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# Causal Statistical Decision Problems

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## 1 Notes on category theoretic probability and string diagrams

Category theoretic treatments of probability theory often start with *probability monads* (for a good overview, see [Jacobs, 2018]). A monad on some category  $C$  is a functor  $T : C \rightarrow C$  along with natural transformations called the unit  $\eta : 1_C \rightarrow T$  and multiplication  $\mu : T^2 \rightarrow T$ . Roughly, functors are maps between categories that preserve identity and composition structure and natural transformations are "maps" between functors that also preserve composition structure. The monad unit is similar to the identity element of a monoid in that application of the identity followed by multiplication yields the identity transformation. The multiplication transformation is also (roughly speaking) associative.

An example of a probability monad is the discrete probability monad given by the functor  $\mathcal{D} : \mathbf{Set} \rightarrow \mathbf{Set}$  which maps a countable set  $X$  to the set of functions from  $X \rightarrow [0, 1]$  that are probability measures on  $X$ , denoted  $\mathcal{D}(X)$ .  $\mathcal{D}$  maps a measurable function  $f$  to  $\mathcal{D}f : X \rightarrow \mathcal{D}(X)$  given by  $\mathcal{D}f : x \mapsto \delta_{f(x)}$ . The unit of this monad is the map  $\eta_X : X \rightarrow \mathcal{D}(X)$  given by  $\eta_X : x \mapsto \delta_x$  (which is equivalent to  $\mathcal{D}1_X$ ) and multiplication is  $\mu_X : \mathcal{D}^2(X) \rightarrow \mathcal{D}(X)$  where  $\mu_X : \Omega \mapsto \sum_{\phi} \Omega(\phi)\phi$ .

For continuous distributions we have the Giry monad on the category  $\mathbf{Meas}$  of measurable spaces given by the functor  $\mathcal{G}$  which maps a measurable space  $X$  to the set of probability measures on  $X$ , denoted  $\mathcal{G}(X)$ . Other elements of the monad (unit, multiplication and map between morphisms) are the "continuous" version of the above.

Of particular interest is the Kleisli category of the monads above. The Kleisli  $C_T$  category of a monad  $T$  on category  $C$  is the category with the same objects and the morphisms  $X \rightarrow Y$  in  $C_T$  is the set of morphisms  $X \rightarrow TY$  in  $C$ . Thus the morphisms  $X \rightarrow Y$  in the Kleisli category  $\mathbf{Set}_{\mathcal{D}}$  are morphisms  $X \rightarrow \mathcal{D}(Y)$  in  $\mathbf{Set}$ , i.e. stochastic matrices, and in the Kleisli category  $\mathbf{Meas}_{\mathcal{G}}$  we have Markov kernels. Composition of arrows in the Kleisli categories correspond to Matrix products and "kernel products" respectively.

Both  $\mathcal{D}$  and  $\mathcal{G}$  are known to be *commutative* monads, and the Kleisli category of a commutative monad is a symmetric monoidal category.

Diagrams for symmetric monoidal categories consist of wires with arrows, boxes and a couple of special symbols. The identity object (which we identify with the set  $\{*\}$ ) is drawn as nothing at all  $\{*\} := \square$  and identity maps are drawn as bare wires:

$$\text{Id}_X := \begin{array}{c} \uparrow \\ X \end{array} \quad (1)$$

We draw Kleisli arrows from the unit (i.e. probability distributions)  $\mu : \{*\} \rightarrow X$  as triangles and Kleisli arrows  $\kappa : X \rightarrow Y$  (i.e. Markov kernels  $X \rightarrow \Delta(\mathcal{Y})$ ) as boxes. We draw the Kleisli arrow

32  $\mathbb{1}_X : X \rightarrow \{*\}$  (which is unique for each  $X$ ) as below

$$\mu := \begin{array}{c} \uparrow X \\ \nabla \mu \end{array} \quad \kappa := \begin{array}{c} \uparrow Y \\ \boxed{\kappa} \end{array} \quad (2)$$

33 The product of objects in **Meas** is given by  $(X, \mathcal{X}) \cdot (Y, \mathcal{Y}) = (X \times Y, \mathcal{X} \otimes \mathcal{Y})$ , which we will  
 34 often write as just  $X \times Y$ . Horizontal juxtaposition of wires indicates this product, and horizontal  
 35 juxtaposition also indicates the tensor product of Kleisli arrows. Let  $\kappa_1 : X \rightarrow W$  and  $\kappa_2 : Y \rightarrow Z$ :

$$(X \times Y, \mathcal{X} \otimes \mathcal{Y}) := \begin{array}{c} \uparrow X \quad \uparrow Y \\ \text{---} \end{array} \quad \kappa_1 \otimes \kappa_2 := \begin{array}{c} \uparrow W \quad \uparrow Z \\ \boxed{\kappa_1} \quad \boxed{\kappa_2} \\ \text{---} \\ \uparrow X \quad \uparrow Y \end{array} \quad (3)$$

36 Composition of arrows is achieved by “wiring” boxes together. For  $\kappa_1 : X \rightarrow Y$  and  $\kappa_2 : Y \rightarrow Z$   
 37 we have

$$\kappa_1 \kappa_2(x; A) = \int_Y \kappa_2(y; A) \kappa_1(x; dy) := \begin{array}{c} \uparrow Z \\ \boxed{\kappa_2} \\ \text{---} \\ \boxed{\kappa_1} \\ \text{---} \\ \uparrow X \end{array} \quad (4)$$

38 Symmetric monoidal categoris have the following coherence theorem[Selinger, 2010]:

39 **Theorem 1.1** (Coherence (symmetric monoidal)). *A well-formed equation between morphisms in*  
 40 *the language of symmetric monoidal categories follows from the axioms of symmetric monoidal*  
 41 *categories if and only if it holds, up to isomorphism of diagrams, in the graphical language.*

42 Isomorphism of diagrams for symmetric monoidal categories (somewhat informally) is any planar  
 43 deformation of a diagram including deformations that cause wires to cross. We consider a diagram  
 44 for a symmetric monoidal category to be well formed only if all wires point upwards.

45 In fact the Kleisli categories of the probability monads above have (for each object) unique *copy*:  
 46  $X \rightarrow X \times X$  and *erase*:  $X \rightarrow \{*\}$  maps that satisfy the *commutative comonoid axioms* that (thanks  
 47 to the coherence theorem above) can be stated graphically. These differ from the copy and erase maps  
 48 of *finite product* or *cartesian* categories in that they do not necessarily respect composition of arrows.

$$\text{Erase} = \mathbb{1}_X := \begin{array}{c} * \\ \uparrow \end{array} \quad \text{Copy} = x \mapsto \delta_{x,x} := \begin{array}{c} \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \uparrow \end{array} \quad (5)$$

$$\begin{array}{c} \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \uparrow \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \uparrow \end{array} := \begin{array}{c} \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \uparrow \end{array} \quad (6)$$

$$\begin{array}{c} * \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \uparrow \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \uparrow \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \uparrow \end{array} \quad (7)$$

$$\begin{array}{c} \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \uparrow \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \uparrow \end{array} \quad (8)$$

Finally,  $\{*\}$  is a terminal object in the Kleisli categories of either probability monad. This means that the map  $X \rightarrow \{*\}$  is unique for all objects  $X$ , and as a consequence for all objects  $X, Y$  and all  $\kappa : X \rightarrow Y$  we have

$$\begin{array}{c} * \\ \boxed{\kappa} \\ \downarrow \\ X \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} * \\ \downarrow \\ X \end{array} \quad (9)$$

This is equivalent to requiring for all  $x \in X$   $\int_Y \kappa(x; dy) = 1$ . In the case of  $\mathbf{Set}_{\mathcal{D}}$ , this condition is what differentiates a stochastic matrix from a general positive matrix (which live in a larger category than  $\mathbf{Set}_{\mathcal{D}}$ ).

Thus when manipulating diagrams representing Markov kernels in particular (and, importantly, not more general symmetric monoidal categories) diagram isomorphism also includes applications of 6, 7, 8 and 9.

A particular property of the copy map in  $\mathbf{Meas}_{\mathcal{G}}$  (and probably  $\mathbf{Set}_{\mathcal{D}}$  as well) is that it commutes with Markov kernels iff the markov kernels are deterministic [Fong, 2013].

## 1.1 Disintegration and Bayesian inversion

*Disintegration* is a key operation on probability distributions (equivalently arrows  $\{*\} \rightarrow X$ ) in the categories under discussion. It corresponds to “finding the conditional probability” (though conditional probability is usually formalised in a slightly different way).

Given a distribution  $\mu : \{*\} \rightarrow X \otimes Y$ , a disintegration  $c : X \rightarrow Y$  is a Markov kernel that satisfies

$$\begin{array}{c} X \quad Y \\ \downarrow \quad \downarrow \\ \mu \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} X \quad Y \\ \downarrow \quad \downarrow \\ \boxed{c} \\ \downarrow \\ * \\ \downarrow \\ \mu \end{array} \quad (10)$$

Disintegrations always exist in  $\mathbf{Set}_{\mathcal{D}}$  but not in  $\mathbf{Meas}_{\mathcal{G}}$ . They do exist in the latter if we restrict ourselves to standard measurable spaces. If  $c_1$  and  $c_2$  are disintegrations  $X \rightarrow Y$  of  $\mu$ , they are equal  $\mu$ -A.S. In fact, this equality can be strengthened somewhat - they are equal almost surely with respect to any distribution that shares the “ $X$ -marginal” of  $\mu$ .

Given  $\sigma : \{*\} \rightarrow X$  and a channel  $c : X \rightarrow Y$ , a Bayesian inversion of  $(\sigma, c)$  is a channel  $d : Y \rightarrow X$  such that

$$\begin{array}{c} X \quad Y \\ \downarrow \quad \downarrow \\ \boxed{c} \\ \downarrow \\ \sigma \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} X \quad Y \\ \downarrow \quad \downarrow \\ \boxed{d} \\ \downarrow \\ \boxed{c} \\ \downarrow \\ \sigma \end{array} \quad (11)$$

We can obtain disintegrations from Bayesian inversions and vice-versa.

Clerc et al. [2017] offer an alternative view of Bayesian inversion which they claim doesn’t depend on standard measurability conditions, but there is a step in their proof I didn’t follow.

## 1.2 Generalisations

Cho and Jacobs [2019] make use of a larger “CD” category by dropping 9. I’m not completely clear whether you end up with arrows being “Markov kernels for general measures” or something else (can we have negative arrows?). This allows for the introduction of “observables” or “effects” of the form

$$\begin{array}{c} \triangle \\ \downarrow \\ f \end{array}$$

79 Jacobs et al. [2019] make use of an embedding of  $\mathbf{Set}_{\mathcal{D}}$  in  $\mathbf{Mat}(\mathbb{R}^+)$  with morphisms all positive  
80 matrices (I’m not totally clear on the objects, or how they are self-dual - this doesn’t seem to be  
81 exactly the same as the category of finite dimensional vector spaces). This latter category is compact  
82 closed, which - informally speaking - supports the same diagrams as symmetric monoidal categories  
83 with the addition of “upside down” wires.

### 84 1.3 Key questions for Causal Theories

85 **generalised disintegrations** : Of key importance to our work is generalising the notion of disinte-  
86 gration (and possibly Bayesian inversion) to general kernels  $X \rightarrow Y$  rather than restricting ourselves  
87 to probability distributions  $\{*\} \rightarrow Y$ .

88 The natural definition would appear to be  $c$  is a disintegration of  $\kappa : \_ \rightarrow X \otimes Y$  if

(12)

89 My conjecture is that a generalised disintegration exists if we restrict ourselves to standard measurable  
90 spaces and  $\kappa$  is determined by its values on a countable set, but “only if” will be difficult to determine.

91 Generalised disintegrations would facilitate an elegant definition of graphical causal models or  
92 influence diagrams.

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