

$f : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ with $\text{dom} f$,
 $f^*(y) = \sup_{x \in \text{dom} f} \{y^T x - f(x)\}$,

where $\text{dom} f^* = \{y | y^T x - f(x) < +\infty, \forall x \in \text{dom} f\}$ is called the conjugate function of f .

$\forall x \in \text{dom} f, \forall y \in \text{dom} f^*, f^*(y) \geq y^T x - f(x) \iff y^T x \leq f(x) + f^*(y)$

e.g. $f(x) = \frac{1}{2}x^T Qx \Rightarrow f^*(y) = \frac{1}{2}y^T Q^{-1}y$, where $Q \in \mathbb{S}_{++}^n$

$\forall x, y, y^T x \leq \frac{1}{2}x^T Qx + \frac{1}{2}y^T Q^{-1}y$

Observation. For $f^*(y) = \frac{1}{2}y^T Q^{-1}y$, $f^{**}(z) = \frac{1}{2}z^T (Q^{-1})^{-1}z = \frac{1}{2}z^T Qz$.

Then, is the statement, $f^{**} = f$, true in general?

The answer is yes if f is a convex and closed function.

Note. f is a closed function if $\text{epi} f$ is a closed set.

When f is closed, f can be represented as the following:

$f(x) = \sup\{h(x) | h \text{ are affine functions such that } h(x) \leq f(x), \forall x \in \text{dom} f\}$

Proposition. $f^{**} = f$ if f is a convex and closed function.

Proof.

1. $f^{**} \geq f$

Any affine function minorizing f of x can be represented as $y^T x + c$, where c is a constant.

$\Rightarrow y^T x + c \leq f(x), \forall x \in \text{dom} f$

$\Rightarrow y^T x - f(x) \leq -c, \forall x \in \text{dom} f$

$\Rightarrow y^T x - f(x)$ is bounded above over $\text{dom} f$

\Rightarrow the supremum of $y^T x - f(x)$ exists, and $y \in \text{dom} f^*$

$\Rightarrow y \in \text{dom} f^*, f^*(y) \leq -c$

$\Rightarrow f(x) = \sup_{\substack{y^T x + c \leq f(x) \\ \forall x \in \text{dom} f}} \{y^T x + c\} = \sup_{\substack{y \in \text{dom} f^* \\ f^*(y) \leq -c}} \{y^T x + c\} \leq \sup_{y \in \text{dom} f^*} \{y^T x - f^*(y)\} = f^{**}(x)$

2. $f^{**} \leq f$

Since $f^*(y) = \sup_{x \in \text{dom} f} \{y^T x - f(x)\}$, $x^T y - f^*(y) \leq f(x), \forall x \in \text{dom} f, \forall y \in \text{dom} f^*$.

$\Rightarrow \sup_{y \in \text{dom} f^*} \{x^T y - f^*(y)\} \leq f(x), \forall x \in \text{dom} f$

The left-hand-side of the inequality above can be defined as $f^{**}(x)$ if $\text{dom} f^{**} = \text{dom} f$.

Since $x^T y - f^*(y) < +\infty, \forall x \in \text{dom} f, \forall y \in \text{dom} f^*$, $\text{dom} f^{**} \supseteq \text{dom} f$.

If there exists $x^o \notin \text{dom} f$ but $x^o \in \text{dom} f^{**}$, then $f^{**}(x) \leq f(x) = +\infty$.

It leads to contradiction, so $\text{dom} f^{**} \subseteq \text{dom} f$.

Hence, $\text{dom} f^{**} = \text{dom} f$, and $\sup_{y \in \text{dom} f^*} \{x^T y - f^*(y)\} = f^{**}(x)$.

Therefore, $f^{**}(x) \leq f(x), \forall x \in \text{dom} f = \text{dom} f^{**}$

Legendre transformation

Let f be a convex and differentiable function with $\text{dom} f = \mathbb{R}^n$.

If $y^T x - f(x)$ be maximized at x^* , then $y = \nabla f(x^*) \Rightarrow f^*(y) = \nabla f(x^*)^T x^* - f(x^*)$

Quasiconvex functions

$f : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ with $\text{dom} f$ is quasiconvex(unimodal) function

if its every sublevel set is convex, that is, $S_\alpha = \{x | f(x) \leq \alpha\}$ is convex, $\forall \alpha \in \mathbb{R}$.

f is quasiconcave function if $-f$ is quasiconvex.

f is quasilinear function if f is both quasiconvex and quasiconcave.