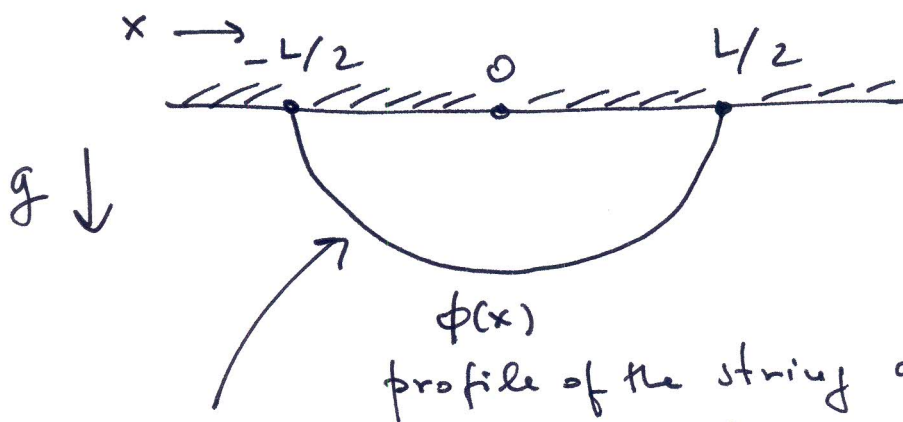


# VARIATIONAL CALCULUS

①

= derivatives w.r.t. a function

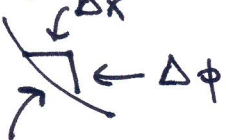
Ex: elastic string hanging on a gravitational field



T: tension

$\sigma$ : linear mass density

infinitesimally



$\phi(x)$   
profile of the string as a function of  $x$

w/ b.c.  $\phi(\pm L/2) = 0$

$$\sqrt{\Delta x^2 + \Delta \phi^2} = \Delta x \sqrt{1 + \left(\frac{\Delta \phi}{\Delta x}\right)^2}$$

$$\rightarrow \text{length: } \int_{-L/2}^{L/2} dx \sqrt{1 + \left(\frac{d\phi}{dx}\right)^2}$$

Two energies: elastic + gravitational

$$\text{elastic energy} = T \cdot \left( \text{length of extended string} - \text{intrinsic length } L \right)$$

$$= T \cdot \left( \int_{-L/2}^{L/2} dx \sqrt{1 + \left(\frac{d\phi}{dx}\right)^2} - L \right)$$

$$\frac{d\phi}{dx} \ll 1 \rightarrow \approx T \int_{-L/2}^{L/2} dx \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{d\phi}{dx}\right)^2$$

gravitational energy:

$$\int_{-L/2}^{L/2} dx \left( -\sigma g \phi(x) \right)$$

mass/unit length

- sign:  $\phi(x)$  points downward



Energy functional

↖ = function of  $\phi(x)$

$$E[\phi] = \int_{-L/2}^{L/2} dx \left( \frac{T}{2} \left( \frac{d\phi}{dx} \right)^2 - \sigma g \phi \right)$$

$E[\cdot]$  = function of a function

Goal: Find the function  $\phi(x)$  which minimizes  $E \rightarrow$  differentiate  $E$  w.r.t.  $\phi$

$$\phi(x) \rightarrow \phi(x) + \eta(x)$$

↖ small variation

(in the end we'll call this  $\delta\phi(x)$  but now I want to avoid possible confusions about "δ" commuting through derivatives, which it does!)

see later

$$\Rightarrow \delta E = E[\phi + \eta] - E[\phi]$$

- It should:
- \* vanish at 1<sup>st</sup> order (=extremum)
  - \*  $> 0$  at 2<sup>nd</sup> order (=minimum)

$$E[\phi + \eta] - E[\phi] = \int_{-L/2}^{L/2} dx \left( \frac{T}{2} \left( \frac{d\phi}{dx} + \frac{d\eta}{dx} \right)^2 - \sigma g (\phi + \eta) \right) \quad (3)$$

$$- \frac{T}{2} \left( \frac{d\phi}{dx} \right)^2 + \sigma g \phi$$

1st order in  $\eta$

$$= \int_{-L/2}^{L/2} dx \left( T \frac{d\phi}{dx} \frac{d\eta}{dx} - \sigma g \eta \right)$$

by parts  
+  
 $d\eta = \frac{d\eta}{dx} dx$

$$= T \int_{-L/2}^{L/2} d \left( \eta \frac{d\phi}{dx} \right) - T \int_{-L/2}^{L/2} dx \eta \frac{d^2\phi}{dx^2} - \int_{-L/2}^{L/2} dx \sigma g \eta$$

$$= T \left. \frac{d\phi}{dx} \eta \right|_{-L/2}^{L/2} - \int_{-L/2}^{L/2} dx \left( T \frac{d^2\phi}{dx^2} + \sigma g \right) \eta$$

$= 0$   $= \delta E$

by (Dirichlet) boundary conditions  $\eta(\pm L/2) = 0$

$$\delta E = 0 \quad \text{iff} \quad T \frac{d^2\phi}{dx^2} = -\sigma g \quad \text{since } \eta \text{ is generic}$$

$$\Rightarrow \boxed{\phi(x) = \frac{\sigma g}{T} \left( \left( \frac{L}{2} \right)^2 - x^2 \right)} \quad \text{a parabola}$$

such that  $\phi(\pm L/2) = 0$

Now, shortcut without introducing  $\eta$ :

(4)

functional derivative  $\frac{\delta}{\delta \phi(y)} \int dx V[\phi(x)] = V'[\phi(y)]$

$$E[\phi] = \int dx \left( F \left[ \frac{d\phi}{dx} \right] + V[\phi] \right)$$

$$= E \left[ \phi, \frac{d\phi}{dx} \right]$$

$$\delta E[\phi] = \int dx \left( \frac{\delta F}{\delta \frac{d\phi}{dx}} \delta \frac{d\phi}{dx} + \frac{\delta V}{\delta \phi} \delta \phi \right)$$

$$= \frac{d}{dx} \delta \phi$$

it is not an operation "δ" acting on φ

(remember  $\delta \phi$  is just an  $\eta$  different from  $\phi$ , so no issue in commuting  $\delta$  & derivatives!)

$$= \int dx \left( \frac{d}{dx} \left( \frac{\delta F}{\delta \frac{d\phi}{dx}} \delta \phi \right) - \left( \frac{d}{dx} \frac{\delta F}{\delta \frac{d\phi}{dx}} \right) \delta \phi + \frac{\delta V}{\delta \phi} \delta \phi \right)$$

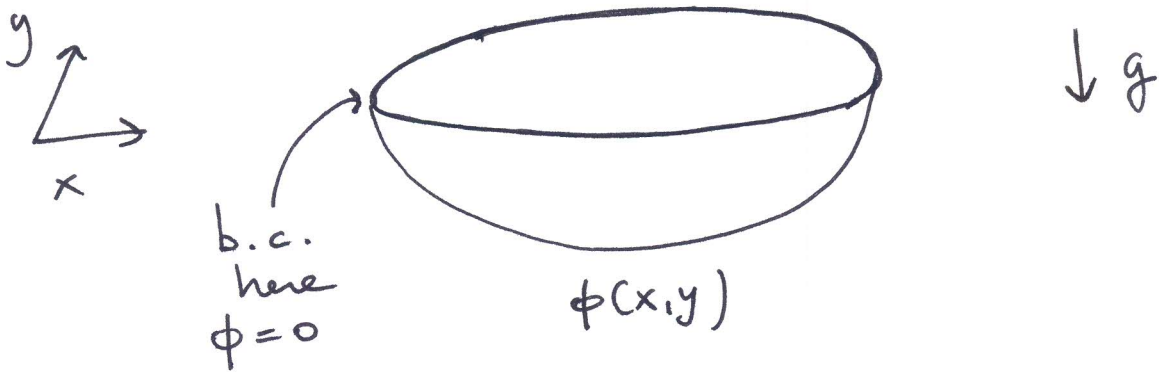
$$= \underbrace{\delta \phi \frac{\delta F}{\delta \frac{d\phi}{dx}} \Big|_{\text{bdry}}}_{=0} - \int dx \delta \phi \left( \frac{d}{dx} \frac{\delta F}{\delta \frac{d\phi}{dx}} - \frac{\delta V}{\delta \phi} \right)$$

↑ arbitrary

$$\Rightarrow \boxed{\frac{d}{dx} \frac{\delta E}{\delta \frac{d\phi}{dx}} - \frac{\delta E}{\delta \phi} = 0}$$

Euler-Lagrange (E-L) equation (5)

Ex: elastic membrane hanging on a gravit. field



$$E[\phi] = \int dx dy \left( \frac{\tilde{T}}{2} \left( \left( \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial x} \right)^2 + \left( \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial y} \right)^2 \right) - \rho(x, y) \phi(x, y) \right)$$

Apply same procedure as before: ( $\tilde{T}$ : membrane tension)

E-L equation = Poisson equation ( $\rho$ : load)

$$\boxed{\nabla^2 \phi(x, y) = -\rho(x, y)}$$

//  
 $(\partial_x^2 + \partial_y^2) \phi(x, y)$

Ex: Newton's gravit. potential

$$\nabla^2 \phi(\underbrace{x, y, z}_{\equiv \vec{x}}) = 4\pi G \rho(x, y, z)$$

It emerges from the following energy functional

$$E[\phi] = \int d^3x \left( \frac{1}{8\pi G} (\vec{\nabla} \phi)^2 + \rho(\vec{x}) \phi(\vec{x}) \right)$$

Check:

6

$$\begin{aligned}\delta E[\phi] &= \frac{\delta E}{\delta \vec{\nabla} \phi} \delta \vec{\nabla} \phi + \frac{\delta E}{\delta \phi} \delta \phi = \\ &= \int d^3x \left( \frac{1}{4\pi G} \vec{\nabla} \phi \cdot \underbrace{\delta \vec{\nabla} \phi}_{= \vec{\nabla} \delta \phi} + \rho(\vec{x}) \delta \phi \right) \\ &= \int d^3x \vec{\nabla} \cdot \left( \frac{1}{4\pi G} \vec{\nabla} \phi \delta \phi \right) - \int d^3x \frac{1}{4\pi G} (\vec{\nabla} \cdot \vec{\nabla} \phi) \delta \phi \\ &\quad + \int d^3x \rho(\vec{x}) \delta \phi \\ &\quad \rightarrow 0 \text{ surfactum}\end{aligned}$$

$$\Rightarrow \boxed{\frac{1}{4\pi G} \nabla^2 \phi = \rho(\vec{x})} \quad \text{OK.}$$

The same would be true for the electrostatic potential if  $\rho$  = charge density.

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Bonus: use dimensional analysis to solve the equation above when  $\rho(\vec{x}) = M \delta^3(\vec{x})$

$$[\delta^3] = L^{-3} \quad (\text{use } \int d^3x \rho(\vec{x}) = 1)$$

$$[\nabla^2] = L^{-2}$$

$$\nabla^2 \phi = 4\pi G M \delta^3(\vec{x}) \Rightarrow [\phi] = \frac{[GM]}{L}$$

By rotational invariance it must be

$$\phi = \frac{\alpha}{r} \quad \text{with } [\alpha] = [GM]$$

↓  
some constant

To determine the constant integrate both sides of the equation on a ball of radius  $R$  around the mass: (7)

$$\int d^3x \nabla^2 \phi = \int d^3x 4\pi G M \delta^3(\vec{x}) = 4\pi G M$$

|| Gauss

$$\begin{aligned} \int d\vec{S} \cdot \vec{\nabla} \phi &= \int_{r=R} r^2 d\theta \sin\theta d\phi \frac{\partial}{\partial r} \left( \frac{\alpha}{r} \right) \\ &= R^2 4\pi \left( -\frac{\alpha}{R^2} \right) \end{aligned}$$

$$\Rightarrow \alpha = -GM$$

(Byproduct:  $\nabla^2 \frac{1}{r} = -4\pi \delta^3(\vec{x}).$ )

Note: One can consider more than one field:

$$E[\phi_i] = \int dx \mathcal{E} \left[ \phi_i, \frac{d\phi_i}{dx} \right]$$

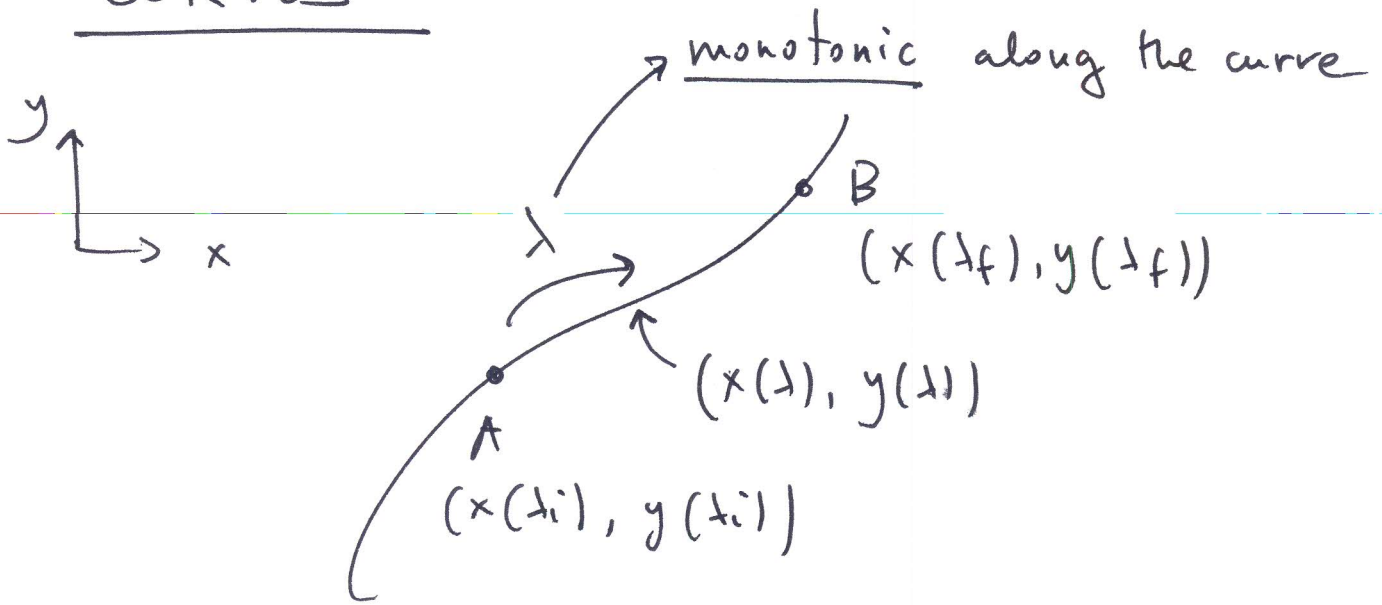
$i = 1 \dots \# \text{ of fields}$

$$\Rightarrow \boxed{\frac{d}{dx} \left( \frac{\delta \mathcal{E}}{\delta \frac{d\phi_i}{dx}} \right) - \frac{\delta \mathcal{E}}{\delta \phi_i} = 0}$$

system of equations.

# CURVES

⑧



length:  $\int_A^B \sqrt{dx^2 + dy^2} = \int_{t_i}^{t_f} dt \sqrt{\frac{dx^2}{dt^2} + \frac{dy^2}{dt^2}}$

obviously reparametrization invariant

also reparametriz. invariant

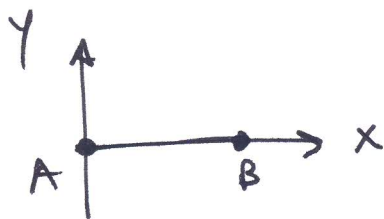
ex:  $\lambda \rightarrow \alpha \lambda$  OK

$\lambda \rightarrow \eta(t)$

$dt = \frac{\partial t}{\partial \eta} d\eta$  OK

EX: Straight line in  $\mathbb{R}^2$

Imagine we don't know its equation & we want to find it via minimization



$\lambda = x$       $E = \int_0^x dx' \sqrt{1 + \left(\frac{dy}{dx'}\right)^2}$

length is minimized by

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = 0$$

This obvious result can be obtained in a more formal way:



$$E(x,y) = \int d\lambda \quad \varepsilon$$

↓

$$\varepsilon = \sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{d\lambda}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{d\lambda}\right)^2}$$

⇒ E-L equations:

$$\left\{ \begin{aligned} \frac{d}{d\lambda} \left( \frac{dx/d\lambda}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{d\lambda}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{d\lambda}\right)^2}} \right) &= 0 \\ \frac{d}{d\lambda} \left( \frac{dy/d\lambda}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{d\lambda}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{d\lambda}\right)^2}} \right) &= 0 \end{aligned} \right.$$

solution:  $\left\{ \begin{aligned} \frac{dx}{d\lambda} &= \text{const.} \\ \frac{dy}{d\lambda} &= \text{const.} \end{aligned} \right.$

Simplification:

use  $\lambda = l$  ← length of the curve

$$dl = \sqrt{dx^2 + dy^2}$$

$$\Rightarrow \sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{d\lambda}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{d\lambda}\right)^2} = \frac{\sqrt{dx^2 + dy^2}}{dl} = 1$$

⇒ the E-L equations become

the square roots disappear!

$$\boxed{\frac{d^2x}{dl^2} = 0 = \frac{d^2y}{dl^2}}$$

In different coordinates systems this will look more complicated: let's look at ~~spatial~~ <sup>polar</sup> coordinates

$$\int \sqrt{dr^2 + r^2 d\theta^2} = \int_{x_i}^{x_f} d\lambda \underbrace{\sqrt{\left(\frac{dr}{d\lambda}\right)^2 + r^2 \left(\frac{d\theta}{d\lambda}\right)^2}}_{\equiv L}$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{\delta L}{\delta \frac{dr}{dt}} \right) = \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{dr/dt}{L} \right)$$

$$\frac{\delta L}{\delta r} = \frac{r \left( \frac{d\theta}{dt} \right)^2}{L}$$

w.r.t. (r)

$$\Rightarrow \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{dr/dt}{L} \right) - \frac{r}{L} \left( \frac{d\theta}{dt} \right)^2 = 0$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{\delta L}{\delta \frac{d\theta}{dt}} \right) = \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{r^2 d\theta/dt}{L} \right)$$

$$\frac{\delta L}{\delta \theta} = 0 \rightarrow \text{important!}$$

w.r.t. (θ)

$$\Rightarrow \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{r^2 d\theta/dt}{L} \right) = 0$$

A convenient reparametrization is  $\lambda = l \Rightarrow L = 1$

$$\frac{d^2 r}{dl^2} - r \left( \frac{d\theta}{dl} \right)^2 = 0$$

&

$$\frac{d}{dl} \left( r^2 \frac{d\theta}{dl} \right) = 0$$

plus there is another (1st order) equation:

$$dl^2 = dr^2 + r^2 d\theta^2 \Rightarrow$$

$$1 = \left( \frac{dr}{dl} \right)^2 + r^2 \left( \frac{d\theta}{dl} \right)^2$$

The two simplest equations to use are clearly (11)  
 this 1st order equation (= definition of  $l$ ) & the  
 equation for  $\theta$ :

$$r^2 \frac{d\theta}{dl} = \text{const} \equiv a$$

$$\Rightarrow 1 = \left(\frac{dr}{dl}\right)^2 + r^2 \frac{a^2}{r^4} \Rightarrow r^2 = l^2 + a^2$$

$$\Rightarrow \frac{d\theta}{dl} = \frac{a}{l^2 + a^2} \Rightarrow \boxed{a \operatorname{tg}(\theta - \theta_0) = l}$$

= straight line  
in "funny" coordinates

lesson: a useful parametrization is the  
 one that eliminates the square root

$$\underline{\lambda = l} \quad (\Rightarrow L = 1)$$

Ex: "Geodesics" on a sphere

$$\int \sqrt{d\theta^2 + \sin^2\theta d\varphi^2} = \int_{\lambda_i}^{\lambda_f} d\lambda \sqrt{\left(\frac{d\theta}{d\lambda}\right)^2 + \sin^2\theta \left(\frac{d\varphi}{d\lambda}\right)^2}$$

$$l = \lambda: \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \frac{d^2\theta}{dl^2} = \sin\theta \cos\theta \left(\frac{d\varphi}{dl}\right)^2 \\ \frac{d}{dl} \left( \sin^2\theta \frac{d\varphi}{dl} \right) = 0 \rightarrow \sin^2\theta \frac{d\varphi}{dl} = \text{const} \\ \left(\frac{d\theta}{dl}\right)^2 + \sin^2\theta \left(\frac{d\varphi}{dl}\right)^2 = 1 \end{array} \right.$$

(Killing vector)

Solution:  $\varphi = \text{const}$  (= great circles) <sup>(12)</sup>  
 $\theta = \alpha l$

GEODESIC EQUATION

$X^\mu(\lambda)$   $\xrightarrow{\hspace{10em}}$  parametrizes the curve  
 $g_{\mu\nu}(x)$   $\xrightarrow{\hspace{10em}}$  metric of the space

$$\int dl = \int \sqrt{g_{\mu\nu} dx^\mu dx^\nu} = \int d\lambda \sqrt{g_{\mu\nu}(X(\lambda)) \frac{dx^\mu}{d\lambda} \frac{dx^\nu}{d\lambda}}$$

$$0 = \delta \int d\lambda L = \int d\lambda \delta L \quad \equiv L$$

$$= \int d\lambda \sqrt{g_{\mu\nu}(x + \delta x) \frac{d}{d\lambda}(x^\mu + \delta x^\mu) \frac{d}{d\lambda}(x^\nu + \delta x^\nu)}$$

$$- \int d\lambda \sqrt{g_{\mu\nu}(x) \frac{dx^\mu}{d\lambda} \frac{dx^\nu}{d\lambda}}$$

$$= \int d\lambda \left( \sqrt{(g_{\mu\nu}(x) + \partial_\sigma g_{\mu\nu}(x) \delta x^\sigma) \left( \frac{dx^\mu}{d\lambda} + \frac{d\delta x^\mu}{d\lambda} \right) \left( \frac{dx^\nu}{d\lambda} + \frac{d\delta x^\nu}{d\lambda} \right)} \right.$$

$$\left. - \sqrt{g_{\mu\nu}(x) \frac{dx^\mu}{d\lambda} \frac{dx^\nu}{d\lambda}} \right)$$

$$= \int d\lambda \left( \sqrt{g_{\mu\nu}(x) \frac{dx^\mu}{d\lambda} \frac{dx^\nu}{d\lambda} + 2g_{\mu\nu}(x) \frac{d\delta x^\mu}{d\lambda} \frac{dx^\nu}{d\lambda} + (\partial_\sigma g_{\mu\nu}(x)) \delta x^\sigma \frac{dx^\mu}{d\lambda} \frac{dx^\nu}{d\lambda} - \sqrt{g_{\mu\nu}(x) \frac{dx^\mu}{d\lambda} \frac{dx^\nu}{d\lambda}} \right)$$

$$= \int dt L \left( \sqrt{1 + \frac{2g_{\mu\nu}(x)}{L^2} \frac{d\delta X^\mu}{dt} \frac{dX^\nu}{dt} + \frac{(\partial_\sigma g_{\mu\nu}(x))}{L^2} \delta X^\sigma \frac{dX^\mu}{dt} \frac{dX^\nu}{dt}} - 1 \right) \quad (13)$$

$$\approx \int dt \frac{L}{2L^2} \left( 2g_{\mu\nu}(x) \frac{d\delta X^\mu}{dt} \frac{dX^\nu}{dt} + (\partial_\sigma g_{\mu\nu}(x)) \delta X^\sigma \frac{dX^\mu}{dt} \frac{dX^\nu}{dt} \right)$$

$$= \frac{d}{dt} \left( 2g_{\mu\nu} \frac{dX^\nu}{dt} \delta X^\mu \right)$$

$$- \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{2g_{\mu\nu}}{L} \frac{dX^\nu}{dt} \right) \delta X^\mu$$

$$\Rightarrow L \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{2g_{\mu\nu}}{L} \frac{dX^\mu}{dt} \right) - \partial_\sigma g_{\mu\nu} \frac{dX^\mu}{dt} \frac{dX^\nu}{dt} = 0$$

use  $dt = dl \Rightarrow L = 1$

$$\Rightarrow \left[ \frac{d}{dl} \left( g_{\mu\nu} \frac{dX^\mu}{dl} \right) - \frac{1}{2} (\partial_\sigma g_{\mu\nu}) \frac{dX^\mu}{dl} \frac{dX^\nu}{dl} = 0 \right]$$

More directly:

$$\int dt \sqrt{g_{\mu\nu} \frac{dX^\mu}{dt} \frac{dX^\nu}{dt}} \equiv \int dt L$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{\delta L}{\delta \frac{dX^\mu}{dt}} \right) = \frac{\delta L}{\delta X^\mu} \quad \text{E-L equations}$$

$$\rightarrow \frac{d}{dt} \left( \frac{g_{\mu\nu} \frac{dX^\nu}{dt}}{L} \right) = \frac{1}{2L} \partial_\mu g_{\nu\sigma} \frac{dX^\nu}{dt} \frac{dX^\sigma}{dt} \frac{dX^\mu}{dt}$$

Carry out the differentiation

(14)

$$\left( 0 = g_{\mu\sigma} \frac{d^2 x^\mu}{d\ell^2} + (\partial_\nu g_{\mu\sigma}) \frac{dx^\nu}{d\ell} \frac{dx^\mu}{d\ell} - \frac{1}{2} (\partial_\sigma g_{\mu\nu}) \frac{dx^\mu}{d\ell} \frac{dx^\nu}{d\ell} \right) g^{\rho\sigma}$$

$$\Rightarrow \frac{d^2 x^\rho}{d\ell^2} + \underbrace{\frac{1}{2} g^{\rho\sigma} (2 \partial_\nu g_{\mu\sigma} - \partial_\sigma g_{\mu\nu})}_{\text{convenient to give a name to this combination}} \frac{dx^\mu}{d\ell} \frac{dx^\nu}{d\ell} = 0$$

convenient to give a name to this combination

$$\Gamma_{\mu\nu}^\rho = \frac{1}{2} g^{\rho\sigma} (\partial_\mu g_{\nu\sigma} + \partial_\nu g_{\mu\sigma} - \partial_\sigma g_{\mu\nu})$$

Christoffel symbols

see later



(not a tensor!)

$$\frac{d^2 x^\rho}{d\ell^2} + \Gamma_{\mu\nu}^\rho \frac{dx^\mu}{d\ell} \frac{dx^\nu}{d\ell} = 0$$

Geodesic equation.

Alternative derivation

Go to locally flat coordinates  $y^\rho(x)$

$$ds^2 = g_{\mu\nu}(x) dx^\mu dx^\nu = \delta_{\mu\nu} dy^\mu dy^\nu$$

$$\text{with } g_{\mu\nu}(x) = \delta_{\rho\sigma} \frac{\partial y^\rho}{\partial x^\mu} \frac{\partial y^\sigma}{\partial x^\nu}$$

A geodesic in locally flat coordinates is a straight line

$$\frac{d^2 y^\beta}{dl^2} = 0 \quad (\text{i.e. } \frac{dy^\beta}{dl} = \text{tangent to the curve} = \text{constant})$$

$$\frac{dy^\beta}{dl} = \frac{\partial y^\beta}{\partial x^\lambda} \frac{dx^\lambda}{dl}$$

$$\frac{\partial x^\sigma}{\partial y^\beta} \left( 0 = \frac{d^2 y^\beta}{dl^2} = \frac{d}{dl} \left( \frac{\partial y^\beta}{\partial x^\lambda} \frac{dx^\lambda}{dl} \right) = \frac{\partial y^\beta}{\partial x^\lambda} \frac{d^2 x^\lambda}{dl^2} + \frac{\partial^2 y^\beta}{\partial x^\lambda \partial x^\nu} \frac{dx^\lambda}{dl} \frac{dx^\nu}{dl} \right)$$

$$\Rightarrow \frac{d^2 x^\lambda}{dl^2} + \frac{\partial x^\lambda}{\partial y^\beta} \frac{\partial^2 y^\beta}{\partial x^\mu \partial x^\nu} \frac{dx^\mu}{dl} \frac{dx^\nu}{dl} = 0$$

alternative expression for  $\Gamma^\lambda_{\mu\nu}$

Lesson: a straight line in curved coordinate does not look straight!

Important:  $\Gamma^\lambda_{\mu\nu}$  is NOT a tensor!

Under  $y \rightarrow x'$

$$\frac{\partial y^\beta}{\partial x'^\nu} = \frac{\partial x^\sigma}{\partial x'^\nu} \frac{\partial y^\beta}{\partial x^\sigma}$$

$$\Gamma'^\lambda_{\mu\nu} = \frac{\partial x'^\lambda}{\partial y^\beta} \frac{\partial^2 y^\beta}{\partial x'^\mu \partial x'^\nu} = \dots = \underbrace{\frac{\partial x'^\lambda}{\partial x^\alpha} \frac{\partial x^\omega}{\partial x'^\mu} \frac{\partial x^\sigma}{\partial x'^\nu} \Gamma^\alpha_{\omega\sigma}}_{\text{OK!}} + \boxed{\frac{\partial x'^\lambda}{\partial x^\alpha} \frac{\partial^2 x^\alpha}{\partial x'^\mu \partial x'^\nu}}$$

extra piece!