

Lecture 02b:

What is Entropy?



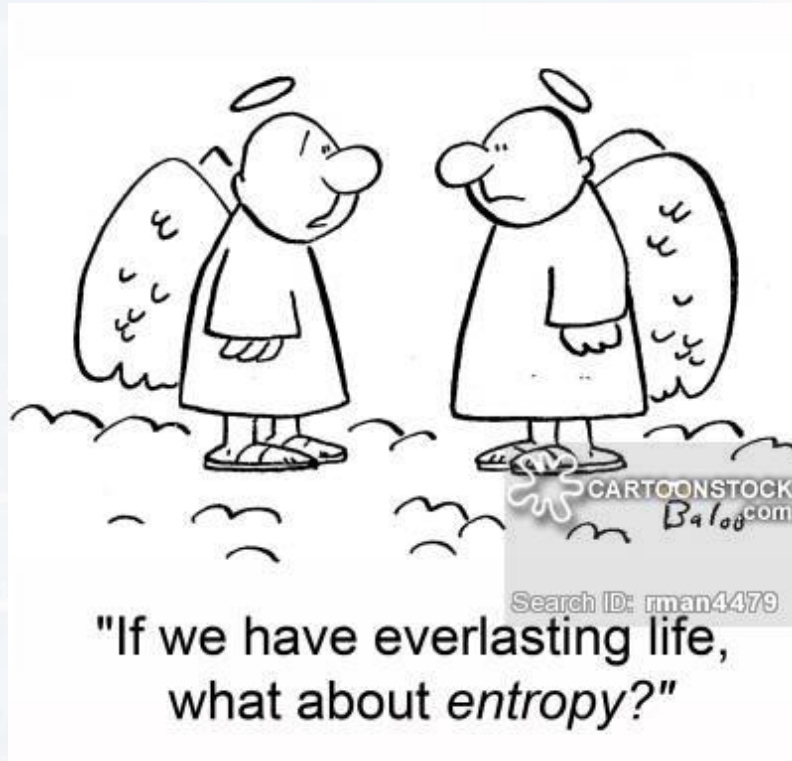
Markus Hohle

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Machine Learning Algorithms

MSSE 277B, 3 Units

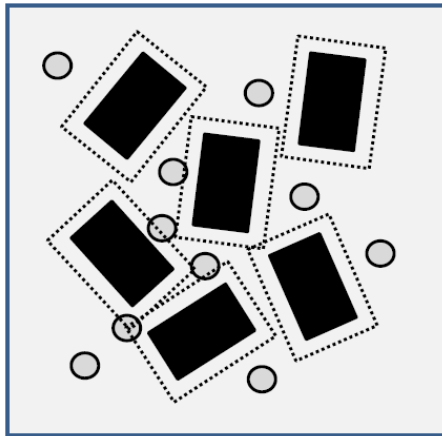
Spring 2025



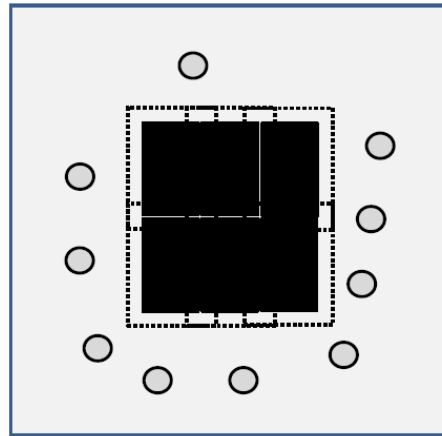
What do you think: in which image is entropy higher?

first of all:

Entropy is **not** a measure of disorder!

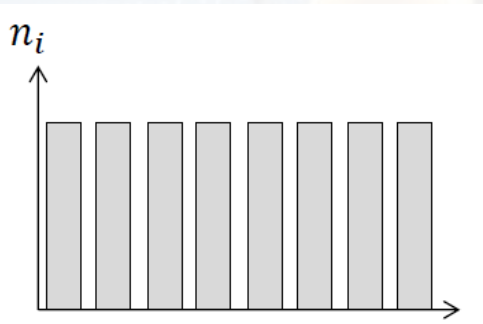


low entropy

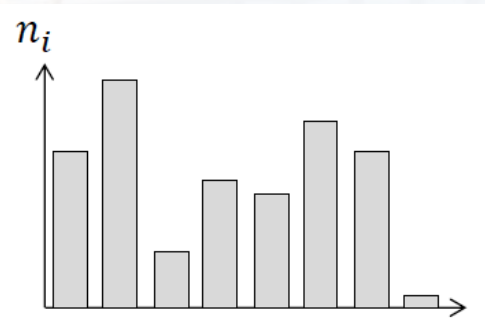


high entropy

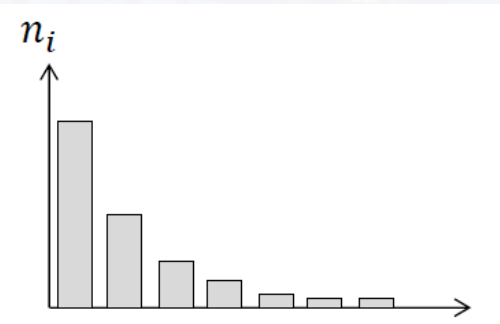
i : states
 n_i : number of particles in state i



highest **possible** entropy



low entropy



high entropy

Often people explain entropy with an ordered vs messy office...



...and then say, that entropy (disorder) grows with time (in closed systems).



first of all:

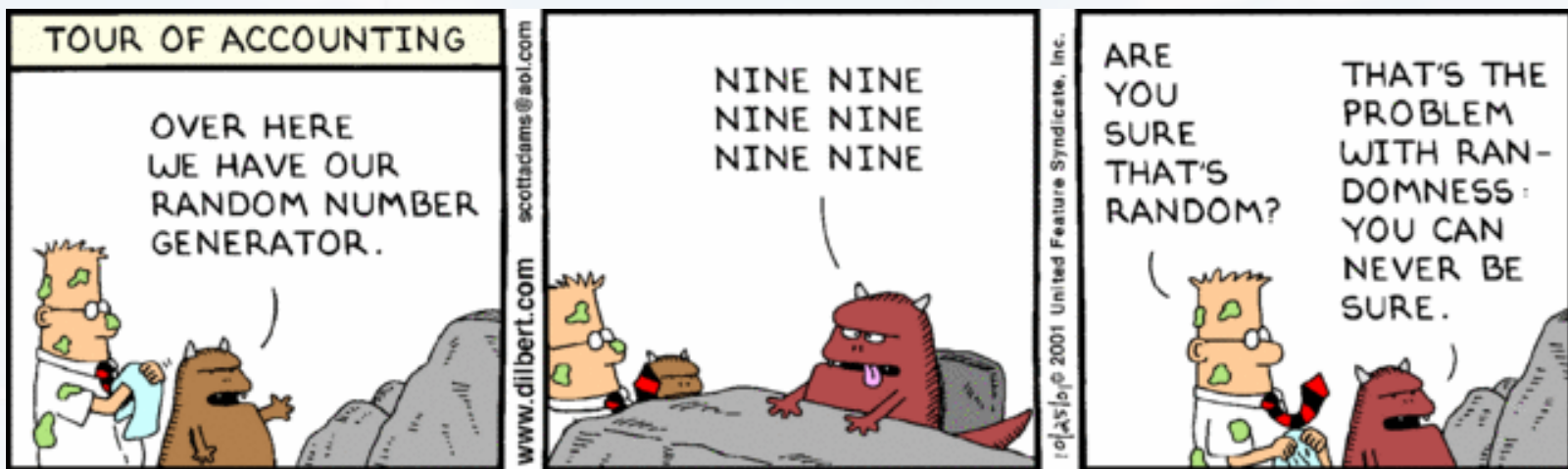
Entropy is **not** a measure of disorder!

- But how is it possible, that an office can do that, just by itself?
- What if my office just *looks* messy, but I can still pull any file you are asking me for?

order/disorder is not a physical quantity!

Those examples have nothing to do with entropy conceptionally!

actually, the idea of entropy is more like that:

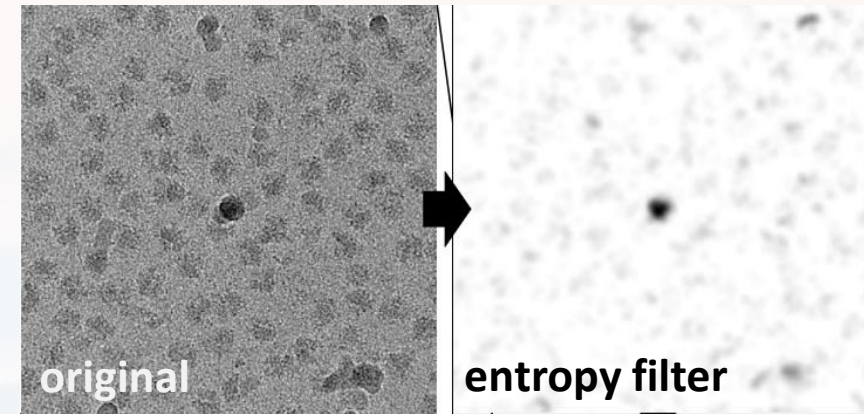


Entropy:

data analysis:

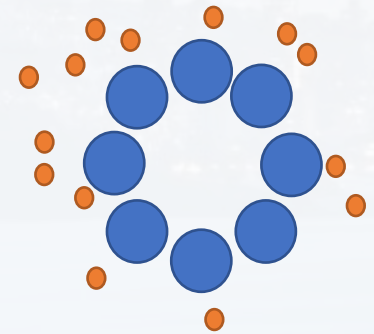
- image processing
- noise reduction
- feature detection

Cryo-EM image of ribosomes



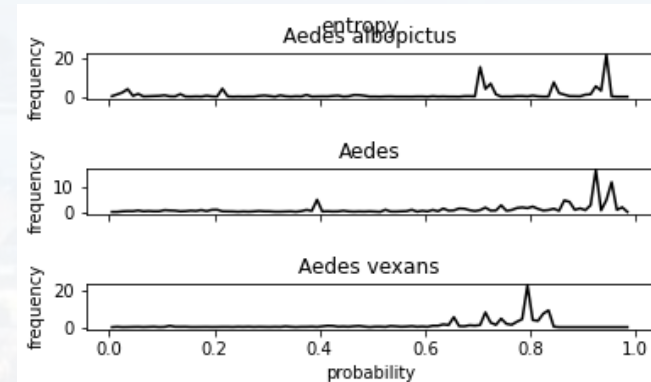
biophysics:

- molecular driving forces
- formation of macromolecules
- “ordering forces”



AI:

- optimization
- cross entropy



Entropy:

statistics/information theory:

- maximum entropy, given constrains

Distribution name	Probability density / mass function	Maximum Entropy constraint	Support
Uniform (discrete)	$f(k) = \frac{1}{b - a + 1}$	None	$\{a, a + 1, \dots, b - 1, b\}$
Uniform (continuous)	$f(x) = \frac{1}{b - a}$	None	$[a, b]$
Bernoulli	$f(k) = p^k (1 - p)^{1-k}$	$\mathbb{E}[K] = p$	$\{0, 1\}$
Geometric	$f(k) = (1 - p)^{k-1} p$	$\mathbb{E}[K] = \frac{1}{p}$	$\mathbb{N} \setminus \{0\} = \{1, 2, 3, \dots\}$
Exponential	$f(x) = \lambda \exp(-\lambda x)$	$\mathbb{E}[X] = \frac{1}{\lambda}$	$[0, \infty)$
Laplace	$f(x) = \frac{1}{2b} \exp\left(-\frac{ x - \mu }{b}\right)$	$\mathbb{E}[X - \mu] = b$	$(-\infty, \infty)$
Asymmetric Laplace	$f(x) = \frac{\lambda \exp\left(-(x - m) \lambda s \kappa^s\right)}{\left(\kappa + \frac{1}{\kappa}\right)}$ where $s \equiv \text{sgn}(x - m)$	$\mathbb{E}[(X - m) s \kappa^s] = \frac{1}{\lambda}$	$(-\infty, \infty)$
Pareto	$f(x) = \frac{\alpha x_m^\alpha}{x^{\alpha+1}}$	$\mathbb{E}[\ln X] = \frac{1}{\alpha} + \ln(x_m)$	$[x_m, \infty)$
Normal	$f(x) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} \exp\left(-\frac{(x - \mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)$	$\mathbb{E}[X] = \mu,$ $\mathbb{E}[X^2] = \sigma^2 + \mu^2$	$(-\infty, \infty)$
Gamma	$f(x) = \frac{x^{k-1} \exp\left(-\frac{x}{\theta}\right)}{\theta^k \Gamma(k)}$	$\mathbb{E}[X] = k \theta,$ $\mathbb{E}[\ln X] = \psi(k) + \ln \theta$	$[0, \infty)$

What is entropy, really?



N : number of dice
 n_i : number of dice exposing a certain number i
(= having a certain state i)
 I : number of states a die can have

What is the probability P to observe the *system* in a certain state?

What is the probability p_i to observe *a die* in a certain state?

$$\Omega = \frac{N!}{n_1! n_2! \dots n_I!}$$

assumption: all i are equally likely:

$$P = 1/\Omega$$



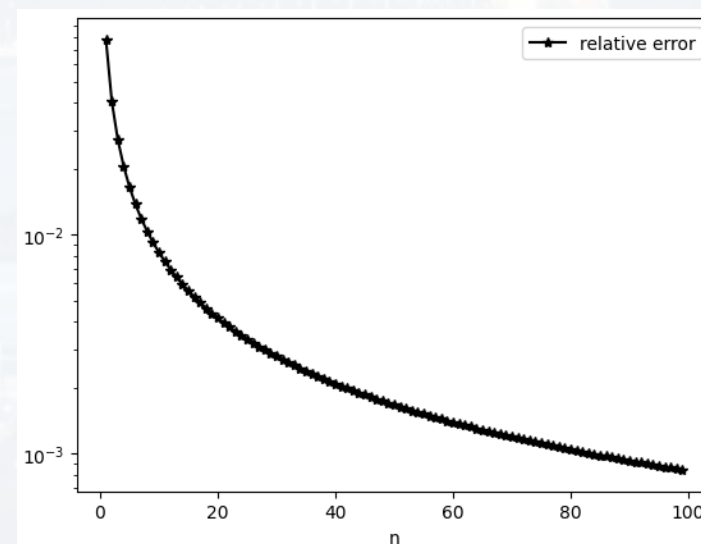
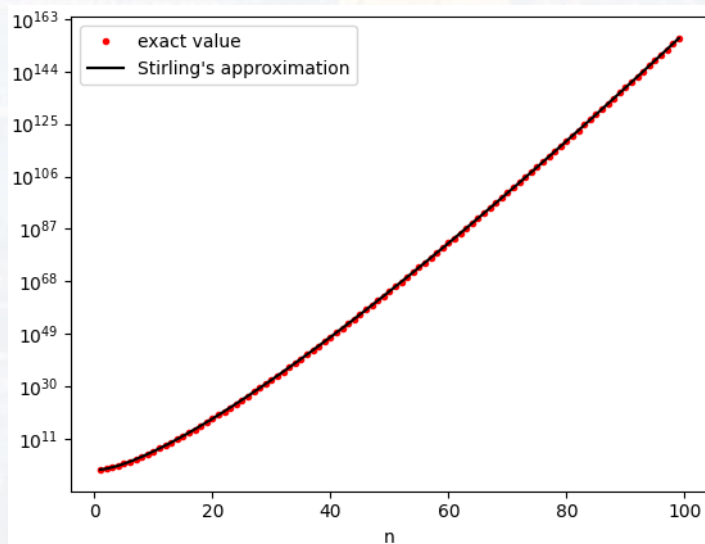
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is large, even for small systems!

Stirling's approximation

$$n! \approx \sqrt{2\pi n} \left(\frac{n}{e}\right)^n$$





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$$\Omega = \frac{N!}{n_1! n_2! \dots n_I!}$$

is large, even for small systems!

for large n_i :

$$\Omega = \frac{N!}{n_1! n_2! \dots n_I!} \approx \frac{N^N}{n_1^{n_1} n_2^{n_2} \dots n_I^{n_I}}$$

$$p_i \approx \frac{n_i}{N}$$

$$\approx \frac{1}{p_1^{n_1} p_2^{n_2} \dots p_I^{n_I}}$$

$$\ln \Omega = - \sum_i^I n_i \ln p_i$$

$$\frac{\ln \Omega}{N} = - \sum_i^I p_i \ln p_i$$

$$S = - \sum_i^I p_i \ln p_i$$

entropy per particle



$$S = - \sum_i^I p_i \ln p_i$$

N :	number of dice
n_i :	number of dice exposing a certain number i (= having a certain state i)
I :	number of states a die can have
p_i :	n_i/N

assumption: all i are equally likely: $P = 1/\Omega$

subsets of Ω :

- sum M of all numbers on the dice
- dice can only be distinguished by their state

$N = 2$:

$$\min(M) = 1 + 1 = 2$$

$$\max(M) = 6 + 6 = 12$$

most likely **$M = 7$** (or $2 \times \text{mean}(I)$), because there are **six** possibilities to obtain it:

$1 + 6; 1 + 6; 2 + 5; 5 + 2; 3 + 4; 4 + 3$

N :

$$\min(M) = N$$

$$\max(M) = I \cdot M$$

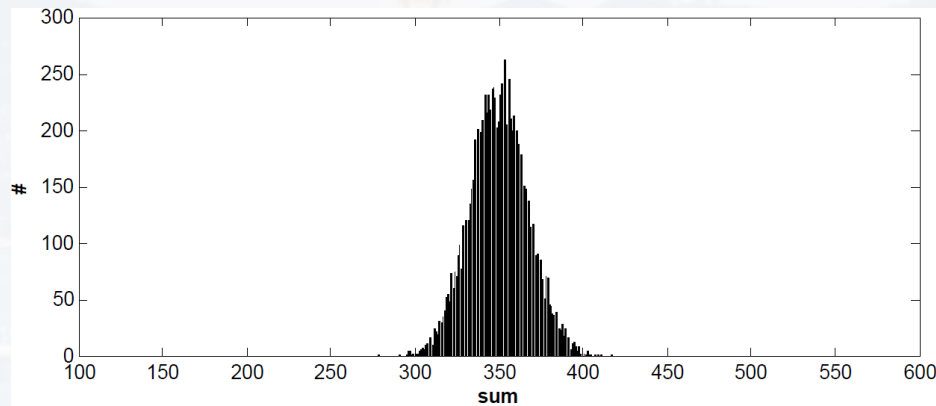
most likely **$M = N \times \text{mean}(I)$**



$$S = - \sum_i^I p_i \ln p_i$$

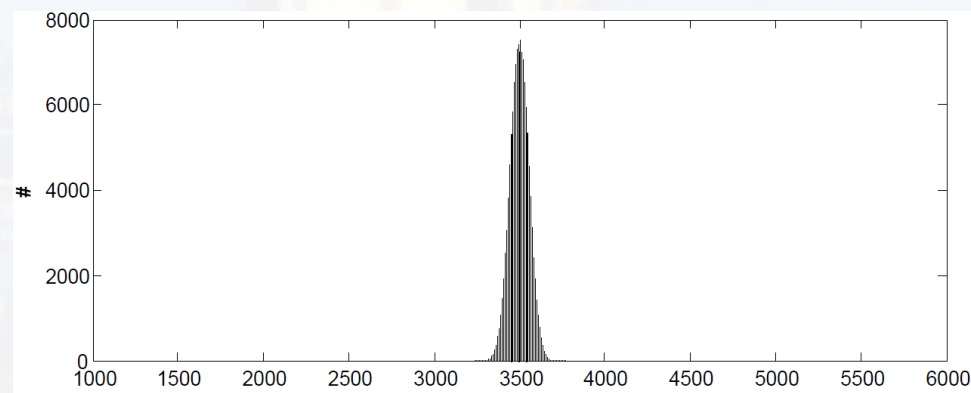
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assumption: all i are equally likely:



$N = 100$

- some subsets of Ω , hence some states of the system are **way more likely** than other states
- becomes **more extreme for large N**



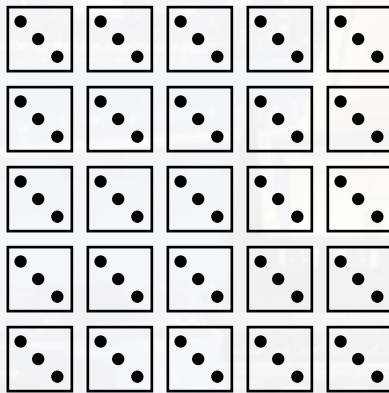
$N = 1000$



$$S = - \sum_i^I p_i \ln p_i$$

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we can also see this as dynamical process:



$t = 0$: all dice have the same state

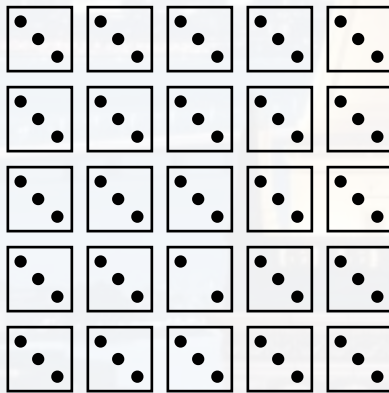
$t \rightarrow t + dt$: one, randomly picked die, changes its state



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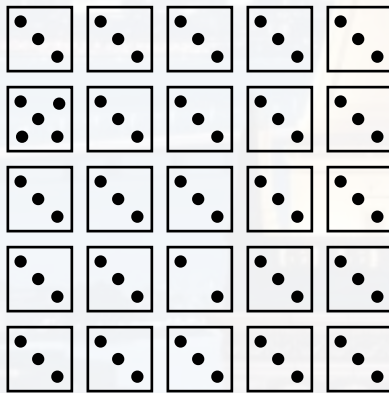
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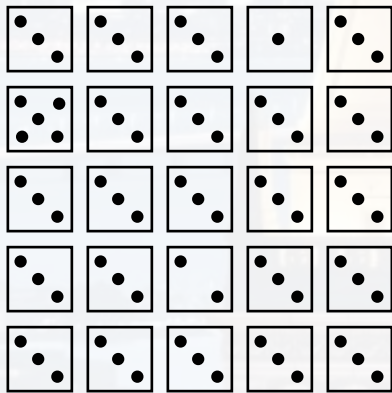
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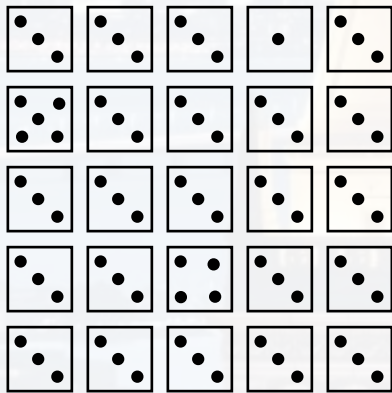
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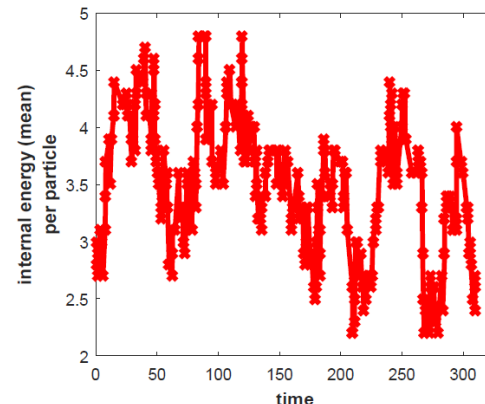
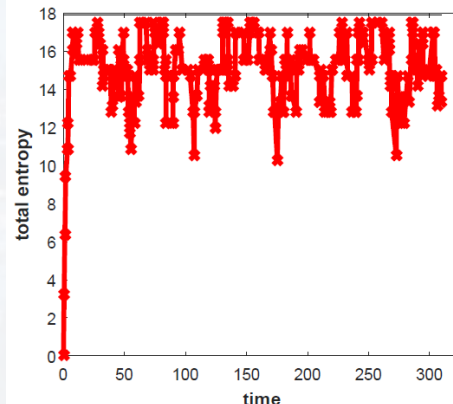
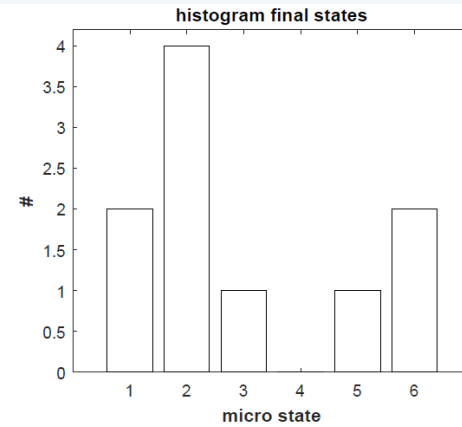
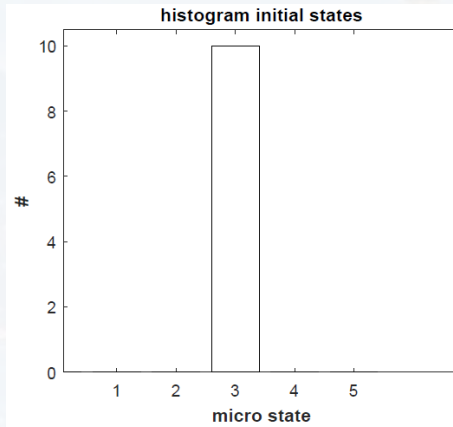
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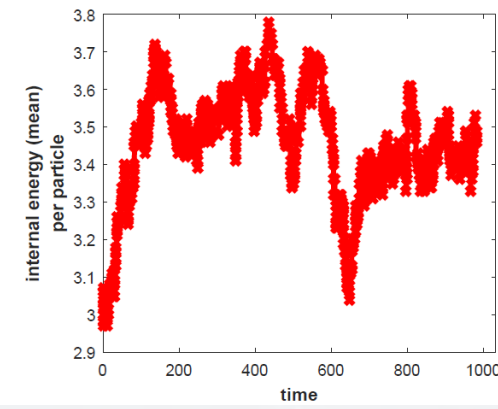
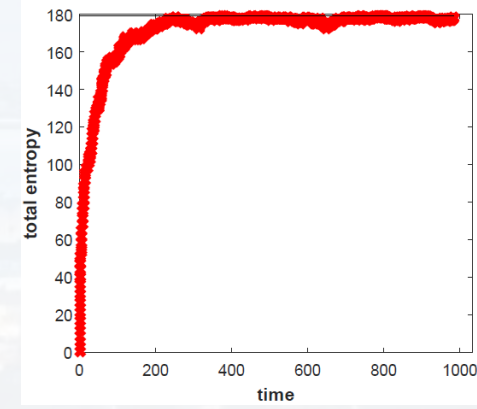
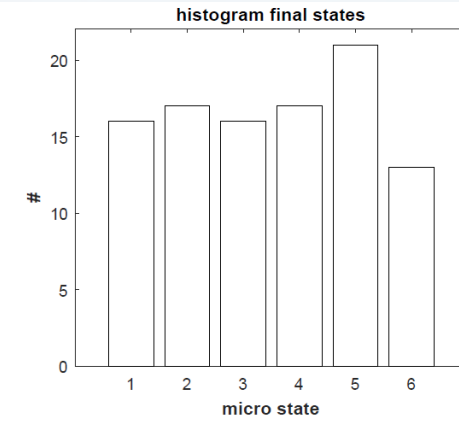
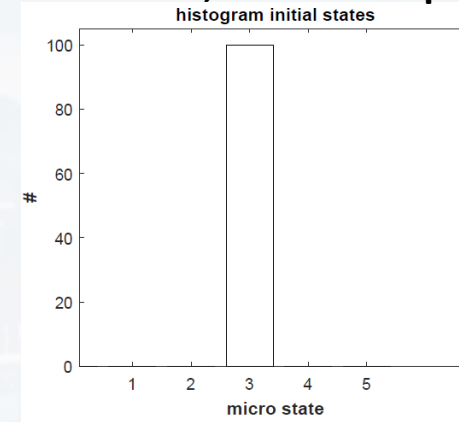
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10 dice
300 timesteps



100 dice 1,000 timesteps

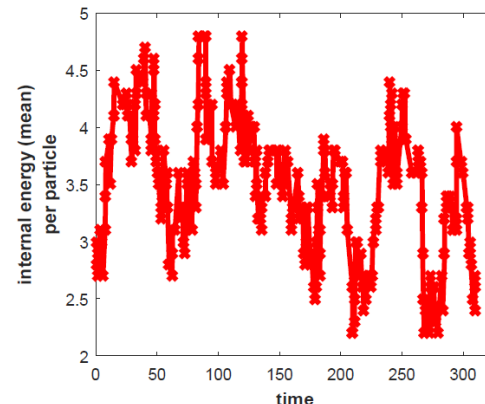
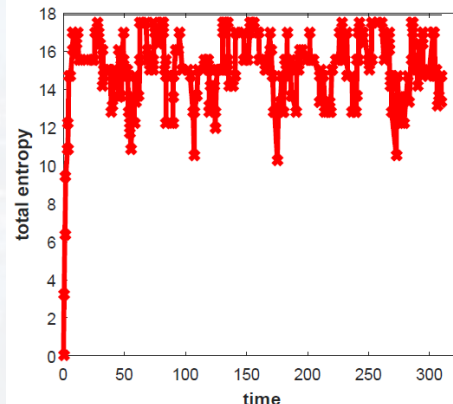
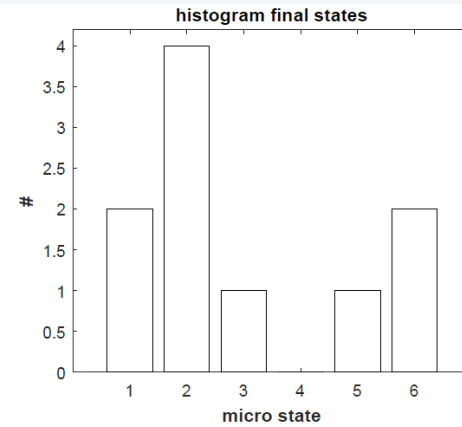
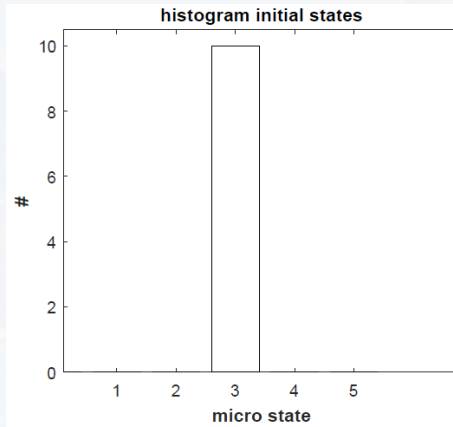




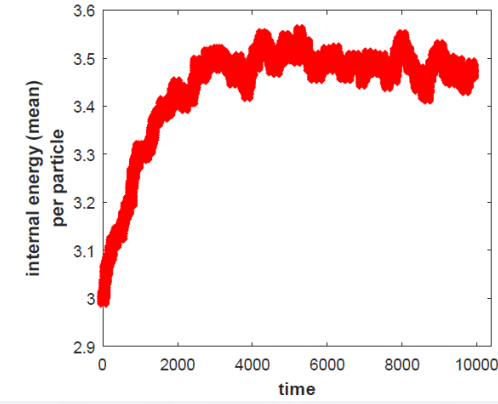
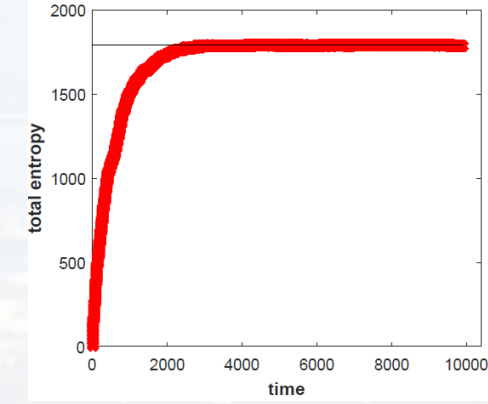
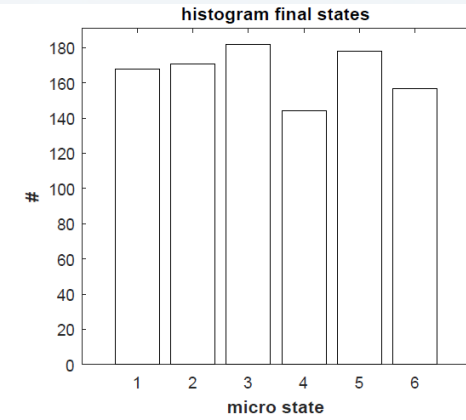
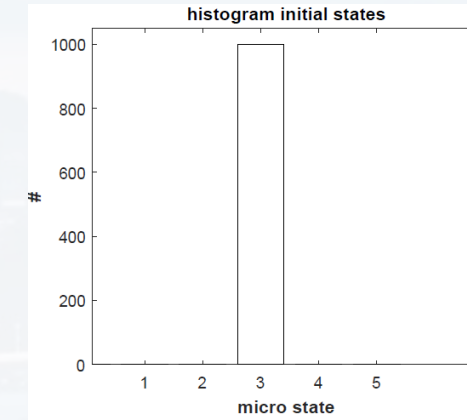
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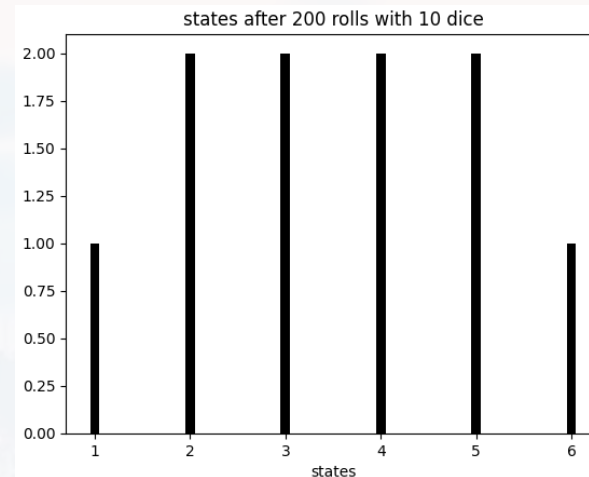
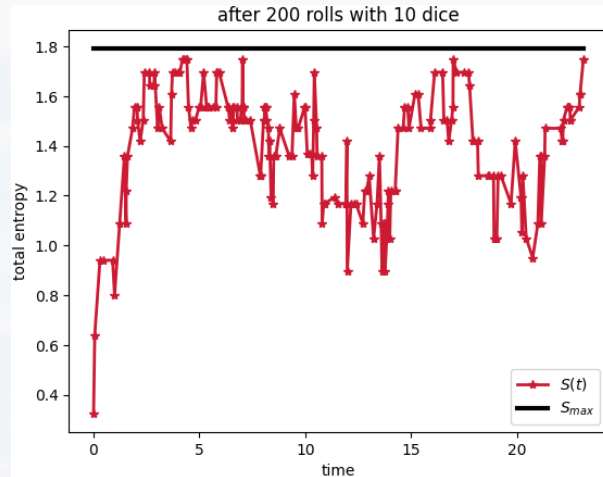
10 dice
300 timesteps



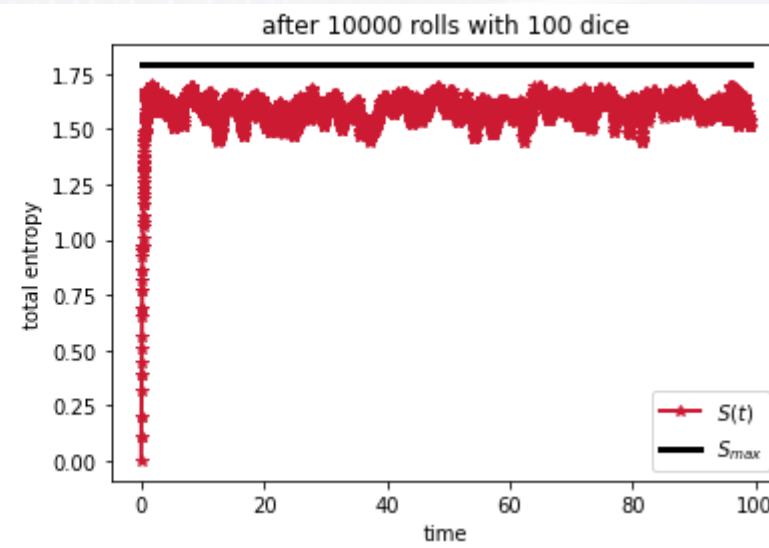
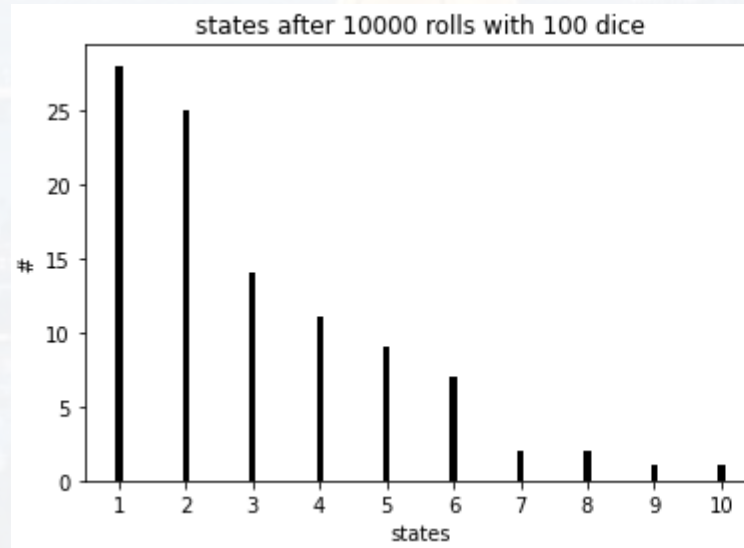
1,000 dice 10,000 timesteps



check out `random_machine.ipynb`



constrain: M is conserved, I is free, but >0



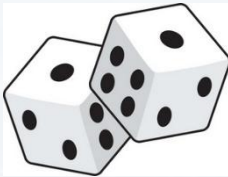
conclusions:

- entropy increases with time (in a closed system) because it is the **most likely state**
- the **larger** the system, the more **deterministic** it looks
- for **small systems**: entropy can fluctuate in both ways and **does not increase!** (Stirling's approximation)
- **large systems**: (thermodynamic) **arrow of time** (question: what if we are at S_{max} already)
- **small systems**: **symmetry** in time!
- even if i are not equally likely (constrains, some states are more accessible)
→ different weights, **but same principle**
- **uniform distribution** has **highest entropy** (do the math :))

Entropy is a mathematically precise measure of information!

- entropy high \rightarrow information low
- entropy low \rightarrow information high

$$S = - \sum_i^I p_i \ln p_i$$



fair die: events are

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

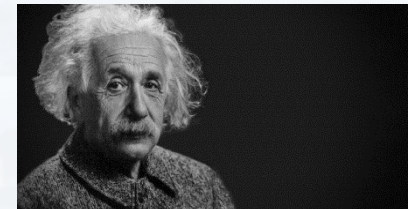
p_n are

$p_1, p_2, p_3, p_4, p_5, p_6 = 1/6$ for all p_n

Hi Eini: guess the
number I rolled!



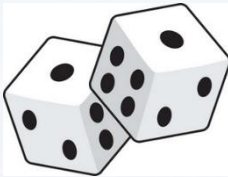
I have no idea, so all numbers are
equally likely if it's a fair die.



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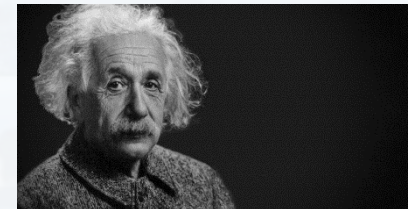
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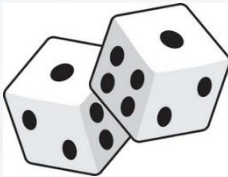
$$S = -\frac{1}{6} \ln \left(\frac{1}{6} \right) * 6 = 1.79 \dots$$



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fair die: events are

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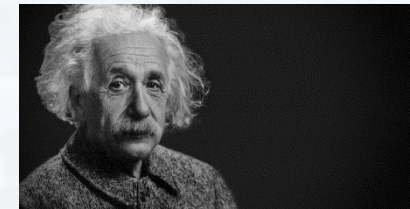
p_n are

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Ok, I give you a
hint: it is not a six.



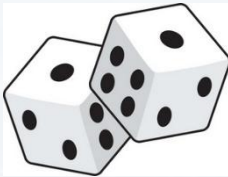
Alright, so then $p_6 = 0$ and all
the other $p_5 = 1/5$.



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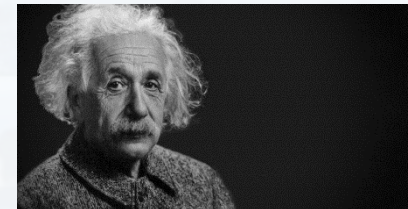
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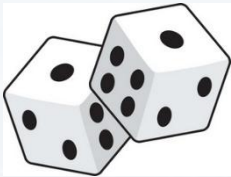
Hence, $S = -\frac{1}{5} \ln \left(\frac{1}{5} \right) * 5 =$
1.61 ...



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fair die: events are

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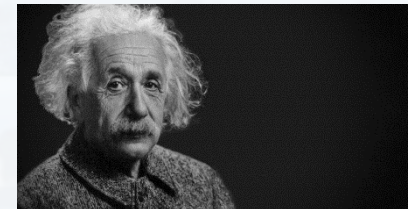
p_n are

$p_1, p_2, p_3, p_4, p_5, p_6 = 1/6$ for all p_n

Come on, don't be so nerdy. It is an odd number.



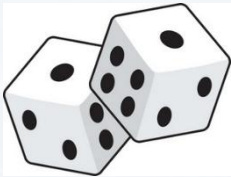
This helps a lot: $p_2 = p_4 = p_6 = 0$
and thus, $p_1 = p_3 = p_5 = 1/3$



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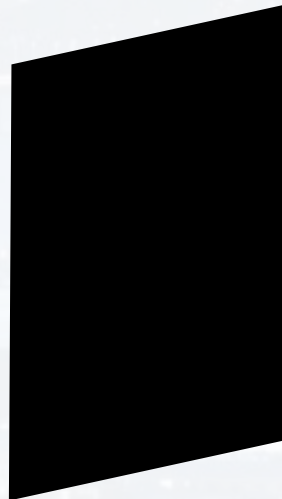
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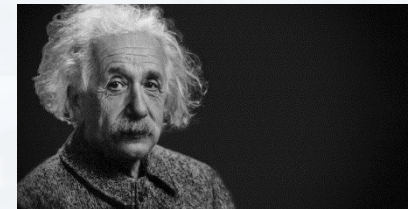
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$p_1, p_2, p_3, p_4, p_5, p_6 = 1/6$ for all p_n

Come on, don't be so nerdy. It is an odd number.



Hence, $S = -\frac{1}{3} \ln\left(\frac{1}{3}\right) * 3 = 1.10 \dots$



Entropy is a mathematically precise measure of information!

- entropy high \rightarrow information low
- entropy low \rightarrow information high

$$S = - \sum_i^I p_i \ln p_i$$



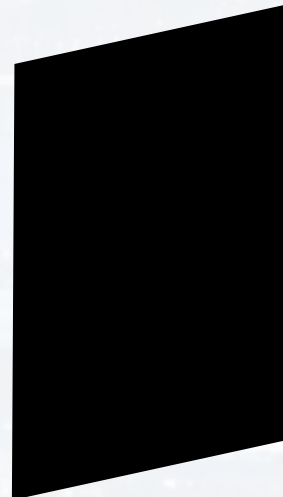
fair die: events are

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

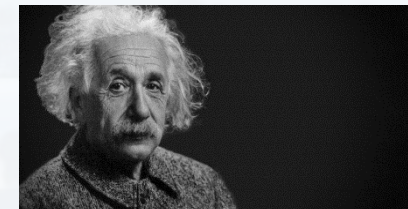
p_n are

$p_1, p_2, p_3, p_4, p_5, p_6 = 1/6$ for all p_n

I give up. It's a five. Next time I am gonna play with Schroedinger.



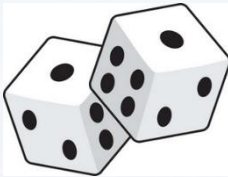
Fantastic! So all $p_n = 0$ except for $n = 5$



Entropy is a mathematically precise measure of information!

- entropy high \rightarrow information low
- entropy low \rightarrow information high

$$S = - \sum_i^I p_i \ln p_i$$



fair die: events are

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

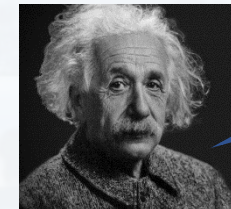
p_n are

$p_1, p_2, p_3, p_4, p_5, p_6 = 1/6$ for all p_n

I give up. It's a five. Next time I am gonna play with Schroedinger.



Hence, $S = -0 \ln(0) * 5 - 1 * \ln(1) = 0$

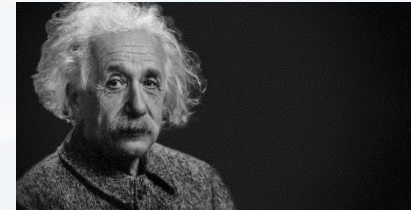


But don't mention your cat!

Entropy is a mathematically precise measure of information!

- entropy high \rightarrow information low
- entropy low \rightarrow information high

$$S = - \sum_i^I p_i \ln p_i$$



Information:

none (any number)

not a six

an odd number

the actual number

Entropy:

$S = 1.79$

$S = 1.61$

$S = 1.10$

$S = 0.00$

M. Hohle:

Thank you for your attention!

