

# Theoretical Gravitation and Cosmology

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2021-11-15

## 1 General Relativity basics

Course given by Andrea Maselli. There's lots of stuff to say, and the course cannot possibly be comprehensive.

The exam can be two things: there will be a list of "old" papers, literature by now, to study in more detail. We can prepare a presentation on this, to be shared among each other.

The alternative is to study more "book-like" topics: say, the TOV solution.

Three standard reference books are

1. Bernard Schultz, "A first course in GR";
2. Clifford and Will, "Theory and experiments of gravitational physics", which is more experimentally oriented;
3. Ferrari, Gualtieri and Pani, "GR and its applications", which is very complete.

Wednesday  
2021-11-10,  
compiled  
2021-11-15

### The equivalence principles

There is a plural in the title. Principia impose constraints which modify the theory, not the other way around.

The thing to be careful with is whether we are testing *principia* or a specific theory. For example, the Pound-Rebka redshift experiment was testing the equivalence principle.

Alternative theories, such as scalar-tensor theories which were pioneered by Brans and Dicke, could also be written satisfying the same equivalence principle.

We can then classify alternative theories of gravity according to the principles they satisfy.

**Newton Equivalence Principle** This is also dubbed "NEP".

"The quantity that I mean hereafter by the name of mass..."

He distinguishes "mass" and "weight", and his formulation is not a principle yet.

In the Newtonian limit, the inertial and gravitational masses are all proportional.

Newton's theory says that a density  $\rho(x(t), t)$  will source a gravitational potential

$$\nabla^2 \phi(x(t), t) = 4\pi G \rho, \quad (1.1)$$

and particles will move according to the law

$$m\ddot{x}(t) = -m\nabla\phi(x(t), t). \quad (1.2)$$

The density  $\rho$  and the mass  $m$  are conceptually different:  $\rho = \rho_{\text{act}}$  is the *active* gravitational density, the mass  $m = m_{\text{in}}$  multiplying  $\ddot{x}$  is the inertial mass, while the  $m = m_{\text{pass}}$  multiplying  $\nabla\phi$  is the passive gravitational mass.

We can show that the active and passive gravitational masses are proportional by exploiting the third of Newton's laws: consider two objects 0 and 1, the attraction forces exerted by 0 on 1 and respectively by 1 on 0 will be

$$f_1 = m_1^{\text{in}} a_1 = \frac{G m_0^{\text{act}} m_1^{\text{pass}}}{r^2} \quad (1.3a)$$

$$f_0 = m_0^{\text{in}} a_0 = \frac{G m_1^{\text{act}} m_0^{\text{pass}}}{r^2}, \quad (1.3b)$$

but the third law imposes  $f_0 = f_1$ , which means

$$\frac{m_0^{\text{pass}}}{m_0^{\text{act}}} = \frac{m_1^{\text{pass}}}{m_1^{\text{act}}}. \quad (1.4)$$

Therefore, these are proportional. Setting the proportionality constant to 1 is just a matter of the units with which we measure them. Therefore, we can say  $m_{\text{act}} = m_{\text{pass}} = m_{\text{grav}}$ .

If we have one more body, 2, the force exerted by 0 will be

$$f_2 = \frac{G m_0^{\text{act}} m_2^{\text{pass}}}{r^2}, \quad (1.5)$$

so the accelerations of bodies 1 and 2 will be  $a_1 = f_1/m_1^{\text{in}}$  and  $a_2 = f_2/m_2^{\text{in}}$ .

If these are equal, then we get  $m_1^{\text{pass}}/m_1^{\text{in}} = m_2^{\text{pass}}/m_2^{\text{in}}$ .

A way to quantify discrepancies from this principle is

$$\eta = \frac{\frac{m_1^{\text{grav}}}{m_1^{\text{in}}} - \frac{m_2^{\text{grav}}}{m_2^{\text{in}}}}{\frac{m_1^{\text{grav}}}{m_1^{\text{in}}} + \frac{m_2^{\text{grav}}}{m_2^{\text{in}}}}. \quad (1.6)$$

We know from experiments that  $|\eta| < 10^{-13}$ . In the Newtonian language, this is purely a coincidence.

Consider a nonrelativistic object moving in an external gravitational field, so that

$$m_{\text{in}} \ddot{x} = m_{\text{grav}} g + \underbrace{\sum_k f_k}_F, \quad (1.7)$$

where  $f_k$  are all other forces affecting this body. We are assuming that  $g$  is a constant.

We can make a transformation  $y(t) = x(t) - gt^2/2$ ,  $t' = t$ . The equation of motion will be

$$m_{\text{in}}\ddot{y} = (m_{\text{grav}} - m_{\text{in}})g + F. \quad (1.8)$$

If the equivalence principle holds, the equation of motion becomes  $m_{\text{in}}\ddot{y} = F$ . In this reference system, gravity disappears completely.

We can see hints of the locality of this procedure: we are neglecting any derivatives of  $g$ , which will never be truly constant. This is the very meaning of a “local inertial observer”.

How does this work in GR? (we are actually doing this in the simplest possible, SR terms)

### Weak Equivalence Principle

“The trajectory of an uncharged test particle in a point of spacetime is independent of that particle’s structure and composition.”

What “test particle” means is that it has negligible self-gravity, and that it is small enough that it does not couple to the inhomogeneities of the gravitational field.

The first statement can be quantified by the compactness parameter:  $GM/c^2R$ . For the Sun, this is of the order of  $10^{-6}$ .

The second statement can be quantified by saying that the size of the body should be small compared to the length scale of the curvature of spacetime.

These two constraints are logically independent. In GR, the term “mass” is quite difficult to deal with. Therefore, instead of discussing them we only talk of trajectories.

“Test experiment” means that its effects are “weak”.

### Einstein Equivalence Principle

 There are two alternative formulations.

“The outcome of any non-gravitational test experiment is not affected locally, at any point in spacetime, by the presence of the gravitational field.”

“The outcome of any non-gravitational test experiment is independent of the position of the lab in space and of the velocity of the free-falling apparatus.”

The second formulation more explicitly requires invariance under the Poincaré group.

In the WEP we are only talking about mechanical laws, while here we extend to all the laws of physics.

This means that we can always find a reference system which cancels gravity.

This is establishing the connection between local frames in a gravitational field, and frames in the absence of gravity.

This sounds a bit circular without a careful definition of a “gravitational experiment”...

## Strong equivalence principle

“The outcome of any experiment is not affected at any point in spacetime by the presence of the gravitational field.”

There is no proof that SEP implies GR, but GR surely satisfies it.

The EEP is what tells us that the theory must be a metric one, since it includes SR, which has the Minkowski tensor.

There must be (at least one) metric tensor, so that it can be made equal to the Minkowski tensor at each point in spacetime, up to a conformal transformation:

$$[g_1, g_2 \dots] \rightarrow [\phi_1(P)\eta, \phi_2(p)\eta, \dots]. \quad (1.9)$$

If this is the case, we will be able to rescale  $\phi_i = C_i\phi(P)$ , but then we can rescale our units so that  $C_i = 1$ , and the metric as  $\bar{g} = \phi^{-1}g$ , which finally yields the transformation  $g \rightarrow \eta$ .

In the end, then, there must be a reference frame such that

$$g_{\mu\nu}(P) = \eta_{\mu\nu} + \sum_{\alpha} \mathcal{O}\left(|x^{\alpha} - x^{\alpha}(P)|^2\right). \quad (1.10)$$

In a Local Lorentz Frame there is a family of preferred curves for  $g_{\mu\nu}$ , geodesics, which are straight lines: free-falling trajectories are straight lines for free-falling observers.

There are purely metric theories, with a single metric tensor, but also ones in which other fields mediate the interaction.

The presence of the LLF means that there is a frame such that, around a point,  $ds^2 = \eta_{\mu\nu} dy^{\mu} dy^{\nu}$ .

What are the EoM for a free-falling particle? We know that they read  $\frac{d^2y}{d\tau^2} = 0$  in the LLF. Suppose we then move to a different frame,  $x^{\alpha} = x^{\alpha}(y)$ : then the interval will transform as

$$ds^2 = \underbrace{\eta_{\mu\nu} \frac{\partial y^{\mu}}{\partial x^{\alpha}} \frac{\partial y^{\nu}}{\partial x^{\beta}}}_{g_{\alpha\beta}} dx^{\alpha} dx^{\beta}. \quad (1.11)$$

The EoM then reads

$$0 = \frac{d}{d\tau} \left( \frac{\partial y^{\alpha}}{\partial x^{\beta}} \frac{dx^{\beta}}{d\tau} \right) = \frac{d^2 x^{\beta}}{d\tau^2} \frac{\partial y^{\beta}}{\partial x^{\beta}} + \frac{\partial^2 y^{\alpha}}{\partial x^{\beta} \partial x^{\gamma}} \frac{dx^{\beta}}{d\tau} \frac{dx^{\gamma}}{d\tau} \quad (1.12a)$$

$$= \frac{d^2 x^{\beta}}{d\tau^2} \underbrace{\frac{\partial y^{\beta}}{\partial x^{\beta}} \frac{\partial x^{\rho}}{\partial x^{\beta}}}_{\delta_{\beta}^{\rho}} + \underbrace{\left( \frac{\partial x^{\rho}}{\partial y^{\alpha}} \frac{\partial^2 y^{\alpha}}{\partial x^{\beta} \partial x^{\gamma}} \right)}_{\Gamma_{\beta\gamma}^{\rho}} \frac{dx^{\beta}}{d\tau} \frac{dx^{\gamma}}{d\tau} \quad (1.12b)$$

$$= \frac{d^2 x^{\rho}}{d\tau^2} + \Gamma_{\beta\gamma}^{\rho} \frac{dx^{\beta}}{d\tau} \frac{dx^{\gamma}}{d\tau}. \quad (1.12c)$$

This is the **Geodesic equation**. The crucial thing is that  $\Gamma$  vanishes when the spacetime is flat.

The WEP implies the NEP. On the other hand, the NEP does not imply the WEP. A theory in which the equations of motion contain weird stuff and not just  $m_I/m_G$  satisfies the NEP and not the WEP.

## Differential geometry

Monday  
2021-11-15

A point in  $\mathbb{R}^n$  is described by the  $n$ -tuple  $(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ . These are a dense set (and also a complete one).

Open sets in  $\mathbb{R}^n$  are defined as follows:  $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$  is open if for all  $x \in S$  we can make a ball  $B_r(x)$  with  $r > 0$  such that  $B_x \subseteq S$ , where a ball is a set

$$B_r(x) = \{y \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid |x - y| < r\}. \quad (1.13)$$

A topological space is a collection of open sets which is closed under arbitrary intersections and finite unions.

A map  $\rho$  between two sets  $M$  and  $N$  takes a point  $x \in M$  to a point  $y = f(x) \in N$ .

If we consider a set  $S \subseteq M$  we can look at the set of the images of  $S$  under  $f$ , denoted as  $T = \rho(S) \subseteq N$ . We can also define the inverse image,  $S = \rho^{-1}(T)$ .

**Composition** of maps between different sets can also be defined: suppose we have three spaces  $M, N, Z$ , with some maps  $f: M \rightarrow N$  and  $g: N \rightarrow Z$ ; their composition will be  $g \circ f: M \rightarrow Z$ .

A map of  $M$  is **into**  $N$  if all points of  $M$  are mapped to  $N$ ; a map of  $M$  is **onto**  $N$  if all points of  $N$  have inverse maps to  $M$ .

A **continuous** map  $f$  between topological spaces  $M$  and  $N$  is one for which, given any point  $x \in M$  such that  $y = f(x) \in N$ , there is an open set of  $N$  containing  $f(x)$ , which is the image of an open set of  $M$ .

This is less stringent than the  $\epsilon$ - $\delta$  definition of continuity because there is no size requirement...??

A differentiable map is defined as follows: a function  $f(x)$ , where  $x \in S$  and  $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$  is open, is of order  $\mathcal{C}^k$  if all partial derivatives of order up to  $k$  exist and are continuous.

A **manifold**  $M$  is a collection of points such that each of them has an open neighborhood which has a continuous one-to-one map with an open set of  $\mathbb{R}^n$ . The number  $n$  is called the **dimension** of the manifold.

He talks about the locality of this definition as being about the fact that  $M$  is a subset of a larger space...

A coordinate system or *chart* is a pair  $(M, \rho)$ , where  $M$  is an open set while  $\rho$  is a map.

Suppose we have two coordinate systems  $(U, f)$  and  $(V, g)$ , where  $U$  and  $V$  overlap at least at a point (so, in a region as well).

Consider the region  $f(U \cap V)$ : in order to move from it to  $g(U \cap V)$  we need to apply the map  $g \circ f^{-1}$ . This is, therefore, a **change of coordinates**, which we will be able to write as  $\vec{y} = \vec{y}(\vec{x})$ .

A  $\mathcal{C}^k$  differentiable **manifold** is one for which

1. each point of  $M$  belongs at least to an open set (and a corresponding chart);
2. each chart is  $\mathcal{C}^k$  related to other charts it overlaps with.

These changes of coordinates can be written as  $y^i = F^i(x^j)$ , for which we can define a Jacobian determinant:

$$J = \left| \frac{\partial F^i}{\partial x^j} \right|. \quad (1.14)$$

If  $J \neq 0$  at a point  $P$ , there is an onto, one-to-one map in some neighborhood of  $P$ .

A **curve** is a path in  $M$  such that we associate a number, called the parameter, to each point in it, and this provides a map between it and a path in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ , called the image of the curve.

This is typically denoted as  $\gamma: s \in [a, b] \rightarrow [x^1(s), \dots, x^n(s)]$ .

The quantities

$$\frac{dx^i}{ds} = \left[ \begin{array}{ccc} \frac{dx^1}{ds} & \cdots & \frac{dx^n}{ds} \end{array} \right] \quad (1.15)$$

are the *components of the tangent vector*.

Suppose we want to make a coordinate change,  $x'(x)$ : how does our tangent vector change? By the chain rule, it will read

$$\frac{dx'^i}{ds} = \frac{\partial x'^i}{\partial x^j} \frac{dx^j}{ds}. \quad (1.16)$$

This kind of vector is called a **contravariant vector**, since it transforms with the Jacobian matrix.

We want to show that directional derivatives form a vector space at a point  $P$ . Consider a curve with its parameter  $\lambda$  and a differentiable function  $\phi(x_1, \dots, x_m)$ . The derivative

$$\frac{d\phi}{d\lambda} = \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial x^i} \frac{dx^i}{d\lambda}. \quad (1.17)$$

With this in mind, we can define the **directional derivative operator**

$$\frac{d}{d\lambda} = \frac{dx^i}{d\lambda} \frac{\partial}{\partial x^i}. \quad (1.18)$$

However, we already know that the  $dx^i/d\lambda$  are the *components of the tangent vector*.

If we have two curves,  $x^i(\lambda)$  and  $x^i(s)$ , we can define a directional derivative for each of them. We can then sum these, by defining the sum as

$$\frac{d}{d\lambda} + \frac{d}{ds} = \left( \frac{dx^i}{d\lambda} + \frac{dx^i}{ds} \right) \frac{\partial}{\partial x^i}. \quad (1.19)$$

This vector will still be tangent to the curve, and we will be able to find a third parameter  $\mu$  such that

$$\frac{d}{d\mu} = \frac{dx^i}{d\mu} \frac{\partial}{\partial x^i}. \quad (1.20)$$

We can also scale the directional derivative operator:

$$a \frac{d}{d\lambda} = \underbrace{\left( a \frac{dx^i}{d\lambda} \right)}_{dx^i/d\sigma} \frac{\partial}{\partial x^i}. \quad (1.21)$$

This proves (?) that the space of directional derivatives is a vector space. This space is denoted as  $T_P$ , where  $d/d\lambda$  is a vector.

The crucial idea here is that vectors at different points belong to different vector spaces, and cannot be directly compared.

Coordinate lines are the ones for which all but one of the coordinates we are using remain constant. What this means is that directional derivatives along these read

$$\frac{d}{dx^i} = \frac{dx^j}{dx^i} \frac{\partial}{\partial x^j} = \delta_i^j \frac{\partial}{\partial x^j} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x^i}. \quad (1.22)$$

This also means that any directional derivatives can be expressed (uniquely) as linear combinations of these  $\partial_i$ , which are therefore a basis for the tangent space at each point.

We have a one-to-one connection between the tangents of curves at a point  $P$  and the derivatives along a curve at  $P$ . Because of this, we associate the directional derivative  $d/d\lambda$  to a tangent vector to a curve  $x^i(\lambda)$ .

We denote the  $i$ -th basis vector as  $\vec{e}_{(i)} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x^i}$ . The number between round brackets enumerates the vectors in the basis, it is not a spatial index.

We can then express any vector in a more conventional notation as  $\vec{A} = A^i \vec{e}_{(i)}$ . If we change coordinates, the basis will shift like

$$\vec{e}_{k'} = \tilde{\Lambda}_{k'}^j \vec{e}_j, \quad (1.23)$$

where  $\tilde{\Lambda}$  is the inverse of the Jacobian.

**One-forms** A one-form  $\tilde{q}$  is a real-valued, linear function of vectors:

$$\tilde{q}(a\vec{V} + \vec{W}) = a\tilde{q}(\vec{V}) + \tilde{q}(\vec{W}). \quad (1.24)$$

We can sum one-forms by summing their action, and multiply them by scalars by multiplying the result of their application by a scalar. These are then a vector space, which is called the *dual*:  $T_P^*$ .

The reason for the name is the dual symmetry: taking  $\tilde{q}(\vec{V}) \simeq \vec{V}(\tilde{q})$ .

The basis for the dual is called the conjugate basis  $\tilde{\omega}$ , and it is convenient to select it so that  $\tilde{\omega}^{(i)}(\vec{V}) = V^i$ . Alternatively, we can write this as  $\tilde{\omega}^{(i)}(\vec{e}_{(j)}) = \delta_j^i$ .

Any 1-form can also be written in terms of the basis covectors,  $\tilde{q} = q_i \tilde{\omega}^{(i)}$ .

We can make the manipulation

$$\tilde{q}(\vec{V}) = \tilde{q}(V^i \vec{e}_{(i)}) = V^i \tilde{q}(\vec{e}_{(i)}) = \tilde{\omega}^{(i)}(\vec{V}) \tilde{q}(\vec{e}_{(i)}) = q^i V_i. \quad (1.25)$$