivalence.

¹⁰Consider the \mathbb{Z} -module $M = \mathbb{Z}/(2)$. Then $M^\vee = 0$.

degree zero).¹¹ Similarly, in algebraic geometry, there is the *projection formula*

$$\pi_* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{F} \cong \pi_*(\mathcal{E} \otimes \pi^* \mathcal{G}),$$

valid in the case that \mathcal{G} is a locally free sheaf. For the derived functors, the formula holds in complete generality, assuming only some finiteness conditions:

$$\mathbb{R}\pi_*(\mathcal{E}^\bullet) \otimes^{\mathbb{L}} \mathcal{F}^\bullet \simeq_{\text{qis}} \mathbb{R}\pi_*(\mathcal{E}^\bullet \otimes^{\mathbb{L}} \mathbb{L}\pi^* \mathcal{G}^\bullet).$$

- somewhere: “complexes good, cohomology bad”, example from homotopy theory

5. EXAMPLE: EXT

- Lifting problems
- Extensions (give correspondence in footnote)

6. EXAMPLE: SHEAF COHOMOLOGY

- Resolution of \mathbb{R}
- Comparison with singular cohomology
- Paucity of projective sheaves
- Example: section-wise surjectivity
- Uninteresting: C^∞ -modules

7. OUTLOOK

- Unbounded resolutions
- Derived categories: definition, composition of derived functors, $D^b(X)$ as an invariant, derived equivalence, $f^!$
- Model categories: $\text{sAb} \simeq \text{Kom}^{\leq 0}(\text{Ab})$

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¹¹We are skating over some details here. In particular, we have not explained how to apply $\mathbb{R}F$ to a complex K^\bullet (instead of a single object); this is done by finding a quasi-isomorphism $K^\bullet \rightarrow I^\bullet$ to a complex consisting of injectives and setting $\mathbb{R}F(K^\bullet) := F(I^\bullet)$. Also one has to impose some finiteness restrictions, for instance A should be Noetherian and M finitely generated.