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Miroslav Josipović

Geometric Multiplication of Vectors

An Introduction to Geometric Algebra
in Physics

 Birkhäuser

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Zagreb, Croatia

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So God made the people speak many different languages. . .

Virus

The World Health Organization has announced a worldwide epidemic of the ***coordinate virus*** in mathematics and physics courses at all grade levels. Students infected with the virus exhibit compulsive ***vector avoidance*** behavior, unable to conceive of a vector except as a list of numbers, and seizing every opportunity to replace vectors by coordinates. At least two-thirds of physics graduate students are severely infected by the virus, and half of those may be so permanently damaged that they will never recover. The most promising treatment is a strong dose of ***geometric algebra***. (*Hestenes*)

Cat

When the spiritual teacher and his disciples began their evening meditation, the cat who lived in the monastery made so much noise that it distracted them. Therefore, the teacher ordered tying up the cat during the evening practice. Years later, when the teacher died, tying the cat continued during meditation sessions. When the cat died, another cat was brought to the monastery and tied up. Centuries later, a learned descendant of the spiritual teacher wrote a scholarly treatise on the religious significance of tying up a cat during meditation. (Zen story)

Empty Your Cup

A university professor went to visit a famous Zen master. While the master quietly served tea, the professor talked

about Zen. The master filled the visitor's cup to the brim, and then kept pouring. The professor watched the overflowing cup until he could no longer restrain himself. It is overfull! No more will go in! the professor expostulated. You are like this cup, the master replied, how can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup? (Zen story)

To my sisters

Preface

The purpose of this text is to introduce the interested reader to the world of geometric algebra. Why?

All right, imagine Neelix and Tuvok (Tuvok is a Vulcan from the starship Voyager) are engaged in conversation. Neelix hopes to sell a new product to Tuvok. His intention is to intrigue Tuvok quickly, giving him as little information as possible, and the ultimate goal is that Tuvok, after using it, will be surprised by the quality of the product and recommend it to others. Do not forget that Tuvok can barely tolerate Neelix's nonstop blathering. Let us begin.

Neelix Mr. Vulcan, would you like to rotate objects without matrices, in any dimension?

Tuvok Mr. Neelix, do you offer me quaternions?

Neelix No, they work in 3D only. I have something much better. In addition, you will be able to calculate with spinors as well.

Tuvok Spinors? Come on, Mr. Neelix, you're not trying to say that I will be able to work with complex numbers, too?

Neelix Yes, Mr. Vulcan, the whole of complex analysis, generalized to higher dimensions. And you will get rid of tensors.

Tuvok Excuse me, what? I'm a physicist... it is impossible...

Neelix It is indeed possible. You do not need coordinates. Moreover, you will be able to do the special theory of relativity and quantum mechanics using the same tool. And all integral theorems that you recognize, including those in the complex field, become a single theorem.

Tuvok Come on... nice idea... I work a lot with Lie algebras and groups...

Neelix In the package...

Tuvok Are you kidding me, Mr. Neelix? Ok, let's suppose that I believe you. How much would that product cost me?

Neelix Pennyworth, Mr. Vulcan; the only price is to multiply vectors differently.

Tuvok That's all? You are offering me all of this for such a small price? What's the trap?

Neelix There isn't one. Except that you will have to spend some time to learn how to use the new tool.

Tuvok Time? I just do not have... Besides, why would I ever give up coordinates? You know, I am quite adept at juggling indices. I have my career...

Neelix Do the physical processes you are studying depend on the coordinate systems you choose?

Tuvok I hope not.

Neelix There. Does a rotation by matrices provide you a clear geometric meaning when you do it?

Tuvok No. I need to make an effort to discover one.

Neelix Now you will not have to for the most part. It will be available to you at each step.

Tuvok Mr. Neelix, I'm curious. Where did you get this new tool?

Neelix Well, Mr. Vulcan, it is an old tool from the Earth, nineteenth century, I think, invented by humans Grassmann and Clifford.

Tuvok What? How is that I am not familiar with it? Isn't that strange?

Neelix Well, I believe that human Gibbs and his followers had a hand in it. Allegedly, human Hestenes was trying to tell the other humans about it, but they did not pay any attention. You will agree, Mr. Vulcan, that humans are really funny sometimes.

Tuvok Mr. Neelix, this is a once in a blue moon case in which I just have to agree with you.

Tuvok buys the product and lives long and prospers. Then, of course, he recommends the new tool to the captain. . .

This text is motivational, so that the reader can see “what’s up.” It introduces basic concepts and provides some insights into possible applications. We endeavored to choose simple examples and solved problems; the reader will also find problems to solve. An active reading of the text is suggested, with paper and pencil in hand. Once you achieve some clear insights, computers will help in calculations and visualization. There is a great deal of literature, as well as computer programs, available on the Internet; the reader should do some research in this direction. Some facts are intentionally repeated throughout the text, from slightly different points of view, just to help novices to become comfortable with concepts and relationships. There are grounds to believe that geometric algebra is the mathematics of the future. Paradoxically, although formulated in the mid-nineteenth century, it was mainly ignored, due to a range of (unfortunate) circumstances. This book is intended primarily for young people; those with established careers probably will not easily accept something new. A background in physics and mathematics at the undergraduate level is welcome for some parts of the text. However, it is possible to follow the text using the Internet to find explanations for less familiar terms. Advanced high-school students should be able to read at least parts of the text. A useful source is the book [1]; it can help those who are beginning with algebra and geometry. The book [2] is rather difficult; we recommend it to those who want to do some serious thinking. We also recommend Hestenes’s articles.

The reader should adopt the idea that vector multiplication as presented here is natural and justified; what follows are the consequences of such multiplication. The reader can come up independently with arguments to account for the definition of the geometric product. My intention is for the reader to accept that the geometric product is not just a “neat trick.” It arises naturally from the concept of a vector. That fact changes a great deal of mathematics. A simple rule that parallel vectors commute, while orthogonal vectors anticommute, produces an incredible amount of mathematics, uniting various mathematical disciplines into the universal language of geometric algebra. Finally, readers well disposed toward geometry may find a great deal of pleasure in geometric algebra. Objects like bivectors are not just new and interesting; they are magical, and they evoke juvenescence and intuitive conceptions about mathematics. In fact, in this book we are trying to explain a new concept of numbers and a special language in which such numbers represent oriented geometric objects. Such oriented numbers are intuitive and can replace unintuitive objects like matrices and tensors, giving us, along the way, universality and great possibilities for the unification of different branches of mathematics.

In the text, we treat for the most part the three-dimensional (3D) Euclidean vector space, and we do so for three main reasons. First, generalizations are usually straightforward; second, the reader can rely on a powerful geometric intuition; and finally, the 3D Euclidean vector space has a lot to offer in the new mathematical language. Its beauty and richness are hidden behind the veil of traditional mathematics.

The Mathematica users can find a special implementation of *Cl3* at official web address from the Publisher.

You are welcome to send comments or questions to me at miroslav.josipovic@gmail.com

Zagreb, Croatia
2018

Miroslav Josipović

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Contents

1	Basic Concepts	1
1.1	Geometric Product	1
1.1.1	How to Multiply Vectors	2
1.1.2	Grassmann's Great Idea	4
1.1.3	The Symmetric and Antisymmetric Parts of the Product	7
1.1.4	Orthonormal Basis Vectors	8
1.1.5	The Inner and the Outer Products	10
1.1.6	Graphical Representation of Bivectors	11
1.1.7	Equations of Geometric Objects	13
1.1.8	The Lorentz Force and Space Inversion	14
1.2	Complex Numbers	15
1.3	The Cross Product and Duality	16
1.3.1	Duality Operation	17
1.4	Algebra	17
1.4.1	Grades and Parity of a Multivector	19
1.4.2	Projection and Rejection	20
1.5	Mixed Products	20
1.5.1	A Useful Formula	21
1.6	Important Concepts	21
1.6.1	Versor	21
1.6.2	Blade	21
1.6.3	Involutions	22
1.6.4	Inverses	24
1.6.5	Nilpotents	24
1.6.6	Idempotents	25
1.6.7	Zero Divisors	25
1.6.8	Addition of Different Grades	25
1.6.9	Lists of Coefficients	26
1.7	Examples of Solving Equations	27
1.7.1	Quadratic Equations	27
1.8	Geometric Product of Vectors in Trigonometric Form	28
1.8.1	Merging Multiplication Tables	29
1.9	Reflections, Rotations, Spinors, Quaternions	29
1.9.1	Bivectors as Rotors	29
1.9.2	Invariants of Rotations	32
1.9.3	The Formalism of Reflections and Rotations	33
1.9.4	A Special Rotor Construction	35
1.9.5	Rotors as Geometric Products of Two Unit Vectors	36
1.9.6	Small Rotations	38

1.9.7	Rotors and Eigenblades	39
1.9.8	Rotors Are Strange	39
1.9.9	How to Rotate a Basis	41
1.9.10	Rotors and Quaternions	41
1.9.11	Rotors Are Universal	42
1.9.12	Rotors as Arcs	42
1.9.13	Rotors Are Unit Spinors	43
1.9.14	Angles as Areas	43
1.9.15	The Versor Product	44
1.9.16	Special Versors	45
1.10	The Scalar Product and the Magnitude of Multivectors	47
1.10.1	The Multivector Norm	48
1.11	Contractions	49
1.11.1	Left Contractions and Permutations	51
1.11.2	Left Contraction and k-Vectors	52
1.11.3	Projectors	53
1.11.4	A Proof of a Special Formula	55
1.12	Commutators and Orthogonal Transformations	56
1.12.1	Commutators with Bivectors	56
1.13	Functions of a Complex Argument	58
1.13.1	The Cauchy–Riemann Equations	58
1.13.2	Taylor Expansion and Analytic Functions	59
1.14	Spinors	60
1.15	A Bit of “Ordinary” Physics	61
1.15.1	The Kepler Problem	62
1.16	Words and Sentences	64
1.16.1	Geometric Content of Expressions	65
1.17	Linear Transformations	66
1.17.1	Determinants	70
1.17.2	Inverse of a Linear Transformation	72
1.17.3	Examples of Linear Transformations	72
1.17.4	Eigenvectors and Eigenblades	73
2	Euclidean 3D Geometric Algebra ($C\mathbb{3}$)	75
2.1	The Structure of Multivectors in $C\mathbb{3}$	75
2.1.1	The Square of a Complex Vector	78
2.2	Nilpotents and Dual Numbers	79
2.2.1	Dual Numbers	80
2.2.2	Dual Numbers and Galilean Transformations	81
2.3	Idempotents and Hyperbolic Structure	82
2.4	Spectral Decomposition and Functions of Multivectors	83
2.4.1	Motivation	83
2.4.2	Spectral Decomposition	84
2.4.3	Series Expansion	85

2.4.4	Functions of Complex Vectors	87
2.4.5	Functions of Nilpotents	87
2.4.6	Functions of Idempotents and Unit Complex Vectors	87
2.4.7	Inverse Functions	88
2.4.8	Functions of Lightlike Multivectors	88
2.4.9	Elementary Functions	89
2.4.10	Polynomial Equations	91
2.4.11	A New Concept of Numbers	91
2.5	What Is the Square Root of -1 ?	92
2.6	Trigonometric Forms of Multivectors	93
2.6.1	Mathematics of the Special Theory of Relativity	94
2.6.2	Everything Is a “Boost”	95
2.7	The Special Theory of Relativity	96
2.7.1	Postulates of the Special Theory of Relativity	97
2.7.2	Inertial Coordinate Systems and Reference Frames	97
2.7.3	Derivation of the Lorentz Transformations from Symmetries	98
2.7.4	Paravectors and Restricted Lorentz Transformations	99
2.7.5	Paravectors and the Minkowski Metric	102
2.7.6	The Restricted Lorentz Transformations	104
2.7.7	Electromagnetic Fields in Geometric Algebra	105
2.7.8	Problems with the Cross Product	106
2.7.9	Complex Vectors Are Powerful	107
2.8	Eigenspinors	108
2.9	Spinorial Equations	110
2.9.1	Kepler’s Problem	111
2.10	$C/3$ and Quantum Mechanics	111
2.10.1	The Wave Function of the Electron, Spinors	112
2.10.2	Spinors in $C/3$	113
2.10.3	Analogies for the Action of Operators	114
2.10.4	Observables in the Pauli Theory	114
2.10.5	The Expected Value of the Spin	115
2.10.6	Spinors Are Rotors with Dilatation	115
2.10.7	Half Spin is Due to the 3D Geometry	116
2.11	Differentiation and Integration	116
2.12	Geometric Models (The Conformal Model)	117
2.12.1	Points as Null Vectors	118
2.12.2	Geometric Objects	118
3	Applications	121
3.1	Two Boosts	121
3.2	Two Rotors in 3D	124
3.3	Reciprocal Frames	125
3.3.1	An Example of a Reciprocal Frame	127
3.4	Rigid-Body Dynamics	129

3.5	<i>C/2</i> and Complex Numbers	132
3.5.1	Inversion	134
3.6	Generalization of Real and Complex Products of Complex Numbers	135
3.7	The Complex Geometric Product and Fractals	135
3.8	Multiplication of Blades and Programming	136
3.8.1	An Interesting Mathematica Implementation	137
3.8.2	Bits and Logical Operations	138
3.8.3	Multiplication Tables	138
3.8.4	Implementation of <i>C/3</i> via Spectral Decomposition	139
4	Geometric Algebra and Matrices	141
4.1	The Pauli Matrices	142
4.1.1	Famous Representation of Vectors	142
4.1.2	Some Properties of the Pauli Matrices	143
4.1.3	The Pauli Matrices and Relativity	145
4.2	Spectral Basis and Matrices	145
4.2.1	<i>C/2</i>	145
4.2.2	<i>C/3</i>	149
4.3	Zero Divisors and Cancellation of Factors	151
4.4	Classical Spinors and Matrices	152
4.4.1	Spinor Formula	153
4.4.2	Exponential of a Matrix	155
4.4.3	SO(3) and SU(2)	156
4.4.4	Spin Rotation Matrices and Vectors	157
4.4.5	Spinors in the Special Theory of Relativity	157
4.4.6	Theorems About Determinants	158
4.4.7	SL(2, C)	158
4.4.8	Generators of the Lorentz Group	159
4.5	Vahlen Matrices and Möbius Transformations	160
5	Appendix	161
5.1	The Exponential Function	161
5.2	Products as Sums	164
5.3	On Idempotents and Spinors	165
5.3.1	Idempotents	165
5.3.2	Bases for Spinorial Matrices	169
5.3.3	Observables in Quantum Mechanics	169
5.3.4	The Möbius Strip and Spinors	170
5.4	Extended Lorentz Transformations. The Speed Limit?	170
5.4.1	General Bilinear Transformations	171
5.4.2	The Real Proper Time	172
5.4.3	The New Limiting Speed(s)	173
5.4.4	The Generalized Velocity and the Generalized Momentum	174

5.4.5	New Conserved Quantities	174
5.4.6	Properties of General Transformations	175
5.4.7	Maxwell's Equations Under General Transformations	175
5.5	Visualization of the Electromagnetic Field in Vacuum	177
5.6	Paravectors and EM Fields	179
5.7	Eigenvalues and Eigenelements	181
5.7.1	Eigensystem of Elements from the Clifford Basis	182
5.8	Duality	184
5.9	Permutations of Orthonormal Unit Vectors in Cl_3	185
6	Miscellaneous	189
6.1	Solutions to Selected Problems	189
6.2	Problems	207
6.3	Why Geometric Algebra?	217
6.4	Formulas	220
6.4.1	Linear Transformations	222
6.4.2	Cl_3	222
6.4.3	The Special Theory of Relativity	223
6.4.4	Lorentz Transformations	224
6.4.5	Electromagnetic Field	224
6.4.6	Quantum Mechanics	225
6.4.7	Conformal Model (<i>Hestenes</i>)	225
	Correction to: Geometric Multiplication of Vectors	C1
	How to Proceed Further?	227
	Quotes	229
	Credits	231
	Glossary	233
	Literature	237
	Some More Interesting Texts	238
	References and Links to Specific Subjects	239
	References	239
	Links to Supplementary Materials	239
	3D Geometry	239
	Some Web Resources	239
	Software	240

About the Author

Miroslav Josipović is a Croatian physicist and musician with special interest in revising the language of mathematical physics and in creating new ways of teaching physics. Revision of the language of mathematical physics can be achieved by relying on geometric algebra, a powerful language of physics and mathematics that brings geometric clarity and unseen possibilities of unification and generalizations. Experiments with physics teaching lead the author to the belief that students can understand nontrivial concepts of physics at an early age, but teachers have to give up the teaching of formalism and offer living examples that encourage curiosity. The feeling that it is possible to understand motivates the students greatly, and the job of a teacher is to enable young people to attain such a feeling. If they are successful, elementary school pupils will be able to solve difficult conceptual problems related to Newton's first law, for example, or high-school students will be able to deal with problems of the special theory of relativity that are generally considered to be difficult at that age. Young students are smart. Mathematics has to rely on geometric intuition, and the author firmly believes that geometric algebra can be gradually introduced as early as elementary school, first through games with oriented geometric objects, and later by extending the concept of a vector to oriented surfaces (bivectors) and the oriented volumes (3-vectors).

Mathematical Notation

x, \vec{x}, \mathbf{x}	a vector
$ \mathbf{x} $	the magnitude (length) of the vector \mathbf{x}
$\ A\ $	the norm of the element A , defined by the scalar product
$x \propto y$	x is proportional to y
\equiv	equal to (by definition)
AB	the geometric product (GP)
$A \cdot B$	the inner product
$A * B$	the scalar product
$A \bullet B$	the dot product
$A \wedge B$	the outer (wedge) product
$A \vee B$	the regressive product
$a \times b$	the cross product (for vectors in 3D)
$A \rfloor B$	the left contraction (LC)
$[A, B]$	the commutator of A and B , $(AB - BA)/2$
$\{A, B\}$	the anticommutator of A and B , $(AB + BA)/2$
$P_B(A)$	a projector of A onto the subspace characterized by B
Cl_n	the Clifford (geometric) algebra in n -dimensional Euclidean space
e_i	a vector of a basis (usually orthonormal, in $Cl3$ we sometimes use σ_i)
e^i	a vector of a reciprocal basis, $e^i \cdot e_j = \delta_{ij}$
$\hat{\sigma}_i$	the i th Pauli matrix
$e_i e_j \equiv e_{ij}$	a unit bivector (in an orthonormal basis e_i)
$j = e_{123}$	the unit pseudoscalar in $Cl3$
k -vector	single graded element of the grade k
$M^\Delta = M \rfloor I^{-1}$	the dual operation, I is the unit pseudoscalar
M^*	complex conjugation, e.g., $(\alpha + \mathbf{n}j + \beta j)^* = \alpha - \mathbf{n}j - \beta j$, $\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{R}$
$\langle M \rangle_r$	the grade r
$\langle M \rangle = \langle M \rangle_0$	the grade 0
M^\dagger	the reverse involution
\overline{M}	the grade involution (\hat{M} is common; however, we use the hat for unit elements)
\bar{M}	the Clifford involution (conjugation, main involution)
$\langle M \rangle_R = (M + M^\dagger)/2$	the real part of a multivector (<i>paravector</i>) in $Cl3$
$\langle M \rangle_I = (M - M^\dagger)/2$	the imaginary part of a multivector in $Cl3$
$\langle M \rangle_S = (M + \bar{M})/2$	the scalar part of a multivector (complex scalar, $\alpha + \beta j$) in $Cl3$, $\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{R}$
$\langle M \rangle_V = (M - \bar{M})/2$	the vector part of a multivector (complex vector, $\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{n}j$) in $Cl3$

$\langle M \rangle_+ = (M + \bar{M})/2$	the even part of a multivector ($\alpha + \mathbf{n}j$) in $Cl3$, $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$
$\langle M \rangle_- = (M - \bar{M})/2$	the odd part of a multivector ($\mathbf{x} + \beta j$) in $Cl3$, $\beta \in \mathbb{R}$
$ M = \sqrt{M\bar{M}}$	the multivector amplitude (MA; sometimes we use it as $M\bar{M}$)
δ_{ij}	the Kronecker delta symbol, $\delta_{ij} = 1$ for $i = j$ and $\delta_{ij} = 0$ for $i \neq j$
$\partial_k \equiv \frac{\partial}{\partial x^k}$	a partial derivative, $\frac{\partial x^i}{\partial x^j} = \delta_{ij}$
$\nabla = e^k \partial_k$	the differential operator <i>nabla</i> (summation over $k = 1, 2, 3$)
$\partial = \partial_t + \nabla$	a differential operator as a <i>paravector</i>
$\mathfrak{R}^{(p, q, r)}$	a vector space with the <i>signature</i> (p, q, r)
\mathbb{R}	the set of real numbers (α, β, \dots)
i	the imaginary unit, $i = \sqrt{-1}$
\mathbb{C}	the set of complex numbers in $Cl3$, such as $\alpha + \beta j$; sometimes $\alpha + \beta i$, $i = \sqrt{-1}$, $\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{R}$
F	a linear transformation (note the text format)
\bar{F}	adjoint (transpose) of the linear transformation F
$ \psi\rangle$	a vector in a complex vector space, <i>ket</i> (a column vector, usually represents spinors)
$\langle \psi $	the Hermitian conjugate (transposed and complex conjugated) of $ \psi\rangle$, <i>bra</i> (a row vector)
$\langle \phi \psi\rangle$	the inner product in a complex vector space
$ \psi\rangle\langle\phi $	the outer product in a complex vector space
$\langle \phi O \psi\rangle$	the <i>expectation value</i> of the <i>operator</i> O in a complex vector space

Acronyms

APS	algebra of physical space, Pauli algebra, $Cl3$
CGA	the <i>conformal model</i> in geometric algebra
ICS	inertial coordinate system
IRF	inertial reference frame
GA	geometric algebra
GP	geometric product
LC	left contraction
MA	multivector amplitude
STA	spacetime algebra
STR	the special theory of relativity

Reference Labels

En	the n th task with a solution in Solutions (Sect. 6.1)
$\text{Fig.}n$	Figure n from the text
Ln	the link n from the References and Links to specific subjects
n	problem n in Problems (Sect. 6.2)
$[n]$	reference n
Rn	reference n from the References and Links to specific subjects