

This will provide an explanation behind these Desmos demonstrations:

<https://www.desmos.com/calculator/j7sw3ezr2h> and

<https://www.desmos.com/calculator/nkdgbhhyke>.

First we have five points P_1, \dots, P_5 . Let $P_i = (a_i, b_i, c_i)$ for $1 \leq i \leq 5$. First we will find an automorphism of the plane $A : \mathbb{P}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^2$ such that

$$\begin{aligned} A(P_1) &= (1, 0, 0), \\ A(P_2) &= (0, 1, 0), \\ A(P_3) &= (0, 0, 1), \\ \text{and } A(P_4) &= (1, 1, 1). \end{aligned}$$

My first step of this was to find a matrix that would just do the first three things. I got

$$M = \begin{pmatrix} (b_2c_3 - b_3c_2) & (a_3c_2 - a_2c_3) & (a_2b_3 - a_3b_2) \\ (b_1c_3 - b_3c_1) & (a_3c_1 - a_1c_3) & (a_1b_3 - a_3b_1) \\ (b_1c_2 - b_2c_1) & (a_2c_1 - a_1c_2) & (a_1b_2 - a_2b_1) \end{pmatrix}.$$

To get a function that also sends P_4 to $(1, 1, 1)$, let us first define the functions

$$\begin{aligned} L_{23}(x, y, z) &= (b_2c_3 - b_3c_2)x + (a_3c_2 - a_2c_3)y + (a_2b_3 - a_3b_2)z, \\ L_{13}(x, y, z) &= (b_1c_3 - b_3c_1)x + (a_3c_1 - a_1c_3)y + (a_1b_3 - a_3b_1)z, \\ L_{12}(x, y, z) &= (b_1c_2 - b_2c_1)x + (a_2c_1 - a_1c_2)y + (a_1b_2 - a_2b_1)z. \end{aligned}$$

In other words,

$$M(x, y, z) = (L_{23}(x, y, z), L_{13}(x, y, z), L_{12}(x, y, z)).$$

Then define $f = 1/L_{23}(P_4)$, $g = 1/L_{13}(P_4)$, and $h = 1/L_{12}(P_4)$. Then

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} (b_2c_3 - b_3c_2)f & (a_3c_2 - a_2c_3)f & (a_2b_3 - a_3b_2)f \\ (b_1c_3 - b_3c_1)g & (a_3c_1 - a_1c_3)g & (a_1b_3 - a_3b_1)g \\ (b_1c_2 - b_2c_1)h & (a_2c_1 - a_1c_2)h & (a_1b_2 - a_2b_1)h \end{pmatrix}.$$

Then $A(P_5) = (L_{23}(P_5)f, L_{13}(P_5)g, L_{12}(P_5)h)$. Now we will apply the quadratic transformation with base points at $(1, 0, 0)$, $(0, 1, 0)$, and $(0, 0, 1)$ (also called the *Cremona* transformation) $\varphi : \mathbb{P}^2 \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}^2$ given by $\varphi(a, b, c) = (bc, ac, ab)$. Then φ preserves $(1, 1, 1)$ and φ sends $A(P_5)$ to

$$\varphi(A(P_5)) = (L_{13}(P_5)L_{12}(P_5)gh, L_{23}(P_5)L_{12}(P_5)fh, L_{23}(P_5)L_{13}(P_5)fg).$$

Define

$$\begin{aligned} Q_1 &= L_{23}(P_5)L_{12}(P_5)fh - L_{23}(P_5)L_{13}(P_5)fg \\ Q_2 &= L_{23}(P_5)L_{13}(P_5)fg - L_{13}(P_5)L_{12}(P_5)gh \\ Q_3 &= L_{13}(P_5)L_{12}(P_5)gh - L_{23}(P_5)L_{12}(P_5)fh. \end{aligned}$$

Then the line connecting $(1, 1, 1)$ and $\varphi(A(P_5))$ is given by the polynomial $Q_1x + Q_2y + Q_3z$. After applying φ again, we get a conic $Q_1yz + Q_2xz + Q_3xy$ that goes through $\varphi(\varphi(A(P_5))) = P_5, (1, 1, 1), (1, 0, 0), (0, 1, 0),$ and $(0, 0, 1)$. Now all we need to do is apply A^{-1} to this conic and we get

$$Q_1L_{13}(x, y, z)gL_{12}(x, y, z)h + Q_2L_{23}(x, y, z)fL_{12}(x, y, z)h + Q_3L_{23}(x, y, z)fL_{13}(x, y, z)g.$$

This is the conic that goes through P_1, \dots, P_5 .

Now suppose we have four points P_1, \dots, P_4 and a line T . We will show how to construct the two conics that go through the four points and is tangent to T .

First let us first determine how to find the points on a conic C whose line connecting to $(1, 1, 1)$ is tangent to C . Let C be given by the expression $qx^2+rxxy+sxz+ty^2+uyz+ vz^2$ and let $P = (a, b, c) \in C$. Then the line tangent to C at P is given by

$$(2qa + rb + sc)x + (ra + 2tb + uc)y + (sa + ub + 2vc)z.$$

For $(1, 1, 1)$ to be on this line, (a, b, c) must satisfy

$$(2q + r + s)a + (r + 2t + u)b + (s + u + 2v)c = \alpha a + \beta b + \gamma c = 0.$$

In other words, P must be where the line $L = \alpha x + \beta y + \gamma z$ intersects C . There are at most 2 such points. Let

$$\begin{aligned} \delta &= q\gamma^2 - s\alpha\gamma + v\alpha^2, \\ \varepsilon &= r\gamma^2 - s\beta\gamma - u\alpha\gamma + 2v\alpha\beta, \\ \psi &= t\gamma^2 - u\beta\gamma + v\beta^2. \end{aligned}$$

The the intersection with the line L and the conic C occur at the solutions to $\delta x^2 + \varepsilon xy + \psi y^2$. These solutions are $(-\varepsilon \pm \sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi}, 2\delta)$. To be on the line $L = \alpha x + \beta y + \gamma z$, we get $z = \frac{-\alpha(-\varepsilon \pm \sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi}) - \beta(2\delta)}{\gamma}$. Thus our points are

$$\left(-\gamma\varepsilon \pm \gamma\sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi}, 2\gamma\delta, -\alpha\left(-\varepsilon \pm \sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi}\right) - 2\beta\delta\right).$$

Now let $T = ax + by + cz$. Note

$$A^{-1} = \begin{pmatrix} -a_1/f & a_2/g & -a_3/h \\ -b_1/f & b_2/g & -b_3/h \\ -c_1/f & c_2/g & -c_3/h \end{pmatrix}.$$

Then

$$A(T) = a \left(-\frac{a_1}{f}x + \frac{a_2}{g}y - \frac{a_3}{h}z\right) + b \left(-\frac{b_1}{f}x + \frac{b_2}{g}y - \frac{b_3}{h}z\right) + c \left(-\frac{c_1}{f}x + \frac{c_2}{g}y - \frac{c_3}{h}z\right).$$

Then

$$\varphi(A(T)) = a \left(-\frac{a_1}{f}yz + \frac{a_2}{g}xz - \frac{a_3}{h}xy\right) + b \left(-\frac{b_1}{f}yz + \frac{b_2}{g}xz - \frac{b_3}{h}xy\right) + c \left(-\frac{c_1}{f}yz + \frac{c_2}{g}xz - \frac{c_3}{h}xy\right)$$

and so

$$\begin{aligned}
 q &= 0 \\
 r &= -\frac{aa_3}{h} - \frac{bb_3}{h} - \frac{cc_3}{h} \\
 s &= \frac{aa_2}{g} + \frac{bb_2}{g} + \frac{cc_2}{g} \\
 t &= 0 \\
 u &= -\frac{aa_1}{f} - \frac{bb_1}{f} - \frac{cc_1}{f} \\
 v &= 0.
 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore

$$\begin{aligned}
 \alpha &= r + s \\
 \beta &= r + u \\
 \gamma &= s + u \\
 \delta &= -s\alpha\gamma \\
 \varepsilon &= r\gamma^2 - s\beta\gamma - u\alpha\gamma \\
 \psi &= -u\beta\gamma.
 \end{aligned}$$

With these equalities in mind, define

$$\begin{aligned}
 \eta_1 &= -\gamma\varepsilon + \gamma\sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi} \\
 \eta_2 &= -\gamma\varepsilon - \gamma\sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi} \\
 \zeta &= 2\gamma\delta \\
 \mu_1 &= -\alpha\left(-\varepsilon + \sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi}\right) - 2\beta\delta \\
 \mu_2 &= -\alpha\left(-\varepsilon - \sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi}\right) - 2\beta\delta
 \end{aligned}$$

and so

$$\begin{aligned}
 \Phi_1 &= \left(-\gamma\varepsilon + \gamma\sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi}, 2\gamma\delta, -\alpha\left(-\varepsilon + \sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi}\right) - 2\beta\delta\right) = (\eta_1, \zeta, \mu_1) \\
 \Phi_2 &= \left(-\gamma\varepsilon - \gamma\sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi}, 2\gamma\delta, -\alpha\left(-\varepsilon - \sqrt{\varepsilon^2 - 4\delta\psi}\right) - 2\beta\delta\right) = (\eta_2, \zeta, \mu_2).
 \end{aligned}$$

Now we must connect Φ_1 and Φ_2 to $(1, 1, 1)$ with the lines

$$\begin{aligned}
 L_1 &= (\zeta - \mu_1)x + (\mu_1 - \eta_1)y + (\eta_1 - \zeta)z \\
 L_2 &= (\zeta - \mu_2)x + (\mu_2 - \eta_2)y + (\eta_2 - \zeta)z.
 \end{aligned}$$

Now we must apply the quadratic transformation φ to these lines to get

$$\begin{aligned}
 \varphi(L_1) &= (\zeta - \mu_1)yz + (\mu_1 - \eta_1)xz + (\eta_1 - \zeta)xy \\
 \varphi(L_2) &= (\zeta - \mu_2)yz + (\mu_2 - \eta_2)xz + (\eta_2 - \zeta)xy.
 \end{aligned}$$

These are conics that contain $(1, 0, 0)$, $(0, 1, 0)$, $(0, 0, 1)$, and $(1, 1, 1)$ and are tangent to $A(T)$. Let us write

$$\begin{aligned} R_1 &= \zeta - \mu_1 \\ R_2 &= \mu_1 - \eta_1 \\ R_3 &= \eta_1 - \zeta \\ S_1 &= \zeta - \mu_2 \\ S_2 &= \mu_2 - \eta_2 \\ S_3 &= \eta_2 - \zeta. \end{aligned}$$

Now we must apply A^{-1} to $\varphi(L_1)$ and $\varphi(L_2)$ to get

$$\begin{aligned} C_1 &= R_1 L_{13}(x, y, z)g L_{12}(x, y, z)h + R_2 L_{23}(x, y, z)f L_{12}(x, y, z)h + R_3 L_{23}(x, y, z)f L_{13}(x, y, z)g \\ C_2 &= S_1 L_{13}(x, y, z)g L_{12}(x, y, z)h + S_2 L_{23}(x, y, z)f L_{12}(x, y, z)h + S_3 L_{23}(x, y, z)f L_{13}(x, y, z)g. \end{aligned}$$

These are the two conics that go through points P_1, \dots, P_4 and are tangent to the line T .