

Question

In the proof that the group of Möbius transformations acts transitively on the set of circles in $\overline{\mathbf{C}}$, we use the fact that three distinct points in $\overline{\mathbf{C}}$ determine a circle in $\overline{\mathbf{C}}$.

Prove this fact in a single special case: determine the center and radius of the circle determined by $2 + i$, $3 - i$, and $-7i$.

Answer

The circle in \mathbf{C} determined by $2 + i, 3 - i, -7i$ (first note that these 3 points do not lie on a line in \mathbf{C} , since the line through $2 + i$ and $3 - i$ intersects the imaginary axis at $5i \neq -7i$).

- The midpoint of the line segment through $2 + i$ and $3 - i$ is $\frac{1}{2}(2 + i + 3 - i) = \frac{5}{2}$ and its slope is $\frac{-1 - 1}{3 - 2} = -2$.

The perpendicular bisector then has equation $y - 0 = +\frac{1}{2}\left(x - \frac{5}{2}\right)$

$$\Rightarrow \underline{y = \frac{1}{2}x - \frac{5}{4}}$$

- The midpoint of the line segment through $2 + i$ and $-7i$ is $\frac{1}{2}(2 + i - 7i) = 1 - 3i$ and its slope is $\frac{-7 - 1}{0 - 2} = 4$.

The perpendicular bisector then has equation $y + 3 = -\frac{1}{4}(x - 1) =$

$$-\frac{1}{4}x + \frac{1}{4}$$

$$\Rightarrow \underline{y = -\frac{1}{4}x - \frac{11}{4}}$$

These perpendiculars are both diameters of the desired circle and hence intersect at the center:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{1}{2}x - \frac{5}{4} &= -\frac{1}{4}x - \frac{11}{4} \\ \frac{3}{4}x &= -\frac{6}{4} \end{aligned}$$

$$\underline{\underline{\begin{aligned} x &= -2 \\ y &= \frac{1}{2}x - \frac{5}{4} = -\frac{9}{4} \end{aligned}}}$$

So, the center of the circle is $\underline{-2 - \frac{9}{4}i = a}$.

Its radius is:

$$\begin{aligned} \left| -2 - \frac{9}{4}i - (-7i) \right| &= \left| -2 + \frac{19}{4}i \right| = 5.154 \\ \left| -2 - \frac{9}{4}i - (2 + i) \right| &= \left| -4 - \frac{13}{4}i \right| = 5.154 \\ \left| -2 - \frac{9}{4}i - (3 - i) \right| &= \left| -5 - \frac{5}{4}i \right| = 5.154 \end{aligned}$$