

# Lagrange Duality

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# Outline

- 1 Lagrangian
- 2 Dual Function
- 3 Dual Problem
- 4 Weak and Strong Duality
- 5 KKT conditions

# Lagrangian

- Consider an optimization problem in standard form (not necessarily convex)

primal problem

$$\begin{array}{ll}\underset{x}{\text{minimize}} & f_0(x) \\ \text{subject to} & f_i(x) \leq 0 \quad i = 1, \dots, m \\ & h_i(x) = 0 \quad i = 1, \dots, p\end{array}$$

with variable  $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$ , domain  $\mathcal{D}$ , and optimal value  $p^*$

- The Lagrangian is a function  $L : \mathbb{R}^n \times \mathbb{R}^m \times \mathbb{R}^p \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ , with  $\text{dom } L = \mathcal{D} \times \mathbb{R}^m \times \mathbb{R}^p$ , defined as

primal variable

→ dual variable

$$L(x, \lambda, \nu) = f_0(x) + \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i f_i(x) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i h_i(x)$$

where  $\lambda_i$  is the Lagrange multiplier associated with  $f_i(x) \leq 0$  and  $\nu_i$  is the Lagrange multiplier associated with  $h_i(x) = 0$ .

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# Lagrange Dual Function I

- The *Lagrange dual function* is defined as the infimum of the Lagrangian over  $x$  :  $g : \mathbb{R}^m \times \mathbb{R}^p \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ ,

$$g(\lambda, \nu) = \inf_{x \in \mathcal{D}} L(x, \lambda, \nu)$$

A

$$= \inf_{x \in \mathcal{D}} \left( f_0(x) + \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i f_i(x) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i h_i(x) \right)$$

- Observe that:

- the infimum is unconstrained (as opposed to the original constrained minimization problem)

- $g$  is concave regardless of original problem (infimum of affine functions)  $\lambda, \nu$

- $g$  can be  $-\infty$  for some  $\lambda, \nu$

Recall: pointwise supremum:  
if  $(x, y)$  is convex in  $x$   
for each  $y \in A$ , then  
 $g(x) = \sup_{y \in A} f(x, y)$  is convex

# Lagrange Dual Function II

🔔 **Lower bound property:** if  $\lambda \succeq 0$ , then  $g(\lambda, \nu) \leq p^*$ . A

Proof.

$$L(\tilde{x}; \lambda, \nu) = f_0(\tilde{x}) + \sum_{i=1}^m \underbrace{\lambda_i f_i(\tilde{x})}_{\geq 0} + \sum_{i=1}^p \underbrace{\nu_i h_i(\tilde{x})}_{=0}$$

Suppose  $\tilde{x}$  is feasible and  $\lambda \succeq 0$ . Then,

$$f_0(\tilde{x}) \geq L(\tilde{x}, \lambda, \nu) \geq \inf_{x \in \mathcal{D}} L(x, \lambda, \nu) = g(\lambda, \nu)$$

Now choose minimizer of  $f_0(\tilde{\mathbf{x}})$  over all feasible  $\tilde{\mathbf{x}}$  to get  $p^* \geq g(\boldsymbol{\lambda}, \boldsymbol{\nu})$ .  $\square$

- 🔔 We could try to find the best lower bound by maximizing  $g(\lambda, \nu)$ . This is in fact the dual problem.

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# Dual Problem

convex

- The Lagrange dual problem is defined as

maximize  
 $\lambda, \nu$

subject to

$$g(\lambda, \nu)$$

$$\lambda \succeq 0$$

$\leq p^*$  minimize  $-g(\lambda, \nu)$   
 $\Rightarrow$  subject to  $\lambda \succeq 0$

- This problem finds the best lower bound on  $p^*$  obtained from the dual function
- It is a convex optimization (maximization of a concave function and linear constraints)
- The optimal value is denoted  $d^*$
- $\lambda, \nu$  are dual feasible if  $\lambda \succeq 0$  and  $(\lambda, \nu) \in \text{dom } g$  (the latter implicit constraints can be made explicit in problem formulation)



# Example: Least-Norm Solution of Linear Equations I

• Consider the problem

$$\begin{array}{ll} \underset{x}{\text{minimize}} & x^T x \\ \text{subject to} & Ax = b \end{array}$$

• The Lagrangian is

$$L(x, \nu) = x^T x + \underbrace{\nu^T}_{\text{convex in } x} (Ax - b)$$

convex in  $x$

• To find the dual function, we need to solve an unconstrained minimization of the Lagrangian. We set the gradient equal to zero

$$\nabla_x L(x, \nu) = 2x + A^T \nu = 0 \implies \underline{x = -\frac{1}{2} A^T \nu}$$

## Example: Least-Norm Solution of Linear Equations II

*dual function*

and we plug the solution in  $L$  to obtain  $g$ :

$$g(\nu) = L\left(-\frac{1}{2}A^T\nu, \nu\right) = -\frac{1}{4}\nu^T AA^T\nu - b^T\nu$$

- The function  $g$  is, as expected, a concave function of  $\nu$ .
- From the lower bound property, we have

$$p^* \geq -\frac{1}{4}\nu^T AA^T\nu - b^T\nu \text{ for all } \nu$$

- The dual problem is the QP

$$\underset{\nu}{\text{maximize}} \quad -\frac{1}{4}\nu^T \underbrace{AA^T}_{\text{PSD}}\nu - b^T\nu$$

*convex optimization*

*minimize  $\frac{1}{4}\nu^T AA^T\nu + b^T\nu$*

## Example: Standard Form LP I

Consider the problem

$$\begin{array}{ll} \underset{x}{\text{minimize}} & c^T x \\ \text{subject to} & Ax = b, \quad x \succeq 0 \end{array}$$

$-x \leq 0$

The Lagrangian is

$g(\lambda, \nu) = \inf_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n} L(x; \lambda, \nu)$

$$\begin{aligned} L(x, \lambda, \nu) &= c^T x + \nu^T (Ax - b) - \lambda^T x \\ &= \underbrace{(c + A^T \nu - \lambda)}_a^T x - b^T \nu \end{aligned}$$

$f^* < \lambda, -x$

$L$  is a linear function of  $x$  and it is unbounded if the term multiplying  $x$  is nonzero.

$$a^T x = \sum_i a_i x_i = \begin{cases} 0, & a_i = 0, i=1, \dots, n \\ -\infty, & \exists a_i \neq 0 \end{cases}$$

## Example: Standard Form LP II

• Hence, the dual function is

$$\lambda \succeq 0$$

$$g(\lambda, \nu) = \inf_x L(x, \lambda, \nu) = \begin{cases} -b^T \nu & c + A^T \nu - \lambda = 0 \\ -\infty & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

• The function  $g$  is a concave function of  $(\lambda, \nu)$  as it is linear on an affine domain.

• From the lower bound property, we have

$$p^* \geq -b^T \nu \quad \text{if } c + A^T \nu \succeq 0$$

• The dual problem is the LP

$$\begin{array}{ll} \underset{\nu}{\text{maximize}} & -b^T \nu \\ \text{subject to} & c + A^T \nu \succeq 0 \end{array}$$

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# Weak and Strong Duality I

- From the lower bound property, we know that  $g(\lambda, \nu) \leq p^*$  for feasible  $(\lambda, \nu)$ . In particular, for a  $(\lambda, \nu)$  that solves the dual problem.
- Hence, **weak duality** always holds (even for nonconvex problems):

$$d^* \leq p^*$$

- The difference  $p^* - d^*$  is called **duality gap**.
- Solving the dual problem may be used to find nontrivial lower bounds for difficult problems.

- Even more interesting is when equality is achieved in weak duality. This is called **strong duality**:

$$d^* = p^*$$

## Weak and Strong Duality II

- Strong duality means that the duality gap is zero.
- Strong duality:
  - is very desirable (we can solve a difficult problem by solving the dual)
  - does not hold in general
  - usually holds for convex problems
  - conditions that guarantee strong duality in convex problems are called constraint qualifications.

*non-convex problem also holds sometimes?*

# Slater's Constraint Qualification I

- Slater's constraint qualification is a very simple condition that is satisfied in most cases and ensures strong duality for convex problems.
- Strong duality holds for a convex problem

$$\begin{array}{ll} \underset{x}{\text{minimize}} & \underline{f_0(x)} \quad \text{convex} \\ \text{subject to} & f_i(x) \leq 0 \quad i = 1, \dots, m \\ & Ax = b \end{array}$$

if it is strictly feasible, i.e.,

$$\exists x \in \text{int } \mathcal{D} : \boxed{f_i(x) < 0} \quad i = 1, \dots, m, \quad \underline{Ax = b}$$

- There exist many other types of constraint qualifications.



## Example: Inequality Form LP

• Consider the problem

$$\begin{array}{ll}\underset{x}{\text{minimize}} & c^T x \\ \text{subject to} & \underline{Ax \preceq b}\end{array}$$

• The dual problem is

$$\begin{array}{ll}\underset{\lambda}{\text{maximize}} & -b^T \lambda \\ \text{subject to} & A^T \lambda + c = 0, \quad \lambda \succeq 0\end{array}$$

• From Slater's condition:  $p^* = d^*$  if  $A\tilde{x} \prec b$  for some  $\tilde{x}$ .

• In this case, in fact,  $p^* = d^*$  except when primal and dual are infeasible.

## Example: Convex QP

- Consider the problem (assume  $P \succeq 0$ )

$$\begin{array}{ll} \underset{x}{\text{minimize}} & x^T P x \\ \text{subject to} & Ax \preceq b \end{array}$$

- The dual problem is

$$\begin{array}{ll} \underset{\lambda}{\text{maximize}} & -\frac{1}{4} \lambda^T A P^{-1} A^T \lambda - b^T \lambda \\ \text{subject to} & \lambda \succeq 0 \end{array}$$

- From Slater's condition:  $p^* = d^*$  if  $A\tilde{x} \prec b$  for some  $\tilde{x}$ .
- In this case, in fact,  $p^* = d^*$  always.

# Complementary Slackness

- Assume strong duality holds,  $x^*$  is primal optimal and  $(\lambda^*, \nu^*)$  is dual optimal. Then

$$f_0(x^*) = g(\lambda^*, \nu^*) \stackrel{\text{def.}}{=} \inf_x \left( f_0(x) + \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i^* f_i(x) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i^* h_i(x) \right)$$

*strong duality*

$$\stackrel{\text{① " = "}}{\leq} f_0(x^*) + \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i^* f_i(x^*) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i^* h_i(x^*)$$

$$\stackrel{\text{② " = "}}{\leq} f_0(x^*) \quad \underbrace{\sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i^* f_i(x^*) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i^* h_i(x^*)}_{\leq 0}$$

- Hence, the two inequalities must hold with equality. Implications:

- ①  $\Rightarrow x^*$  minimizes  $L(x, \lambda^*, \nu^*)$  (not necessarily convex)
- ②  $\Rightarrow \lambda_i^* f_i(x^*) = 0$  for  $i = 1, \dots, m$ ; this is called **complementary slackness**:

$$\lambda_i^* > 0 \implies f_i(x^*) = 0, \quad f_i(x^*) < 0 \implies \lambda_i^* = 0$$

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# Karush-Kuhn-Tucker (KKT) Conditions

KKT conditions (for differentiable  $f_i, h_i$ ):

① ~~1~~ primal feasibility:

$$f_i(\mathbf{x}) \leq 0, \quad i = 1, \dots, m, \quad h_i(\mathbf{x}) = 0, \quad i = 1, \dots, p$$

② ~~2~~ dual feasibility:  $\lambda \succeq 0$

③ ~~3~~ complementary slackness:  $\lambda_i f_i(\mathbf{x}) = 0$  for  $i = 1, \dots, m$

④ ~~4~~ zero gradient of Lagrangian with respect to  $\mathbf{x}$ : (not necessary convex)

$$\nabla f_0(\mathbf{x}) + \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i \nabla f_i(\mathbf{x}) + \sum_{i=1}^p \nu_i \nabla h_i(\mathbf{x}) = \mathbf{0}$$

③ duality gap = 0

# KKT condition

- ① We already know that if strong duality holds and  $x, \lambda, \nu$  are optimal, then they must satisfy the KKT conditions.  $\Rightarrow$
- ② What about the opposite statement?
- If  $x, \lambda, \nu$  satisfy the KKT conditions for a convex problem, then they are optimal.

$$L(\hat{x}; \lambda, \nu) = f_0(\hat{x}) + \sum_{i=1}^M \lambda_i \underbrace{f_i(\hat{x})}_{=0} + \sum_{i=1}^P \nu_i \underbrace{h_i(\hat{x})}_{=0}$$

Proof.

From complementary slackness,  $f_0(\hat{x}) = L(\hat{x}, \lambda, \nu)$  and, from 4th KKT condition and convexity,  $g(\lambda, \nu) = L(\hat{x}, \lambda, \nu)$ . Hence,  $f_0(x) = g(\lambda, \nu)$ .  $\square$

$$\nabla_{\hat{x}} L(\hat{x}; \lambda, \nu) = 0, \quad g(\lambda, \nu) = \inf_x L(x; \lambda, \nu)$$

Theorem

If a problem is convex and Slater's condition is satisfied, then  $x$  is optimal if and only if there exists  $\lambda, \nu$  that satisfy the KKT conditions.

Strong duality

cvx - begin

convex optimization  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{minimize } f_0(x) \\ \text{subject to } f_i(x) \leq 0, i=1, \dots, M \\ Ax = 0 \end{array} \right.$

cvx - end

$\Downarrow$  cvx step 1: transformation

conic optimization (primal - dual problem)

minimize  $C^T x$   
subject to  $Ax + s = b$

$(x, s) \in \underbrace{\mathcal{R}^n \times K}_{\text{convex cone}}$

maximize  $-b^T y$   
subject to  $-A^T y + r = c$

$(r, y) \in \underbrace{\{0\}^n \times K^*}_{\text{dual cone of } K}$

Proof: minimize  $C^T x$   
 $(x, s) \in \mathcal{D}$   
subject to  $Ax + s = b$

$$g(y) = \inf_{(x,s) \in D} C^T x + \langle y, Ax + s - b \rangle$$

$$= -b^T y + \inf_{(x,s) \in D} [\langle C, x \rangle + \langle y, Ax + s \rangle]$$

$$= -b^T y + \underbrace{\inf_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n} \langle C + A^T y, x \rangle}_{\text{if } C + A^T y = 0} + \underbrace{\inf_{s \in K} \langle y, s \rangle}_{\text{if } y \in K^*}$$

$$\textcircled{1} \inf_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n} \langle C + A^T y, x \rangle = \begin{cases} 0, & C + A^T y = 0 \\ -\infty, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

$$\textcircled{2} \inf_{s \in K} \langle y, s \rangle = \begin{cases} 0, & \text{if } y \in K^* \\ -\infty, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

(definition) convex cone  $K$ : for all  $x \in K$

$$\lambda x \in K, \forall \lambda \geq 0$$

$$\text{dual cone } K^*: K^* = \{ z \in \mathbb{R}^n : \underbrace{\langle z, x \rangle \geq 0,}_{\forall x \in K} \}$$



$$1) y \in K^* \Rightarrow \langle y, s \rangle \geq 0, \forall s \in K$$

$$\Downarrow \lambda s \in K, \forall \lambda > 0$$

$$\langle y, \lambda s \rangle = \underbrace{\lambda}_{\downarrow 0} \underbrace{\langle y, s \rangle}_{\geq 0} \rightarrow 0$$

$$2) y \notin K^* \Rightarrow \langle y, s \rangle < 0, \exists s \in K$$

$$\Downarrow \lambda s \in K, \forall \lambda > 0$$

$$\langle y, \lambda s \rangle = \underbrace{\lambda}_{\downarrow \rightarrow +\infty} \underbrace{\langle y, s \rangle}_{< 0} \rightarrow -\infty$$

KKT conditions

1) - primal feasible:  $AX + S = b, x \in \mathcal{R}^n, S \in K$

2) - dual feasible:  $A^T y + c = r, r = 0, y \in K^*$

3) - complementary slackness:  $\underline{c^T x + b^T y = 0}$   
(strong duality)



KKT system

$$\begin{array}{l|l} A^T y + C z = r & \text{homogeneous self-dual} \\ -A x + b z = s & \text{embedding system} \\ C^T x + b^T y + k = 0 & \end{array}$$

$$(X, S, z, r, y, k) \in \underbrace{R^n \times R^n \times R_+}_{C} \times \underbrace{\{0\}^n \times R^n \times R_+}_{C^*}$$

↓ solver: SDPT3, MOSEK, SeDuMi

Any solution of the self-dual embedding

$(X, S, z, r, y, k)$  falls into one of three cases:

1.  $z > 0, k = 0$ . The point

$$(\hat{X}, \hat{Y}, \hat{S}) = \left( \frac{X}{z}, \frac{Y}{z}, \frac{S}{z} \right)$$

satisfies the KKT conditions  $\Rightarrow$

a primal-dual optimal solution

$2.2=0, K > 0 \Rightarrow C^T x + b^T y < 0 \Rightarrow$   
either primal or dual infeasible!

Theorem: certificates of infeasibility (sect. 5.8)

If strong duality holds, then exactly one of the sets:

①  $P = \{(x, s) : Ax + s = b, s \in K\}$ : enables primal feasibility

②  $D = \{y : A^T y = 0, y \in K^*, b^T y < 0\}$

is non-empty.

Theorem of strong alternatives:

Any dual variable  $y \in D$  serves as a proof or certificate that the set  $P$  is empty, i.e., the problem is primal infeasible.

Similarly, exactly one of the following two sets is non-empty:

$$\textcircled{1} \tilde{P} = \{x : -Ax \in K, \quad C^T x < 0\}$$

$$\textcircled{2} \tilde{D} = \{y : A^T y = -C, \quad y \in K^*\} : \text{dual feasible}$$

claim: any primal variable  $x \in \tilde{P}$  is a certificate of dual infeasibility

2.  $z = 0, \quad K \neq \emptyset \Rightarrow \underline{C^T x + b^T y} < 0 \Rightarrow$   
either primal or dual infeasible!

1) if  $b^T y < 0$ , then  $\hat{y} = \frac{y}{-b^T y}$  is a certificate of primal infeasibility (i.e.,  $D$  is non-empty),

since  $A^T \hat{y} = \frac{y}{-b^T y} = 0, \quad \hat{y} \in K^*, \quad b^T \hat{y} = -1 < 0$

2) if  $C^T X < 0$ , then  $\hat{X} = \frac{X}{-C^T X}$  is a certificate of dual infeasibility (i.e.,  $\tilde{p}$  is non-empty) since

$$-A\hat{X} = \frac{S}{\underbrace{-C^T X}_{>0}} \in K, \quad C^T \hat{X} = 1 < 0$$

3)  $C^T X < 0, \quad b^T y < 0 \Rightarrow$  both primal and dual infeasible

strong duality assumption is violated!

3.  $z = K = 0$ , nothing can be concluded, can be avoided.

# Reference

## Chapter 5 of:

- Stephen Boyd and Lieven Vandenberghe, *Convex Optimization*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004.