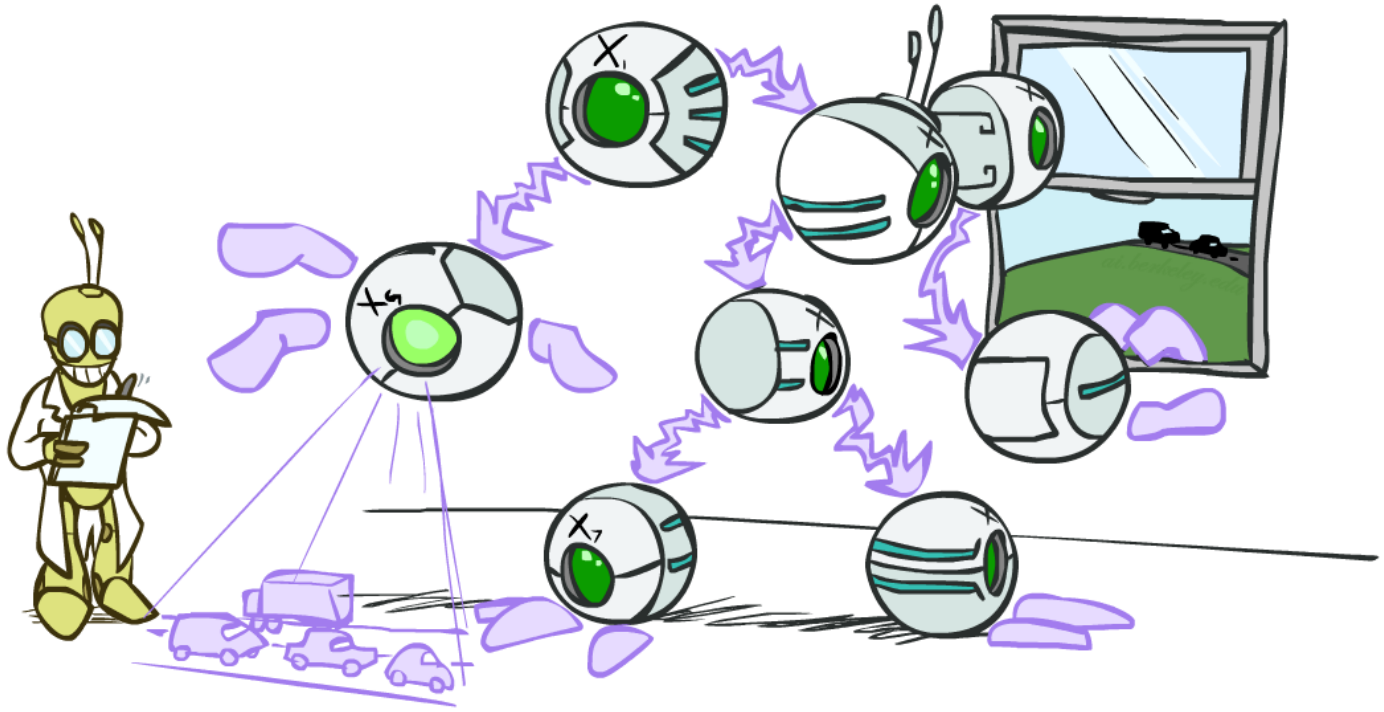
CS 188: Artificial Intelligence

Bayes' Nets: Inference



Fall 2025 --- University of California, Berkeley

[These slides were created by Dan Klein and Pieter Abbeel for CS188 Intro to AI at UC Berkeley. All CS188 materials are available at http://ai.berkeley.edu.]

Bayes' Nets

- ✔ Representation
- ✔ Conditional Independences
- Probabilistic Inference
  - Enumeration (exact, exponential complexity)
  - Variable elimination (exact, worst-case exponential complexity, often better)
  - Probabilistic inference is NP-complete
  - Sampling (approximate)
- Learning Bayes' Nets from Data

Inference

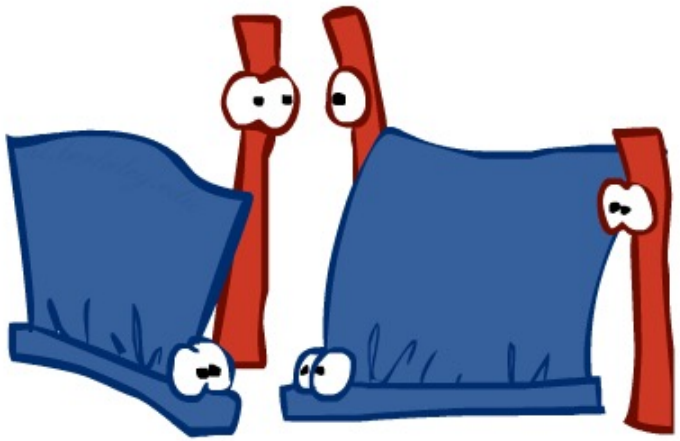
- Inference: calculating some useful quantity from a joint probability distribution

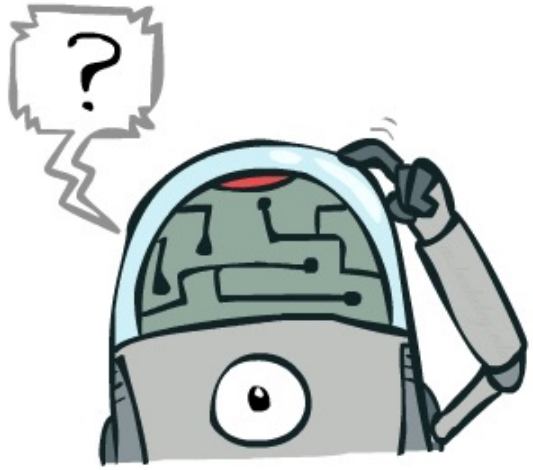
- Examples:
  - Posterior probability

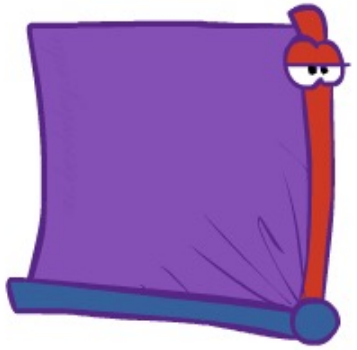
    $$P(Q|E_1 = e_1, \ldots E_k = e_k)$$

  - Most likely explanation:

    $$\text{argmax}_q \; P(Q = q|E_1 = e_1 \ldots)$$







Inference by Enumeration

- General case:
  - Evidence variables: $E_1 \dots E_k = e_1 \dots e_k$
  - Query* variable: Q
  - Hidden variables: $H_1 \dots H_r$

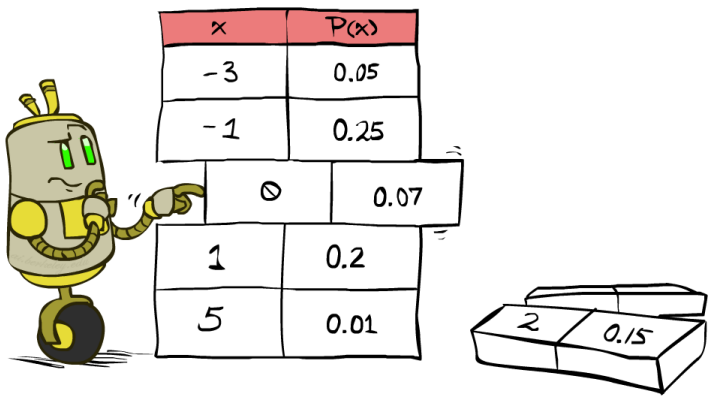
$$\left.\begin{array}{l} E_1 \dots E_k = e_1 \dots e_k \\ Q \\ H_1 \dots H_r \end{array}\right\} \begin{array}{l} X_1, X_2, \dots X_n \\ \textit{All variables} \end{array}$$

- We want:

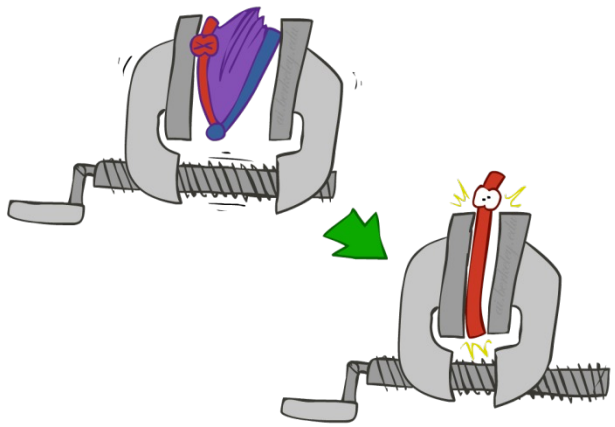
** Works fine with multiple query variables, too*

$$P(Q|e_1 \dots e_k)$$

- Step 1: Select the entries consistent with the evidence



- Step 2: Sum out H to get joint of Query and evidence



$$P(Q, e_1 \dots e_k) = \sum_{h_1 \dots h_r} P(\underbrace{Q, h_1 \dots h_r, e_1 \dots e_k}_{X_1, X_2, \dots X_n})$$

- Step 3: Normalize

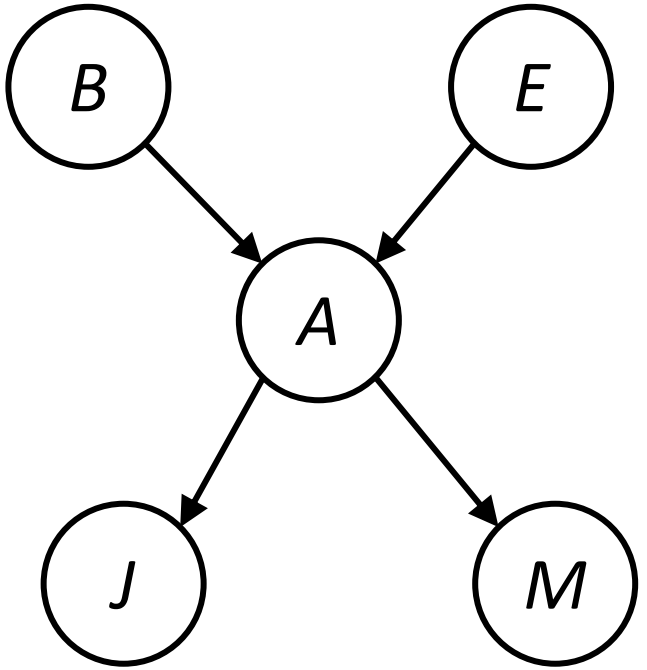
$$\times \frac{1}{Z}$$

$$Z = \sum_q P(Q, e_1 \cdots e_k)$$

$$P(Q|e_1 \cdots e_k) = \frac{1}{Z} P(Q, e_1 \cdots e_k)$$

Inference by Enumeration in Bayes' Net

- Given unlimited time, inference in BNs is easy
- Reminder of inference by enumeration by example:



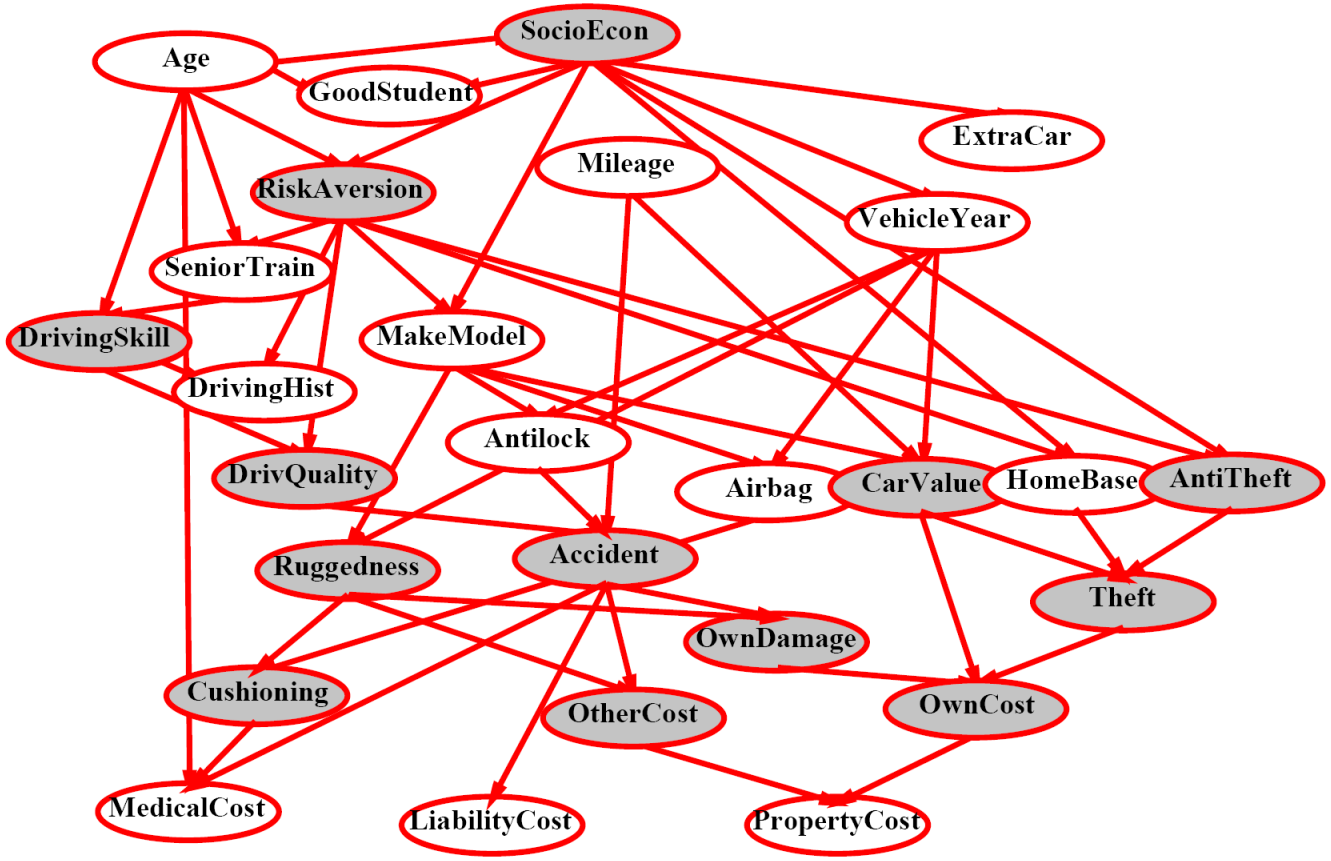
$$P(B \mid +j, +m) \propto_B P(B, +j, +m)$$

$$= \sum_{e,a} P(B, e, a, +j, +m)$$

$$= \sum_{e,a} P(B)P(e)P(a|B,e)P(+j|a)P(+m|a)$$

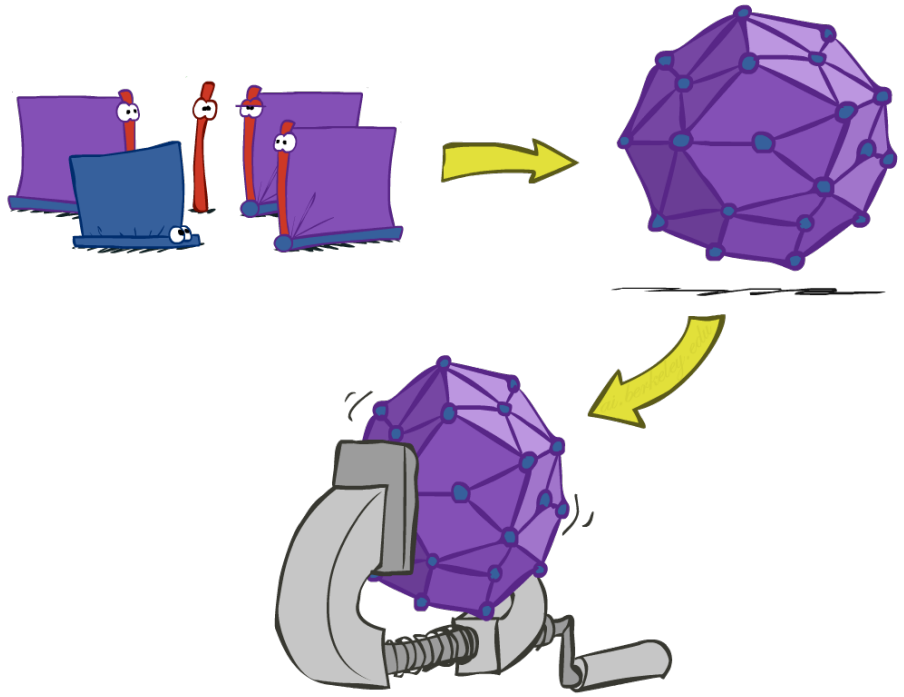
$$= P(B)P(+e)P(+a|B,+e)P(+j|+a)P(+m|+a) + P(B)P(+e)P(-a|B,+e)P(+j|-a)P(+m|-a)$$
$$P(B)P(-e)P(+a|B,-e)P(+j|+a)P(+m|+a) + P(B)P(-e)P(-a|B,-e)P(+j|-a)P(+m|-a)$$

Inference by Enumeration?

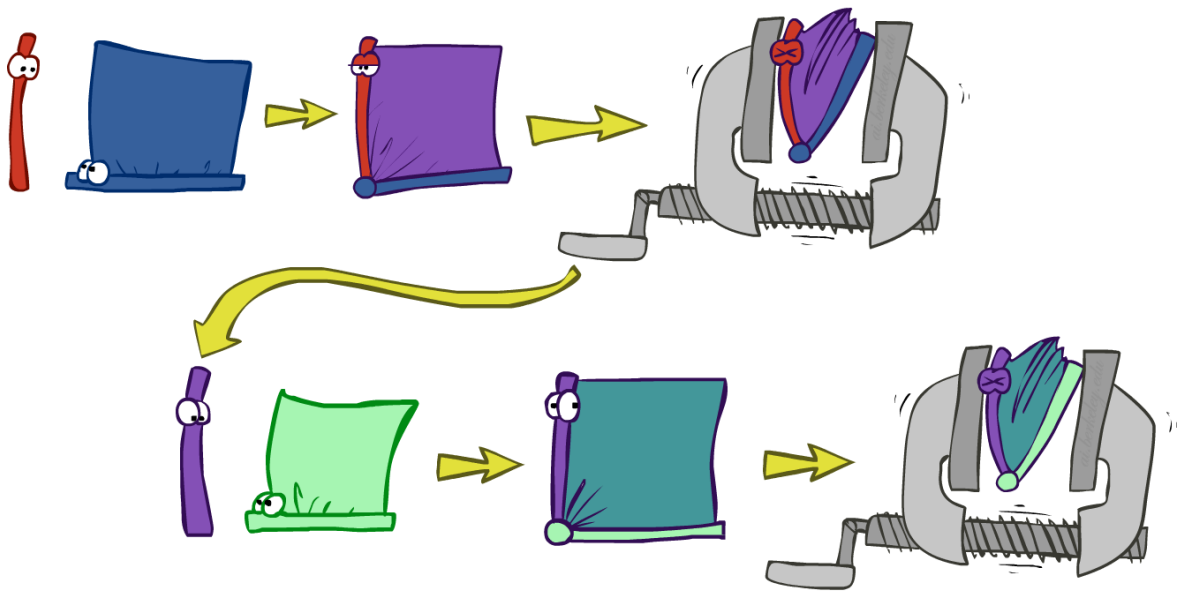


Inference by Enumeration vs. Variable Elimination

- Why is inference by enumeration so slow?
  - You join up the whole joint distribution before you sum out the hidden variables

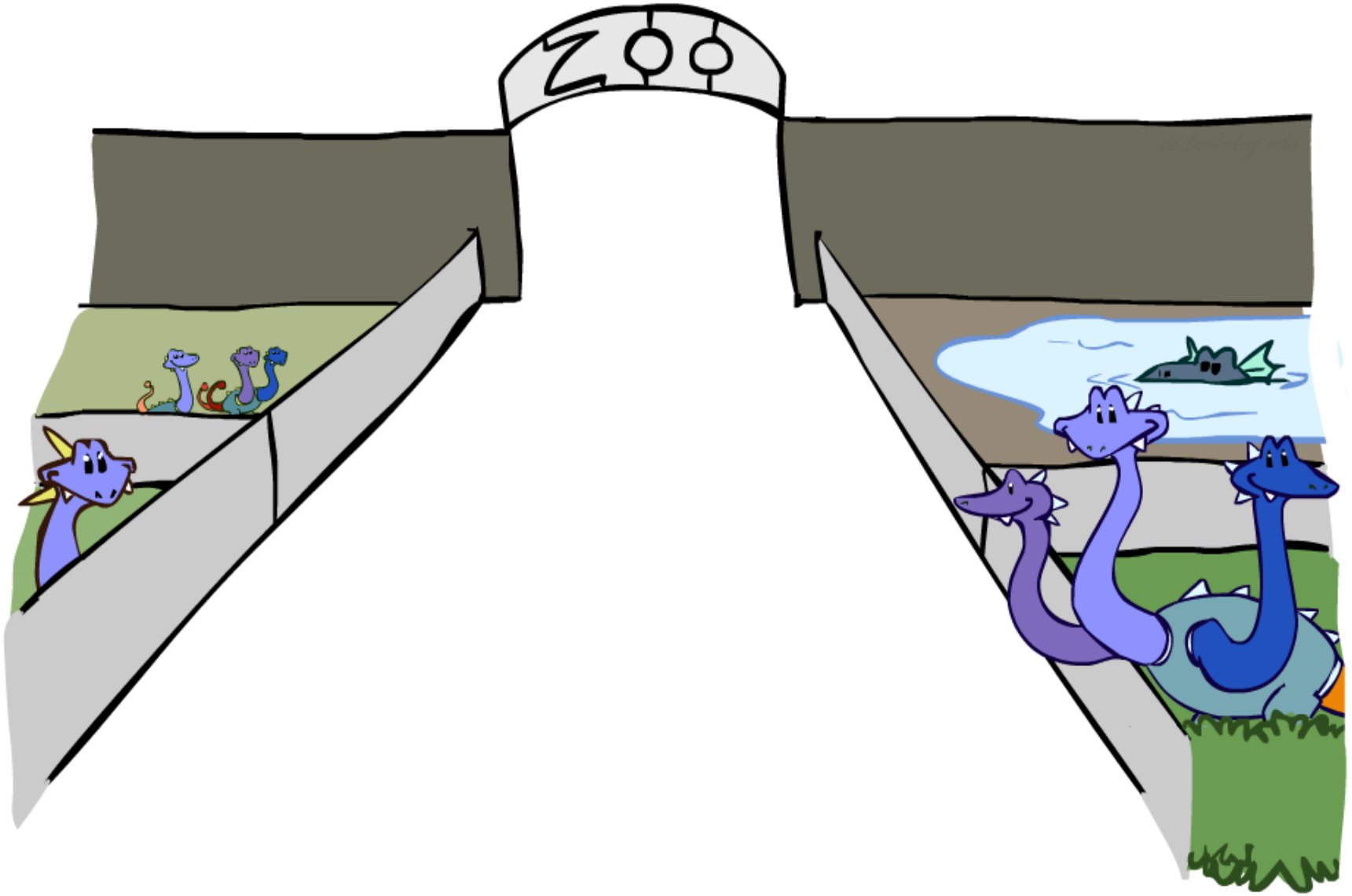


- Idea: interleave joining and marginalizing!
  - Called "Variable Elimination"
  - Still NP-hard, but usually much faster than inference by enumeration



  - First we'll need some new notation: factors

Factor Zoo



Factor Zoo I

- Joint distribution: P(X,Y)
  - Entries P(x,y) for all x, y
  - Sums to 1

$$P(T, W)$$

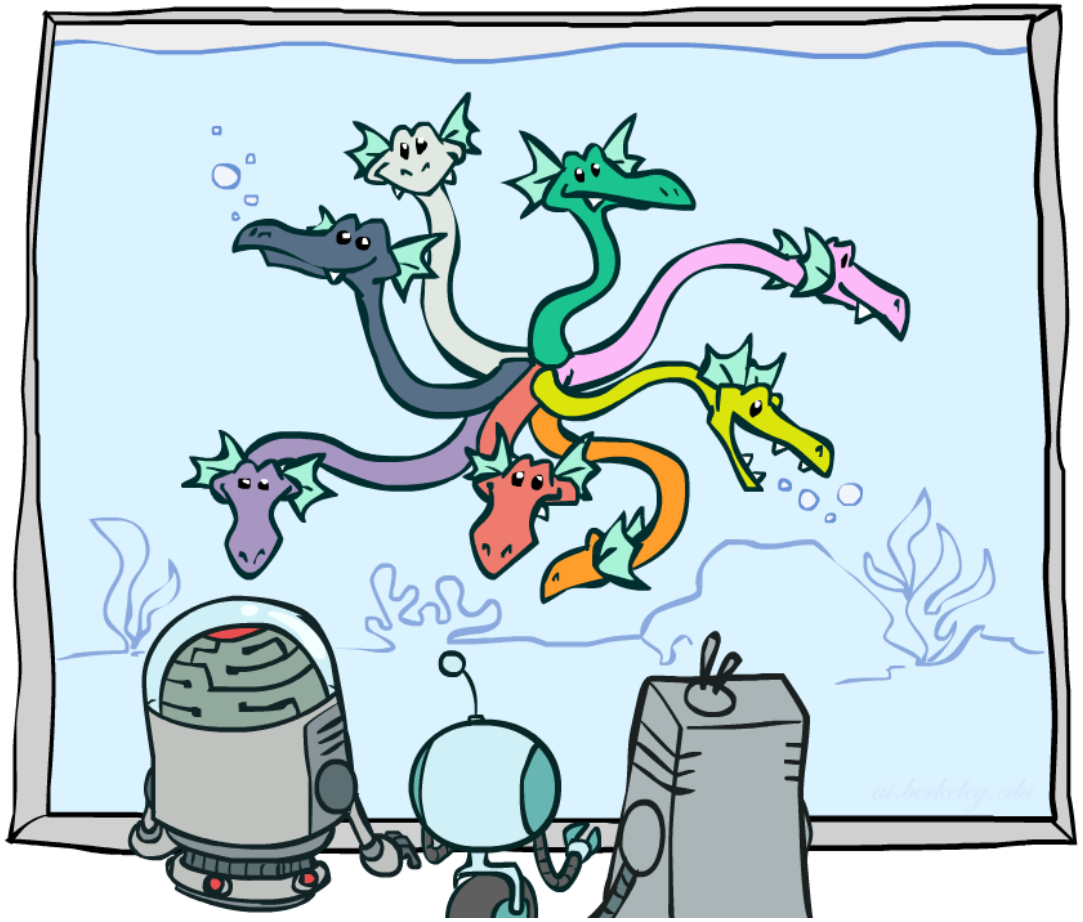
T	W	P
hot	sun	0.4
hot	rain	0.1
cold	sun	0.2
cold	rain	0.3

- Selected joint: P(x,Y)
  - A slice of the joint distribution
  - Entries P(x,y) for fixed x, all y
  - Sums to P(x)

$$P(cold, W)$$

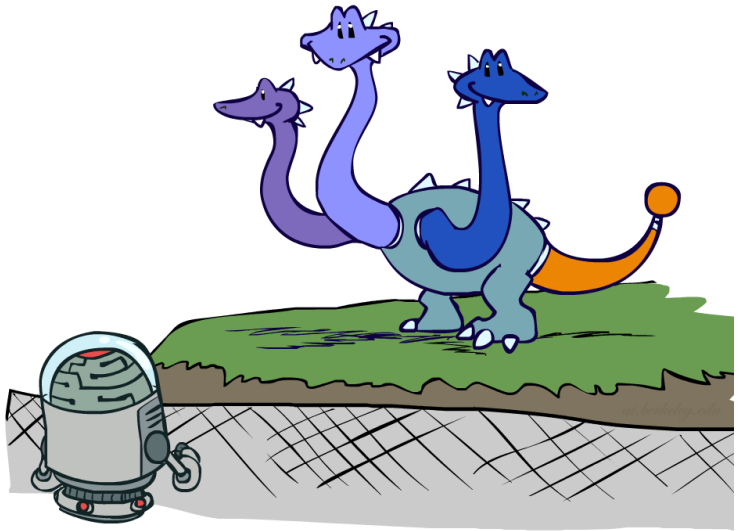
T	W	P
cold	sun	0.2
cold	rain	0.3

- Number of capitals = dimensionality of the table



Factor Zoo II

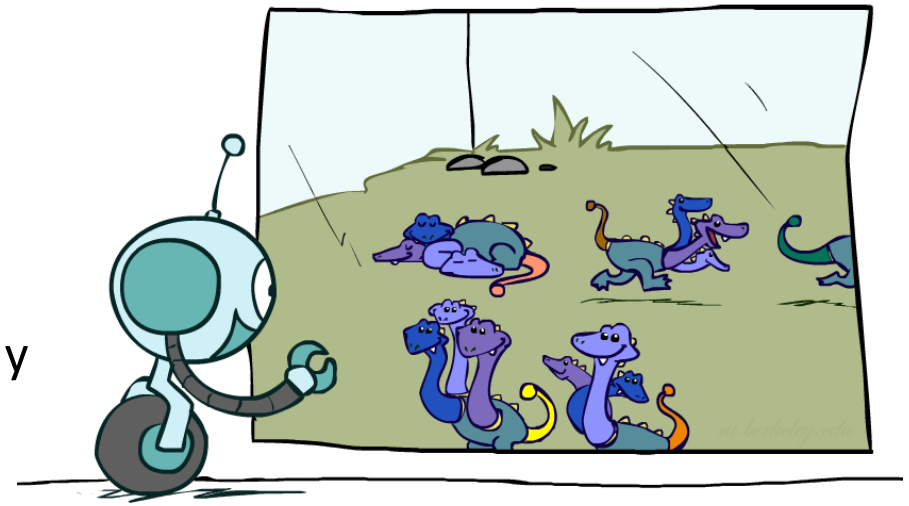
- Single conditional: P(Y | x)
  - Entries P(y | x) for fixed x, all
  - Sums to 1



$P(W|cold)$

T	W	P
cold	sun	0.4
cold	rain	0.6

- Family of conditionals: P(Y | X)
  - Multiple conditionals
  - Entries P(y | x) for all x, y
  - Sums to |X|



$P(W|T)$

T	W	P
hot	sun	0.8
hot	rain	0.2
cold	sun	0.4
cold	rain	0.6

$P(W|hot)$

$P(W|cold)$

Factor Zoo III

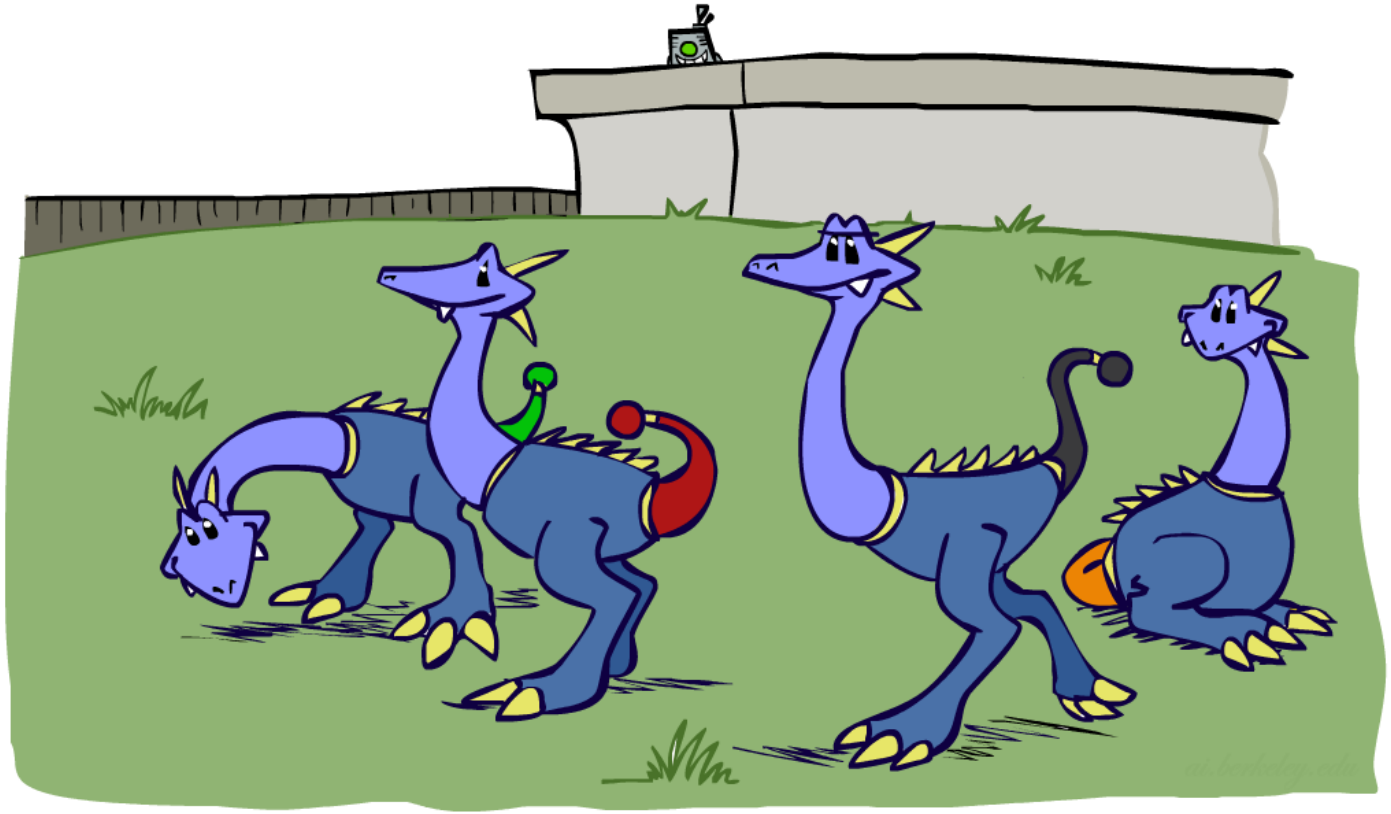
- Specified family: P(y | X)
  - Entries P(y | x) for fixed y, but for all x
  - Sums to … who knows!

$$P(rain|T)$$

T	W	P
hot	rain	0.2
cold	rain	0.6

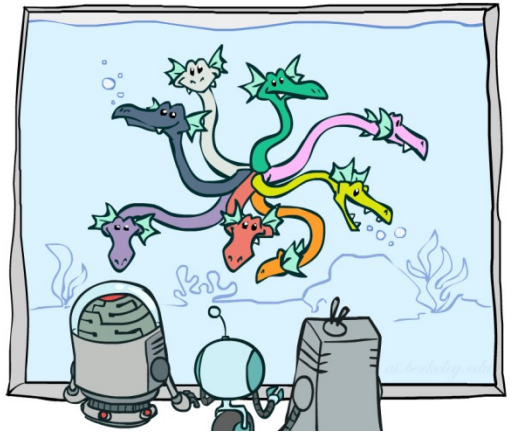
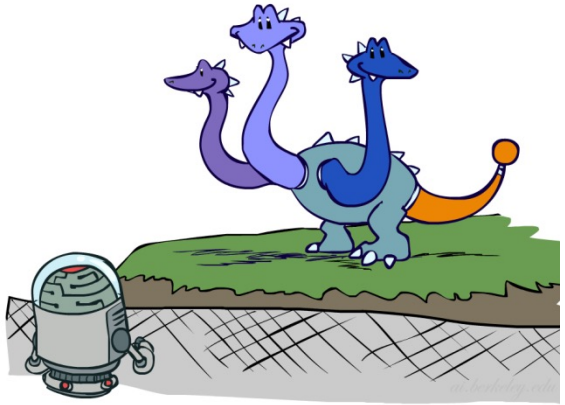
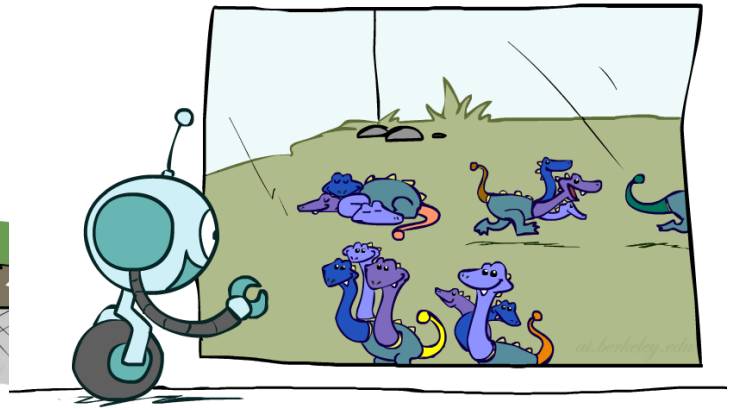
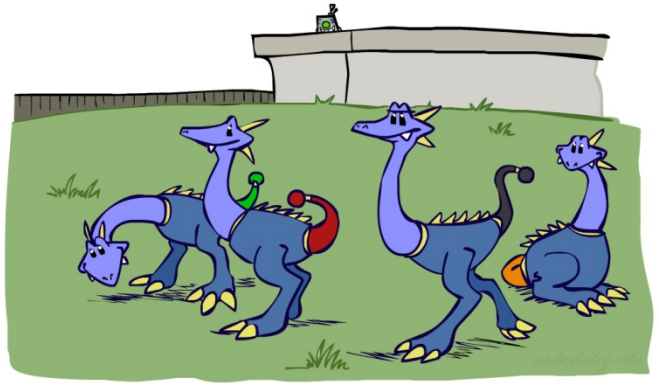
$P(rain|hot)$

$P(rain|cold)$



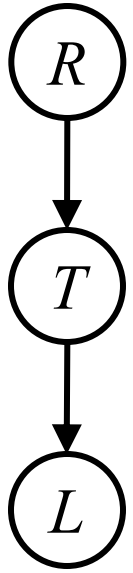
Factor Zoo Summary

- In general, when we write $P(Y_1 \ldots Y_N \mid X_1 \ldots X_M)$
  - It is a "factor," a multi-dimensional array
  - Its values are $P(y_1 \ldots y_N \mid x_1 \ldots x_M)$
  - Any assigned (=lower-case) X or Y is a dimension missing (selected) from the array

Example: Traffic Domain

- Random Variables
  - R: Raining
  - T: Traffic
  - L: Late for class!



$$P(L) = ?$$

$$= \sum_{r,t} P(r,t,L)$$

$$= \sum_{r,t} P(r)P(t|r)P(L|t)$$

$P(R)$

+r	0.1
-r	0.9

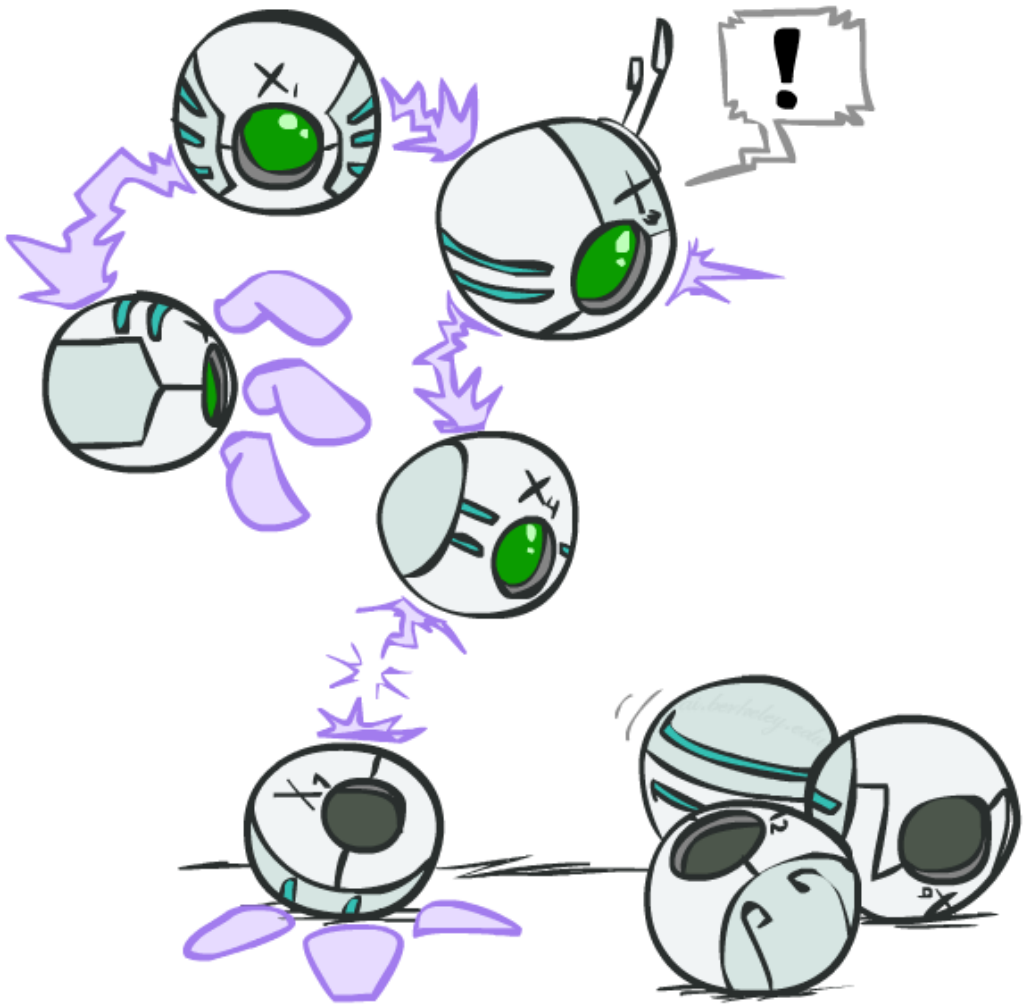
$P(T|R)$

+r	+t	0.8
+r	-t	0.2
-r	+t	0.1
-r	-t	0.9

$P(L|T)$

+t	+l	0.3
+t	-l	0.7
-t	+l	0.1
-t	-l	0.9

Variable Elimination (VE)



Inference by Enumeration: Procedural Outline

- Track objects called factors
- Initial factors are local CPTs (one per node)

$P(R)$

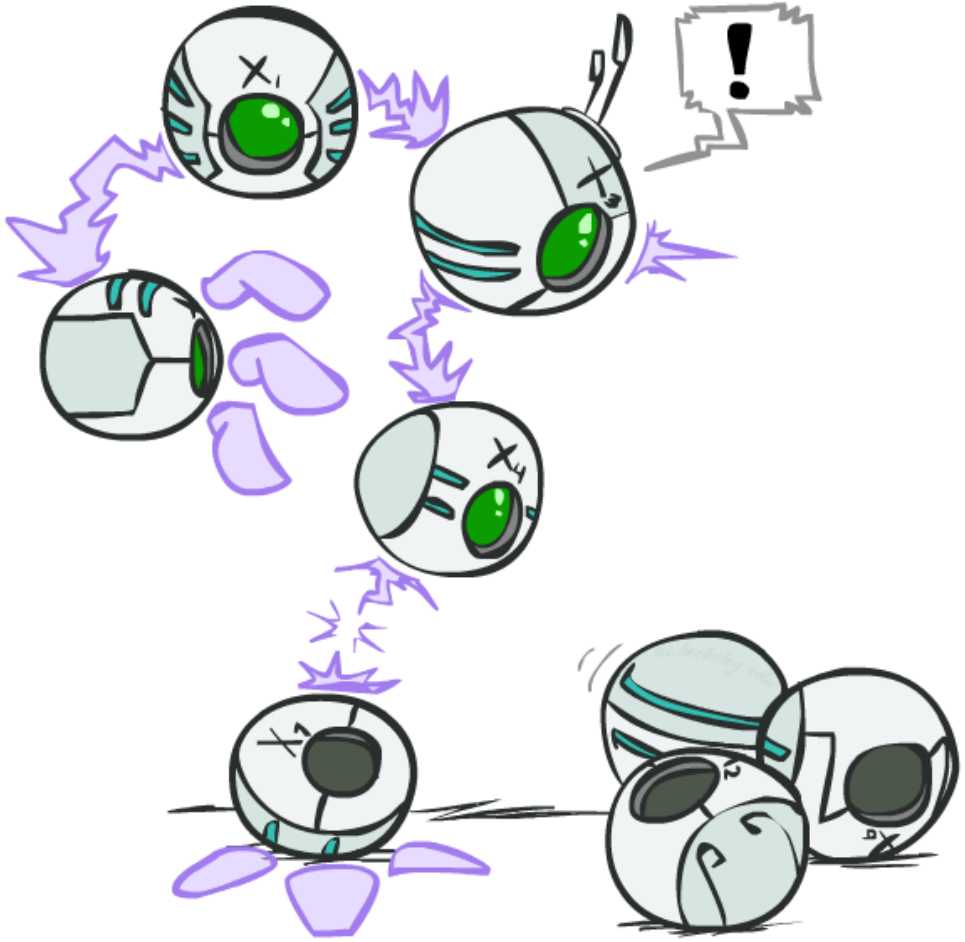
+r	0.1
-r	0.9

$P(T|R)$

+r	+t	0.8
+r	-t	0.2
-r	+t	0.1
-r	-t	0.9

$P(L|T)$

+t	+l	0.3
+t	-l	0.7
-t	+l	0.1
-t	-l	0.9



- Any known values are selected
  - E.g. if we know $L = +\ell$, the initial factors are

$P(R)$

+r	0.1
-r	0.9

$P(T|R)$

+r	+t	0.8
+r	-t	0.2
-r	+t	0.1
-r	-t	0.9

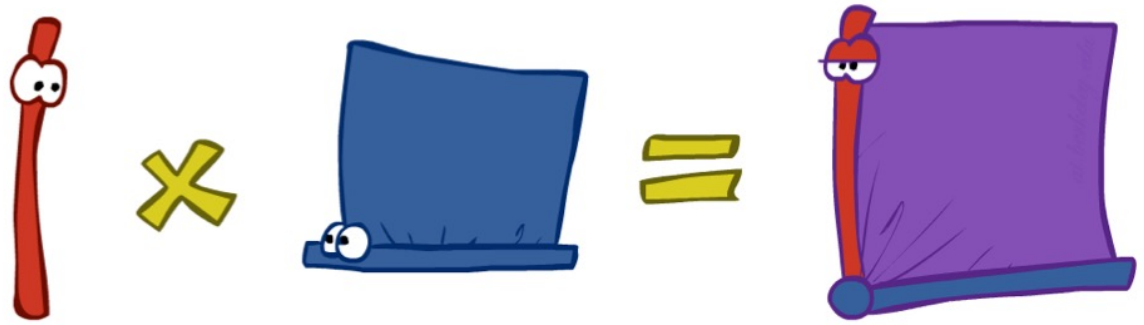
$P(+\ell|T)$

+t	+l	0.3
-t	+l	0.1

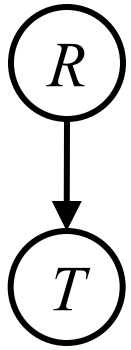
- Procedure: Join all factors, eliminate all hidden variables, normalize

Operation 1: Join Factors

- First basic operation: joining factors
- Combining factors:
  - Just like a database join
  - Get all factors over the joining variable
  - Build a new factor over the union of the variables involved



- Example: Join on R



$$P(R) \times P(T|R) \Rightarrow P(R,T)$$

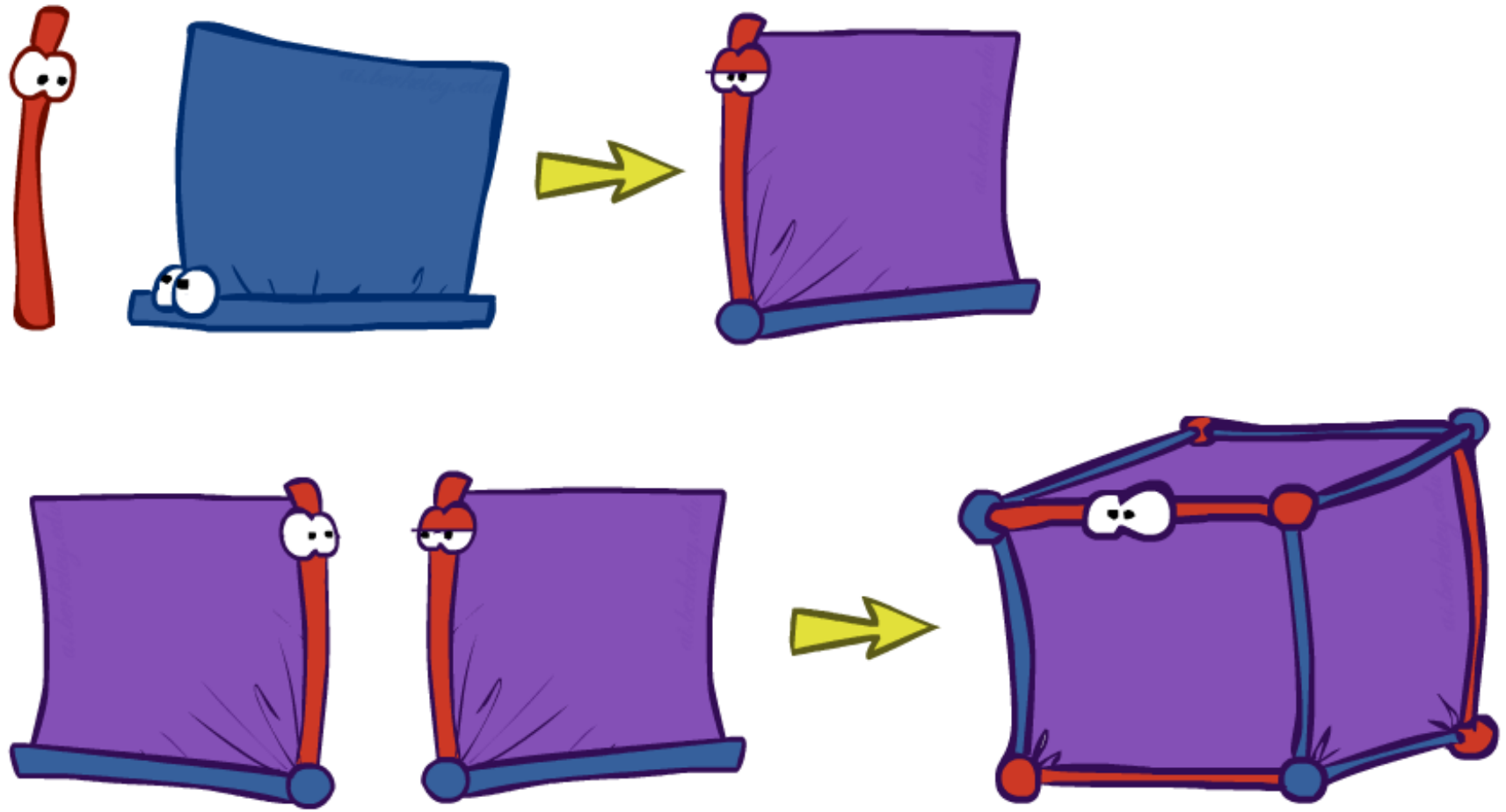
+r	0.1
-r	0.9

+r	+t	0.8
+r	-t	0.2
-r	+t	0.1
-r	-t	0.9

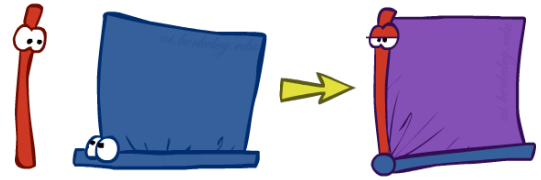
+r	+t	0.08
+r	-t	0.02
-r	+t	0.09
-r	-t	0.81

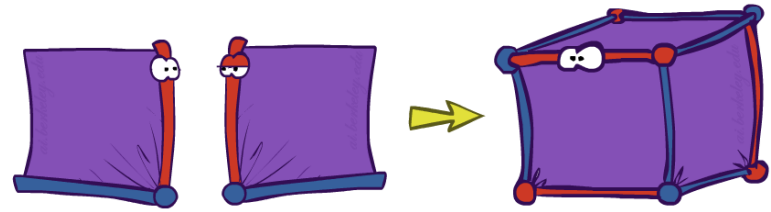
- Computation for each entry: pointwise products $\forall r, t: \quad P(r,t) = P(r) \cdot P(t|r)$

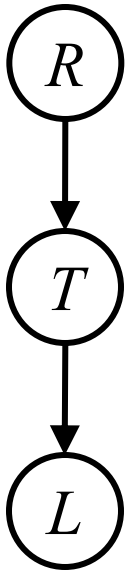
Example: Multiple Joins



Example: Multiple Joins







$P(R)$

+r	0.1
-r	0.9

$P(T|R)$

+r	+t	0.8
+r	-t	0.2
-r	+t	0.1
-r	-t	0.9

$P(L|T)$

+t	+l	0.3
+t	-l	0.7
-t	+l	0.1
-t	-l	0.9

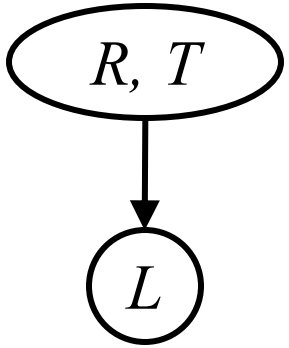
Join R

$P(R,T)$

+r	+t	0.08
+r	-t	0.02
-r	+t	0.09
-r	-t	0.81

$P(L|T)$

+t	+l	0.3
+t	-l	0.7
-t	+l	0.1
-t	-l	0.9



Join T

$P(R,T,L)$

+r	+t	+l	0.024
+r	+t	-l	0.056
+r	-t	+l	0.002
+r	-t	-l	0.018
-r	+t	+l	0.027
-r	+t	-l	0.063
-r	-t	+l	0.081
-r	-t	-l	0.729

Operation 2: Eliminate

- Second basic operation: marginalization
- Take a factor and sum out a variable
  - Shrinks a factor to a smaller one
  - A projection operation
- Example:

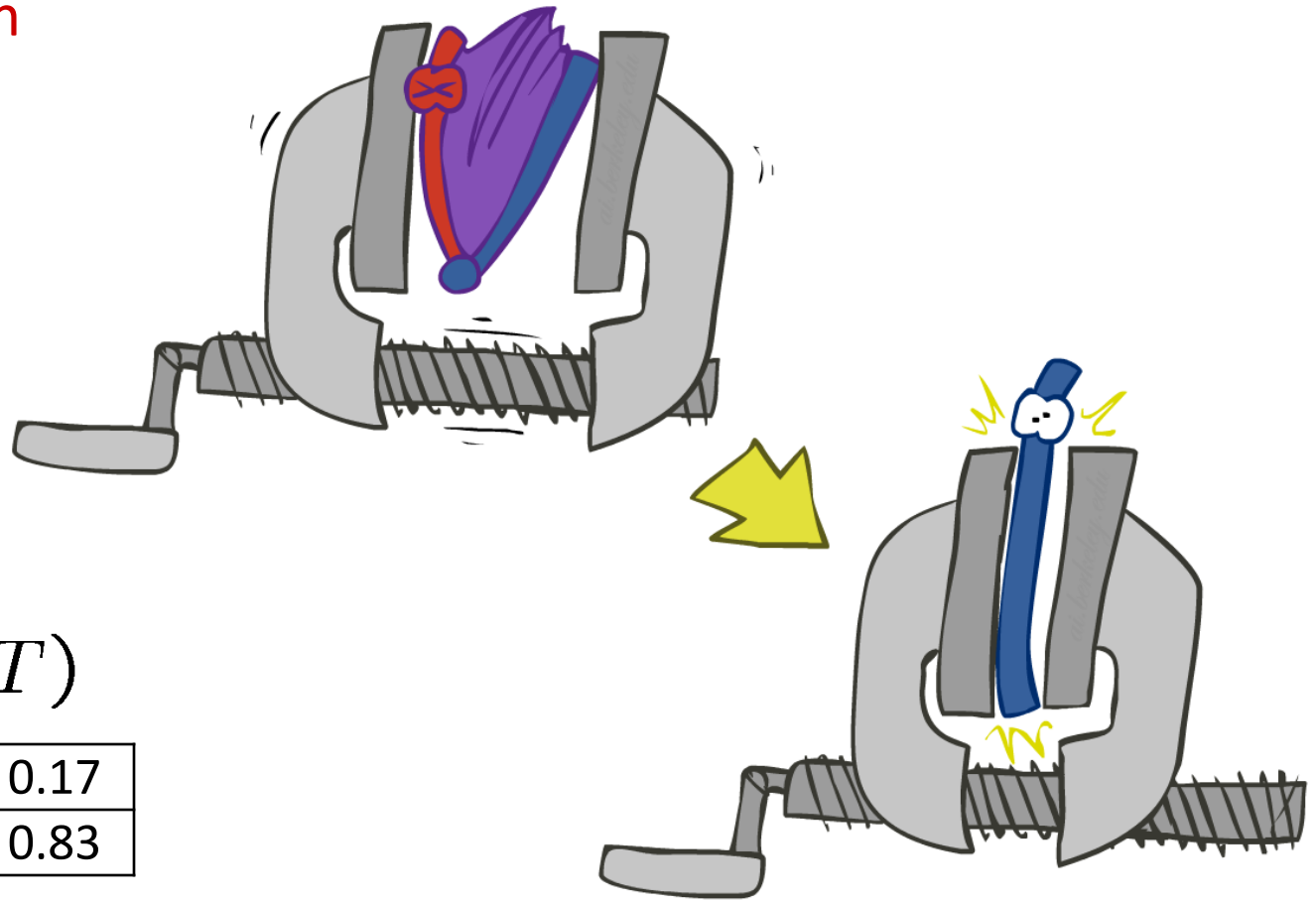
$P(R,T)$

+r	+t	0.08
+r	-t	0.02
-r	+t	0.09
-r	-t	0.81

sum R

$P(T)$

+t	0.17
-t	0.83



Multiple Elimination

R, T, L

$P(R, T, L)$

+r	+t	+l	0.024
+r	+t	-l	0.056
+r	-t	+l	0.002
+r	-t	-l	0.018
-r	+t	+l	0.027
-r	+t	-l	0.063
-r	-t	+l	0.081
-r	-t	-l	0.729

Sum out R

T, L

$P(T, L)$

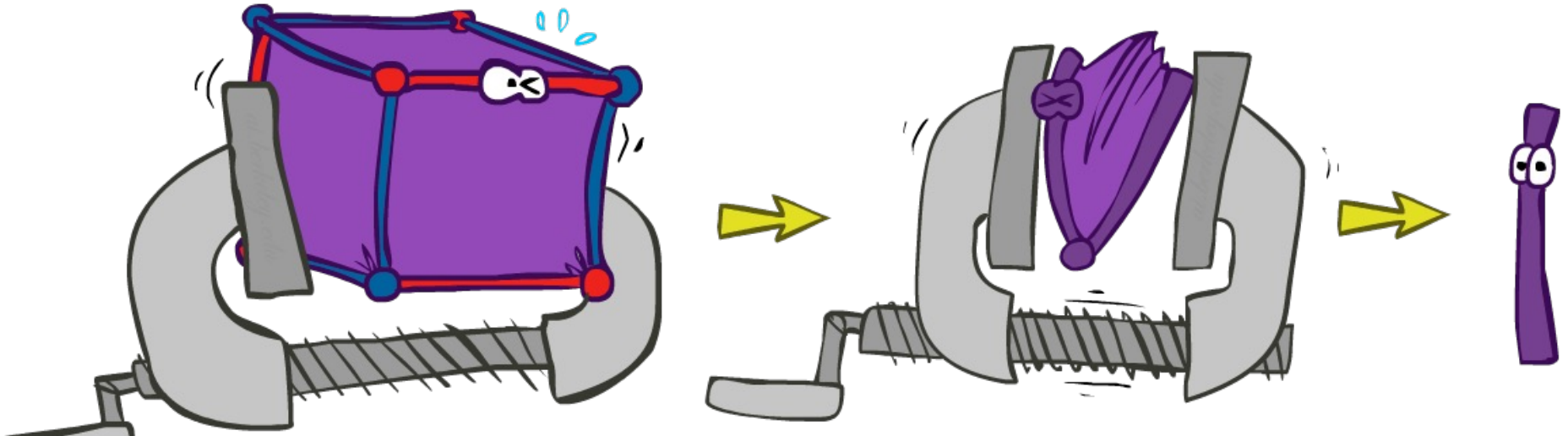
+t	+l	0.051
+t	-l	0.119
-t	+l	0.083
-t	-l	0.747

Sum out T

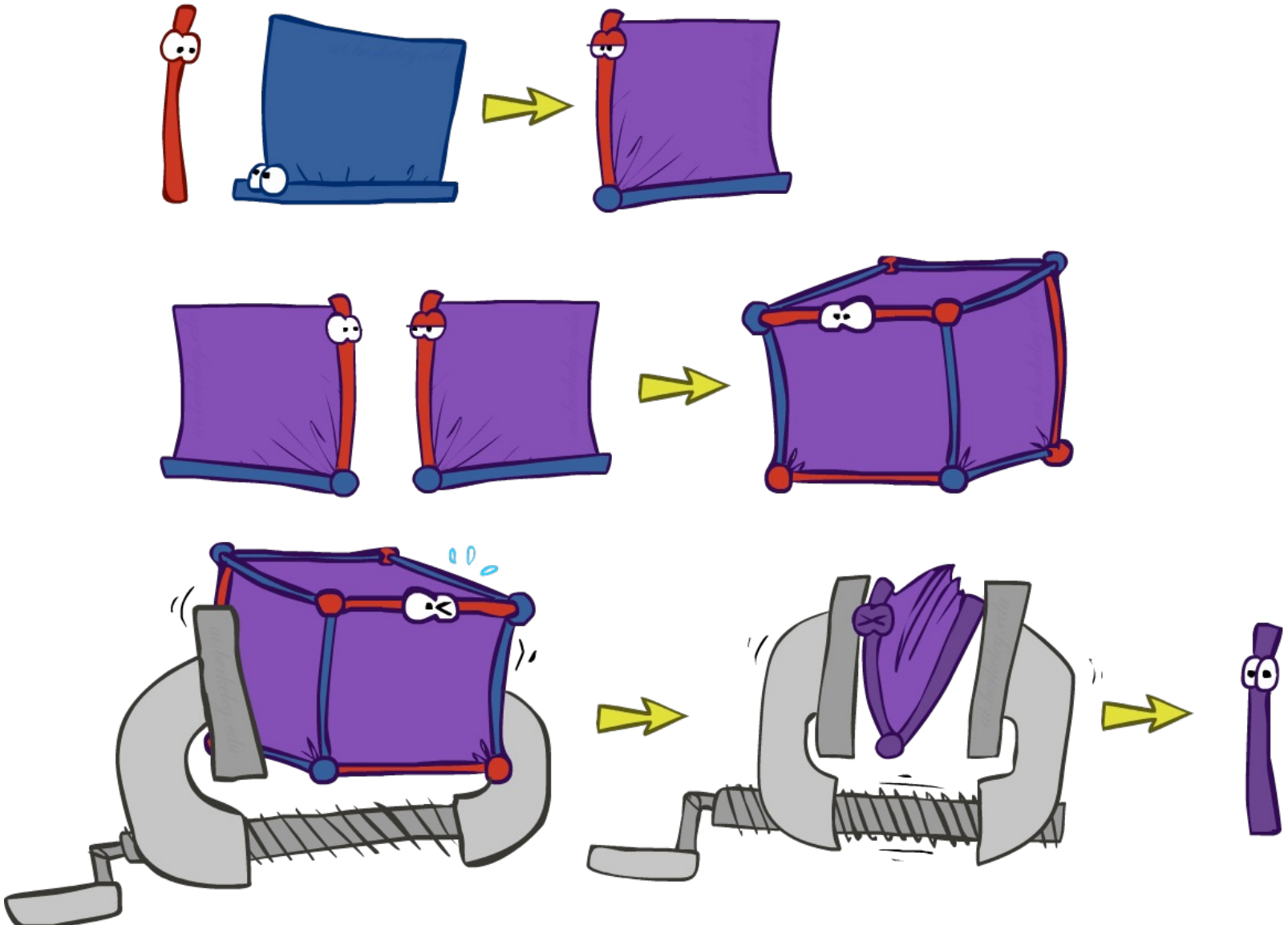
L

$P(L)$

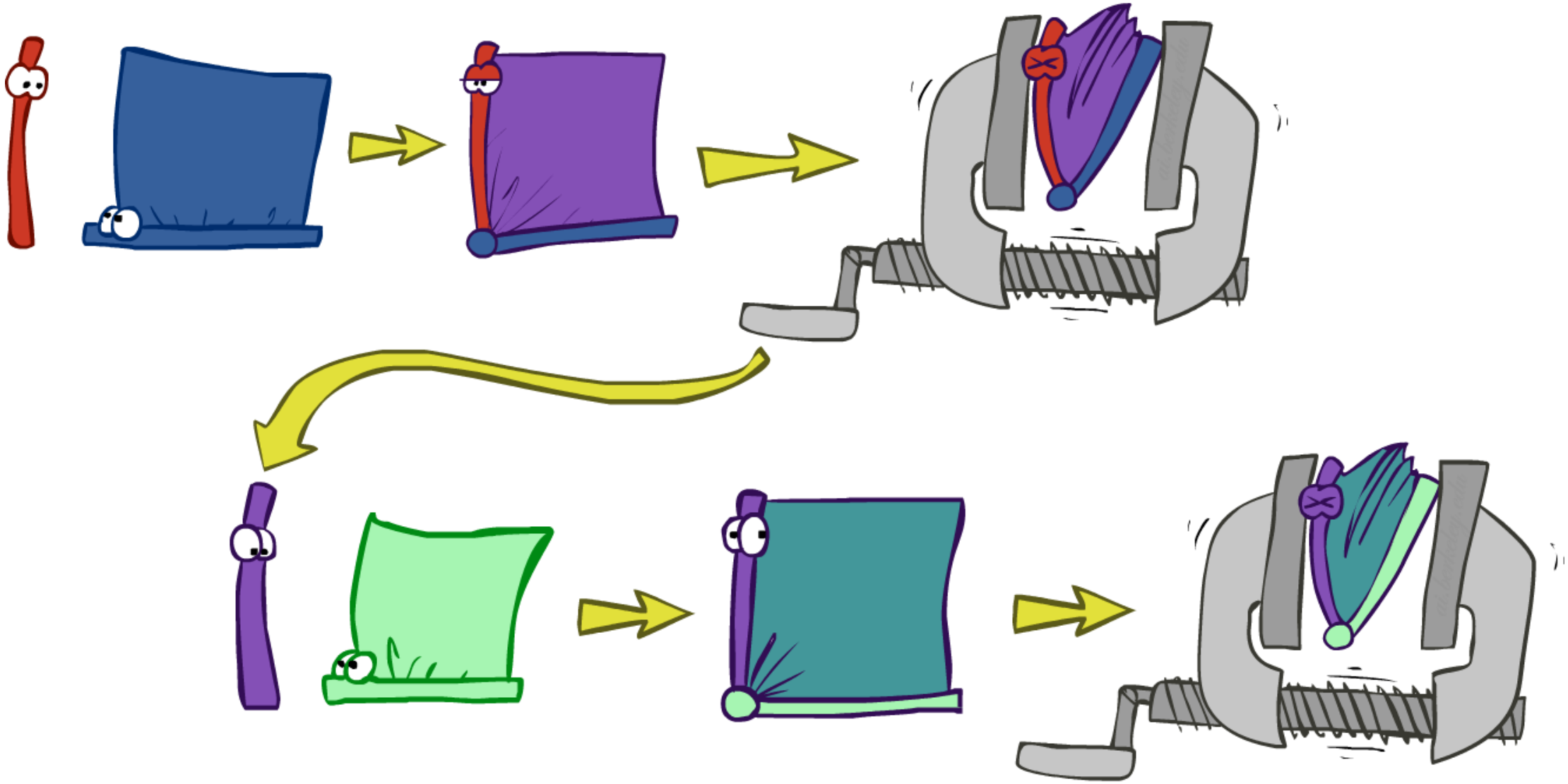
+l	0.134
-l	0.886



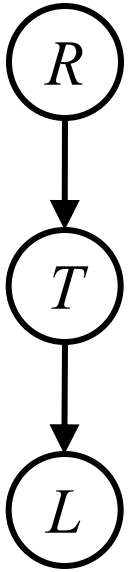
Thus Far: Multiple Join, Multiple Eliminate (= Inference by Enumeration)



Marginalizing Early (= Variable Elimination)



Traffic Domain



$$P(L) = ?$$

- Inference by Enumeration

$$= \sum_t \sum_r P(L|t)P(r)P(t|r)$$

Join on r

Join on t

Eliminate r

Eliminate t

- Variable Elimination

$$= \sum_t P(L|t) \sum_r P(r)P(t|r)$$

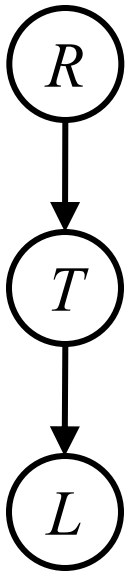
Join on r

Eliminate r

Join on t

Eliminate t

Marginalizing Early! (aka VE)



$P(R)$

+r	0.1
-r	0.9

$P(T|R)$

+r	+t	0.8
+r	-t	0.2
-r	+t	0.1
-r	-t	0.9

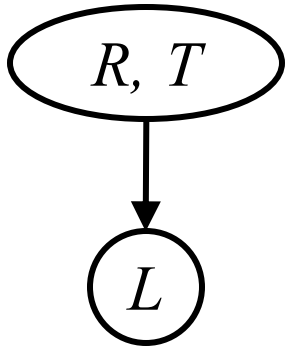
$P(L|T)$

+t	+l	0.3
+t	-l	0.7
-t	+l	0.1
-t	-l	0.9

Join R

$P(R,T)$

+r	+t	0.08
+r	-t	0.02
-r	+t	0.09
-r	-t	0.81



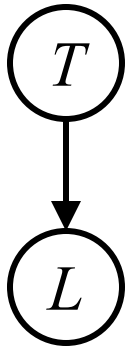
$P(L|T)$

+t	+l	0.3
+t	-l	0.7
-t	+l	0.1
-t	-l	0.9

Sum out R

$P(T)$

+t	0.17
-t	0.83



$P(L|T)$

+t	+l	0.3
+t	-l	0.7
-t	+l	0.1
-t	-l	0.9

Join T

$P(T,L)$

+t	+l	0.051
+t	-l	0.119
-t	+l	0.083
-t	-l	0.747

Sum out T

$P(L)$

+l	0.134
-l	0.866

Evidence

- If evidence, start with factors that select that evidence
  - No evidence uses these initial factors:

$P(R)$

+r	0.1
-r	0.9

$P(T|R)$

+r	+t	0.8
+r	-t	0.2
-r	+t	0.1
-r	-t	0.9

$P(L|T)$

+t	+l	0.3
+t	-l	0.7
-t	+l	0.1
-t	-l	0.9

  - Computing $P(L|+r)$ the initial factors become:

$P(+r)$

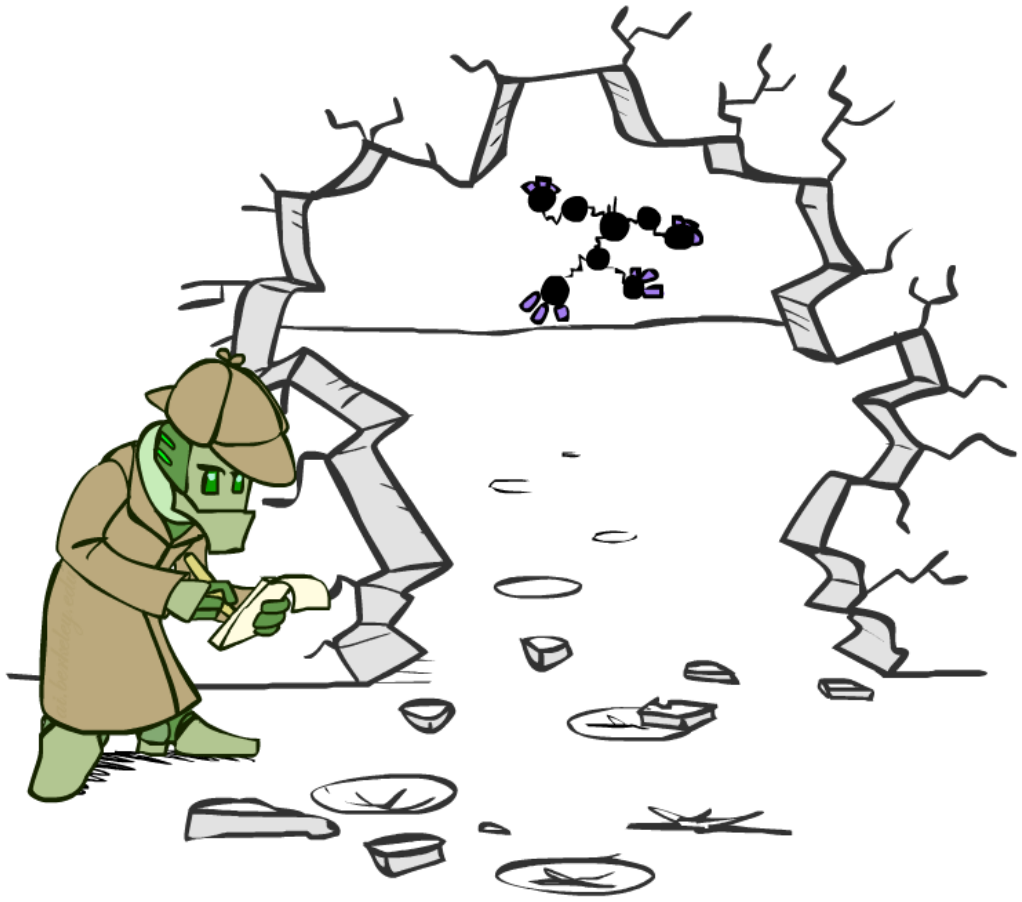
+r	0.1

$P(T|+r)$

+r	+t	0.8
+r	-t	0.2

$P(L|T)$

+t	+l	0.3
+t	-l	0.7
-t	+l	0.1
-t	-l	0.9



- We eliminate all vars other than query + evidence

Evidence II

- Result will be a selected joint of query and evidence
  - E.g. for P(L | +r), we would end up with:

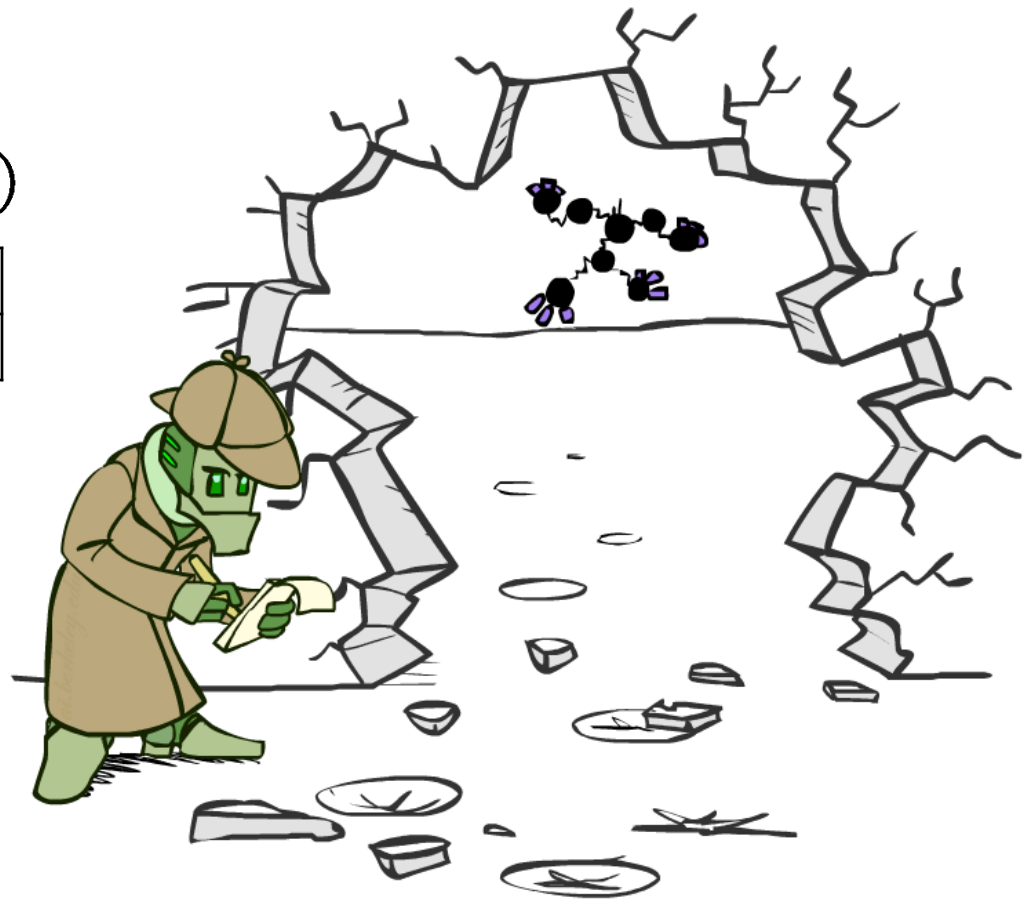
$P(+r, L)$

+r	+l	0.026
+r	-l	0.074

Normalize

$P(L|+r)$

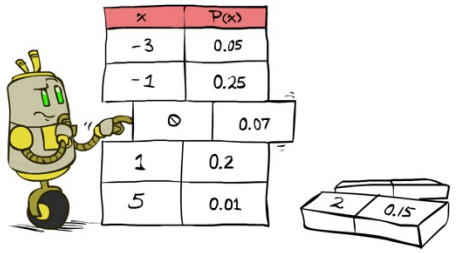
+l	0.26
-l	0.74



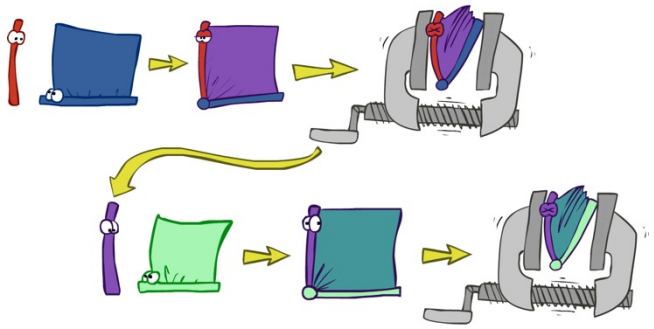
- To get our answer, just normalize this!
- That's it!

General Variable Elimination

- Query: $P(Q|E_1 = e_1, \ldots E_k = e_k)$



- Start with initial factors:
  - Local CPTs (but instantiated by evidence)

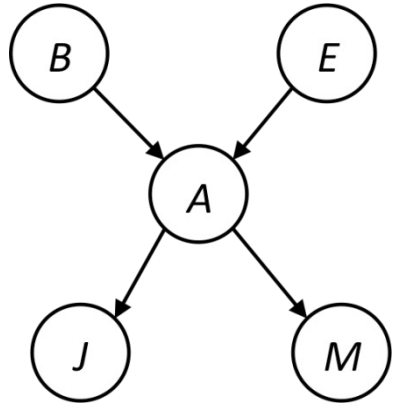


- While there are still hidden variables (not Q or evidence):
  - Pick a hidden variable H
  - Join all factors mentioning H
  - Eliminate (sum out) H

- Join all remaining factors and normalize

Example

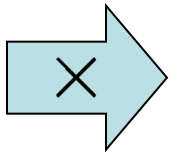
$$P(B|j,m) \propto P(B,j,m)$$



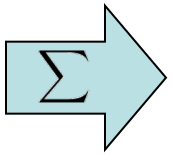
$P(B)$	$P(E)$	$P(A\|B,E)$	$P(j\|A)$	$P(m\|A)$

Choose A

$P(A|B,E)$
$P(j|A)$
$P(m|A)$



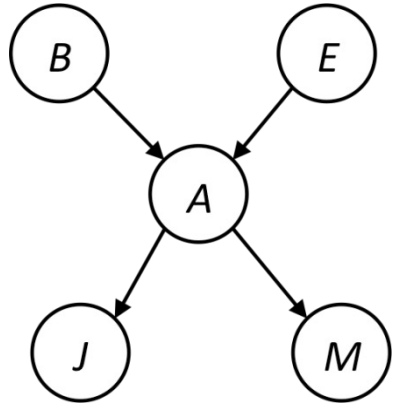
$P(j,m,A|B,E)$



$P(j,m|B,E)$

$P(B)$	$P(E)$	$P(j,m\|B,E)$

Example



$$P(B) \qquad P(E) \qquad P(j,m|B,E)$$

Choose E

$$P(E)$$
$$P(j,m|B,E)$$

$\times$ → $P(j,m,E|B)$ → $\sum$ → $P(j,m|B)$

$$P(B) \qquad P(j,m|B)$$

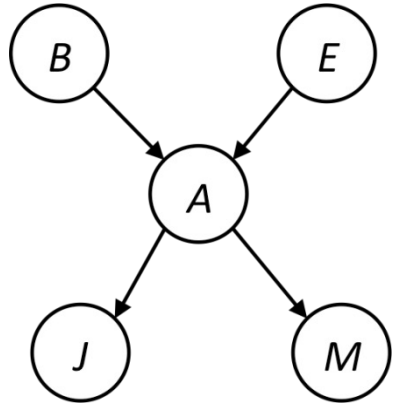
Finish with B

$$P(B)$$
$$P(j,m|B)$$

$\times$ → $P(j,m,B)$ → Normalize → $P(B|j,m)$

Same Example in Equations

$$P(B|j,m) \propto P(B,j,m)$$



$P(B)$	$P(E)$	$P(A\|B,E)$	$P(j\|A)$	$P(m\|A)$

$$\begin{aligned}
P(B|j,m) &\propto P(B,j,m) \\
&= \sum_{e,a} P(B,j,m,e,a) \\
&= \sum_{e,a} P(B)P(e)P(a|B,e)P(j|a)P(m|a) \\
&= \sum_{e} P(B)P(e)\sum_{a} P(a|B,e)P(j|a)P(m|a) \\
&= \sum_{e} P(B)P(e)f_1(B,e,j,m) \\
&= P(B)\sum_{e} P(e)f_1(B,e,j,m) \\
&= P(B)f_2(B,j,m)
\end{aligned}$$

marginal obtained from joint by summing out

use Bayes' net joint distribution expression

use x*(y+z) = xy + xz

joining on a, and then summing out gives f_1

use x*(y+z) = xy + xz

joining on e, and then summing out gives f_2

All we are doing is exploiting uwy + uwz + uxy + uxz + vwy + vwz + vxy +vxz = (u+v)(w+x)(y+z) to improve computational efficiency!

Another Variable Elimination Example

Query: $P(X_3|Y_1 = y_1, Y_2 = y_2, Y_3 = y_3)$

Start by inserting evidence, which gives the following initial factors:

$$p(Z)p(X_1|Z)p(X_2|Z)p(X_3|Z)p(y_1|X_1)p(y_2|X_2)p(y_3|X_3)$$

Eliminate X_1, this introduces the factor $f_1(Z, y_1) = \sum_{x_1} p(x_1|Z)p(y_1|x_1)$, and we are left with:

$$p(Z)f_1(Z, y_1)p(X_2|Z)p(X_3|Z)p(y_2|X_2)p(y_3|X_3)$$

Eliminate X_2, this introduces the factor $f_2(Z, y_2) = \sum_{x_2} p(x_2|Z)p(y_2|x_2)$, and we are left with:

$$p(Z)f_1(Z, y_1)f_2(Z, y_2)p(X_3|Z)p(y_3|X_3)$$

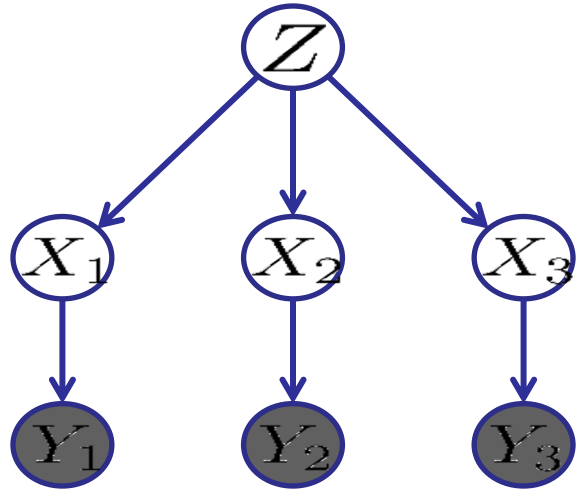
Eliminate Z, this introduces the factor $f_3(y_1, y_2, X_3) = \sum_z p(z)f_1(z, y_1)f_2(z, y_2)p(X_3|z)$, and we are left:

$$p(y_3|X_3), f_3(y_1, y_2, X_3)$$

No hidden variables left. Join the remaining factors to get:

$$f_4(y_1, y_2, y_3, X_3) = P(y_3|X_3)f_3(y_1, y_2, X_3).$$

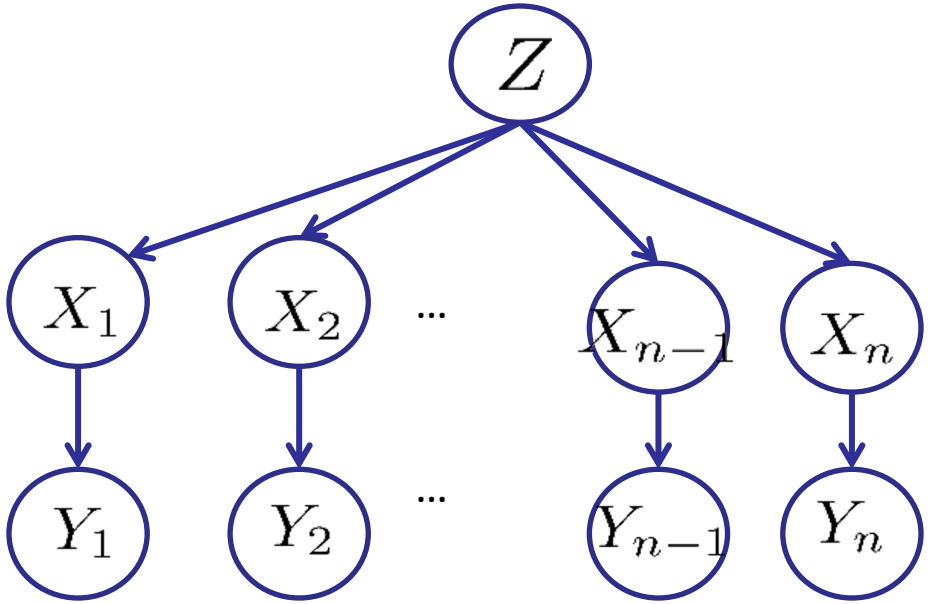
Normalizing over X_3 gives $P(X_3|y_1, y_2, y_3)$.



Computational complexity critically depends on the largest factor being generated in this process. Size of factor = number of entries in table. In example above (assuming binary) all factors generated are of size 2 --- as they all only have one variable (Z, Z, and X_3 respectively).

Variable Elimination Ordering

- For the query $P(X_n | y_1,\ldots,y_n)$ work through the following two different orderings as done in previous slide: Z, X_1, …, X_{n-1} and X_1, …, X_{n-1}, Z. What is the size of the maximum factor generated for each of the orderings?



- Answer: 2^{n+1} versus 2^2 (assuming binary)
- In general: the ordering can greatly affect efficiency.

VE: Computational and Space Complexity

- The computational and space complexity of variable elimination is determined by the largest factor

- The elimination ordering can greatly affect the size of the largest factor.
  - E.g., previous slide's example 2^n vs. 2

- Does there always exist an ordering that only results in small factors?
  - No!

Worst Case Complexity?

- CSP:

$$(x_1 \vee x_2 \vee \neg x_3) \wedge (\neg x_1 \vee x_3 \vee \neg x_4) \wedge (x_2 \vee \neg x_2 \vee x_4) \wedge (\neg x_3 \vee \neg x_4 \vee \neg x_5) \wedge (x_2 \vee x_5 \vee x_7) \wedge (x_4 \vee x_5 \vee x_6) \wedge (\neg x_5 \vee x_6 \vee \neg x_7) \wedge (\neg x_5 \vee \neg x_6 \vee x_7)$$

$$P(X_i = 0) = P(X_i = 1) = 0.5$$

$$Y_1 = X_1 \vee X_2 \vee \neg X_3$$

...

$$Y_8 = \neg X_5 \vee X_6 \vee X_7$$

$$Y_{1,2} = Y_1 \wedge Y_2$$

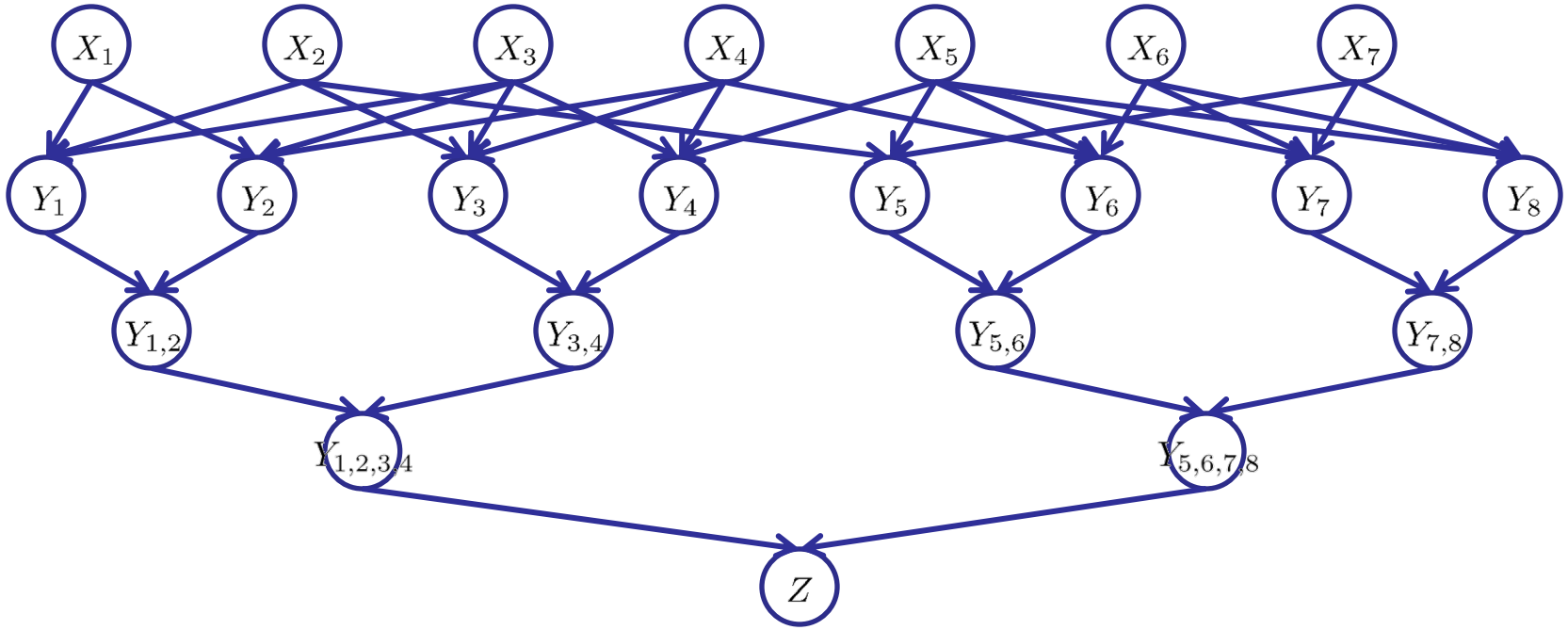
...

$$Y_{7,8} = Y_7 \wedge Y_8$$

$$Y_{1,2,3,4} = Y_{1,2} \wedge Y_{3,4}$$

$$Y_{5,6,7,8} = Y_{5,6} \wedge Y_{7,8}$$

$$Z = Y_{1,2,3,4} \wedge Y_{5,6,7,8}$$



- If we can answer P(z) equal to zero or not, we answered whether the 3-SAT problem has a solution.
- Hence inference in Bayes' nets is NP-hard. No known efficient probabilistic inference in general.

Polytrees

- A polytree is a directed graph with no undirected cycles
- For poly-trees you can always find an ordering that is efficient
  - Try it!!
- Cut-set conditioning for Bayes' net inference
  - Choose set of variables such that if removed only a polytree remains
  - Exercise: Think about how the specifics would work out!

Bayes' Nets

- ✔ Representation
- ✔ Conditional Independences
- Probabilistic Inference
  - ✔ Enumeration (exact, exponential complexity)
  - ✔ Variable elimination (exact, worst-case exponential complexity, often better)
  - ✔ Inference is NP-complete
  - Sampling (approximate)
- Learning Bayes' Nets from Data