

Softmax is Argmax, and the Logic of the Reals

MSP101

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2024-03-22

Prologue

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One could call this ‘semiotics’¹: analyzing a **sign** to understand how it decouples in a **signifier** (a syntactic hence logical/categorical object) with a certain **semantics** (a choice of ambient to interpret it).

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For a while I’ve been thinking about argmax and softmax: can we make sense of their similarity?

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Softmax

Definition. Let $f : X \rightarrow [0, \infty]$ be an integrable function over X measure space. Its **softmax** is the probability distribution $X \rightarrow [0, 1]$ defined as

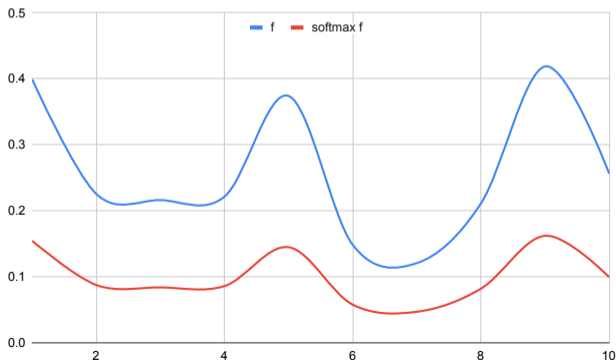
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1. not as brittle than argmax
2. all the cool kids are doing it



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Idea

In general, the fact that \int 'behaves like' ' \exists /*colim*' has been noted before:

From (Loregian 2021):

$\int_{x \in \mathbb{R}}$	$f(x)$	\circ	$\delta(x - y)dx$	$=$	$f(y)$
\int^X	FX	\times	$\mathcal{C}(Y, X)$	\cong	FY

The analogy between the pairing of a function and a delta distribution, and the ninja Yoneda lemma.

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From (Perrone and Tholen 2021):

- small presheaves on a category are similar to measures on a measurable space;
- cocomplete categories (categories where one can take colimits) are similar to algebras over probability monads (spaces where one can take integrals or expectation values, such as the real line);

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- ▶ 'Metric spaces, generalized logic, and closed categories' (Lawvere 1973).

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Radu & collaborators have done lots of work in this direction already! I'm an amateur.

Logic of the Reals

The multiplicative reals

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3. it is equipped with a duality $(-)^* : [0, \infty]^{\text{op}} \rightarrow [0, \infty]$, defined as

$$\forall a \in (0, \infty), a^* := 1/a, \quad 0^* = \infty, \quad \infty^* = 0,$$

satisfying the property

$$\forall a \in [0, \infty], a \otimes b \leq c^* \iff a \leq (b \otimes c)^*.$$

$0_\infty = ?$

The definition of \otimes involving ∞ is dictated by the requirement \otimes preserves joins: for any unbounded set $(u_i)_{i \in I}$, we have

$$a \otimes \infty := a \otimes \bigvee_i u_i = \bigvee_i a \otimes u_i = \infty$$

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Also: the law $(a \otimes b)^* = a^* \otimes b^*$ isn't required to hold. In fact

$$0 = 0 \otimes \infty = \infty^* \otimes 0^* \neq (\infty \otimes 0)^* = \infty$$

It does hold for all $0 < a, b < \infty$ though.

$$0 \infty = ?$$

The reason this doesn't hold is that a ***-autonomous category** really features two distinct monoidal products, where the second is de Morgan dual to the first:

$$a \otimes^* b = (a^* \otimes b^*)^*$$

In the case of $[0, \infty]$, \otimes^* coincides with \otimes except for the rule

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Thus they (lax) linearly distribute over each other:

$$a \otimes (b \otimes^* c) \leq (a \otimes b) \otimes^* c$$

where, again, equality holds for all finite values and breaks for $(a, b, c) = (0, 0, \infty)$.

Closure

Bonus: every *-autonomous category is closed (not compact though):

$$a \multimap b := a^* \otimes b = \begin{cases} 0 & b = 0 \text{ or } a = \infty \\ \infty & a = 0 \text{ and } b \neq \infty \\ b/a & \text{else} \end{cases}$$

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...and coclosed:

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Sums

Crucially, $[0, \infty]$ also has sums:

$$a \oplus b := \begin{cases} \infty & a = \infty \text{ or } b = \infty \\ a + b & \text{else} \end{cases}$$

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which are commutative, associative and unital, with unit 0;

and **harmonic sums**:

$$a \oplus^* b := (a^* \oplus b^*)^* = \begin{cases} 0 & a = 0 \text{ or } b = 0 \\ a & b = \infty \\ b & a = \infty \\ \frac{1}{1/a + 1/b} & \text{else} \end{cases}$$

which are commutative, associative and unital, with unit ∞ .

Algebra-logical structures on the multiplicative reals

		non-linear	linear	
polarity			additive	multiplicative
duality $a^* := 1/a$	positive	false := 0 $a \vee b := \max\{a, b\}$	0 := 0 $a \oplus b := a + b$	1 := 1 $a \otimes b := ab, 0\infty = 0$
	negative	true := ∞ $a \wedge b := \min\{a, b\}$	\top := ∞ $a \oplus^* b := a \oplus^* b$	\perp := 1 $a \otimes^* b := ab, 0\infty = \infty$

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and three kinds of distributivity (+ duals not shown):

multiplicative	$a \otimes^* (b \otimes c) \leq (a \otimes^* b) \otimes c$	$\mathbf{1} \leq \top$
multiplicative-additive	$a \otimes (b \oplus_p c) = (a \otimes b) \oplus_p (a \otimes c)$	$a \otimes 0 = 0$
linear-nonlinear	$a \otimes (b \vee c) = (a \otimes b) \vee (a \otimes c)$	$a \otimes \mathbf{false} = \mathbf{false}$
	$a \oplus (b \vee c) = (a \oplus b) \vee (a \oplus c)$	$a \oplus \mathbf{true} = \mathbf{true}$

Conjectures

I'm not a logician so don't laugh:

Conjecture 1. There is an extension of classical linear logic featuring an extra generation of linear connectives:

linear	'very linear'
additive \vee, \wedge	non-linear \vee, \wedge
multiplicative \otimes, \otimes^*	linear additive \oplus, \oplus^* linear multiplicative \otimes, \otimes^*

Open question: what are the rules associated to \oplus and \oplus^ ?*

Conjectures

Conjecture 2. The Lambek side of this logic is

***-autonomous symmetric bimonoidal bicartesian categories.**

A **symmetric bimonoidal category** is a category \mathbf{A} equipped with two monoidal structures $(\mathbf{1}, \otimes)$ and $(\mathbf{0}, \oplus)$ and coherent isomorphisms:

$$a \otimes (b \oplus c) \cong (a \otimes b) \oplus (a \otimes c), \quad a \otimes \mathbf{0} \cong \mathbf{0}.$$

It is ***-autonomous** when it is a Frobenius pseudomonoid, i.e. it comes with a symmetric monoidal functor $(-)^* : \mathbf{A}^{\text{op}} \rightarrow \mathbf{A}$ and natural isomorphisms

$$\mathbf{A}(a \otimes b, c^*) \cong \mathbf{A}(a, (b \otimes c)^*).$$

It is **bicartesian** when instead of starting from a category \mathbf{A} , we start from a bicartesian category \mathbf{A} (so that all operations commute with \vee).

Comparison with Polynomial Lawvere Logic (PL)

Recently Radu & co² introduced $\mathbb{P}\mathbb{L}$, a logic valued in $([0, \infty], \geq, \oplus)$ with \otimes (my notation).

The link with the above is given by the following well-known diagram of quantales:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} [0, \infty]_{\otimes} & \begin{array}{c} \xleftarrow{1/\exp} \\ \sim \\ \xrightarrow{-\log} \end{array} & (-\infty, \infty)_{\oplus}^{\text{op}} \\ \uparrow & & \uparrow \\ [1, \infty]_{\otimes} & \begin{array}{c} \xleftarrow{1/\exp} \\ \sim \\ \xrightarrow{-\log} \end{array} & [0, \infty]_{\oplus}^{\text{op}} \end{array}$$

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Some observations:

1. the \otimes world seems to 'have more natural structure': $1/\exp$ and $-\log$ don't see \oplus on the left
2. working with unsigned truth values allows to represent more 'degrees of falsehood'
3. additive enrichment seems to work better than multiplicative one
4. less obvious candidates for quantifiers: can't use \oplus for \exists .

²(Bacci, Mardare, Panangaden, and Plotkin 2024)

Coda: from quantitative to qualitative

To extract 'qualitative' truth from 'quantitative' one chooses an **ideal** representing truth:

$$F \subseteq [0, \infty]_{\otimes} \text{ which is } \begin{cases} \text{inhabited} & \infty \in F, \\ \text{upper-closed} & a \in F, a \leq b \implies b \in F \\ \otimes\text{-closed} & a, b \in F \implies a \otimes b \in F \end{cases}$$

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Lemma. Every ideal in $[0, \infty]_{\otimes}$ is principal and has one of four forms:

$$\{\infty\} \quad [1 + \varepsilon, \infty], \varepsilon \geq 0 \quad (0, \infty] \quad [0, \infty]$$

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My favourite ideal is $[1, \infty]$, and it corresponds to ‘positive evidence’. Indeed this the choice made in the additive world of \mathbb{PL} .

Quantifiers

The spectrum of p -sums

Definition. For any $p \in (-\infty, \infty)$, $p \neq 0$, the p -**sum** of a finite set of numbers $(a_i)_{i \in I}$ is

$$\bigoplus_{i \in I}^p a_i := \left(\bigoplus_{i \in I} a_i^p \right)^{1/p}$$

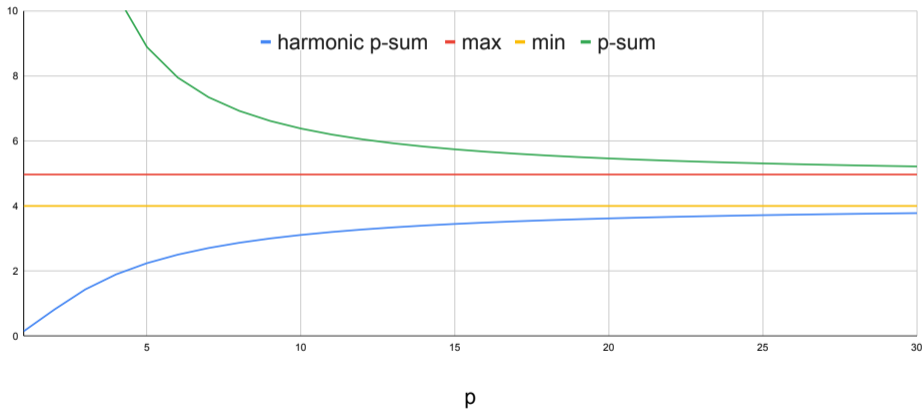
when $p < 0$ we call p -sums **harmonic**.

One extends the above definition to $p = \pm\infty$ (but not $p = 0$) by taking suitable limits.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccccccccccc} \wedge & & \dots & \bigoplus^{-p} & & \dots & \bigoplus^* & & \infty & & \bigoplus & & \dots & \bigoplus^p & & \dots & \vee \\ -\infty & \text{---} & & -p & \text{---} & & -1 & \text{---} & 0 & \text{---} & 1 & \text{---} & & p & \text{---} & & \infty \end{array}$$

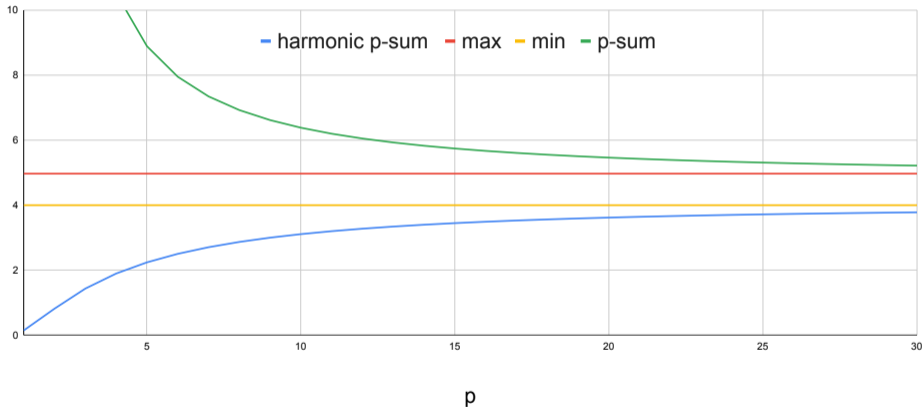
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We have $\bigoplus^{-p} \leq \wedge \leq \vee \leq \bigoplus^p$, with the (exterior) gap narrowing as p increases:



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So deforming \bigoplus to \bigoplus^p doesn't change the 'logic' of $[0, \infty]_{\otimes}$, and in fact it converges to classical linear logic as $p \rightarrow \infty$.

The amazing p -sums

The **fundamental relation of harmonic sums** is:

$$\bigoplus_{i \in I}^{-p} (b_i \multimap a) = \left(\bigoplus_{i \in I}^p b_i \right) \multimap a \quad \rightsquigarrow \bigoplus_{i \in I}^{-p} \frac{a}{b_i} = \frac{a}{\bigoplus_{i \in I}^p b_i}$$

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In fact we also have:

$$\bigoplus_i^{-p} (b \multimap a_i) = b \multimap \left(\bigoplus_i^{-p} a_i \right),$$

which is analogous to $\forall i (b \rightarrow a_i) = b \rightarrow (\forall i a_i)$.

The amazing p -sums

Lemma. Sum and harmonic sums...

1. are monotonic in the argument: if, for each $i \in I$, $a_i \leq b_i$, then

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However... **p -sums are susceptible to cumulative effects**: their truth value can pass any threshold given enough ‘false’ values (too easy to satisfy); *vice versa* for harmonic p -sums (too hard to satisfy). **We need to compensate for size!**

The spectrum of p -means

Definition. For any $p \in (-\infty, \infty)$, $p \neq 0$, the p -**mean** of a finite set of numbers $(a_i)_{i \in I}$ is

$$\int_{i \in I}^p a_i := \left(\bigoplus_{i \in I}^p \frac{a_i^p}{|I|} \right)^{1/p}$$

when $p < 0$ we call p -means **harmonic**.

One extends the above definition to $p = \pm\infty$ by taking suitable limits.

$$\begin{array}{cccccccccccc} \wedge & \cdots & \int^{-p} & \cdots & \int^* & GM & \int & \cdots & \int^p & \cdots & \vee \\ -\infty & \text{---} & -p & \text{---} & -1 & \text{---} & 1 & \text{---} & p & \text{---} & \infty \end{array}$$

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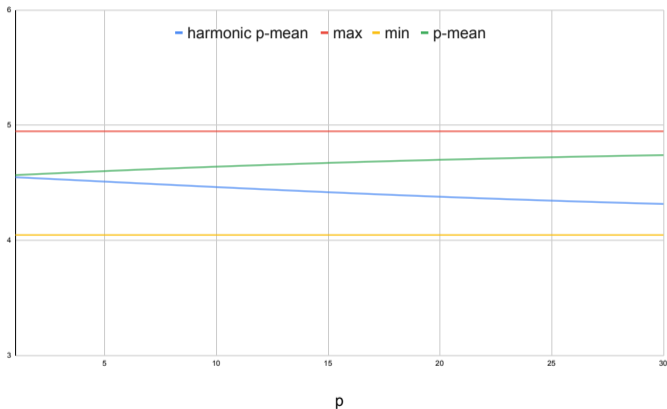
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Fact. p -means satisfy the same properties as p -sums: Fubini, monotonicity in the argument and index, fundamental relation and homogeneity.

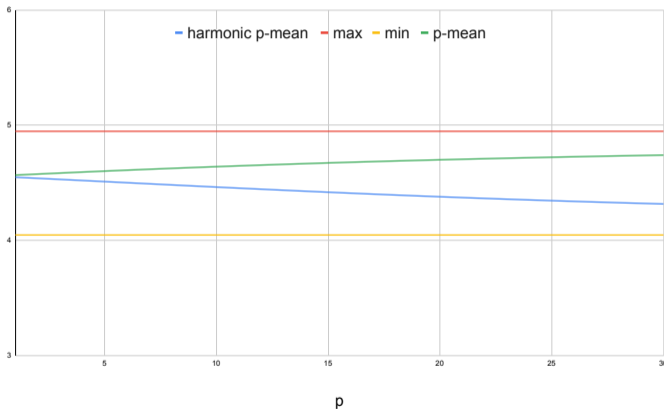
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Unlike p -sums, p -means **compensate for cumulative effects**.

Means as bounded quantifiers

Idea. Mean and harmonic mean correspond to **bounded quantification**:

$$\exists i. (i \in I) \wedge a(i) \quad \longleftrightarrow \quad \bigoplus_{i \in I}^p \frac{1}{|I|} \otimes a(i)$$

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A mean is a just an integral over a probability space so we can directly generalize:

$$\exists i \in I. a(i) \quad \longleftrightarrow \quad \int_{i \in I}^p a(i) di.$$

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for I any probability space. Duality also suggests this interpretation since

$$\forall i \in I. a(i) = \neg \exists i \in I. \neg a(i) \quad \longleftrightarrow \quad \int_{i \in I}^{-p} a(i) = \left(\int_{i \in I}^p a(i)^* di \right)^*,$$

i.e. we dualize $a(i)$ but not the domain of quantification.

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$$(p\text{-softmax } f)(x^*) = \int_{x \in X}^{-p} f(x) \dashv\circ f(x^*).$$

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$$(\rho\text{-softmax } f)(x^*) = \int_{x \in X}^{-\rho} f(x) \rightarrow f(x^*).$$

Then it's easy to see that softmax = 1-softmax:

$$(1\text{-softmax } f)(x^*) = \int_{x \in X}^* f(x) \rightarrow f(x^*) = \frac{f(x^*)}{\int_{x \in X} f(x) dx} = (\text{softmax } f)(x^*)$$

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$$(\rho\text{-softmax } f)(x^*) = \int_{x \in X}^{-\rho} f(x) \multimap f(x^*).$$

Then it's easy to see that $\text{softmax} = 1\text{-softmax}$:

$$(1\text{-softmax } f)(x^*) = \int_{x \in X}^* f(x) \multimap f(x^*) = \frac{f(x^*)}{\int_{x \in X} f(x) dx} = (\text{softmax } f)(x^*)$$

Conversely, argmax is $[1, \infty]$ -qualitatively ∞ -softmax:

$$(\infty\text{-softmax } f)(x^*) = \int_{x \in X}^{-\infty} f(x) \multimap f(x^*) = \bigwedge_{x \in X} \frac{f(x^*)}{f(x)} \xrightarrow{[-]} (\text{argmax } f)(x^*)$$

The passage to qualitative is necessary since that's where argmax lives!

Conjecture: transporting quantifiers to PL

One can transport structure from $[0, \infty]_{\otimes}$ to $[-\infty, \infty]_{\oplus}$ along Napier's isomorphism.

Thus for $\varphi : I \rightarrow [-\infty, \infty]_{\oplus}$, define:

$$\exists^p(i \in I). \varphi(i) := -\log \int_{i \in I}^p \exp(-\varphi(i)) di$$

$$\forall^p(i \in I). \varphi(i) := -\log \int_{i \in I}^{-p} \exp(-\varphi(i)) di = \log \int_{i \in I}^p \exp(\varphi(i)) di$$

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It's also very typical to start with $u : X \rightarrow [-\infty, \infty]_{\oplus}$ and then construct $(\text{softmax } e^{-u})(x^*)$. In logistic regression, one actually goes all the way back to obtain a quantity called

log-likelihood:

$$L_u = -\log \text{softmax } e^{-u} = u - \log \int_{x \in X} e^{-u(x)} dx = \text{"}\forall^p (x \in X). u(x) \multimap u(x^*)\text{"}$$

And this is indeed $\text{argmax } u$ in $[-\infty, \infty]_{\oplus}$ according to the proposed quantifiers.

**Exploration:
generalized logic via enriched category theory**

The mirage of an enriched hyperdoctrine

To each probability space I we can try to associate an $[0, \infty]_{\otimes}$ -enriched **p -Lindenbaum–Tarski algebra** of real-valued predicates:

$$\mathbf{LT}^p(I, [0, \infty]) = \begin{cases} \text{elements} & \varphi : I \rightarrow [0, \infty]_{\otimes} \\ \text{entailment} & \varphi \vdash_I \psi := \int_{i \in I}^{-p} \varphi(i) \multimap \psi(i) = \left(\int_{i \in I} \frac{\varphi(i)^p}{\psi(i)^p} di \right)^{-1/p} \end{cases}$$

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If it worked, it would embody the enriched generalized logic as a functor

$$\mathbf{LT}^p : \mathbf{Prob}^{\text{op}} \longrightarrow [0, \infty]_{\otimes}\text{-Cat}$$

and quantifiers would be given as adjoints to reindexing, justifying their definition.

The mirage of an enriched hyperdoctrine

Fix $\pi_I : I \times J \rightarrow I$, an enriched left adjoint $\int_i^P \dashv \pi_I^*$ would satisfy

$$\text{for all } \varphi \in \mathbf{LT}^P(I \times J), \psi \in \mathbf{LT}^P(I), \quad \int_i^P \varphi \vdash_I \psi = \varphi \vdash_{I \times J} \pi_I^* \psi$$

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which unpacks to

$$\int_{i \in I}^{-p} \left(\int_{j \in I}^p \varphi(i, j) \right) \multimap \psi(i) = \int_{\substack{j \in I \\ j \in J}}^{-p} \varphi(i, j) \multimap \psi(i)$$

which is true by the fundamental relation of harmonic sum.

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Notice: it's absolutely crucial that \vdash_I is enriched!

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Entailment isn't transitive. It's worth to see in detail why (for $p = 1$ for simplicity):

$$(\varphi \vdash_I \psi) \otimes (\psi \vdash_I \sigma) \leq (\varphi \vdash_I \sigma) \iff (\varphi \vdash_I \psi)^{-1} \otimes (\psi \vdash_I \sigma)^{-1} \geq (\varphi \vdash_I \sigma)^{-1}$$

Thus

$$\int_{i \in I} \int_{i' \in I} \frac{\varphi(i)}{\psi(i)} \frac{\psi(i')}{\sigma(i')} di di' \geq \int_{i \in \Delta_I} \frac{\varphi(i)}{\psi(i)} \frac{\psi(i)}{\sigma(i)} di di \not\geq \int_{i \in I} \frac{\varphi(i)}{\sigma(i)} di$$

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So there seems to be a metalevel issue in the way we combine these numbers: if Δ_I was a subset of $(I \times I, \frac{didi'}{\sqrt{didi'}})$, there would be no problem!

The mirage of an enriched equipment of relations

An equipment of relations is an alternative way to present a first-order logic.

Definition. Define $[0, \infty]_{\otimes} \mathbf{Rel}$ as the $[0, \infty]_{\otimes}$ -enriched equipment with prob. spaces & their maps as objects & tight maps, enriched relations as loose arrows, and squares given by

$$\begin{array}{ccc} A & \xrightarrow{R} & B \\ f \downarrow & & \downarrow g \\ C & \xrightarrow{S} & D \end{array} := R \vdash_{A \times B} S(f, g) \in [0, \infty]_{\otimes}.$$

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There being 'a' square means $1 \leq \begin{array}{ccc} A & \xrightarrow{R} & B \\ f \downarrow & & \downarrow g \\ C & \xrightarrow{S} & D \end{array}$, in which case we draw an arrow inside.

Note this is parameterized by a choice of filter, but we fixed $F = [1, \infty]$.

The mirage of an enriched equipment of relations

The existential quantifier is involved in composing relations:

$$A \xrightarrow{R} B \xrightarrow{S} C, \quad (R \odot S)(a, c) := \int_{b \in B}^p R(a, b) \otimes S(b, c).$$

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The universal quantifier gives right lifts and extensions:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} A & \xrightarrow{K} & B & \xrightarrow{\text{ran}_K F} & C \\ \parallel & & \Downarrow_{\text{cart}} & & \parallel \\ A & \xrightarrow{\quad} & & \xrightarrow{F} & C \end{array}$$

$$\text{ran}_K F(b, c) = \int_a^{-p} K(a, b) \multimap F(a, c),$$

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} A & \xrightarrow{\text{rft}_K F} & B & \xrightarrow{K} & C \\ \parallel & & \Downarrow_{\text{cart}} & & \parallel \\ A & \xrightarrow{\quad} & & \xrightarrow{F} & C \end{array}$$

$$\text{rft}_K F(a, b) = \int_{c \in C}^{-p} K(b, c) \multimap F(a, c).$$

The mirage of an enriched equipment of relations

There are also all restrictions, hence companions and conjoints:

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 A & \xrightarrow{S(f,g)} & B \\
 f \downarrow & \Downarrow_{\text{cart}} & \downarrow g \\
 C & \xrightarrow{S} & D
 \end{array}, \quad S(f, g)(a, b) := S(f(a), g(b)),$$

Example. Take $[0, 1]$ with its uniform distribution, for $f : X \rightarrow [0, 1]$ as before we have:

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 X & \xrightarrow{f \multimap f} & X \\
 f \downarrow & \Downarrow_{\text{cart}} & \downarrow f \\
 [0, 1] & \xrightarrow{\multimap} & [0, 1]
 \end{array}$$

Incidentally, $(f \multimap f)(x, x') = 1 \wedge f(x)/f(x')$ appears as in the Metropolis–Hastings' Monte-Carlo sampling method.

The mirage of a perfect correspondance of argmax and softmax

Argmax and softmax are the same operation performed in different worlds:

In the \mathbf{Prop}_\wedge -equipment \mathbf{Rel} :

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 X & \xrightarrow{P} & 1 & \xrightarrow{\text{argmax}_P f} & X \\
 \parallel & & \downarrow \text{cart} & & \parallel \\
 X & \xrightarrow{f \leq f} & X & & X \\
 f \downarrow & & \parallel \text{cart} & & \downarrow f \\
 [0, 1] & \xrightarrow{\leq} & [0, 1] & &
 \end{array}$$

In the $[0, \infty]_\otimes$ -equipment $[0, \infty]_\otimes \mathbf{Rel}$:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 X & \xrightarrow{P} & 1 & \xrightarrow{\text{softmax}_P f} & X \\
 \parallel & & \downarrow \text{cart} & & \parallel \\
 X & \xrightarrow{f \multimap f} & X & & X \\
 f \downarrow & & \parallel \text{cart} & & \downarrow f \\
 [0, 1] & \xrightarrow{\multimap} & [0, 1] & &
 \end{array}$$

Here we are exhibiting *constrained argmax*, i.e. argmax subject to an optimization constraint P given by a predicate. Put $P = 1$ for vanilla argmax.

Conclusions

Takeaways

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4. $[0, \infty]_{\otimes}$ -enriched universal properties are *equations*, and one can compute universal objects by solving them
5. Lack of idempotency keeps biting back

Open questions

1. Is 'very linear' logic a thing? What's its relationship to PL?

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2. How do we fix the enriched Lindenbaum–Tarski algebras?
Owen Lynch and David Jaz Myers' have intriguing ideas about more sophisticated forms of enrichment which might save the day.
3. Why are probability spaces natural domains of quantification?
4. Can we motivate other constructions in analysis and probability theory from a logical/categorical POV?
e.g. L^p spaces, mutual information, Giry monad, etc.

Thanks for your attention!

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