

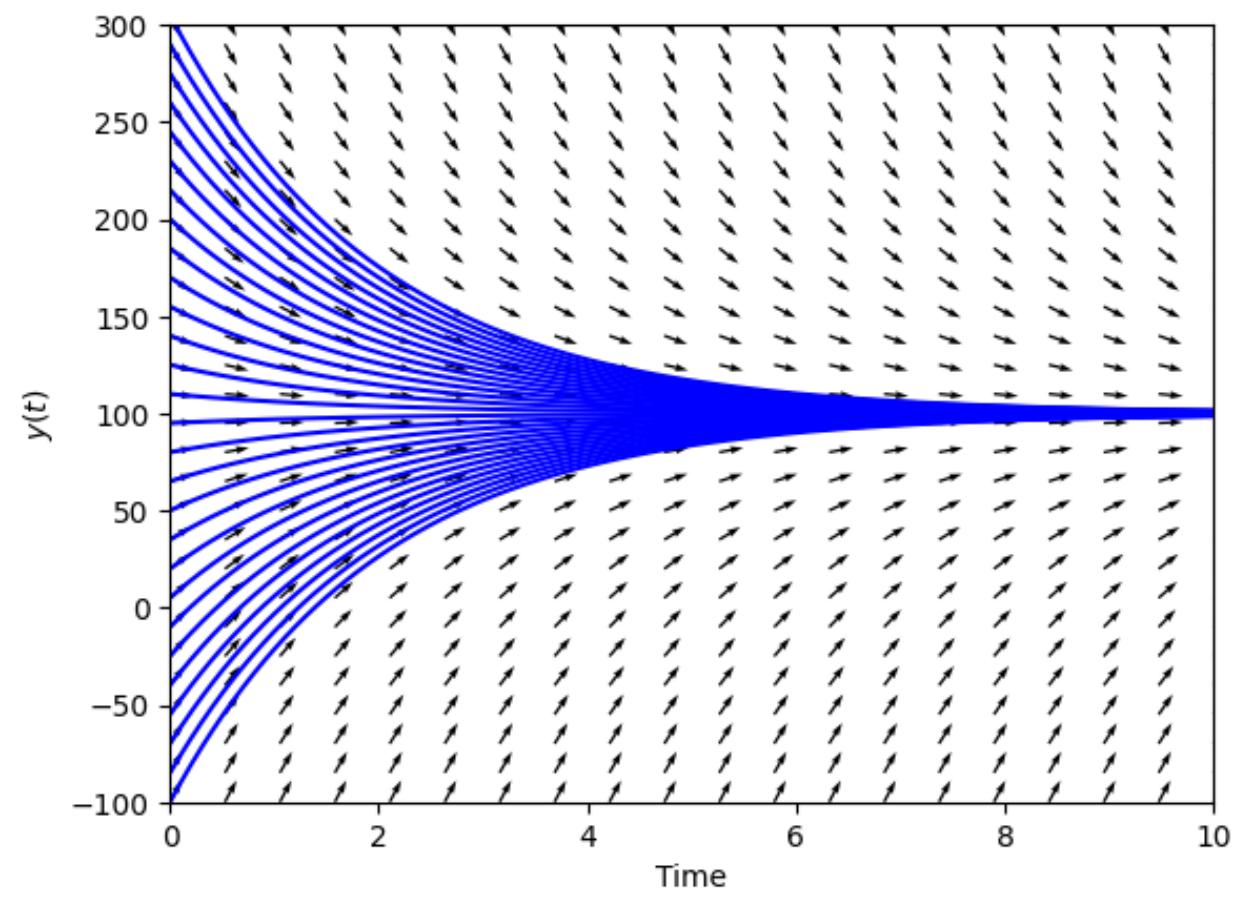
# **Neural Differential Equations with applications in generative models**

**EaGR workshop @ AIM**

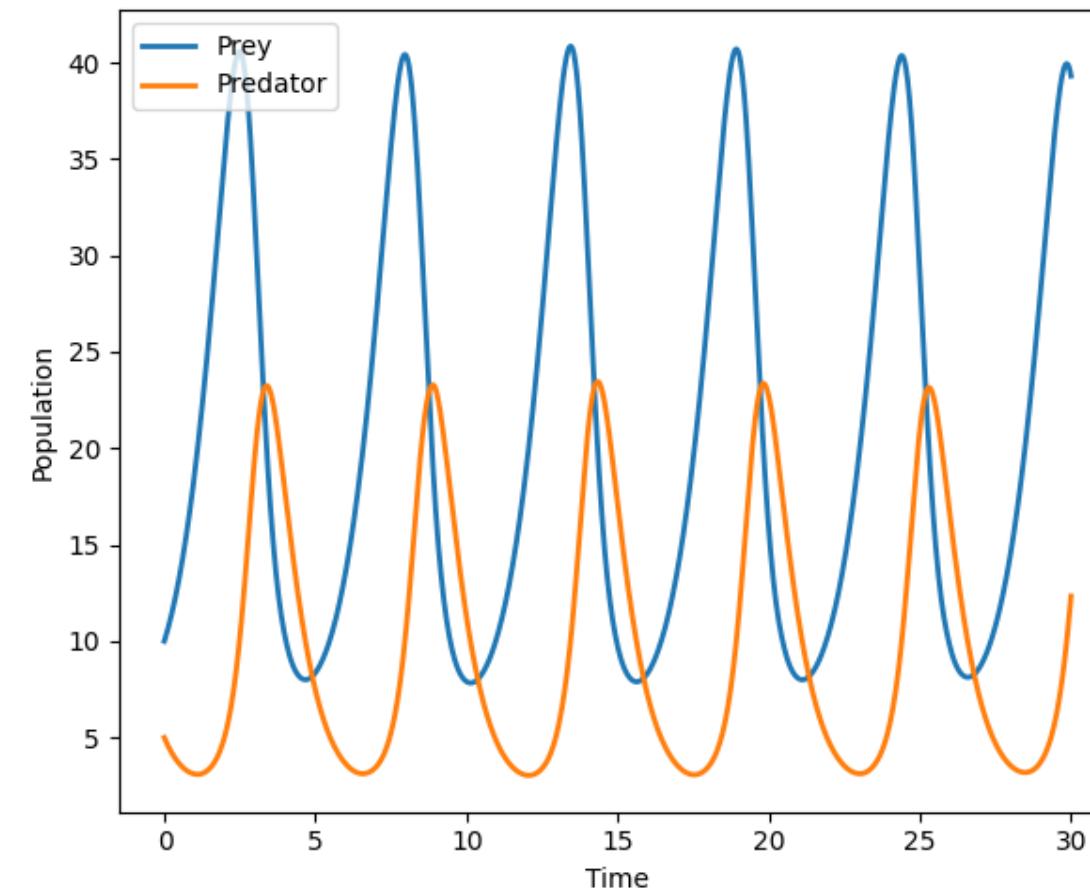
**Nicole Yang, Emory University  
June 2025**

# Dynamical systems

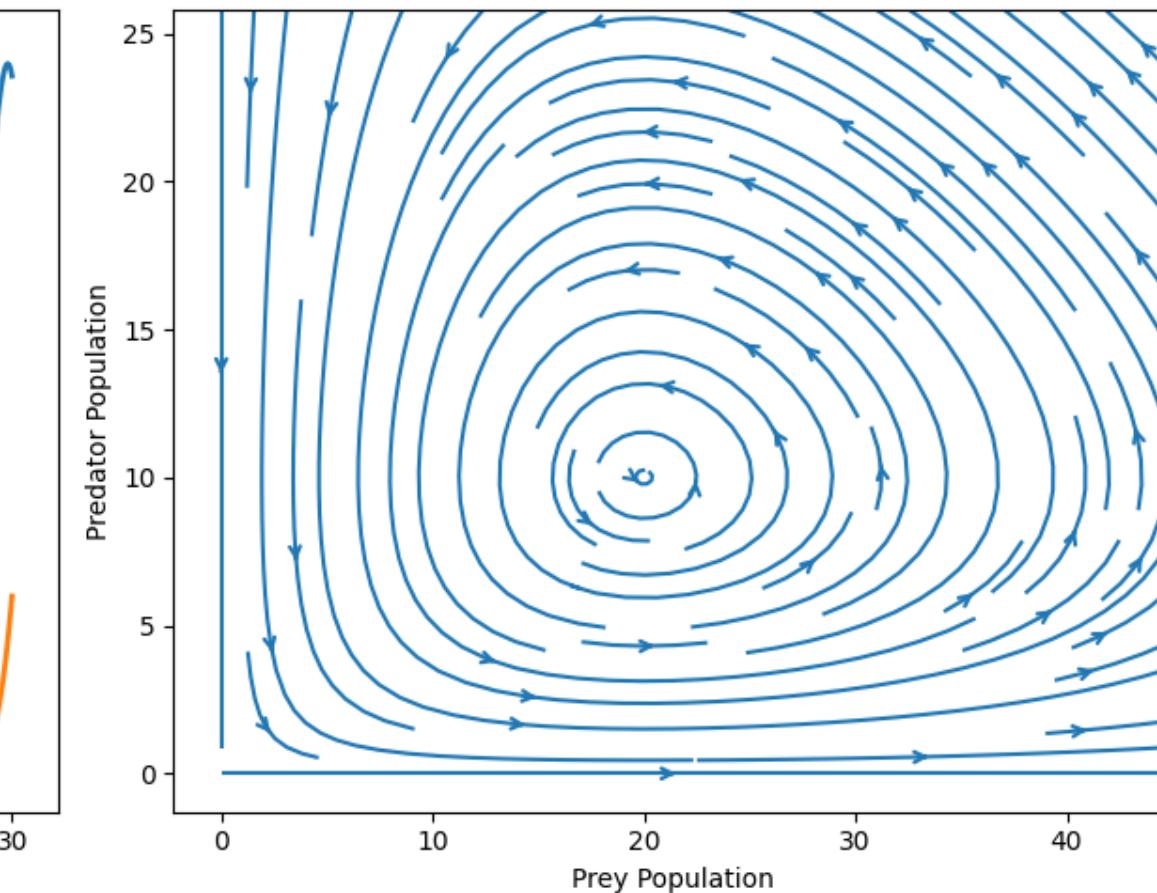
- Describe how the state of a system evolves over time



$$y'(t) = 50 - 0.5y(t), t \in [0,10]$$



Lotka–Volterra predator-prey model



# Dynamical systems

## Modern Perspective

- Multi-layer Perceptron (MLP) with L layers

$$x_\ell = F_{\theta_\ell}(x_{\ell-1}), \text{ where } F_{\theta_\ell}(x) = \sigma(W_\ell x + b_\ell), \ell = 1, \dots, L$$

- Residual neural networks (ResNets)

$$x_\ell = x_{\ell-1} + F_{\theta_\ell}(x_{\ell-1})$$

# Today's roadmap

- Neural ODEs (NODEs)
  - Supervised learning examples via NODEs
  - Fundamentals in probability
  - Generative modeling example - Continuous Normalizing Flow
- Neural differential equations in latent space
  - KL divergence, ELBO
  - Latent ODEs
- Diffusion models
- References

# Afternoon's hands-on session

- Experiment examples
- How to read a paper
- Pick a paper you are interested in
- Ideas in action!

Team up to discuss and brainstorm

# Neural Ordinary Differential Equations

- Consider an initial value problem

$$\frac{d}{dt}y(t) = f_\theta(t, y(t)), \text{ for } t \in [0, T], y(0) = y_0,$$

where  $f_\theta : [0, T] \times \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^d$  is parametrized by neural networks.

- Existence and Uniqueness

By Picard's existence theorem, if  $f_\theta$  is continuous in time and uniformly Lipschitz in  $y$ , then there exists a unique function  $t \rightarrow y(t)$  that satisfies the above IVP over  $[0, T]$ .

# Neural Ordinary Differential Equations

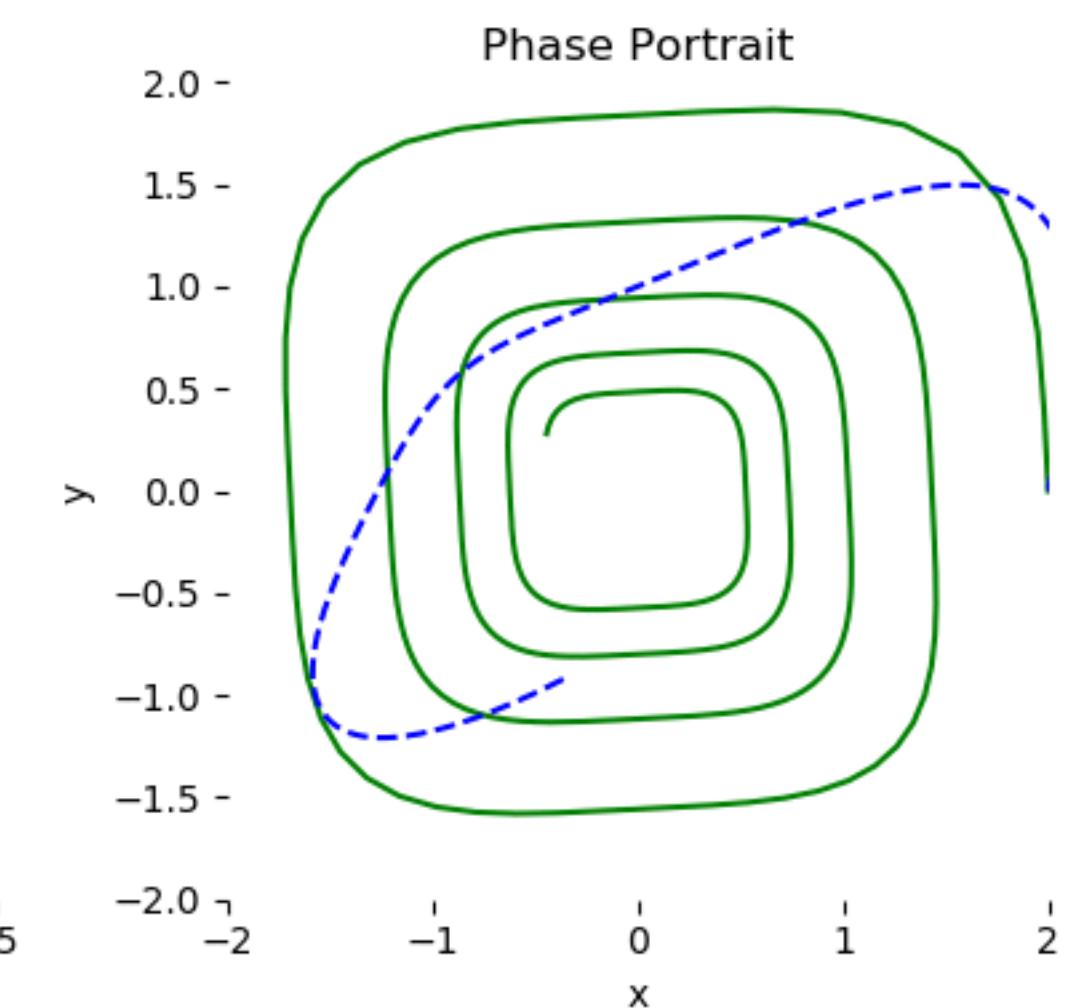
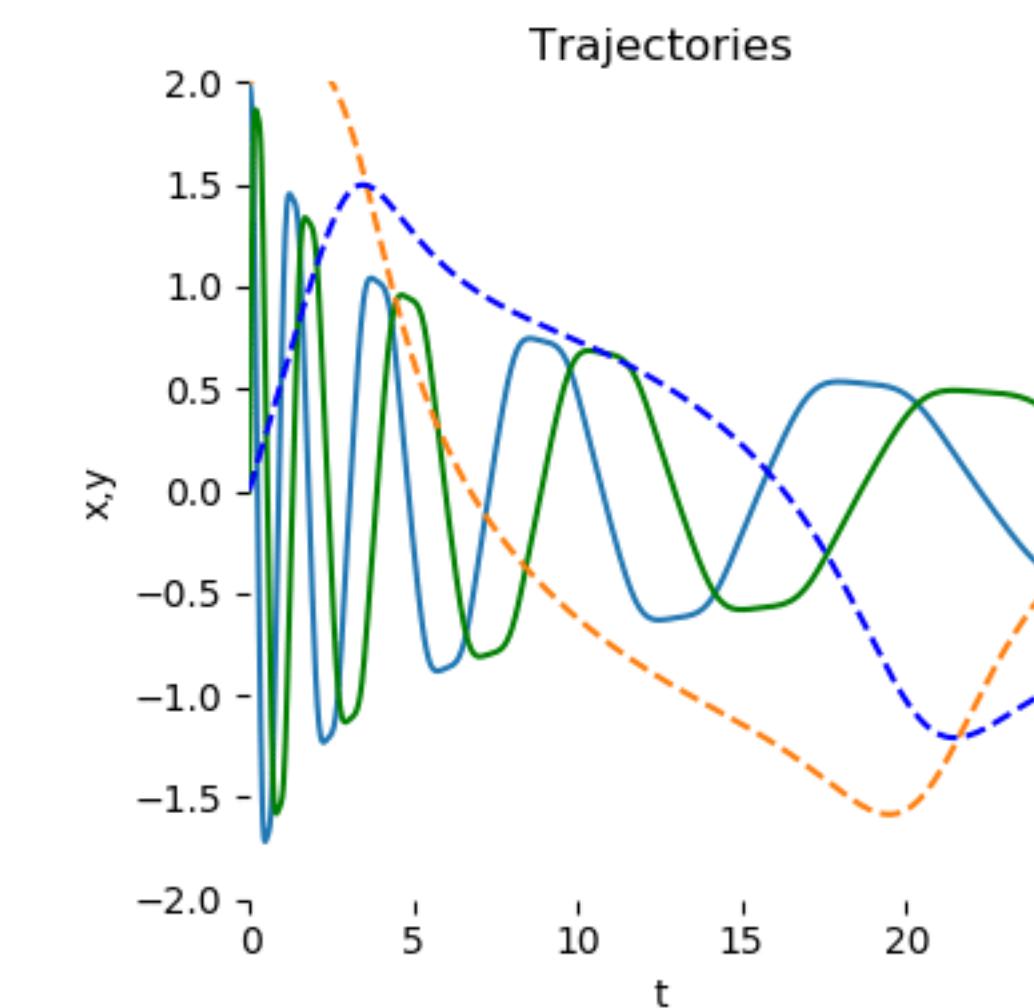
## A supervised learning example

- Consider  $\frac{d}{dt}y(t) = f_\theta(t, y(t))$ , for  $t \in [0, T]$ ,  $y(0) = y_0$ ,

- $f_\theta(y) = W_2 \tanh(W_1 (y^3) + b_1) + b_2$

- Train  $\theta$  by minimizing

$$\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \|y_{\text{true}}(t_i) - y_\theta(t_i)\|_1$$



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# Discussion

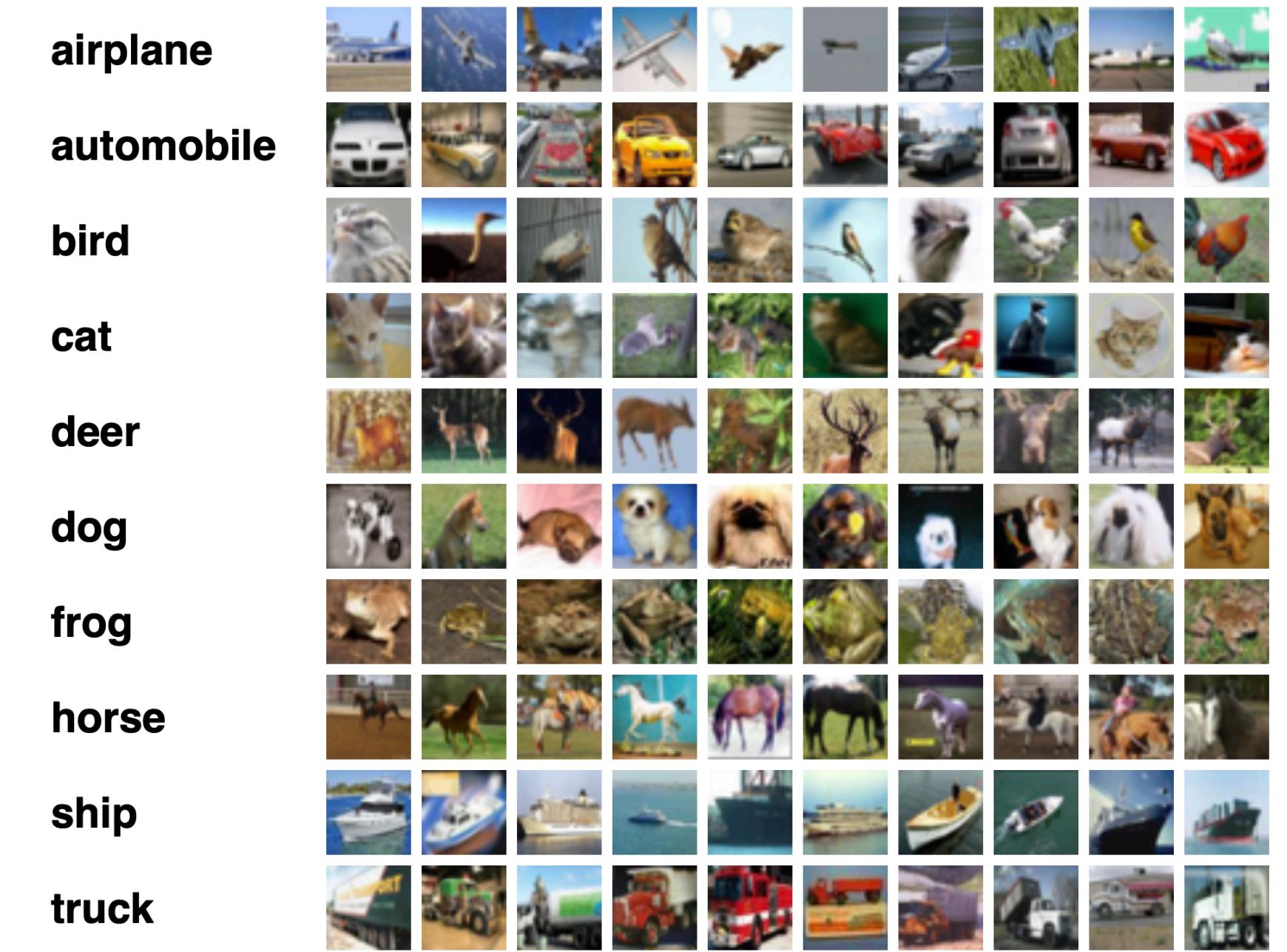
Any questions?

- A continuous-time deep learning framework

Haber&Ruthotto '17, E '17, Chen et al., '18

- How do you update  $\theta$ ? Back propagation

- Applications



# Neural Ordinary Differential Equations

## Unsupervised?

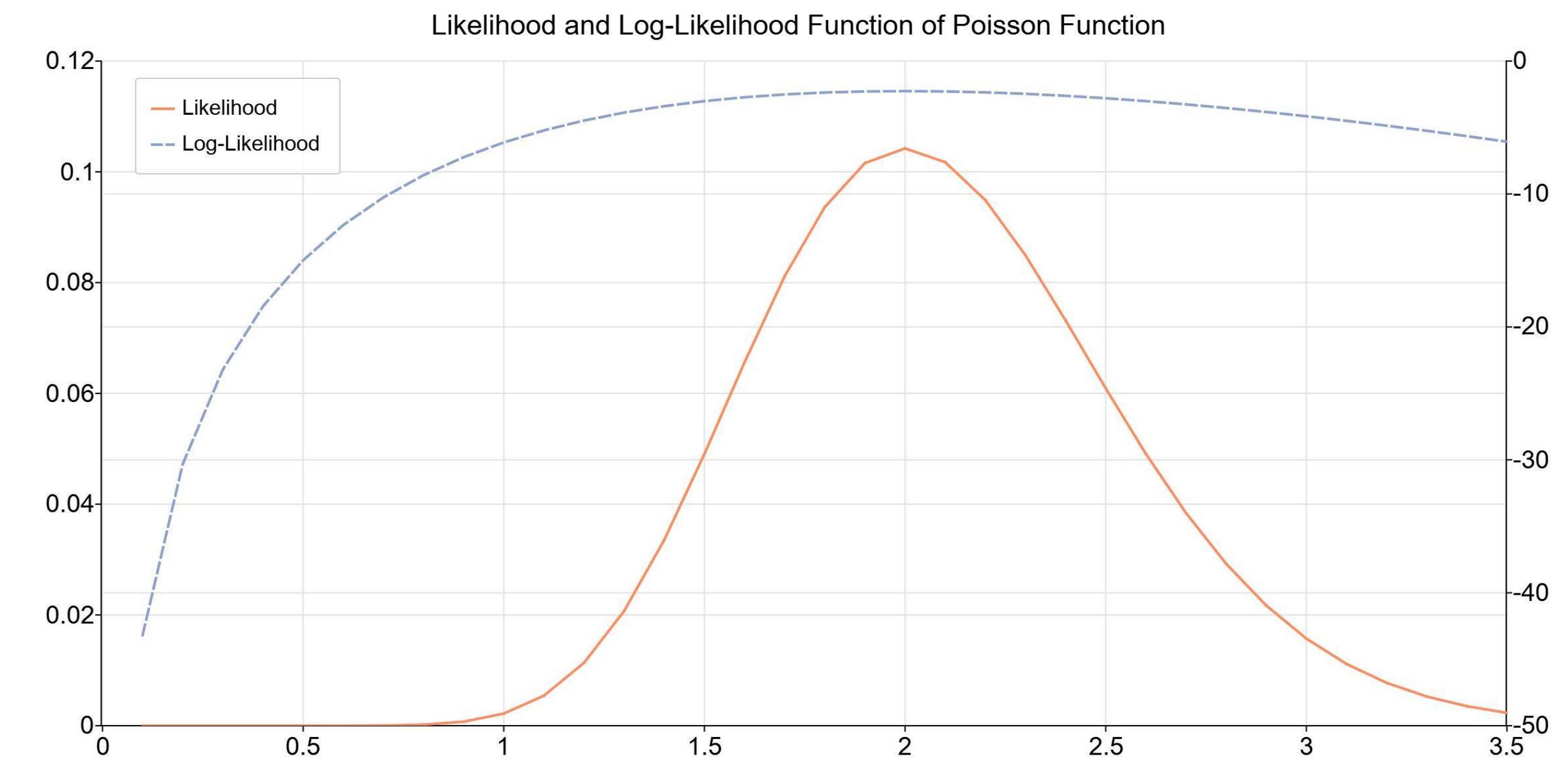
- Consider  $\frac{d}{dt}y(t) = f_\theta(t, y(t))$ , for  $t \in [0, T]$ ,  $y(0) = y_0$ ,

- Randomness

We have access to some data (samples from a distribution)

Use  $y(T)$  to approximate the data distribution

- Evaluation



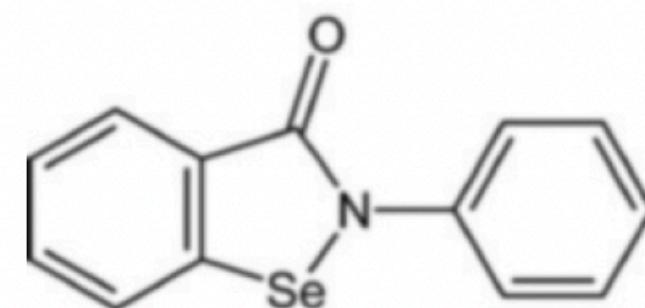
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# Generative Models

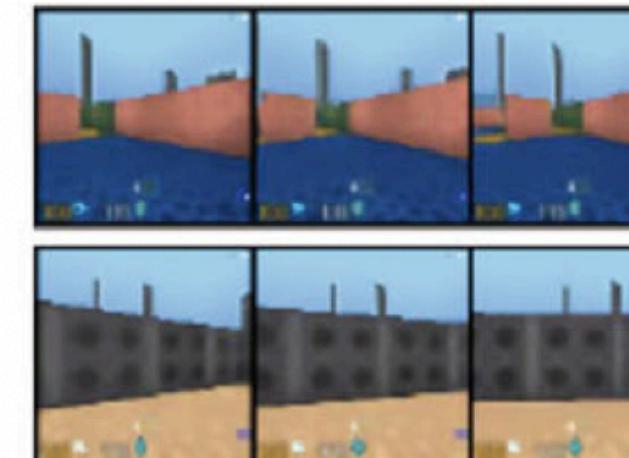
“ i want to talk to you . ”  
“i want to be with you . ”  
“i do n’t want to be with you . ”  
i do n’t want to be with you .  
she did n’t want to be with him .

he was silent for a long moment .  
he was silent for a moment .  
it was quiet for a moment .  
it was dark and cold .  
there was a pause .  
it was my turn .

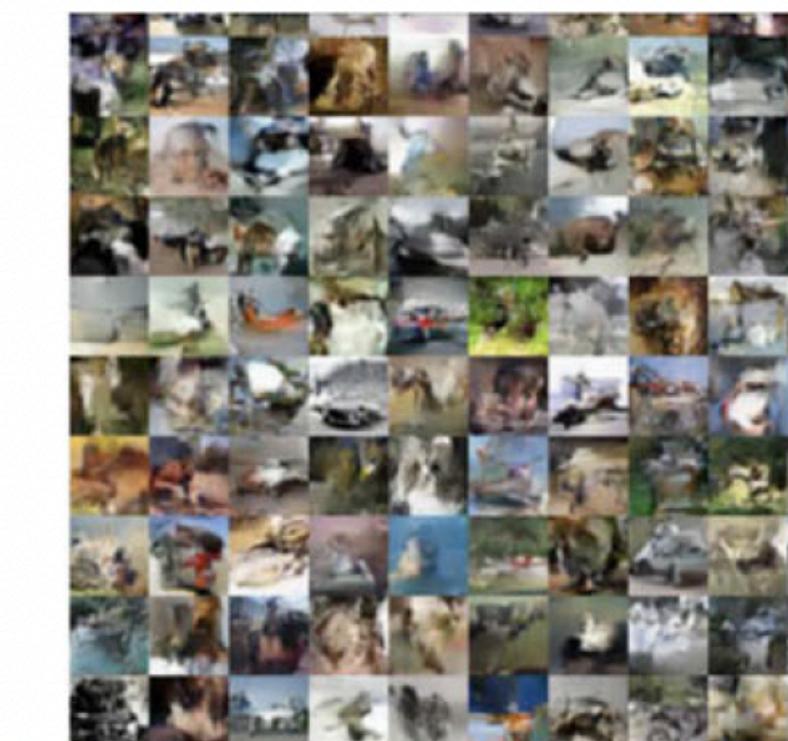
Text



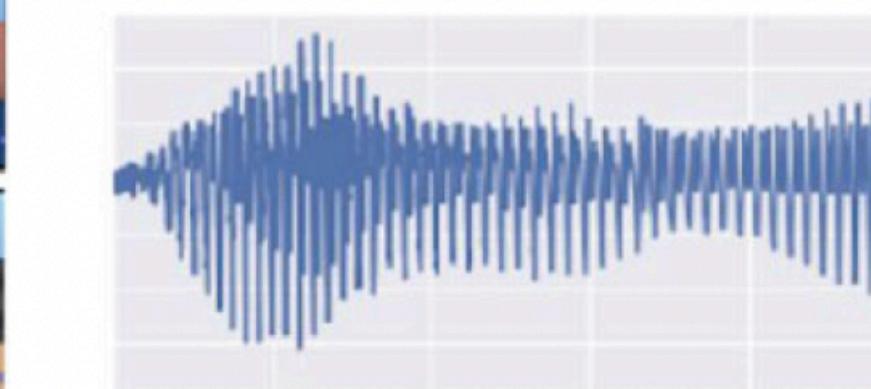
Graphs



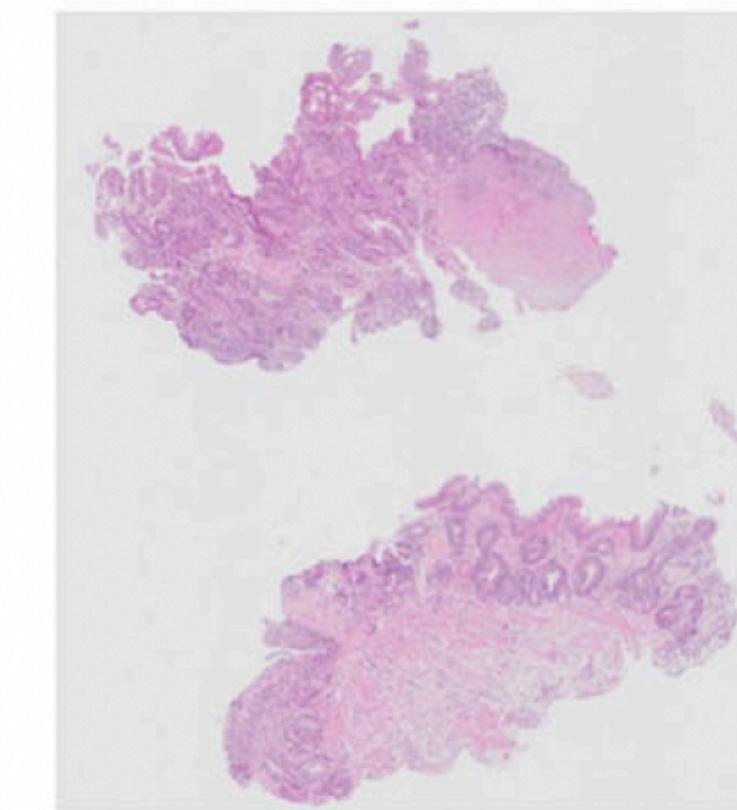
Reinforcement learning



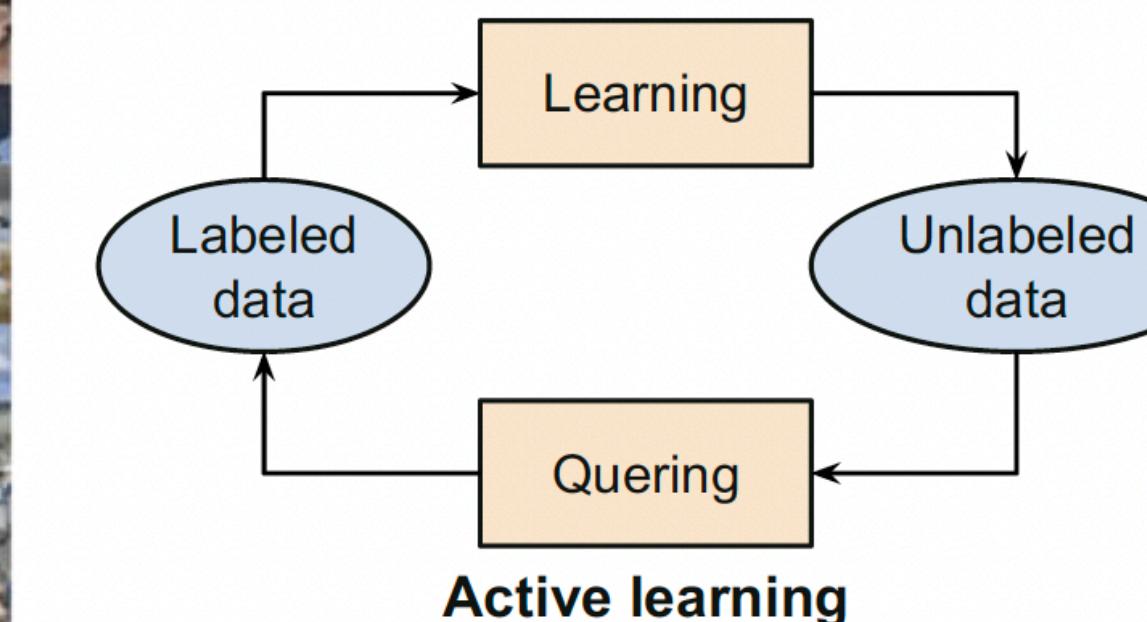
Images



Audio



Medical imaging

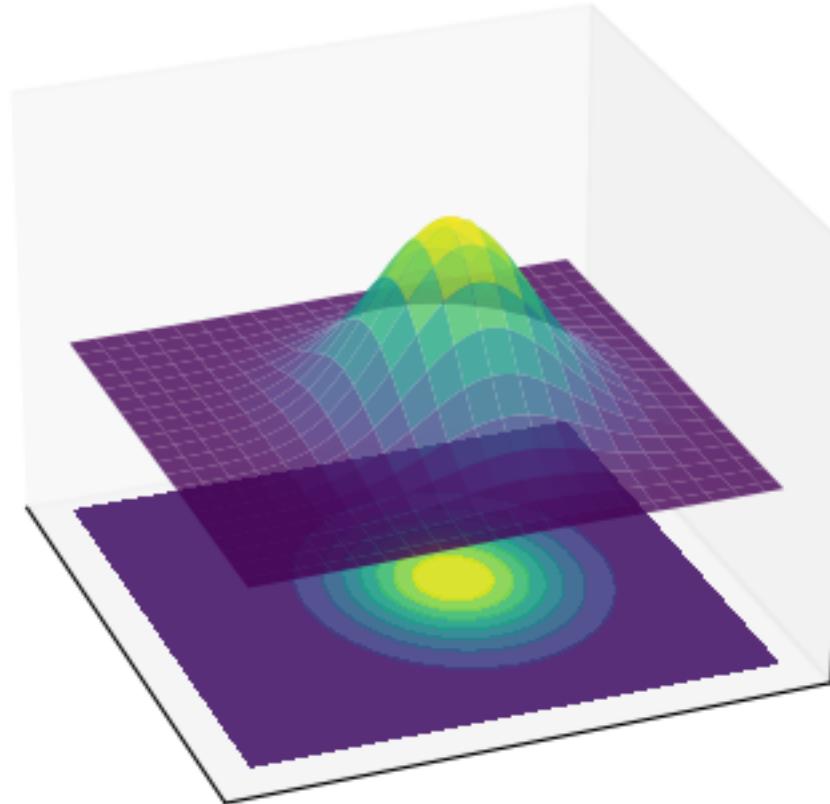


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# Generative Models

A mathematical formulation

- Given some observations, sample from a data distribution (unknown!)



# **Fundamentals**

## **Probability space and probability distributions**

# Fundamentals

## Pushforward

- Pushforward map  $\varphi$
- Recall the change of variables formula: Let  $\varphi$  be injective, continuously differentiable function such that  $(v_1, \dots, v_n) = \varphi(u_1, \dots, u_n)$ . Then,  
$$dv_1 \cdots dv_n = |\det(J_\varphi)| du_1 \cdots du_n.$$

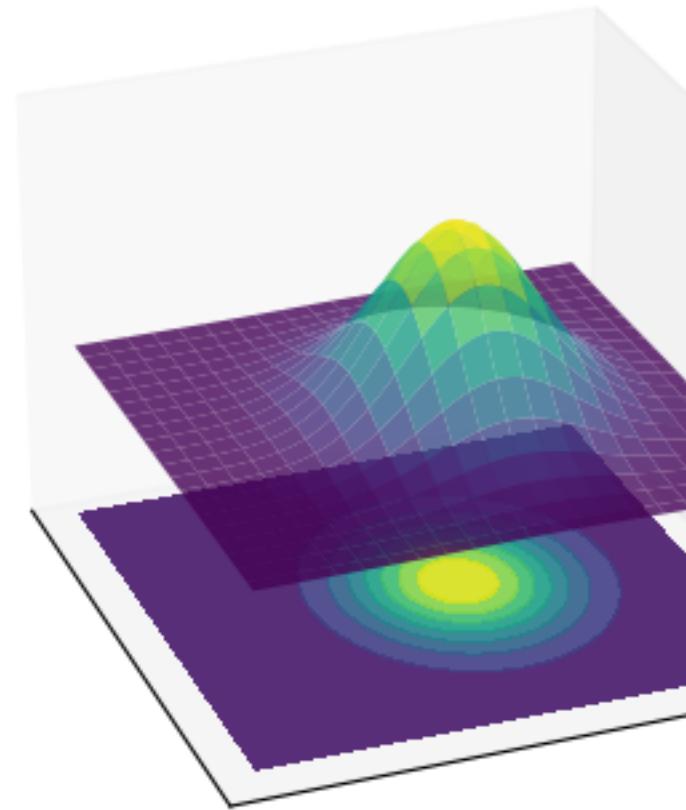
# **Fundamentals**

## **Continuity equation**

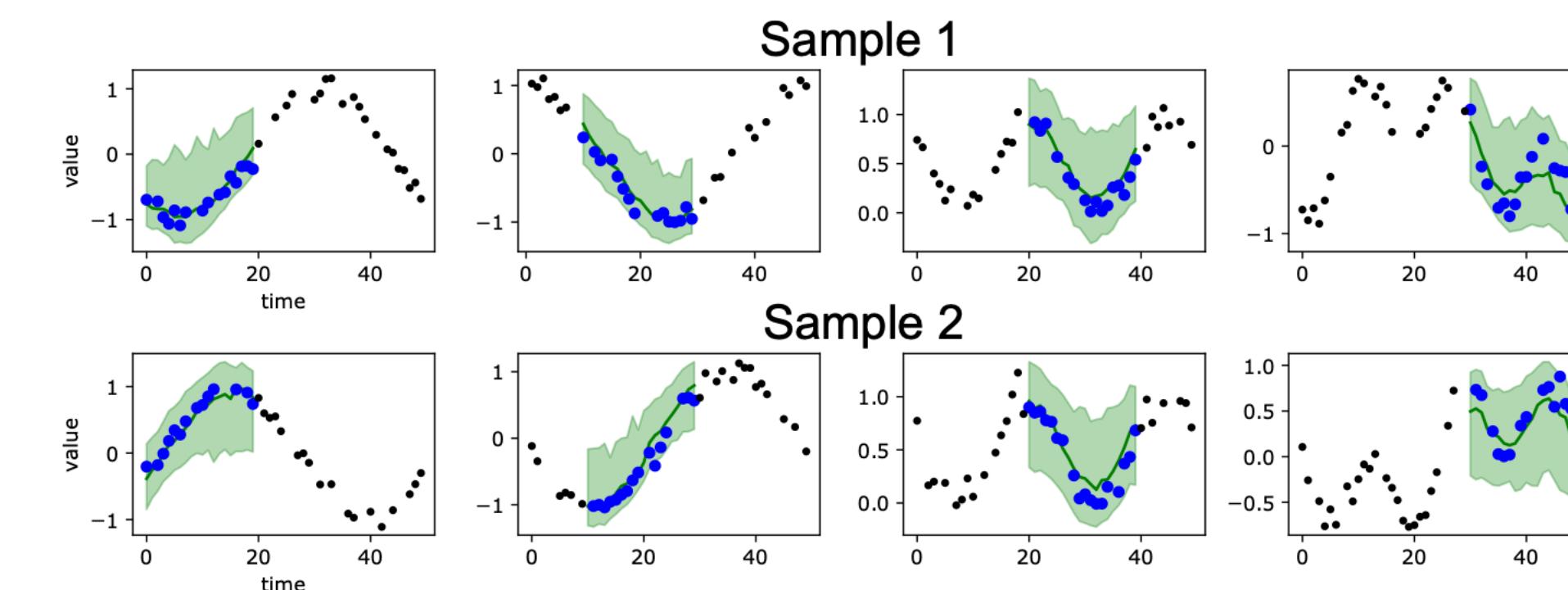
# Generative Models

## A mathematical formulation

- Given some observations, sample from a data distribution (unknown!)



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# Continuous Normalizing Flows

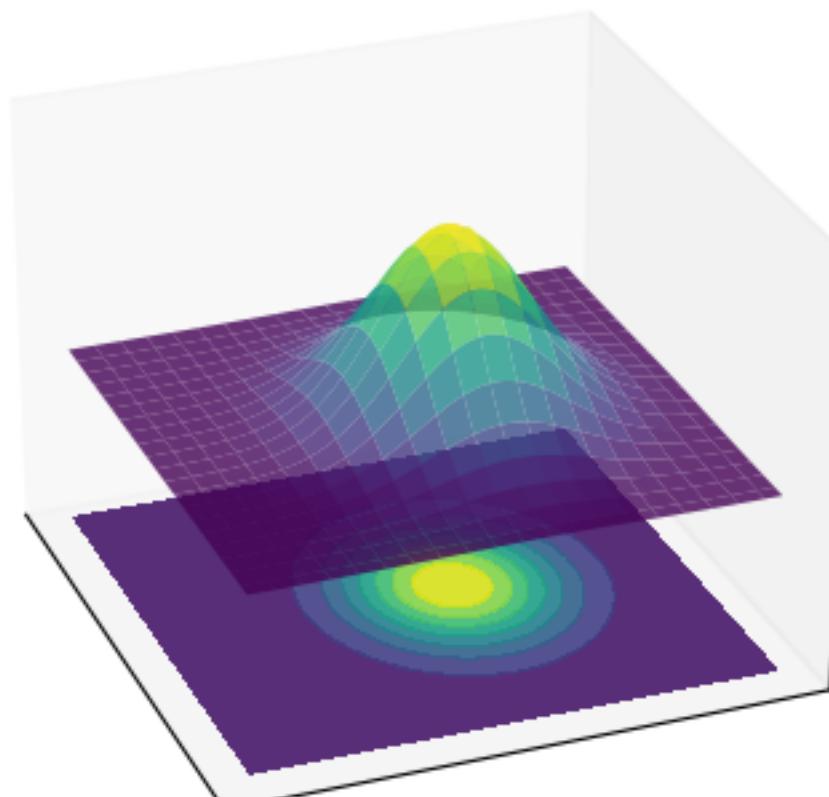
A generative model via Neural Ordinary Differential Equations

- Flow map

Given a initial condition  $y_0$  and a time  $t$ , flow map  $\Phi_t(y_0) = y(t)$

- Pushforward

$$\mu_t = \Phi_{t\#}\mu_0$$



# Continuous Normalizing Flows

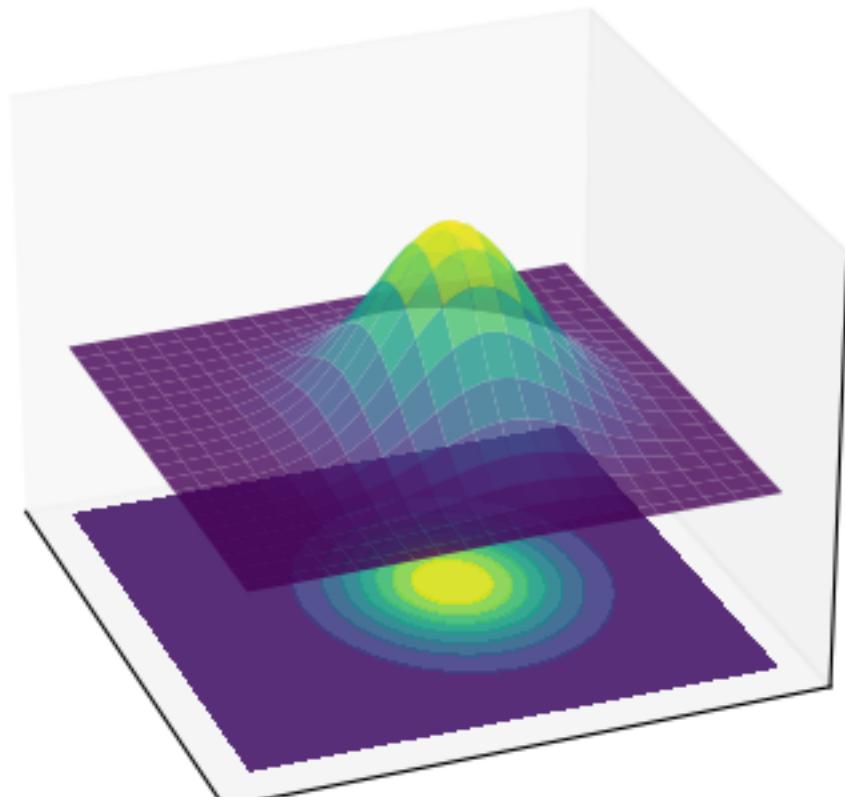
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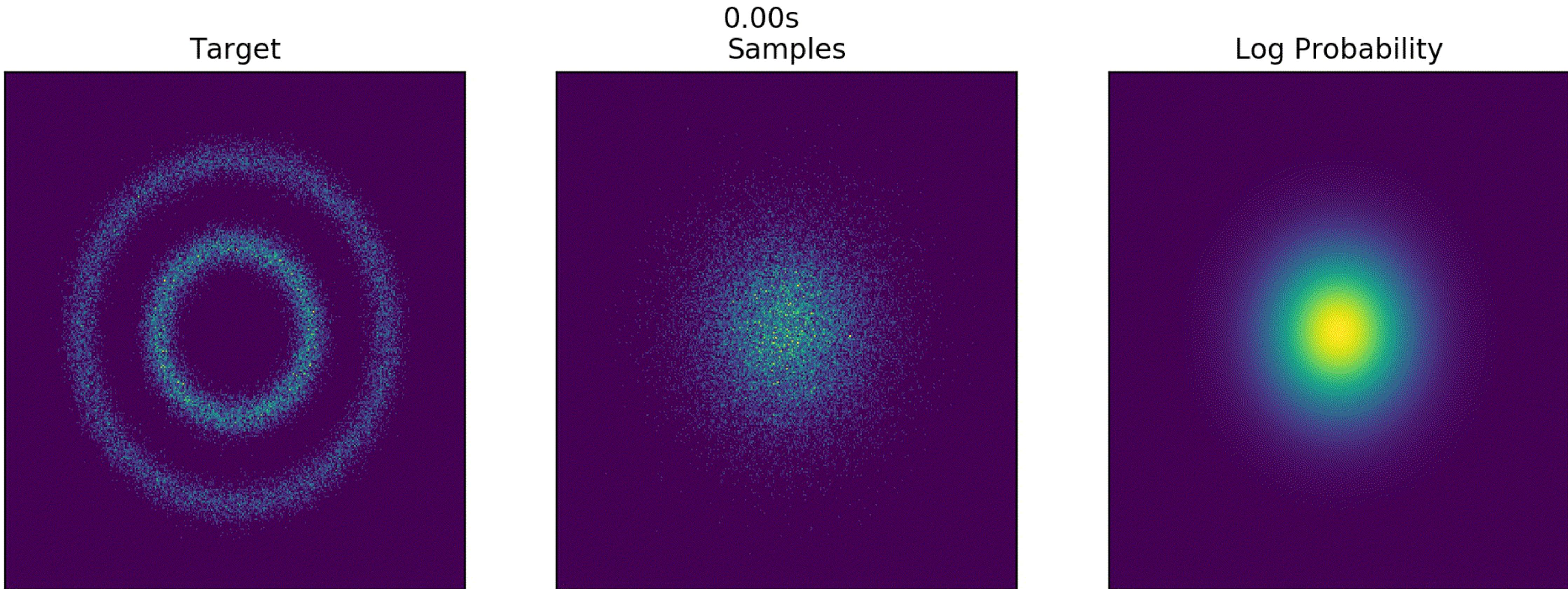
$$\mu_t = \Phi_{t\#}\mu_0$$



$$\frac{d}{dt} \begin{bmatrix} z_\theta(t) \\ \ell_\theta(t) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} f_\theta(z_\theta(t), t) \\ -\text{tr} \left( \frac{\partial f_\theta}{\partial z_\theta} \right) \end{bmatrix}, \quad \begin{bmatrix} z_\theta(T) \\ \ell_\theta(T) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} x \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}.$$

# Continuous Normalizing Flows

A generative model via Neural Ordinary Differential Equations



# Continuous Normalizing Flows

## Discussion

- Exact likelihood evaluation
- Density Estimation
- Generation - text, audio, image, video etc.

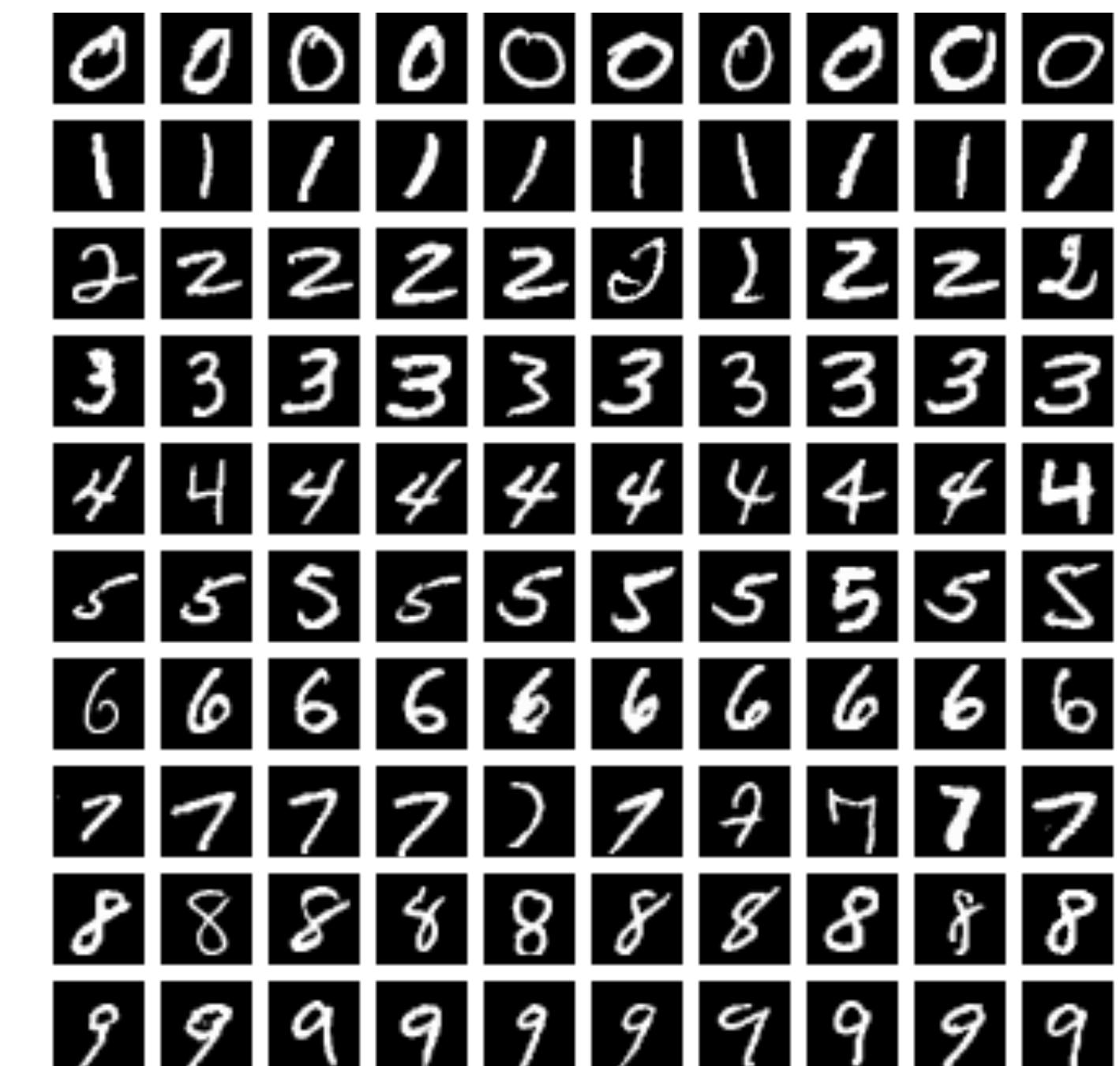
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# Continuous Normalizing Flows

## Discussion

- Exact likelihood evaluation
- Density Estimation
- Generation - text, audio, image, video etc.
- Limitations in CNF
  - Bijection:  
need the input output dimension to be the same
  - Expressivity:  
data space dimension and latent space dimension need to be the same

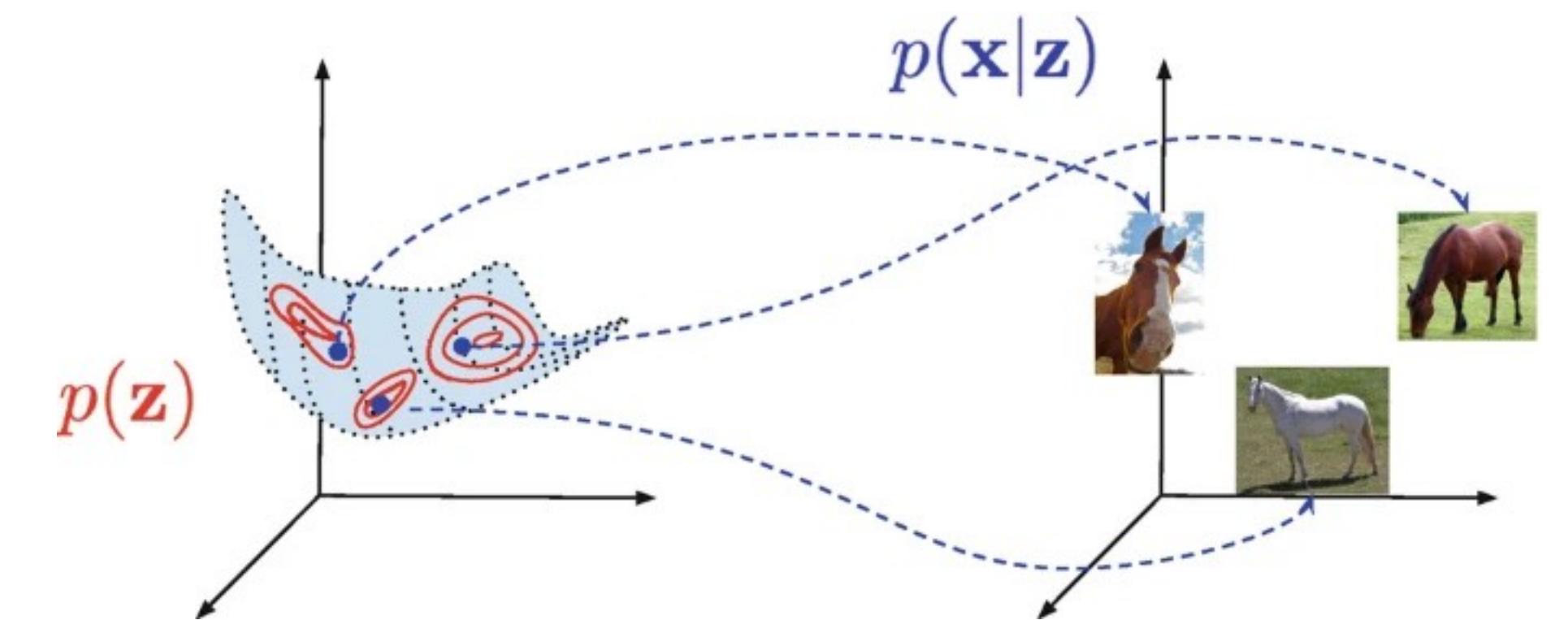


# Latent Variables

- Principle Component

Data  $x$  (high dimensional)

Latent variables  $z$  (lower dimensional,  
hidden factors in data)



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- Evaluation of likelihood

- Generative process: first sample  $z$ , we learn the relation as  $p(x | z)$

- Note that, we only have access to  $x$  during training. Hence, the likelihood is computed as

$$p(x) = \int_{\mathcal{Z}} p(x | z)p(z)dz$$

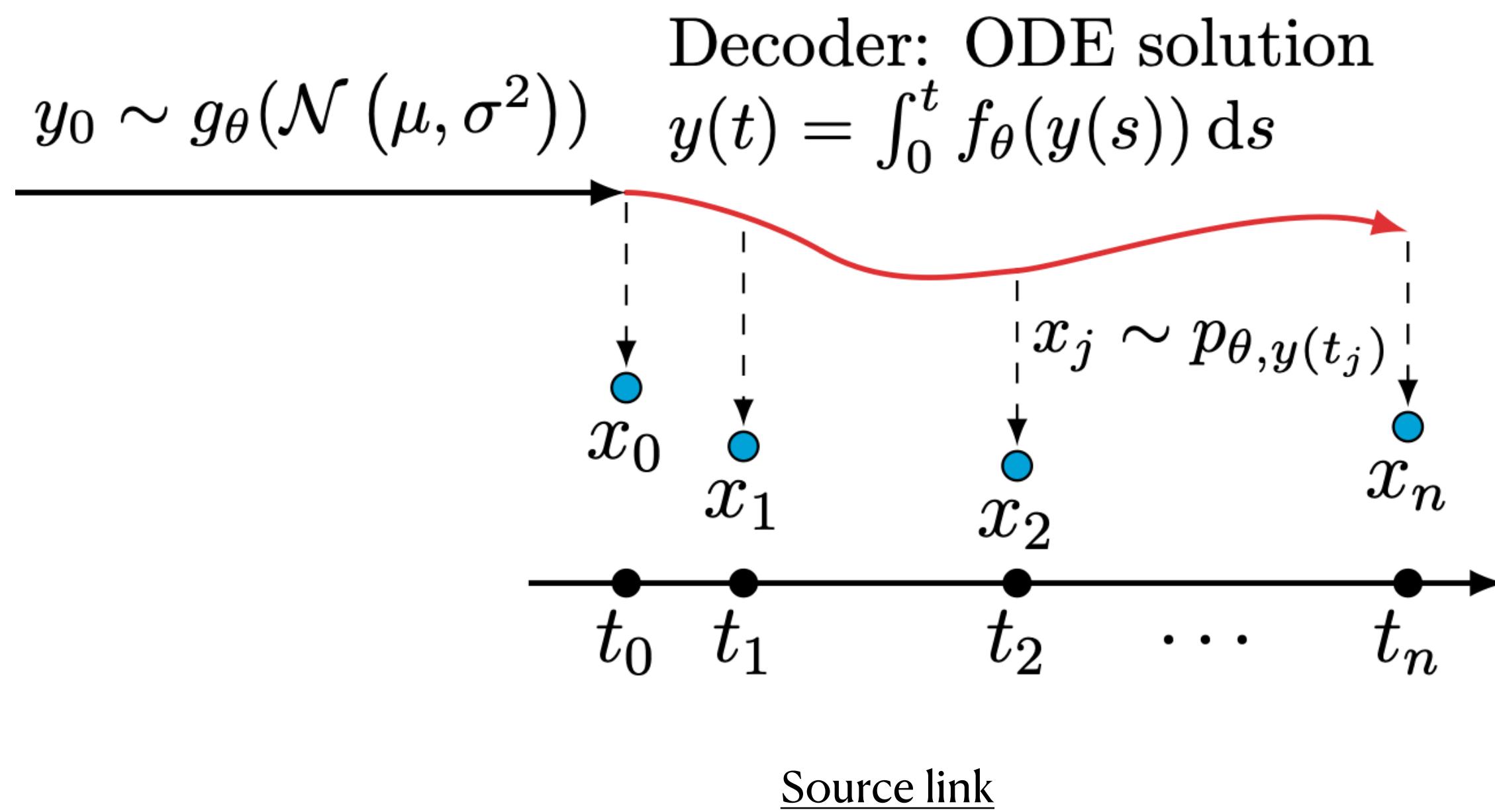
# Evidence Lower Bound

- Jensen's inequality : For any convex function  $f$ , it holds that

$$f\left(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i x_i\right) \leq \sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i f(x_i), \text{ where } \lambda_i \geq 0, \sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i = 1.$$

- Let's compute  $\log p_\theta(x)$ !

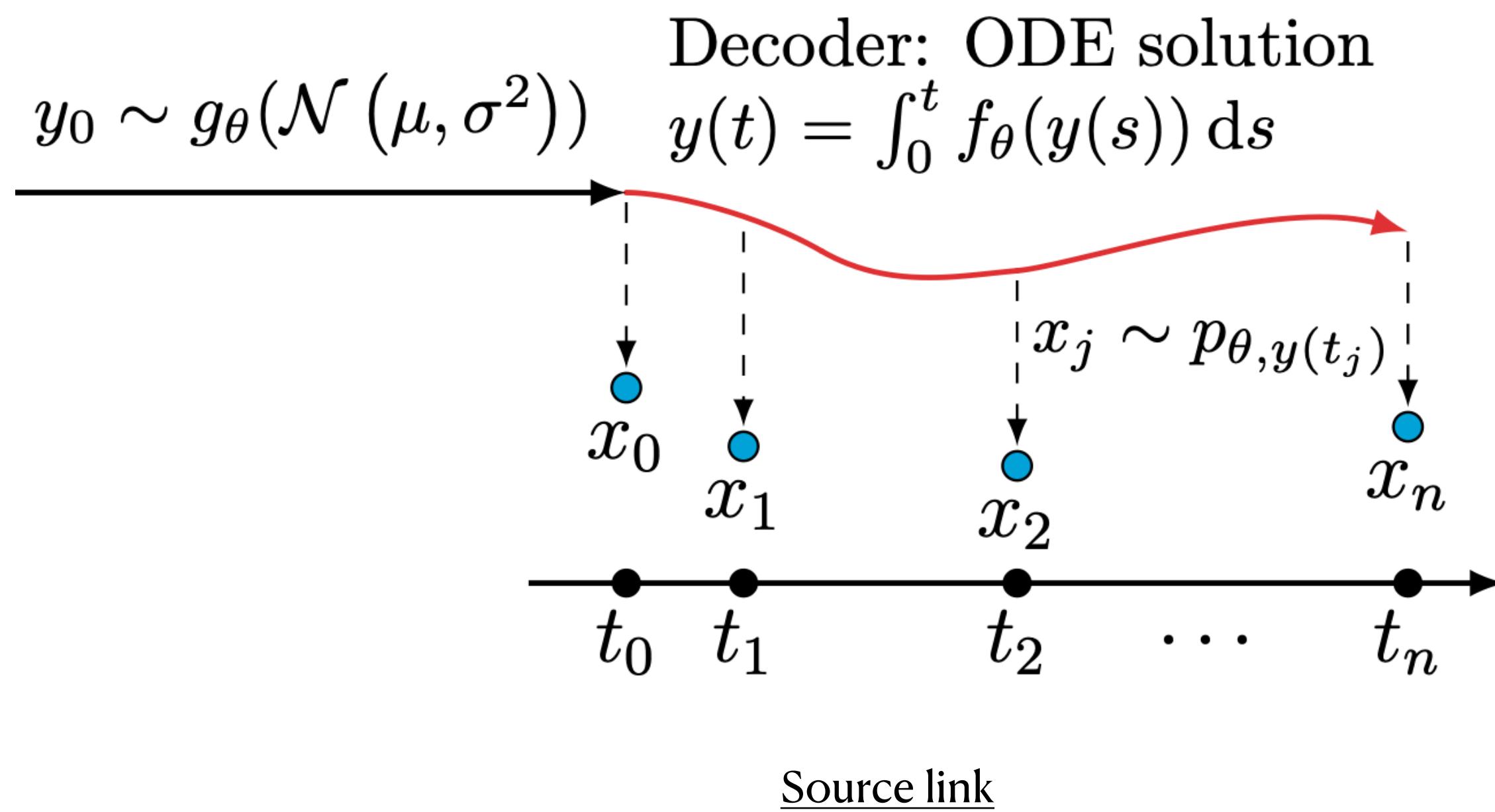
# A latent structure for NODEs



Architecture:

- Encode - Decoder
- NODEs evolve in latent space

# A latent structure for NODEs



Architecture:

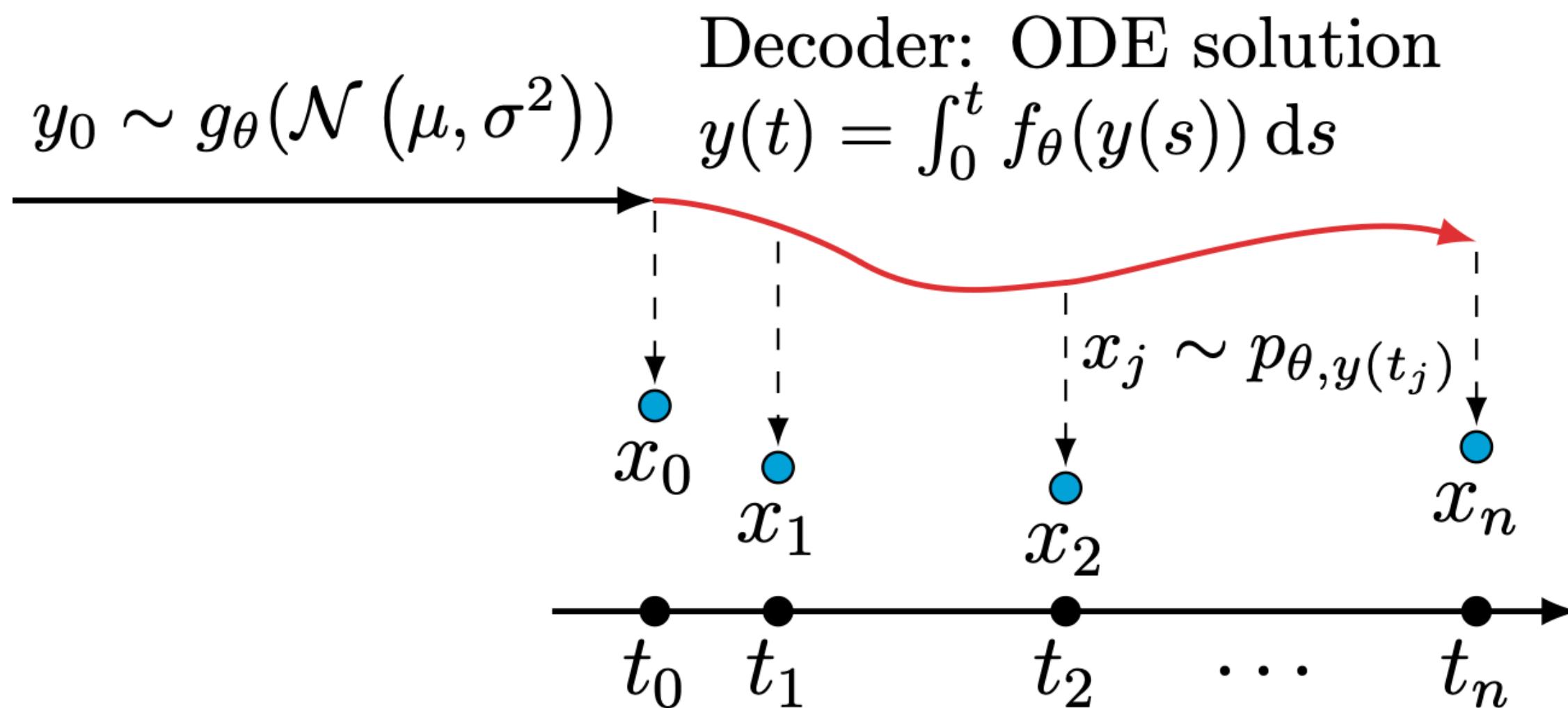
- Encode - Decoder
- NODEs evolve in latent space

Difference from previous methods:

- Dynamic
- Can take irregular observations

# A latent structure for NODEs

- Exercise: ELBO for the sequential likelihood



# A latent structure for NODEs

**Discussion**

# Today's roadmap

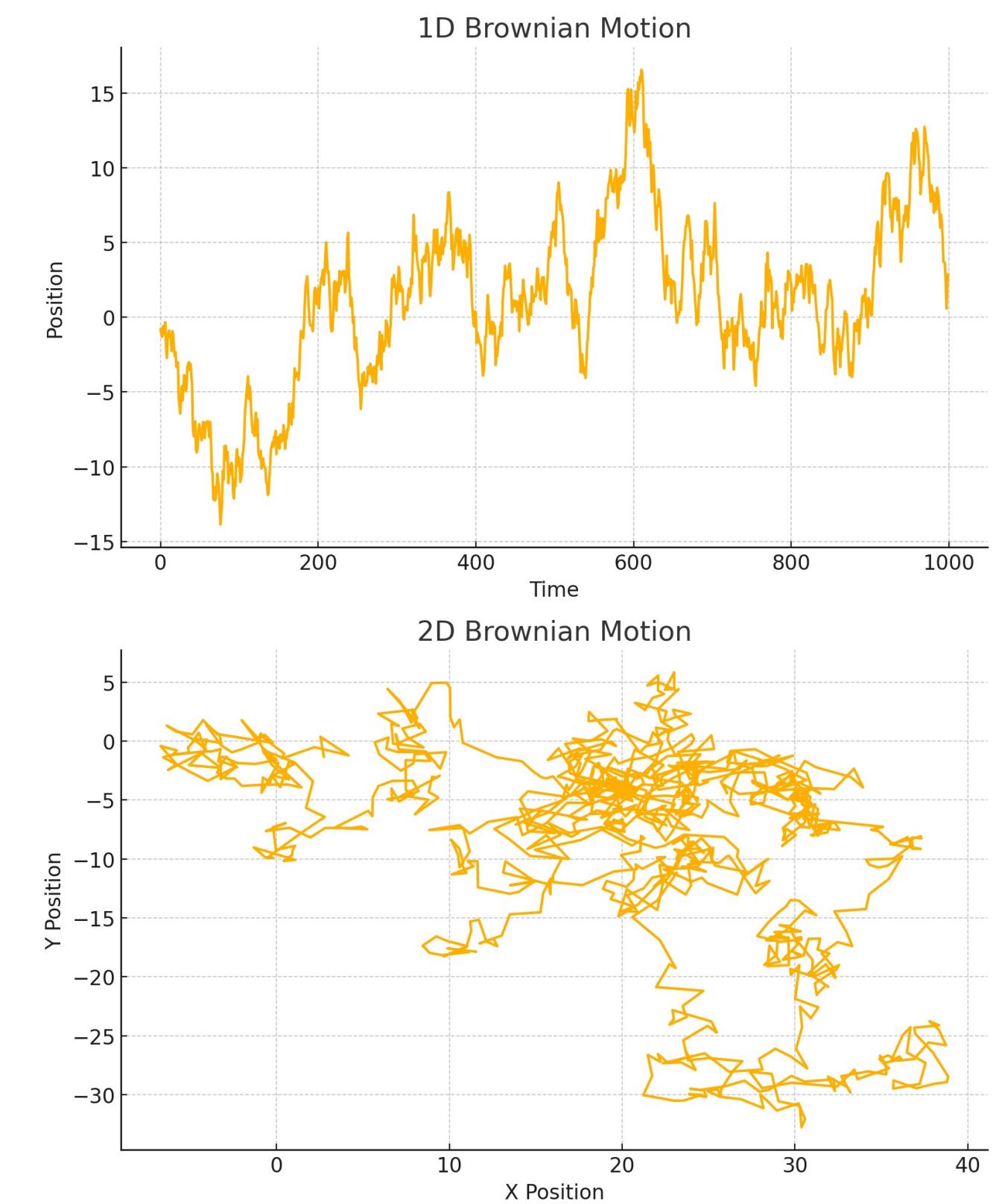
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# Stochastic Differential Equations

Random trajectories

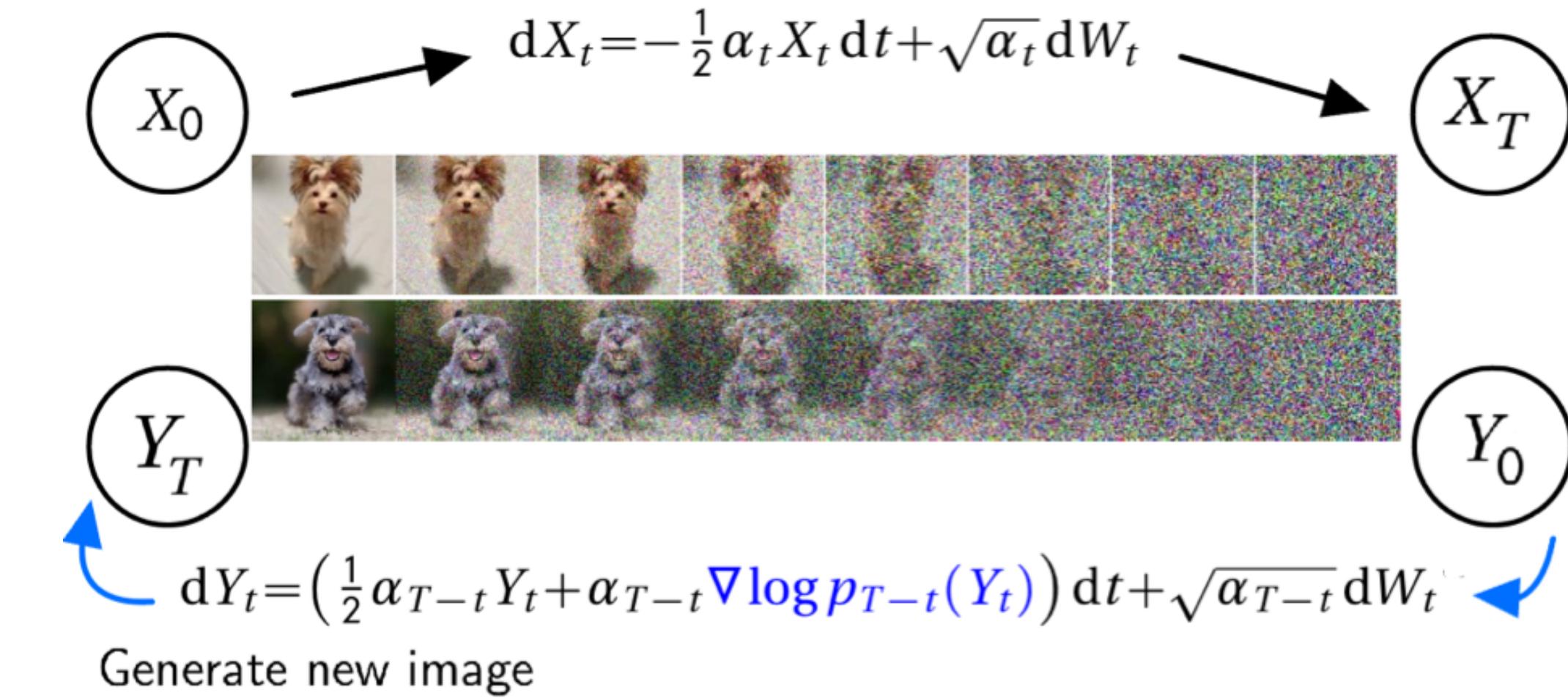
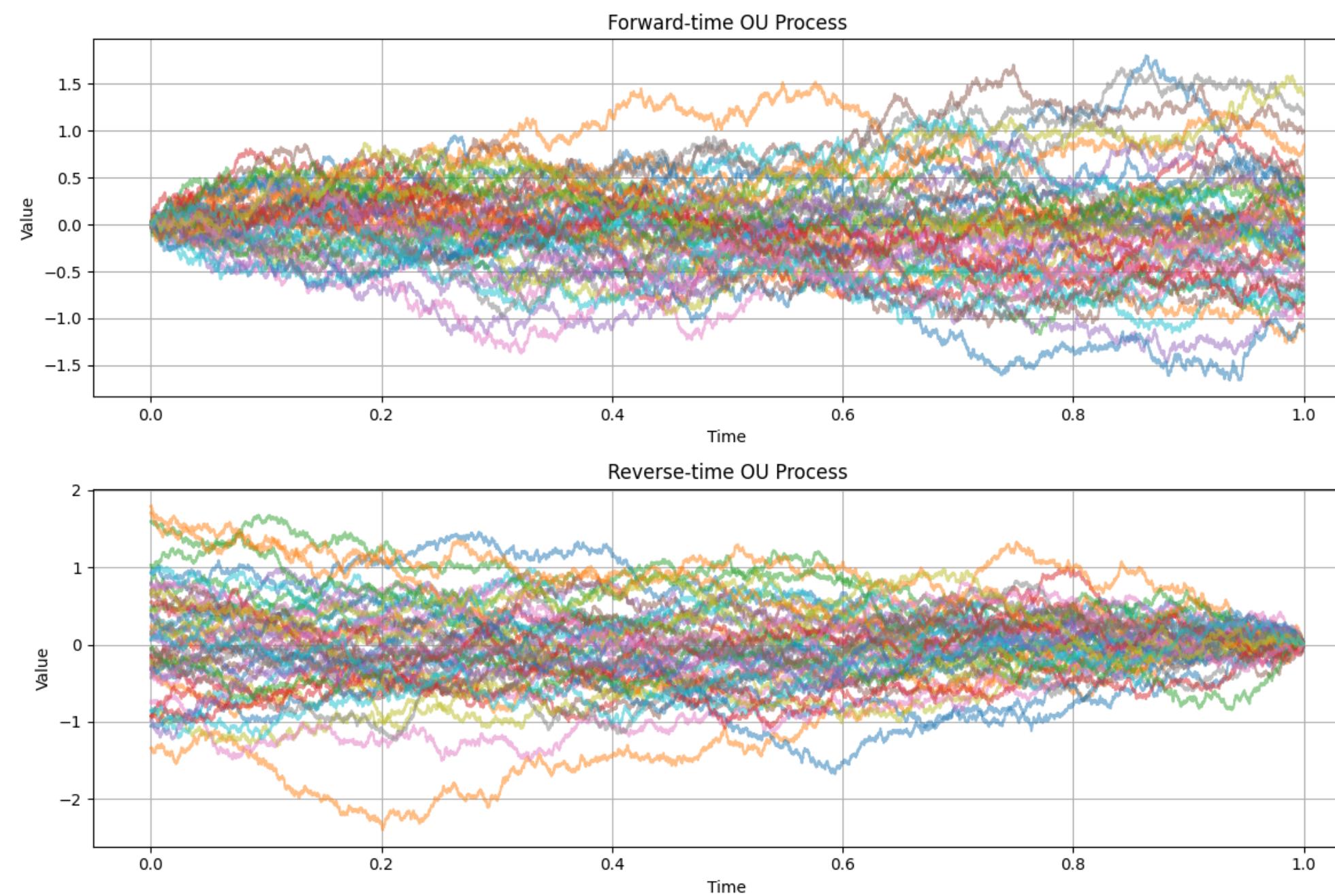
$$dX_t = b(t, X_t)dt + \sigma(t, X_t)dW_t,$$

$$W_{t+\Delta t} - W_t \sim N(0, \Delta t).$$



# Diffusion Models

- $dX_t = -X_t dt + \sqrt{2} dW_t, \quad X_0 = x.$



- $d\tilde{X}_t = \left( \tilde{X}_t - 2 \frac{\tilde{X}_t - e^{-(T-t)} x}{1 - e^{-2(T-t)}} \right) dt + \sqrt{2} dW_t$

# Diffusion Models

## Discussion

- Score-matching loss
- Static or Dynamics?

# References

## Resources

- Durrett, R. (2019). *Probability: theory and examples* (Vol. 49). Cambridge university press.
- Tomczak, J. M. (2024). *Deep Generative Modeling*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
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# References

## For afternoon discussion

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