CHAPTER 2

Hilbert spaces and operators

1. Hilbert space

We have shown that $L^p(X, \mu)$ is a Banach space – a complete normed space. I shall next discuss the class of Hilbert spaces, a special class of Banach spaces, of which $L^2(X, \mu)$ is a standard example, in which the norm arises from an inner product, just as it does in Euclidean space.

An inner product on a vector space V over $\mathbb{C}$ (one can do the real case too, not much changes) is a *sesquilinear* form

$$V \times V \to \mathbb{C}$$

written (u, v), if $u, v \in V$. The 'sesqui-' part is just linearity in the first variable

$$(a_1 u_1 + a_2 u_2\,,\ v) = a_1(u_1, v) + a_2(u_2, v), \tag{1.1}$$

anti-linearly in the second

$$(u, a_1 v_1 + a_2 v_2) = \overline{a}_1(u, v_1) + \overline{a}_2(u, v_2) \tag{1.2}$$

and the conjugacy condition

$$(u, v) = \overline{(v, u)}\,. \tag{1.3}$$

Notice that (1.2) follows from (1.1) and (1.3). If we assume in addition the positivity condition[1]

$$(u, u) \geq 0\,,\ (u, u) = 0 \Rightarrow u = 0\,, \tag{1.4}$$

then

$$\|u\| = (u, u)^{1/2} \tag{1.5}$$

is a *norm* on V, as we shall see.

Suppose that $u, v \in V$ have $\|u\| = \|v\| = 1$. Then $(u, v) = e^{i\theta}\,|(u, v)|$ for some $\theta \in \mathbb{R}$. By choice of θ, $e^{-i\theta}(u, v) = |(u, v)|$ is

[1]Notice that (u, u) is real by (1.3).

real, so expanding out using linearity for $s \in \mathbb{R}$,

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &\leq (e^{-i\theta}u - sv\,,\, e^{-i\theta}u - sv) \\ &= \|u\|^2 - 2s \operatorname{Re} e^{-i\theta}(u,v) + s^2\|v\|^2 = 1 - 2s|(u,v)| + s^2. \end{aligned}$$

The minimum of this occurs when $s = |(u,v)|$ and this is negative unless $|(u,v)| \leq 1$. Using linearity, and checking the trivial cases $u =$ or $v = 0$ shows that

$$|(u,v)| \leq \|u\|\,\|v\|,\ \forall\, u,v \in V\,. \tag{1.6}$$

This is called Schwarz'[2] inequality.

Using Schwarz' inequality

$$\begin{aligned} \|u+v\|^2 &= \|u\|^2 + (u,v) + (v,u) + \|v\|^2 \\ &\leq (\|u\| + \|v\|)^2 \\ &\Longrightarrow \|u+v\| \leq \|u\| + \|v\|\ \forall\, u,v \in V \end{aligned}$$

which is the triangle inequality.

Definition 1.1. *A Hilbert space is a vector space V with an inner product satisfying* (1.1) - (1.4) *which is complete as a normed space (i.e., is a Banach space).*

Thus we have already shown $L^2(X,\mu)$ to be a Hilbert space for any positive measure μ. The inner product is

$$(f,g) = \int_X f\overline{g}\,d\mu\,, \tag{1.7}$$

since then (1.3) gives $\|f\|_2$.

Another important identity valid in any inner product spaces is the parallelogram law:

$$\|u+v\|^2 + \|u-v\|^2 = 2\|u\|^2 + 2\|v\|^2\,. \tag{1.8}$$

This can be used to prove the basic 'existence theorem' in Hilbert space theory.

Lemma 1.2. *Let $C \subset H$, in a Hilbert space, be closed and convex (i.e., $su + (1-s)v \in C$ if $u,v \in C$ and $0 < s < 1$). Then C contains a unique element of smallest norm.*

Proof. We can certainly choose a sequence $u_n \in C$ such that

$$\|u_n\| \to \delta = \inf\left\{\|v\|\,;\, v \in C\right\}\,.$$

[2]No 't' in this Schwarz.

By the parallelogram law,

$$\begin{aligned}\|u_n - u_m\|^2 &= 2\|u_n\|^2 + 2\|u_m\|^2 - \|u_n + u_m\|^2 \\ &\le 2(\|u_n\|^2 + \|u_m\|^2) - 4\delta^2\end{aligned}$$

where we use the fact that $(u_n + u_m)/2 \in C$ so must have norm at least δ. Thus $\{u_n\}$ is a Cauchy sequence, hence convergent by the assumed completeness of H. Thus $\lim u_n = u \in C$ (since it is assumed closed) and by the triangle inequality

$$|\|u_n\| - \|u\|| \le \|u_n - u\| \to 0$$

So $\|u\| = \delta$. Uniqueness of u follows again from the parallelogram law which shows that if $\|u'\| = \delta$ then

$$\|u - u'\| \le 2\delta^2 - 4\|(u + u')/2\|^2 \le 0\,.$$

□

The fundamental fact about a Hilbert space is that each element $v \in H$ defines a continuous linear functional by

$$H \ni u \longmapsto (u, v) \in \mathbb{C}$$

and conversely *every* continuous linear functional arises this way. This is also called the Riesz representation theorem.

Proposition 1.3. *If $L : H \to \mathbb{C}$ is a continuous linear functional on a Hilbert space then this is a unique element $v \in H$ such that*

$$Lu = (u, v)\ \forall\ u \in H\,, \tag{1.9}$$

Proof. Consider the linear space

$$M = \{u \in H\,;\, Lu = 0\}$$

the null space of L, a continuous linear functional on H. By the assumed continuity, M is closed. We can suppose that L is *not* identically zero (since then $v = 0$ in (1.9)). Thus there exists $w \notin M$. Consider

$$w + M = \{v \in H\,;\, v = w + u\,,\, u \in M\}\ .$$

This is a closed convex subset of H. Applying Lemma 1.2 it has a unique smallest element, $v \in w + M$. Since v minimizes the norm on $w + M$,

$$\|v + su\|^2 = \|v\|^2 + 2\,\mathrm{Re}(su, v) + \|s\|^2\|u\|^2$$

is stationary at $s = 0$. Thus $\mathrm{Re}(u, v) = 0\ \forall\ u \in M$, and the same argument with s replaced by is shows that $(v, u) = 0\ \forall\ u \in M$.

Now $v \in w + M$, so $Lv = Lw \ne 0$. Consider the element $w' = w/Lw \in H$. Since $Lw' = 1$, for any $u \in H$

$$L(u - (Lu)w') = Lu - Lu = 0\,.$$

It follows that $u - (Lu)w' \in M$ so if $w'' = w'/\|w'\|^2$

$$(u, w'') = ((Lu)w', w'') = Lu\frac{(w', w')}{\|w'\|^2} = Lu\,.$$

The uniqueness of v follows from the positivity of the norm. □

COROLLARY 1.4. *For any positive measure μ, any continuous linear functional*

$$L : L^2(X, \mu) \to \mathbb{C}$$

is of the form

$$Lf = \int_X f\overline{g}\,d\mu\,,\ \ g \in L^2(X, \mu)\,.$$

Notice the apparent power of 'abstract reasoning' here! Although we seem to have constructed g out of nowhere, its existence follows from the *completeness* of $L^2(X, \mu)$, but it is very convenient to express the argument abstractly for a general Hilbert space.

2. Spectral theorem

For a bounded operator T on a Hilbert space we define the spectrum as the set

$$\operatorname{spec}(T) = \{z \in \mathbb{C}; T - z\operatorname{Id} \text{ is not invertible}\}. \tag{2.1}$$

PROPOSITION 2.1. *For any bounded linear operator on a Hilbert space* $\operatorname{spec}(T) \subset \mathbb{C}$ *is a compact subset of* $\{|z| \le \|T\|\}$.

PROOF. We show that the set $\mathbb{C} \setminus \operatorname{spec}(T)$ (generally called the resolvent set of T) is open and contains the complement of a sufficiently large ball. This is based on the convergence of the Neumann series. Namely if T is bounded and $\|T\| < 1$ then

$$(\operatorname{Id} - T)^{-1} = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} T^j \tag{2.2}$$

converges to a bounded operator which is a two-sided inverse of $\operatorname{Id} - T$. Indeed, $\|T^j\| \le \|T\|^j$ so the series is convergent and composing with $\operatorname{Id} - T$ on either side gives a telescoping series reducing to the identity.

Applying this result, we first see that

$$(T - z) = -z(\operatorname{Id} - T/z) \tag{2.3}$$

is invertible if $|z| > \|T\|$. Similarly, if $(T - z_0)^{-1}$ exists for some $z_0 \in \mathbb{C}$ then

$$(T - z) = (T - z_0) - (z - z_0) = (T - z_0)^{-1}(\operatorname{Id} - (z - z_0)(T - z_0)^{-1}) \tag{2.4}$$

exists for $|z - z_0|\|(T - z_0)^{-1}\| < 1$. □

In general it is rather difficult to precisely locate $\operatorname{spec}(T)$.

However for a bounded self-adjoint operator it is easier. One sign of this is the the norm of the operator has an alternative, simple, characterization. Namely

$$\text{if } A^* = A \text{ then } \sup_{\|\phi\|=1} \langle A\phi, \phi\rangle| = \|A\|. \tag{2.5}$$

If a is this supermum, then clearly $a \le \|A\|$. To see the converse, choose any ϕ, $\psi \in H$ with norm 1 and then replace ψ by $e^{i\theta}\psi$ with θ chosen so that $\langle A\phi, \psi\rangle$ is real. Then use the polarization identity to write

$$\begin{aligned} 4\langle A\phi, \psi\rangle = \langle A(\phi+\psi), (\phi+\psi)\rangle - \langle A(\phi-\psi), (\phi-\psi)\rangle \\ + i\langle A(\phi+i\psi), (\phi+i\psi)\rangle - i\langle A(\phi-i\psi), (\phi-i\psi)\rangle. \end{aligned} \tag{2.6}$$

Now, by the assumed reality we may drop the last two terms and see that

$$4|\langle A\phi, \psi\rangle| \le a(\|\phi+\psi\|^2 + \|\phi-\psi\|^2) = 2a(\|\phi\|^2 + \|\psi\|^2) = 4a. \tag{2.7}$$

Thus indeed $\|A\| = \sup_{\|\phi\|=\|\psi\|=1} |\langle A\phi, \psi\rangle| = a$.

We can always subtract a real constant from A so that $A' = A - t$ satisfies

$$-\inf_{\|\phi\|=1} \langle A'\phi, \phi\rangle = \sup_{\|\phi\|=1} \langle A'\phi, \phi\rangle = \|A'\|. \tag{2.8}$$

Then, it follows that $A' \pm \|A'\|$ is not invertible. Indeed, there exists a sequence ϕ_n, with $\|\phi_n\| = 1$ such that $\langle (A' - \|A'\|)\phi_n, \phi_n\rangle \to 0$. Thus

$$\|(A' - \|A'\|)\phi_n\|^2 = -2\langle A'\phi_n, \phi_n\rangle + \|A'\phi_n\|^2 + \|A'\|^2 \le -2\langle A'\phi_n, \phi_n\rangle + 2\|A'\|^2 \to 0. \tag{2.9}$$

This shows that $A' - \|A'\|$ cannot be invertible and the same argument works for $A' + \|A'\|$. For the original operator A if we set

$$m = \inf_{\|\phi\|=1} \langle A\phi, \phi\rangle \;\; M = \sup_{\|\phi\|=1} \langle A\phi, \phi\rangle \tag{2.10}$$

then we conclude that neither $A - m\operatorname{Id}$ nor $A - M\operatorname{Id}$ is invertible and $\|A\| = \max(-m, M)$.

Proposition 2.2. *If A is a bounded self-adjoint operator then, with m and M defined by* (2.10),

$$\{m\} \cup \{M\} \subset \operatorname{spec}(A) \subset [m, M]. \tag{2.11}$$

Proof. We have already shown the first part, that m and M are in the spectrum so it remains to show that $A - z$ is invertible for all $z \in \mathbb{C} \setminus [m, M]$.

Using the self-adjointness

$$\operatorname{Im}\langle (A - z)\phi, \phi\rangle = -\operatorname{Im} z \|\phi\|^2. \tag{2.12}$$

This implies that $A - z$ is invertible if $z \in \mathbb{C} \setminus \mathbb{R}$. First it shows that $(A-z)\phi = 0$ implies $\phi = 0$, so $A - z$ is injective. Secondly, the range is closed. Indeed, if $(A-z)\phi_n \to \psi$ then applying (2.12) directly shows that $\|\phi_n\|$ is bounded and so can be replaced by a weakly convergent subsequence. Applying (2.12) again to $\phi_n - \phi_m$ shows that the sequence is actually Cauchy, hence convergens to ϕ so $(A-z)\phi = \psi$ is in the range. Finally, the orthocomplement to this range is the null space of $A^* - \bar{z}$, which is also trivial, so $A - z$ is an isomorphism and (2.12) also shows that the inverse is bounded, in fact

$$\|(A-z)^{-1}\| \leq \frac{1}{|\operatorname{Im} z|}. \tag{2.13}$$

When $z \in \mathbb{R}$ we can replace A by A' satisfying (2.8). Then we have to show that $A' - z$ is inverible for $|z| > \|A\|$, but that is shown in the proof of Proposition 2.1. □

The basic estimate leading to the spectral theorem is:

Proposition 2.3. *If A is a bounded self-adjoint operator and p is a real polynomial in one variable,*

$$p(t) = \sum_{i=0}^{N} c_i t^i, \ c_N \neq 0, \tag{2.14}$$

then $p(A) = \sum_{i=0}^{N} c_i A^i$ satisfies

$$\|p(A)\| \leq \sup_{t \in [m,M]} |p(t)|. \tag{2.15}$$

Proof. Clearly, $p(A)$ is a bounded self-adjoint operator. If $s \notin p([m,M])$ then $p(A) - s$ is invertible. Indeed, the roots of $p(t) - s$ must cannot lie in $[m.M]$, since otherwise $s \in p([m,M])$. Thus, factorizing $p(s) - t$ we have

(2.16)

$$p(t) - s = c_N \prod_{i=1}^{N} (t - t_i(s)), \ t_i(s) \notin [m,M] \Longrightarrow (p(A) - s)^{-1} \text{ exists}$$

since $p(A) = c_N \sum_i (A - t_i(s))$ and each of the factors is invertible. Thus $\operatorname{spec}(p(A)) \subset p([m,M])$, which is an interval (or a point), and from Proposition 2.3 we conclude that $\|p(A)\| \leq \sup p([m,M])$ which is (2.15). □

Now, reinterpreting (2.15) we have a linear map

$$\mathcal{P}(\mathbb{R}) \ni p \longmapsto p(A) \in \mathcal{B}(H) \tag{2.17}$$

from the real polynomials to the bounded self-adjoint operators which is continuous with respect to the supremum norm on $[m, M]$. Since polynomials are dense in continuous functions on finite intervals, we see that (2.17) extends by continuity to a linear map

$$\mathcal{C}([m, M]) \ni f \longmapsto f(A) \in \mathcal{B}(H),\ \|f(A)\| \le \|f\|_{[m,M]},\ fg(A) = f(A)g(A) \tag{2.18}$$

where the multiplicativity follows by continuity together with the fact that it is true for polynomials.

Now, consider any two elements $\phi, \psi \in H$. Evaluating $f(A)$ on ϕ and pairing with ψ gives a linear map

$$\mathcal{C}([m, M]) \ni f \longmapsto \langle f(A)\phi, \psi\rangle \in \mathbb{C}. \tag{2.19}$$

This is a linear functional on $\mathcal{C}([m, M])$ to which we can apply the Riesz representatin theorem and conclude that it is defined by integration against a unique Radon measure $\mu_{\phi,\psi}$:

$$\langle f(A)\phi, \psi\rangle = \int_{[m,M]} f d\mu_{\phi,\psi}. \tag{2.20}$$

The total mass $|\mu_{\phi,\psi}|$ of this measure is the norm of the functional. Since it is a Borel measure, we can take the integral on $-\infty, b]$ for any $b \in \mathbb{R}$ ad, with the uniqueness, this shows that we have a continuous sesquilinear map

$$P_b(\phi, \psi) : H \times H \ni (\phi, \psi) \longmapsto \int_{[m,b]} d\mu_{\phi,\psi} \in \mathbb{R},\ |P_b(\phi, \psi)| \le \|A\|\|\phi\|\|\psi\|. \tag{2.21}$$

From the Hilbert space Riesz representation theorem it follows that this sesquilinear form defines, and is determined by, a bounded linear operator

$$P_b(\phi, \psi) = \langle P_b\phi, \psi\rangle,\ \|P_b\| \le \|A\|. \tag{2.22}$$

In fact, from the functional calculus (the multiplicativity in (2.18)) we see that

$$P_b^* = P_b,\ P_b^2 = P_b,\ \|P_b\| \le 1, \tag{2.23}$$

so P_b is a projection.

Thus the spectral theorem gives us an increasing (with b) family of commuting self-adjoint projections such that $\mu_{\phi,\psi}((-\infty, b]) = \langle P_b\phi, \psi\rangle$ determines the Radon measure for which (2.20) holds. One can go further and think of P_b itself as determining a measure

$$\mu((-\infty, b]) = P_b \tag{2.24}$$

which takes values in the projections on H and which allows the functions of A to be written as integrals in the form

$$f(A) = \int_{[m,M]} f d\mu \tag{2.25}$$

of which (2.20) becomes the 'weak form'. To do so one needs to develop the theory of such measures and the corresponding integrals. This is not so hard but I shall not do it.