

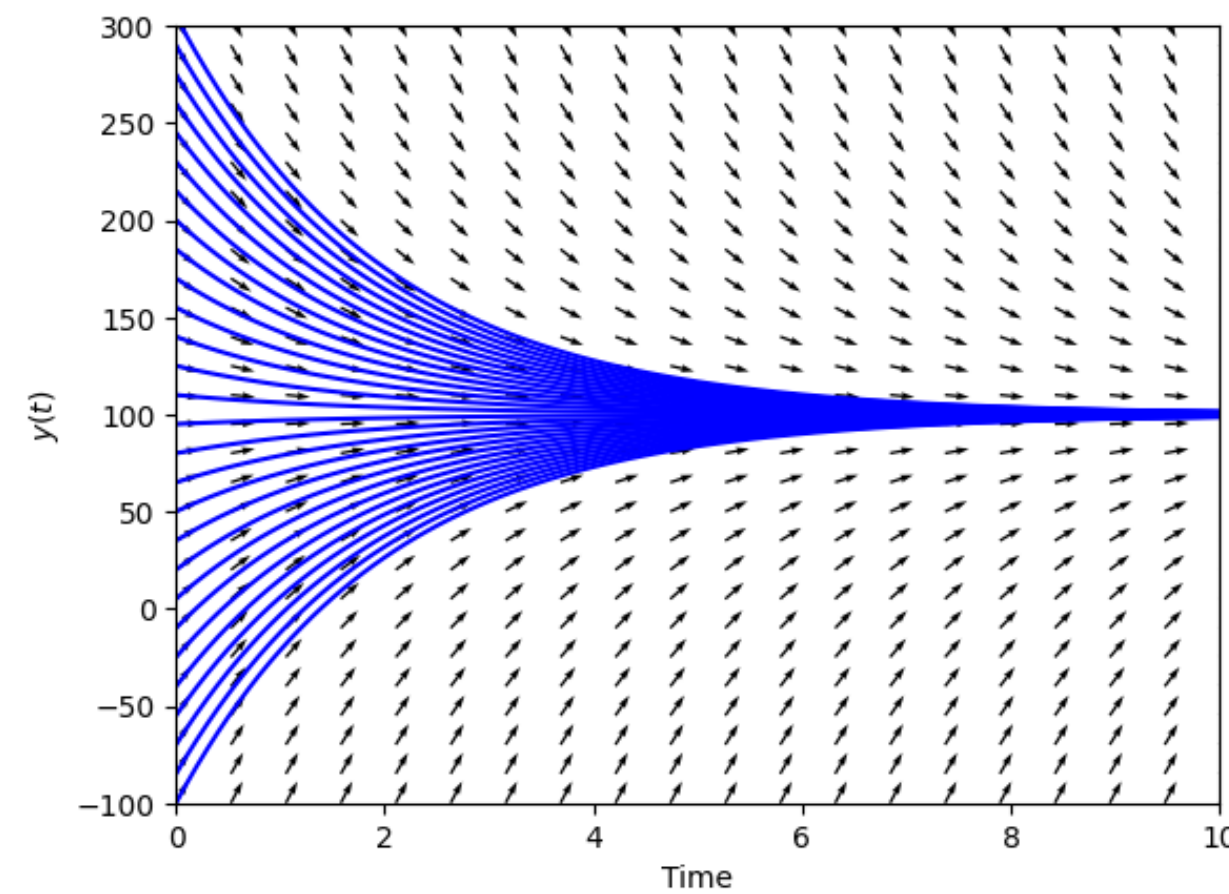
Neural Differential Equations with applications in generative models

EaGR workshop @ AIM

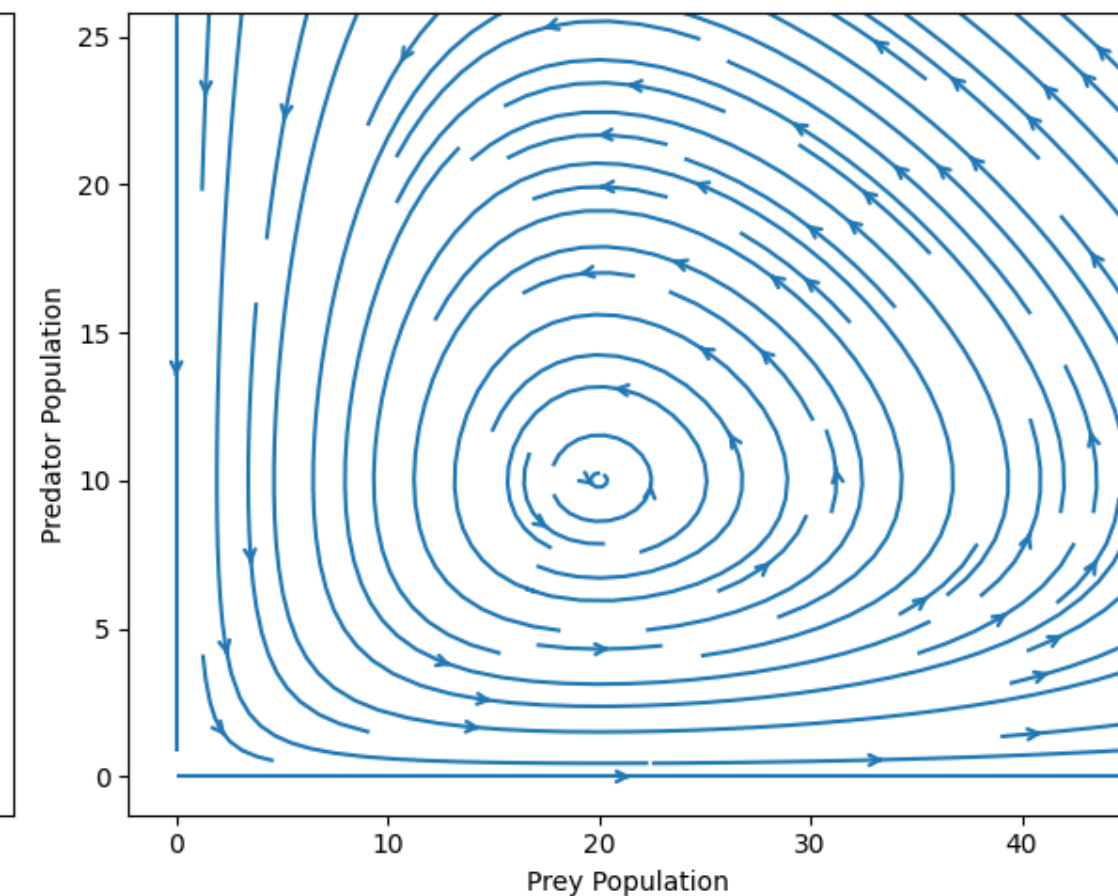
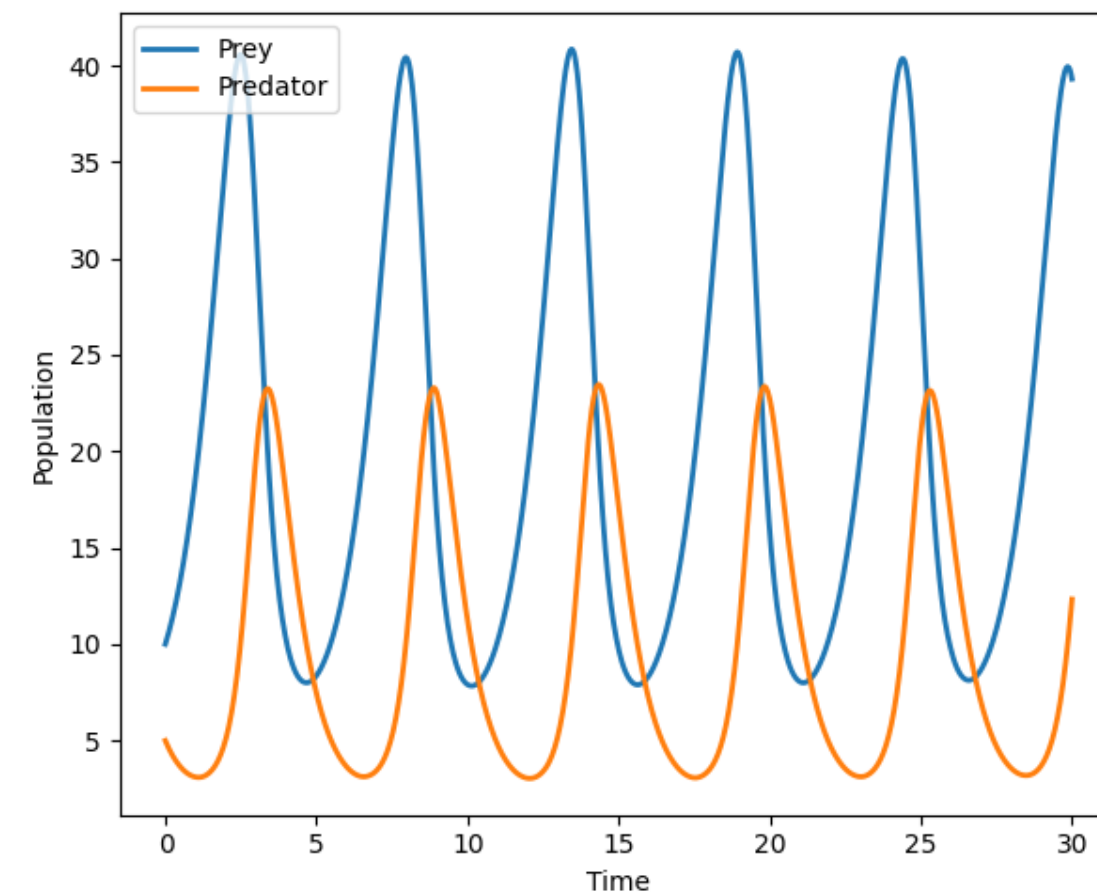
Nicole Yang, Emory University
June 2025

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_{θ} 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

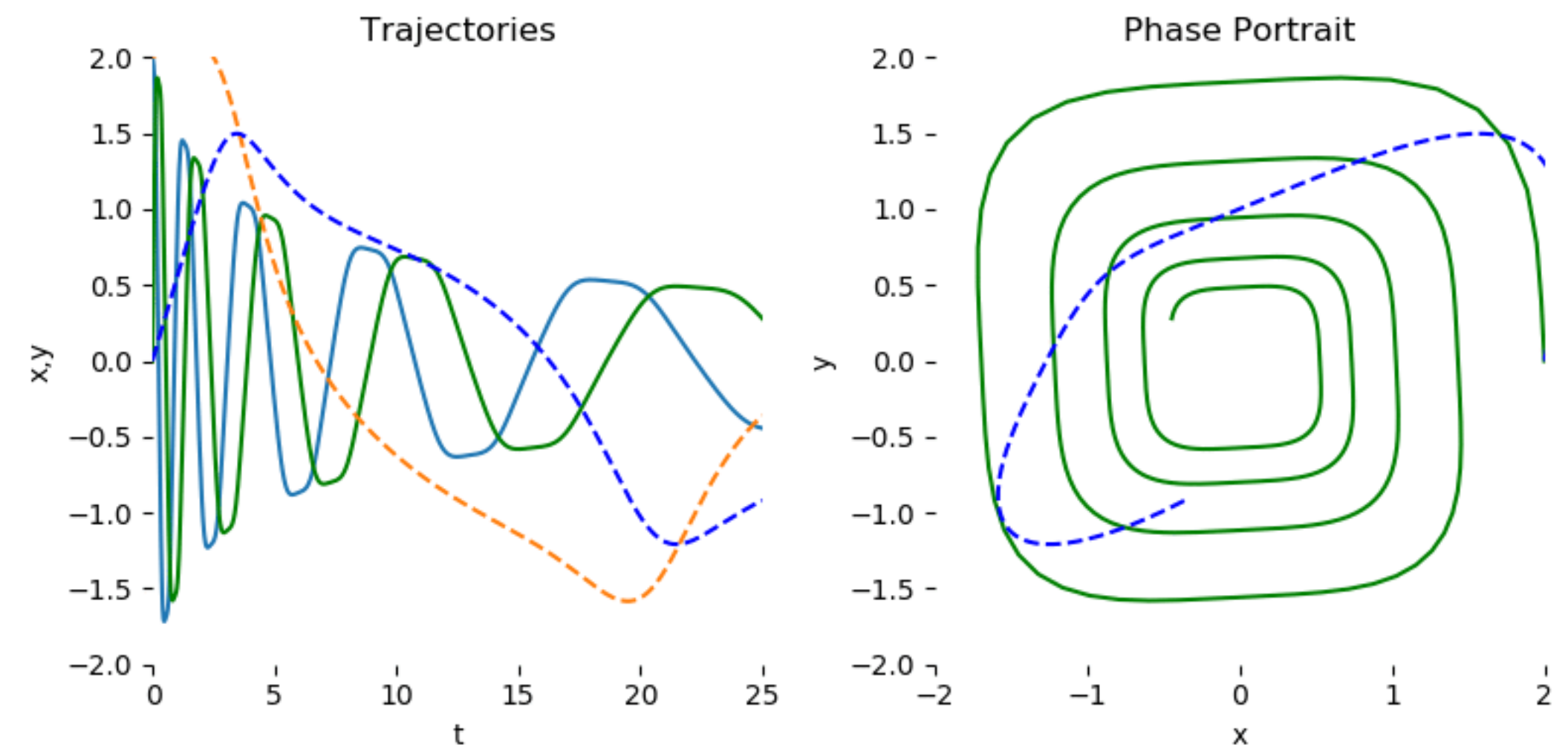
A supervised learning example

- 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 θ by minimizing

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



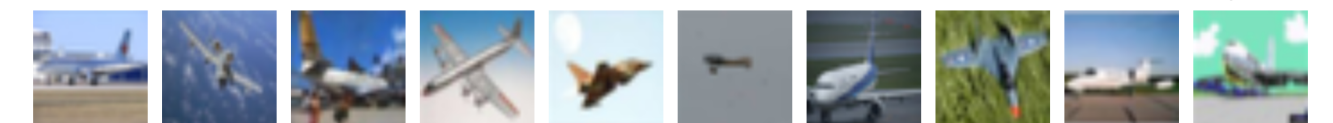
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Discussion

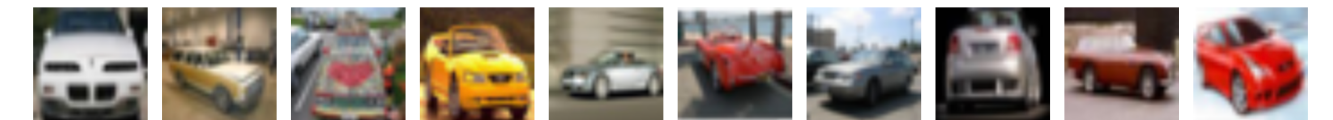
Any questions?

- A continuous-time deep learning framework
Haber&Ruthotto '17, E '17, Chen et al., '18
- How do you update θ ? Back propagation
- Applications

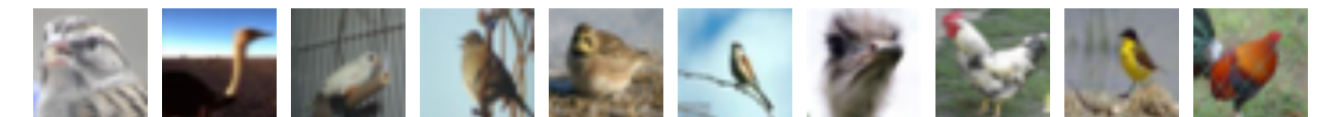
airplane



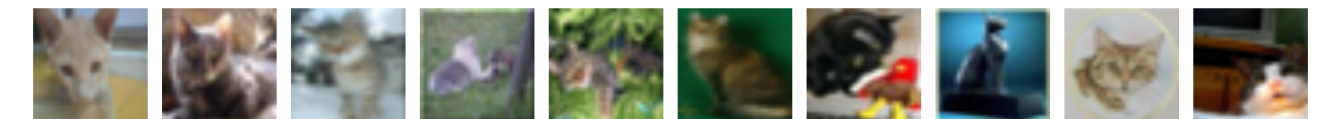
automobile



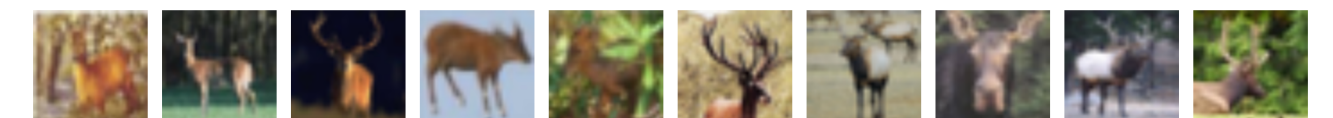
bird



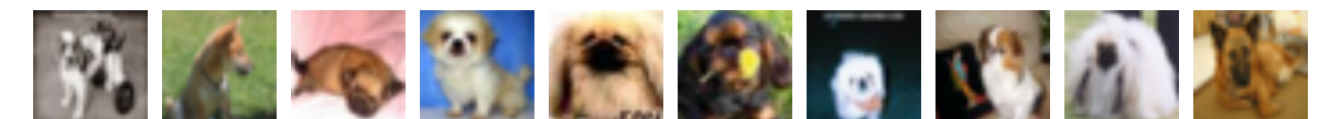
cat



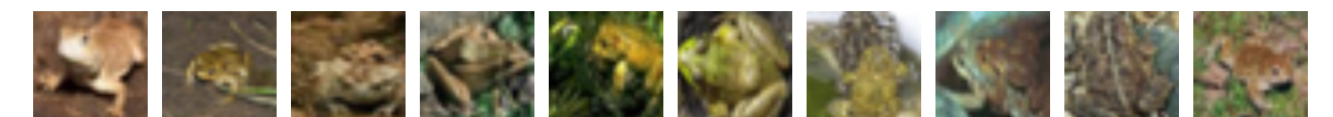
deer



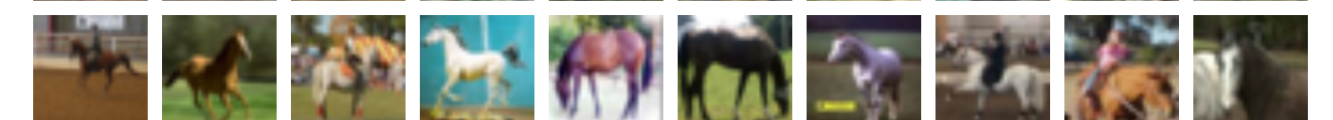
dog



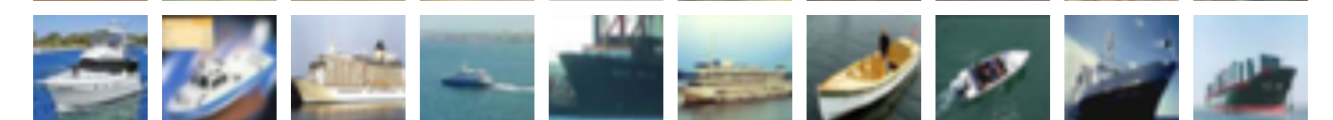
frog



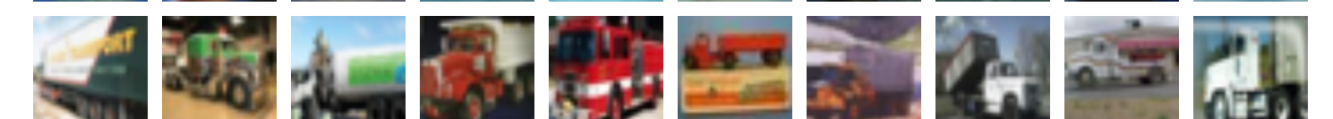
horse



ship



truck



Neural Ordinary Differential Equations

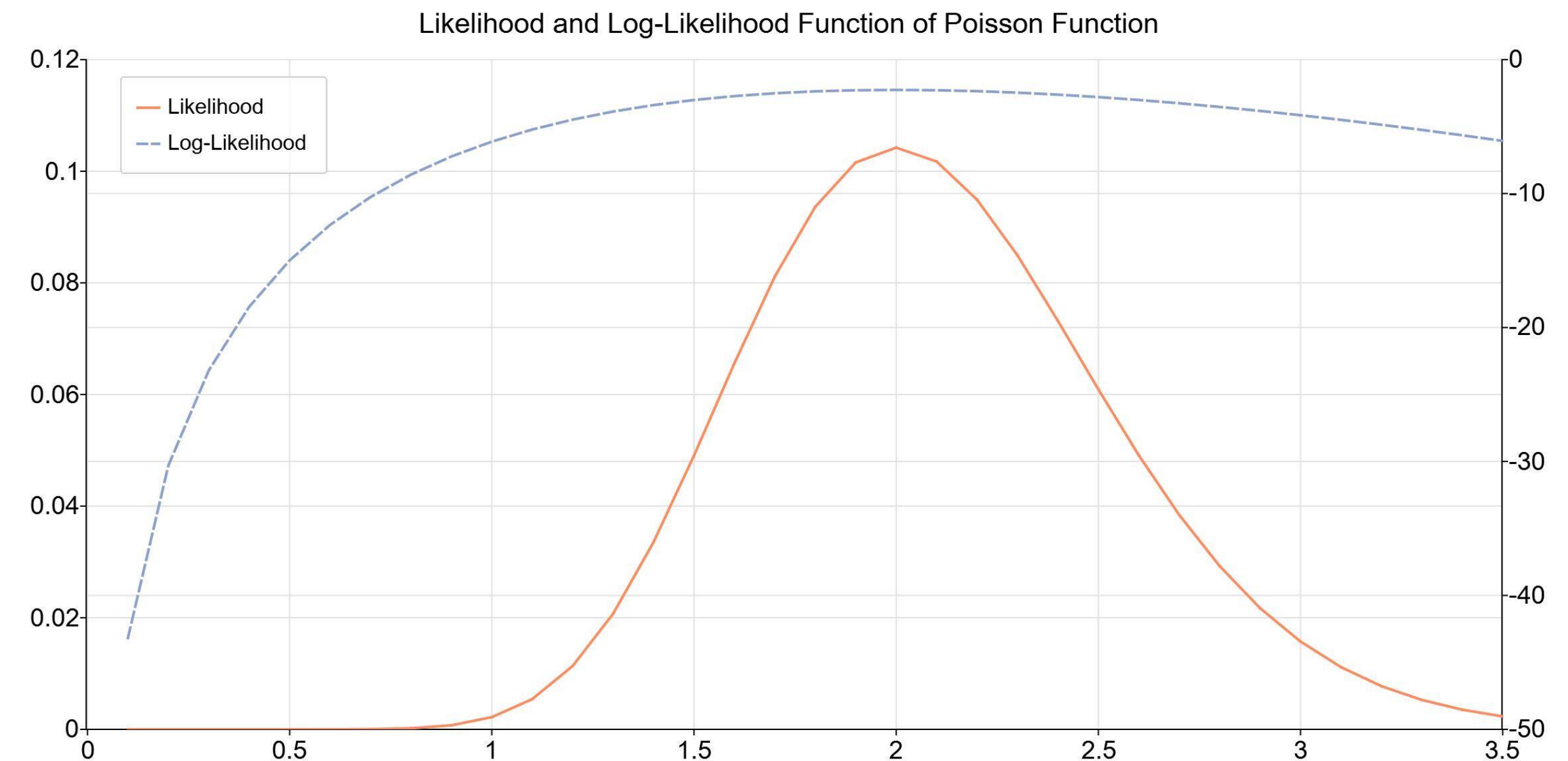
Unsupervised?

- 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

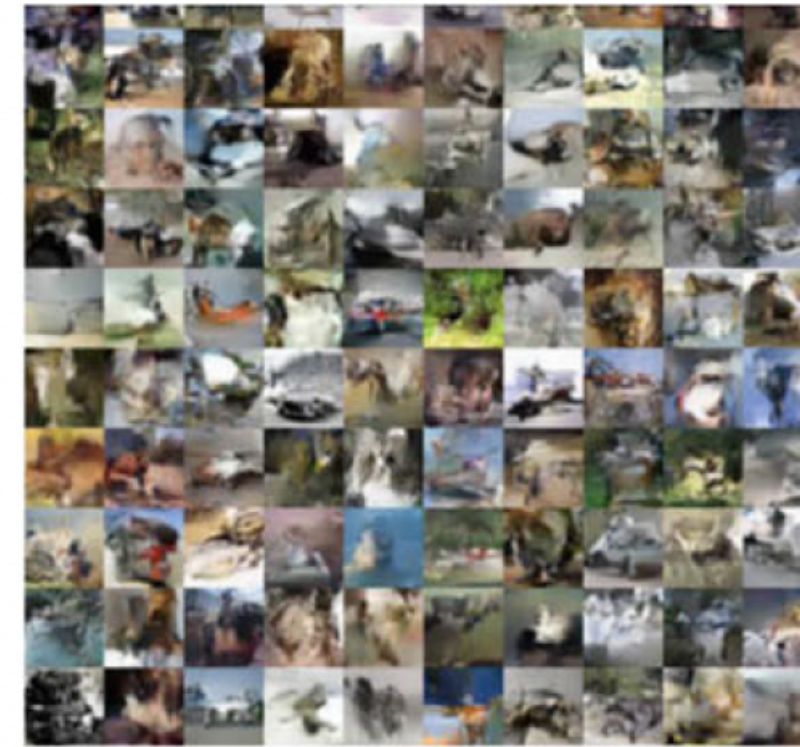


Generative Models

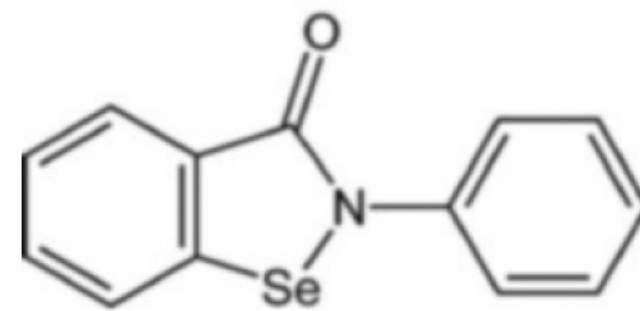
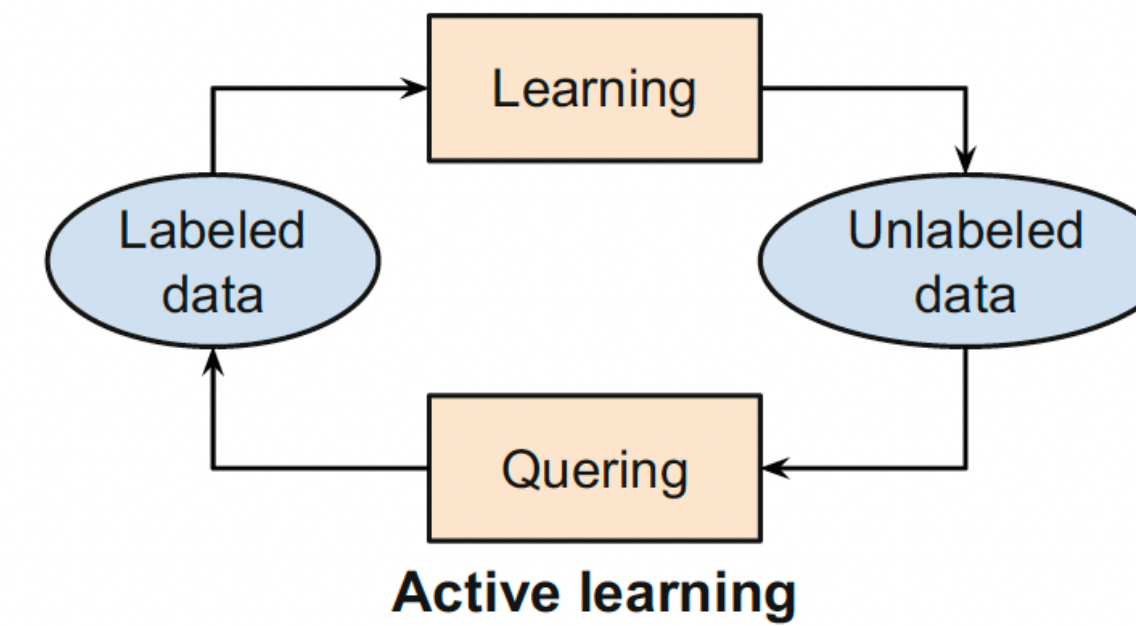
“ i want to talk to you . ”
“ i want to be with you . ”
“ i do n't want to be with you . ”
i do n't want to be with you .
she did n't want to be with him .

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 .

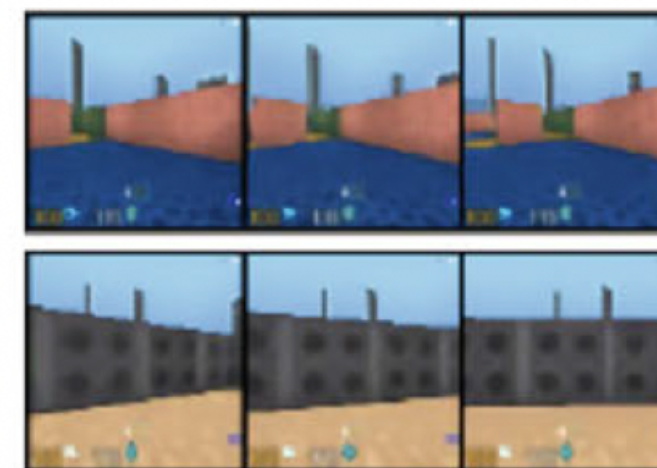
Text



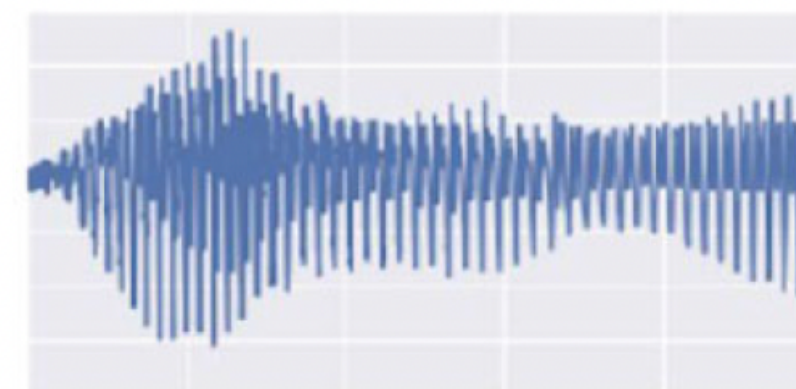
Images



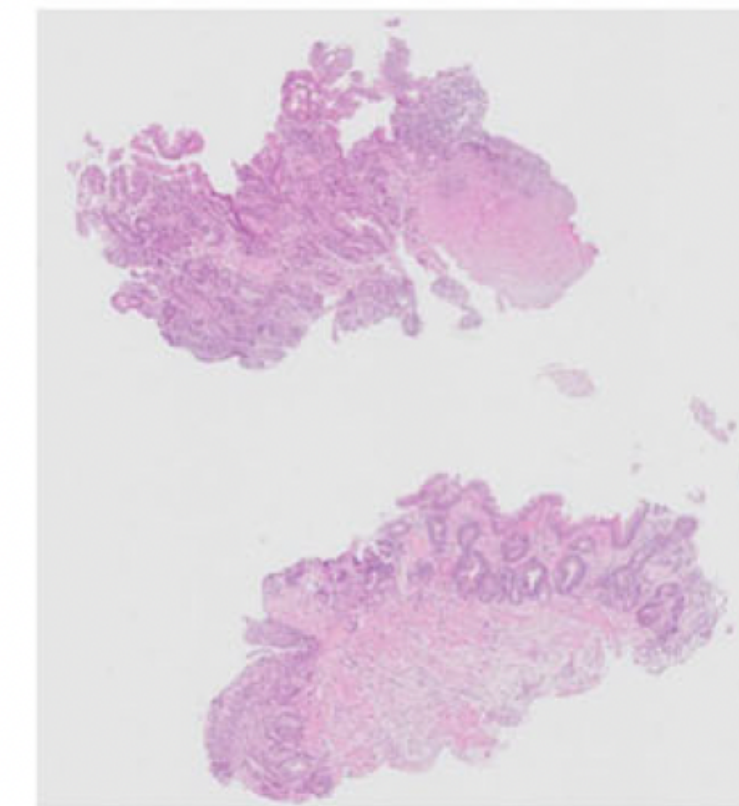
Graphs



Reinforcement
learning



Audio



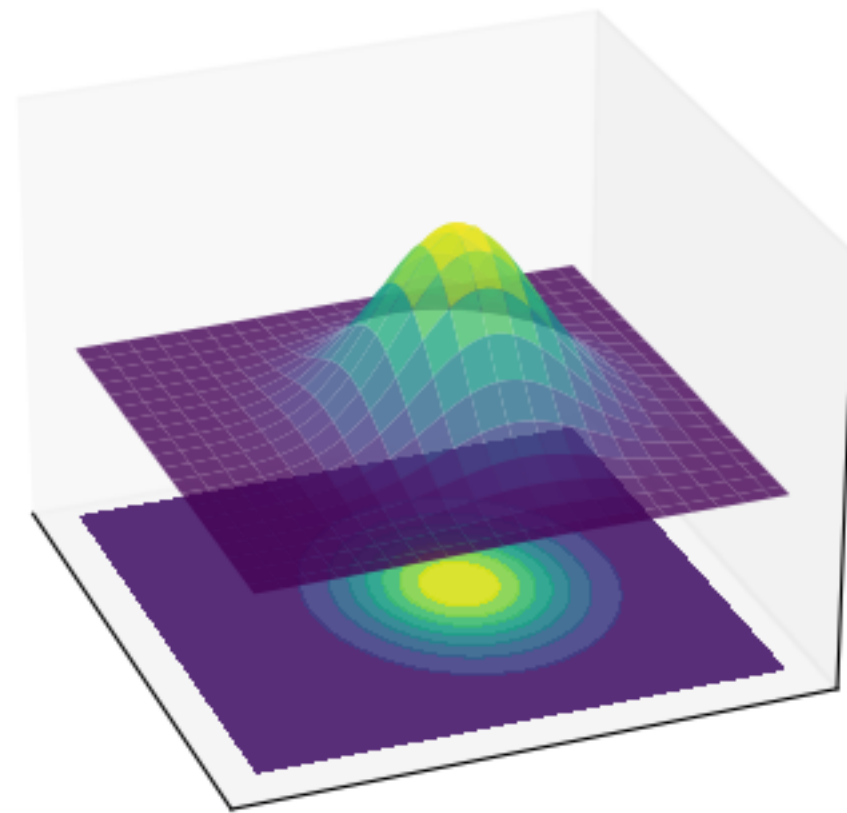
Medical imaging

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

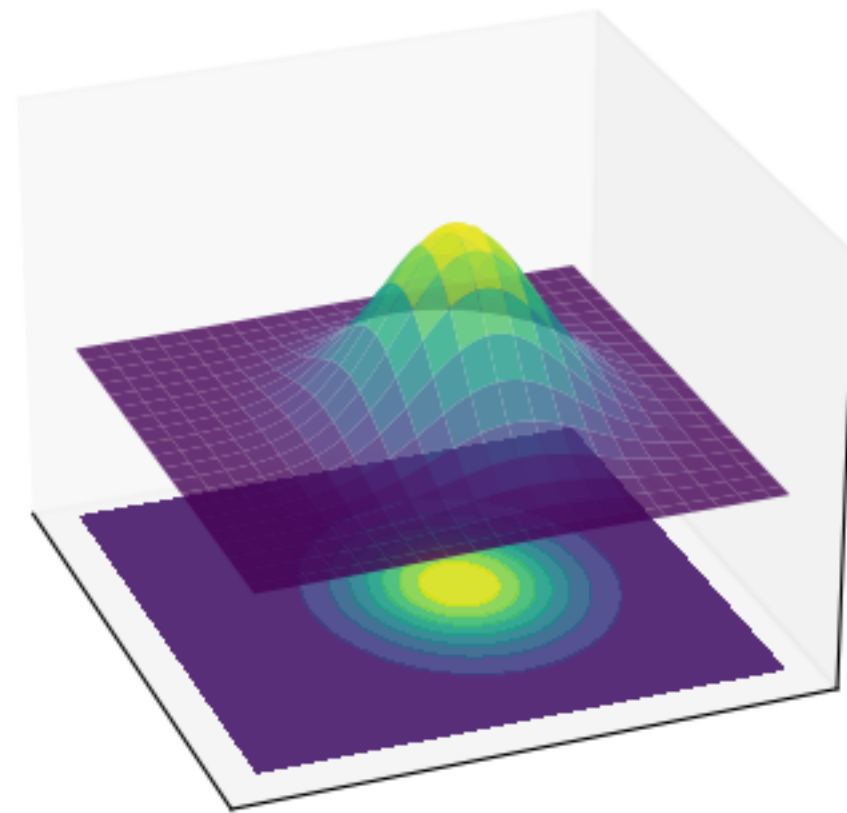
Fundamentals

Continuity equation

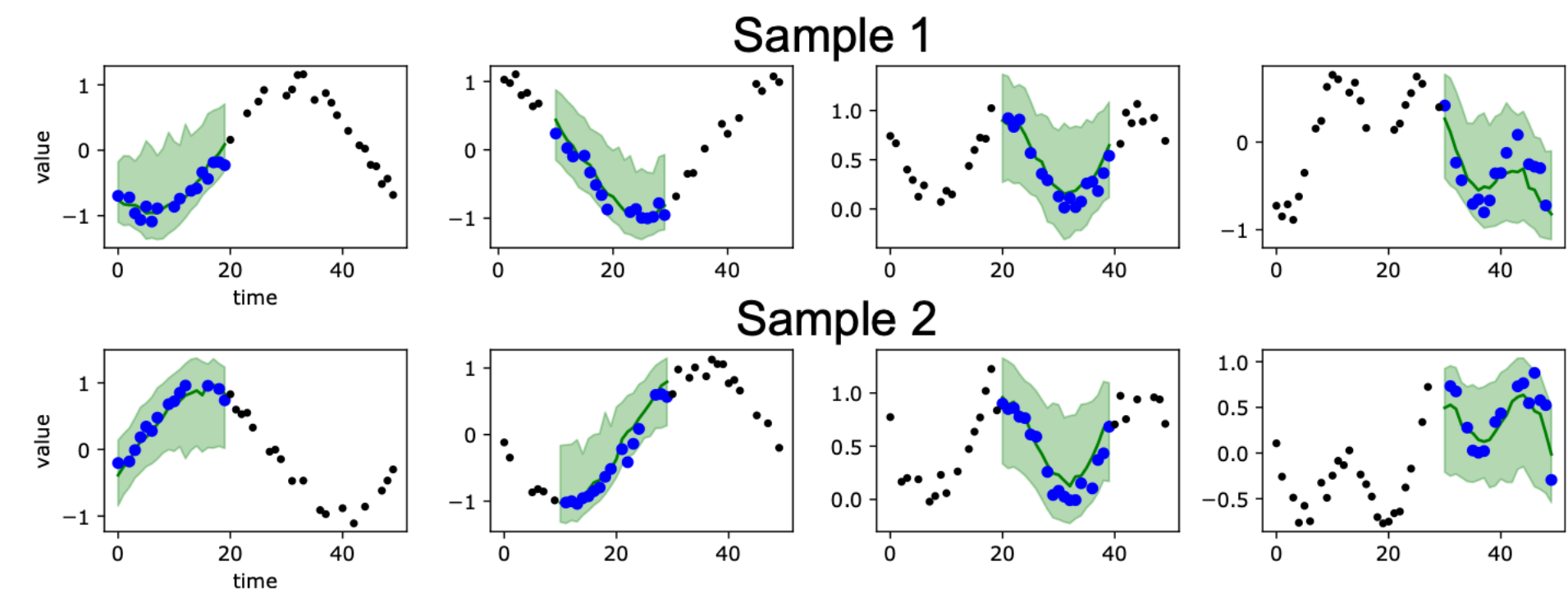
Generative Models

A mathematical formulation

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



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Continuous Normalizing Flows

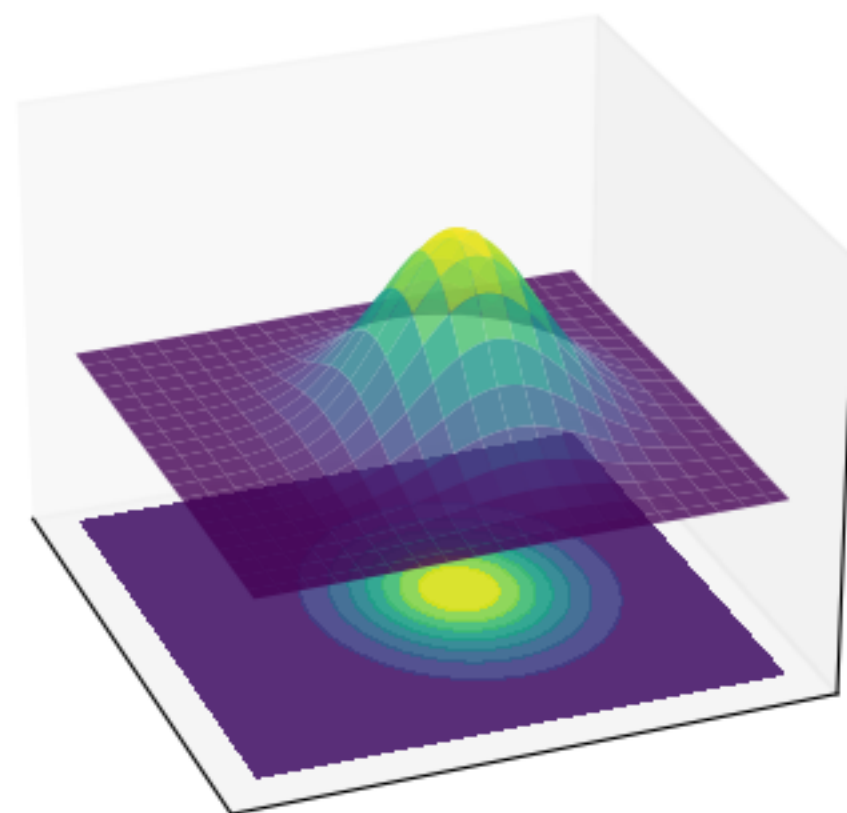
A generative model via Neural Ordinary Differential Equations

- 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

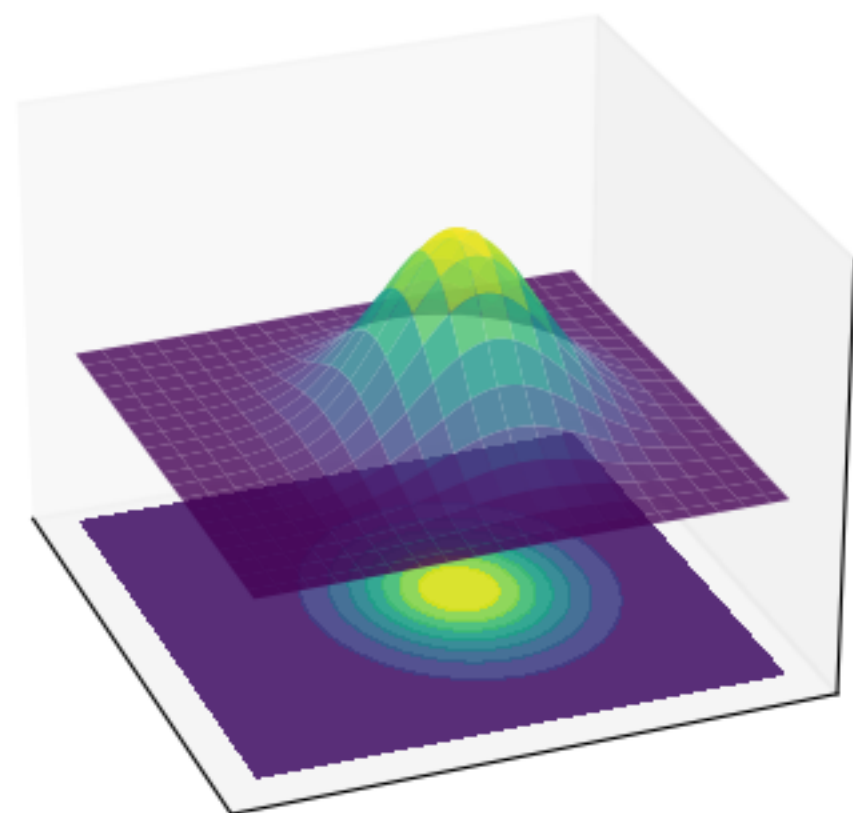
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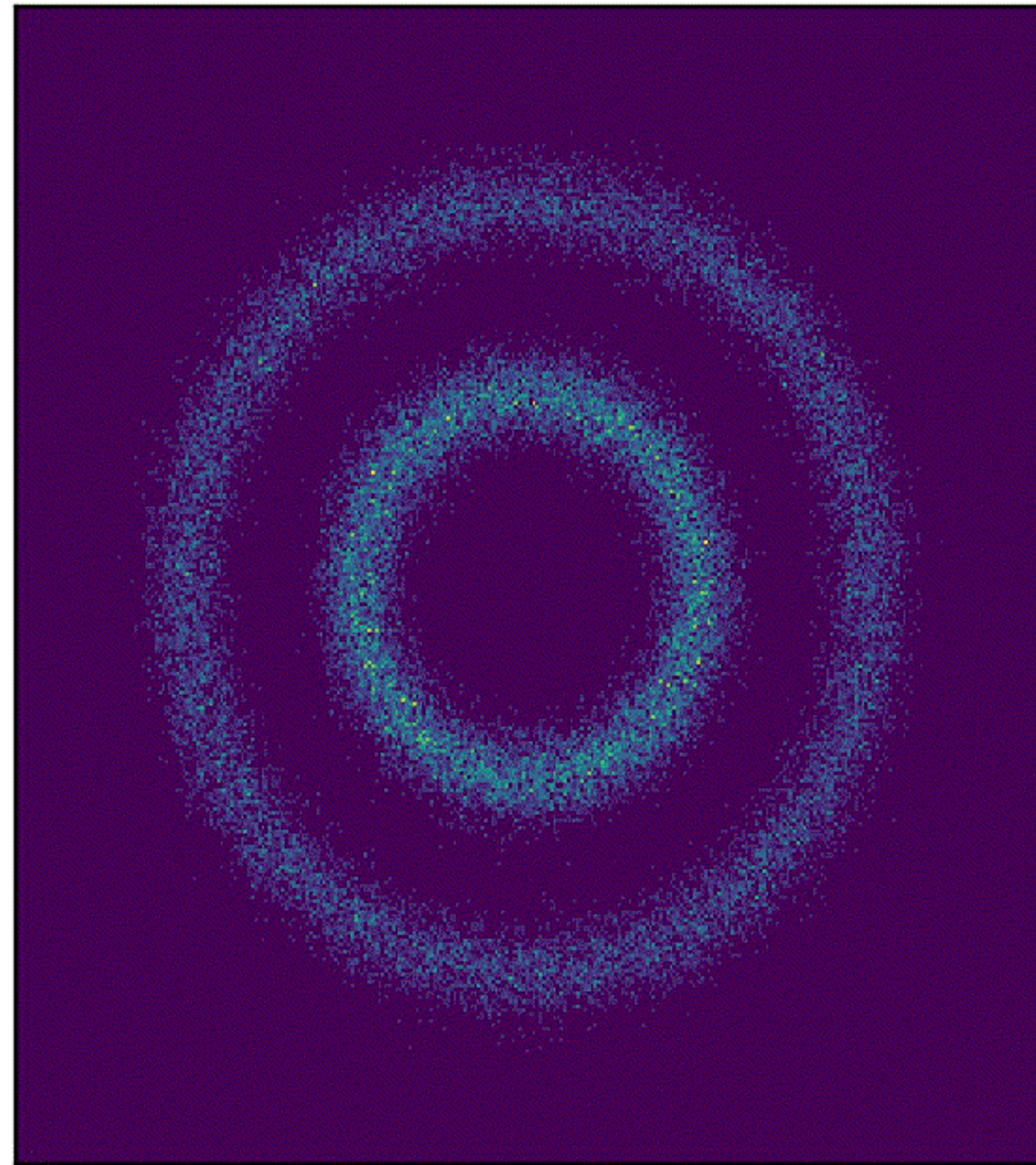


$$\frac{d}{dt} \begin{bmatrix} z_\theta(t) \\ \ell_\theta(t) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} f_\theta(z_\theta(t), t) \\ -\text{tr} \left(\frac{\partial f_\theta}{\partial z_\theta} \right) \end{bmatrix}, \quad \begin{bmatrix} z_\theta(T) \\ \ell_\theta(T) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} x \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}.$$

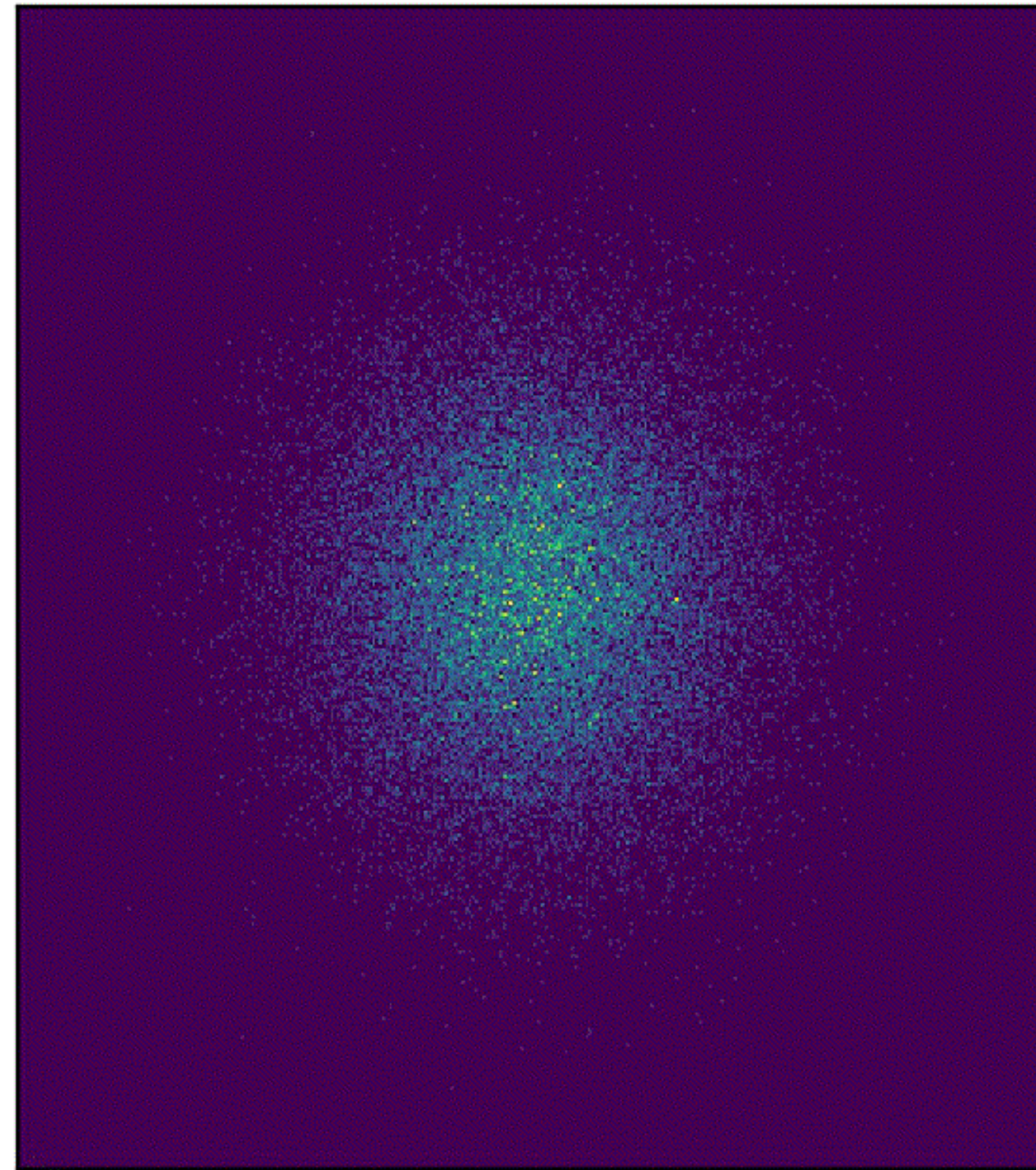
Continuous Normalizing Flows

A generative model via Neural Ordinary Differential Equations

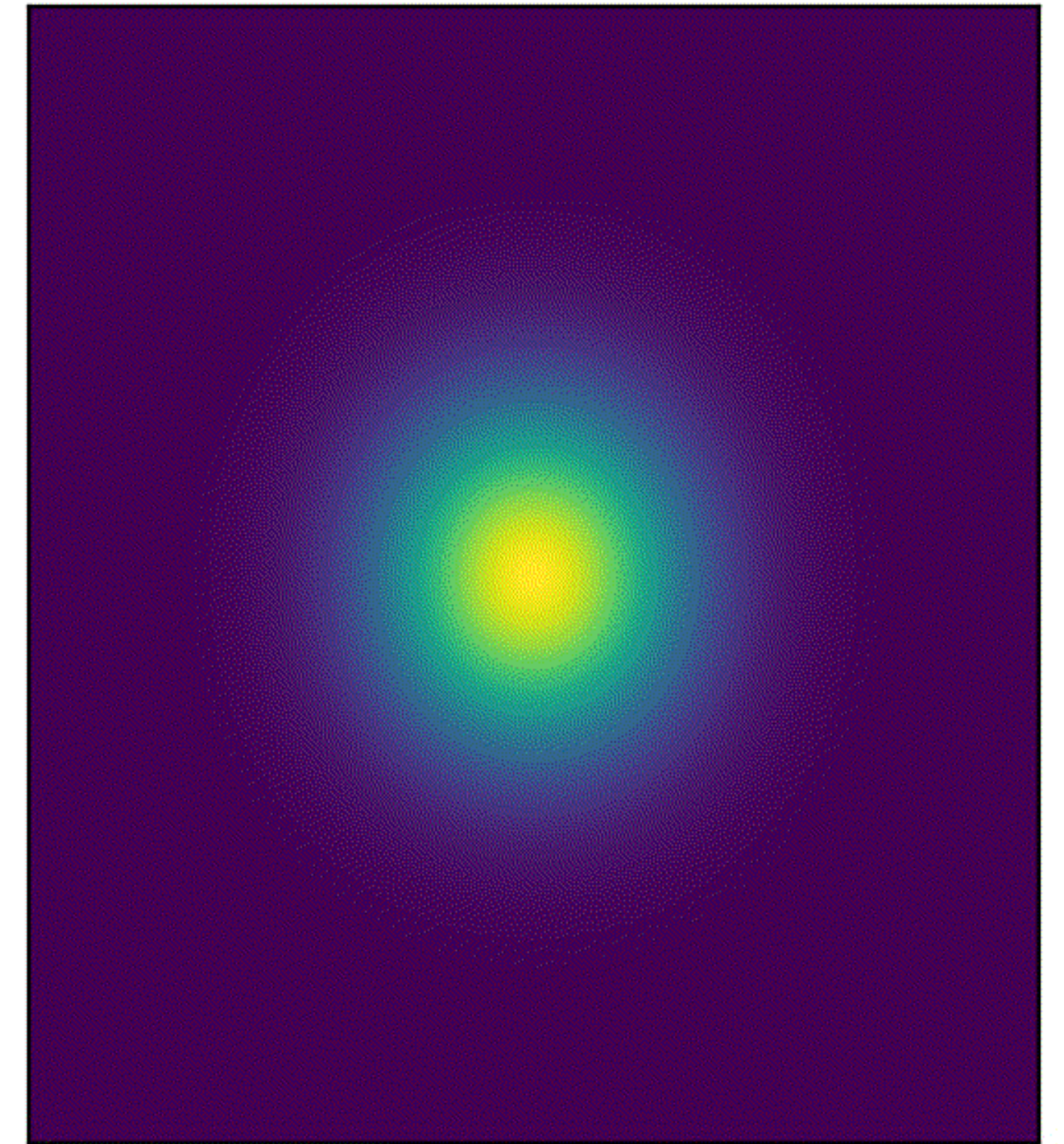
Target



0.00s
Samples



Log Probability



Continuous Normalizing Flows

Discussion

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

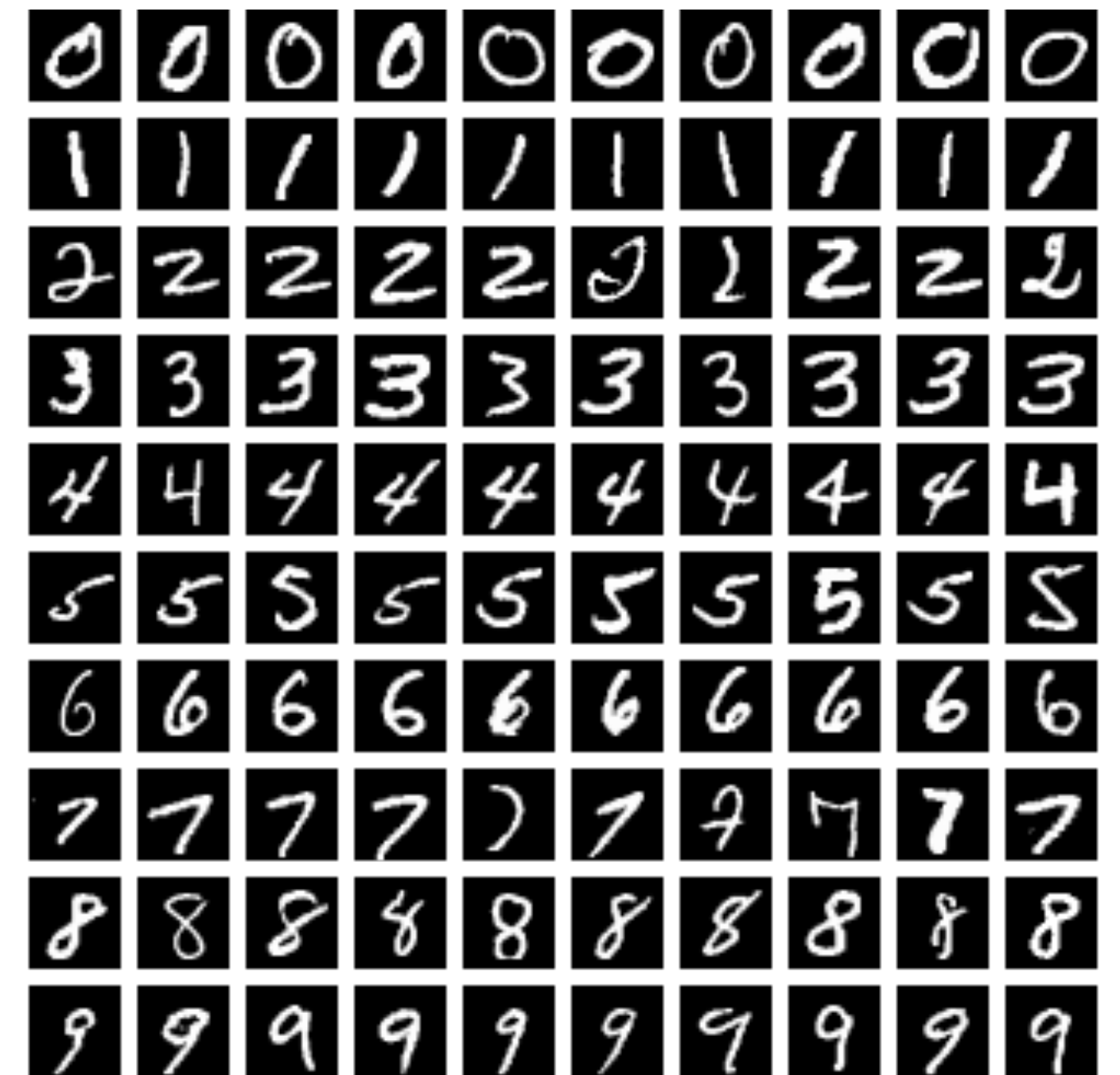
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Continuous Normalizing Flows

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

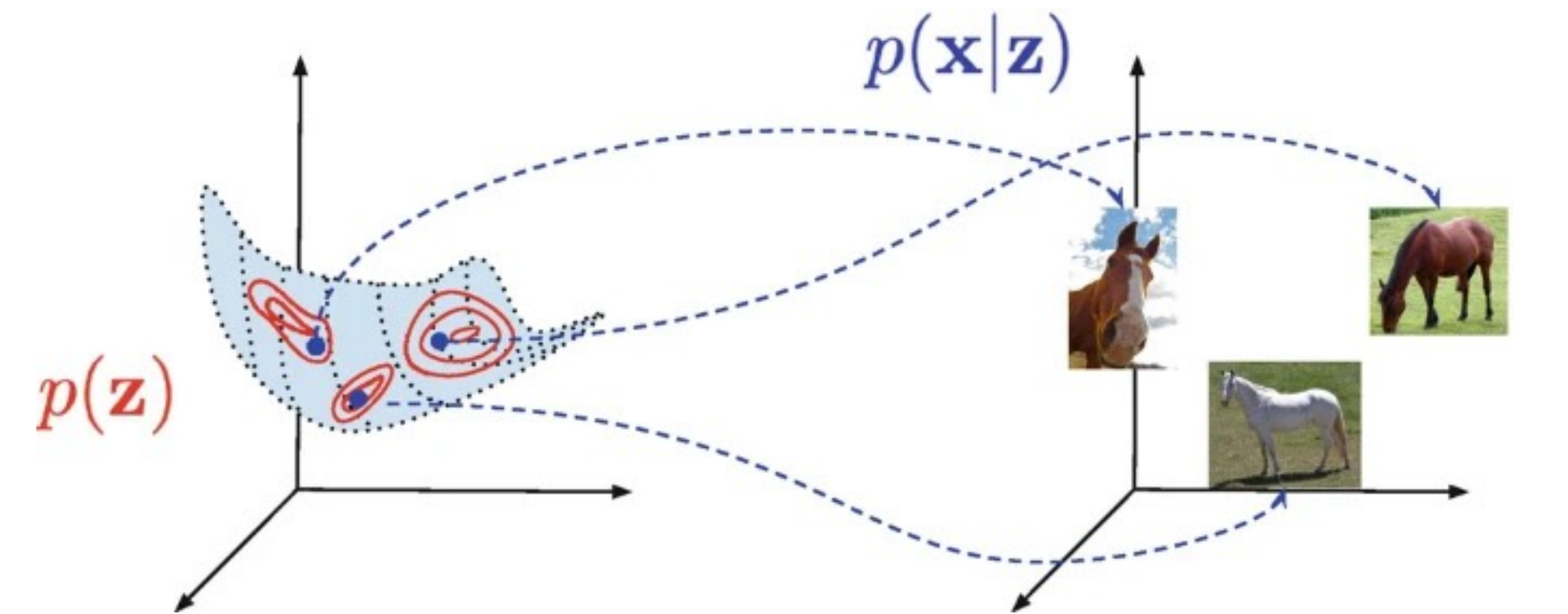


Latent Variables

- 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

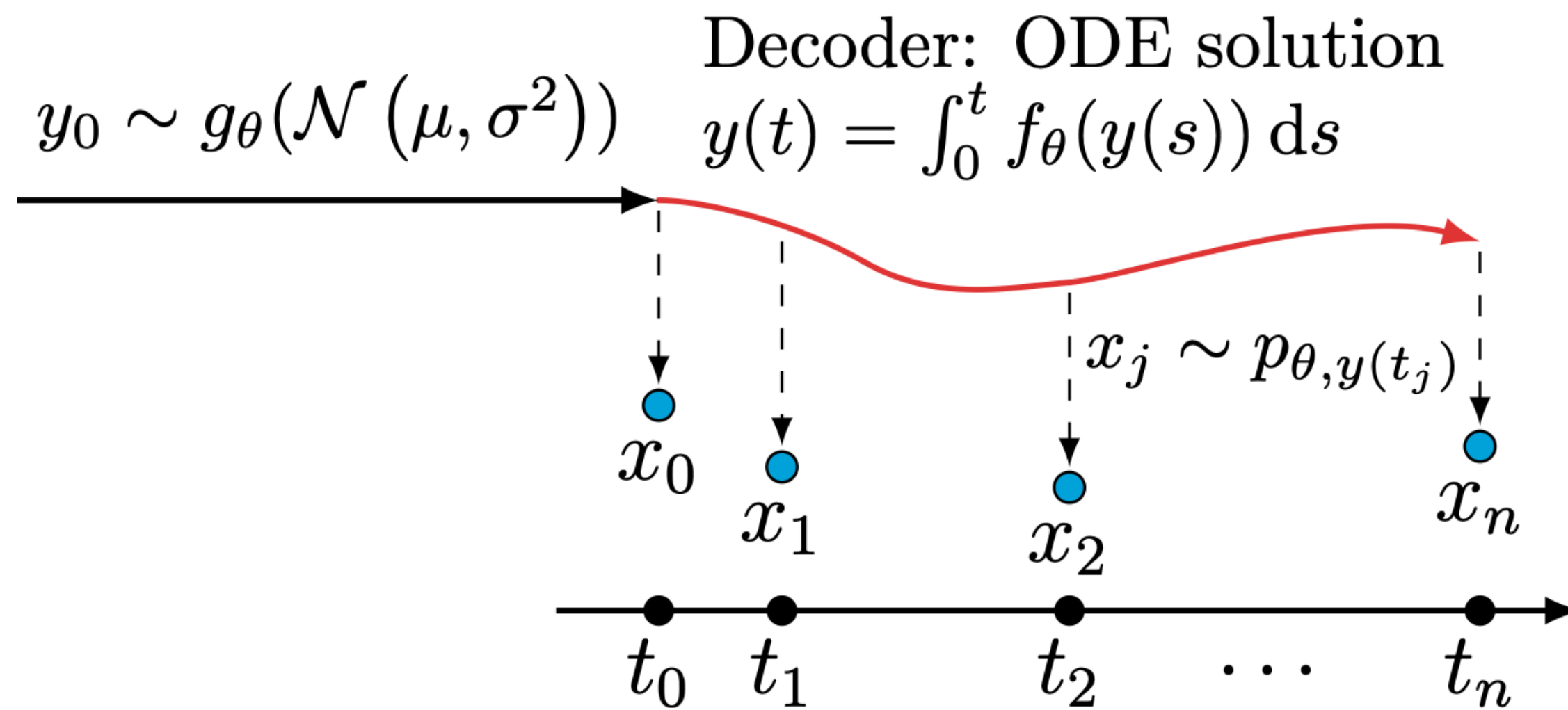
$$f\left(\sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i x_i\right) \leq \sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i f(x_i), \text{ where } \lambda_i \geq 0, \sum_{i=1}^n \lambda_i = 1.$$

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

A latent structure for NODEs

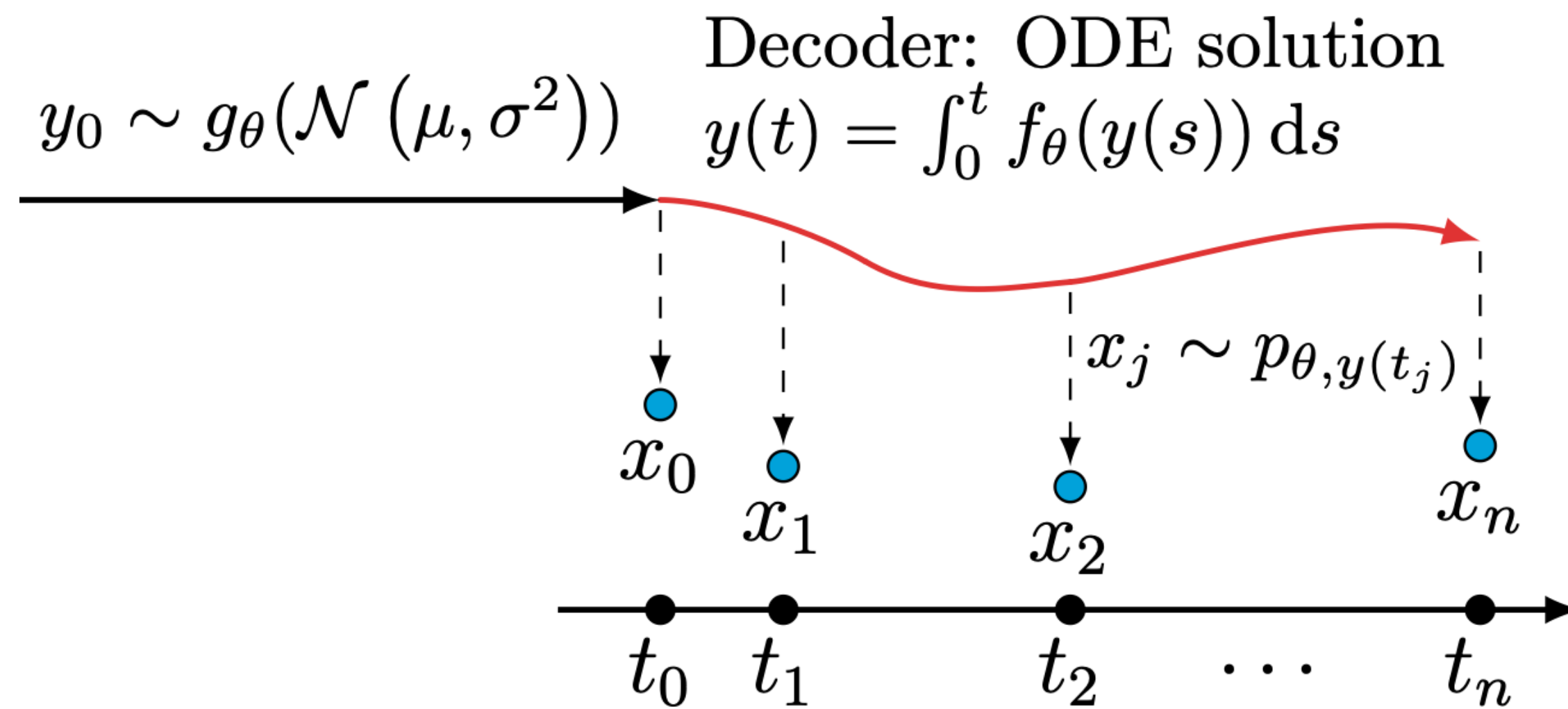
Architecture:

- Encode - Decoder
- NODEs evolve in latent space



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A latent structure for NODEs



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Architecture:

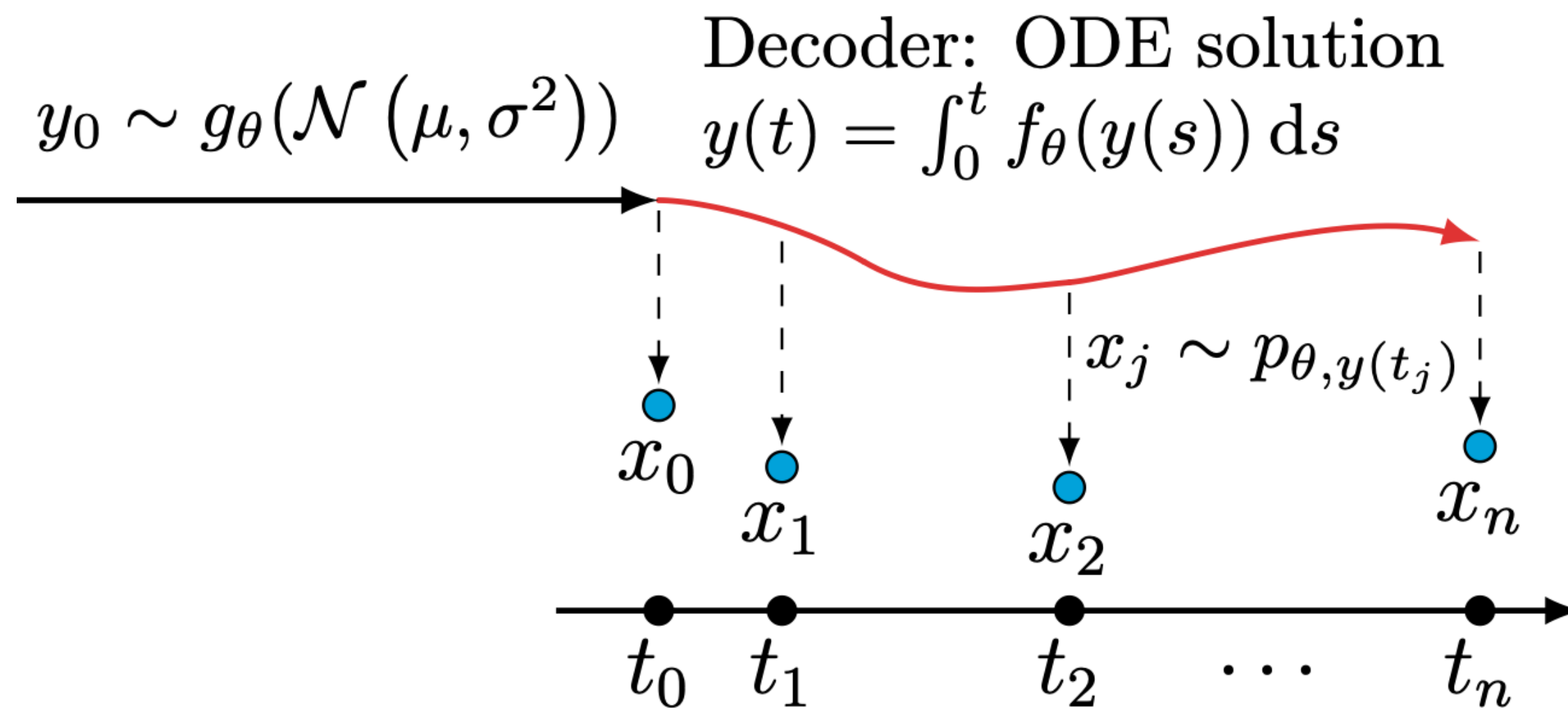
- Encode - Decoder
- NODEs evolve in latent space

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

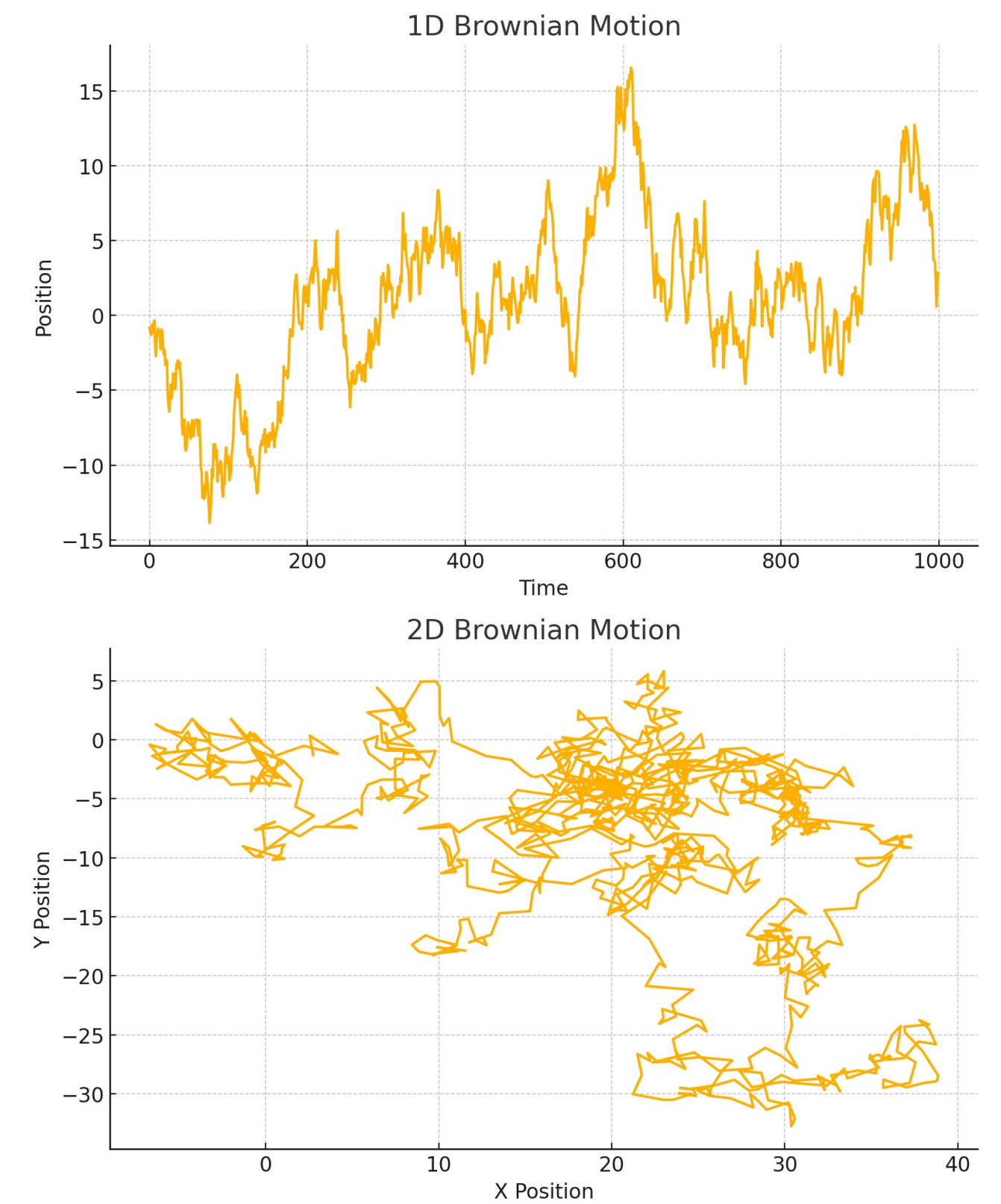
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Stochastic Differential Equations

Random trajectories

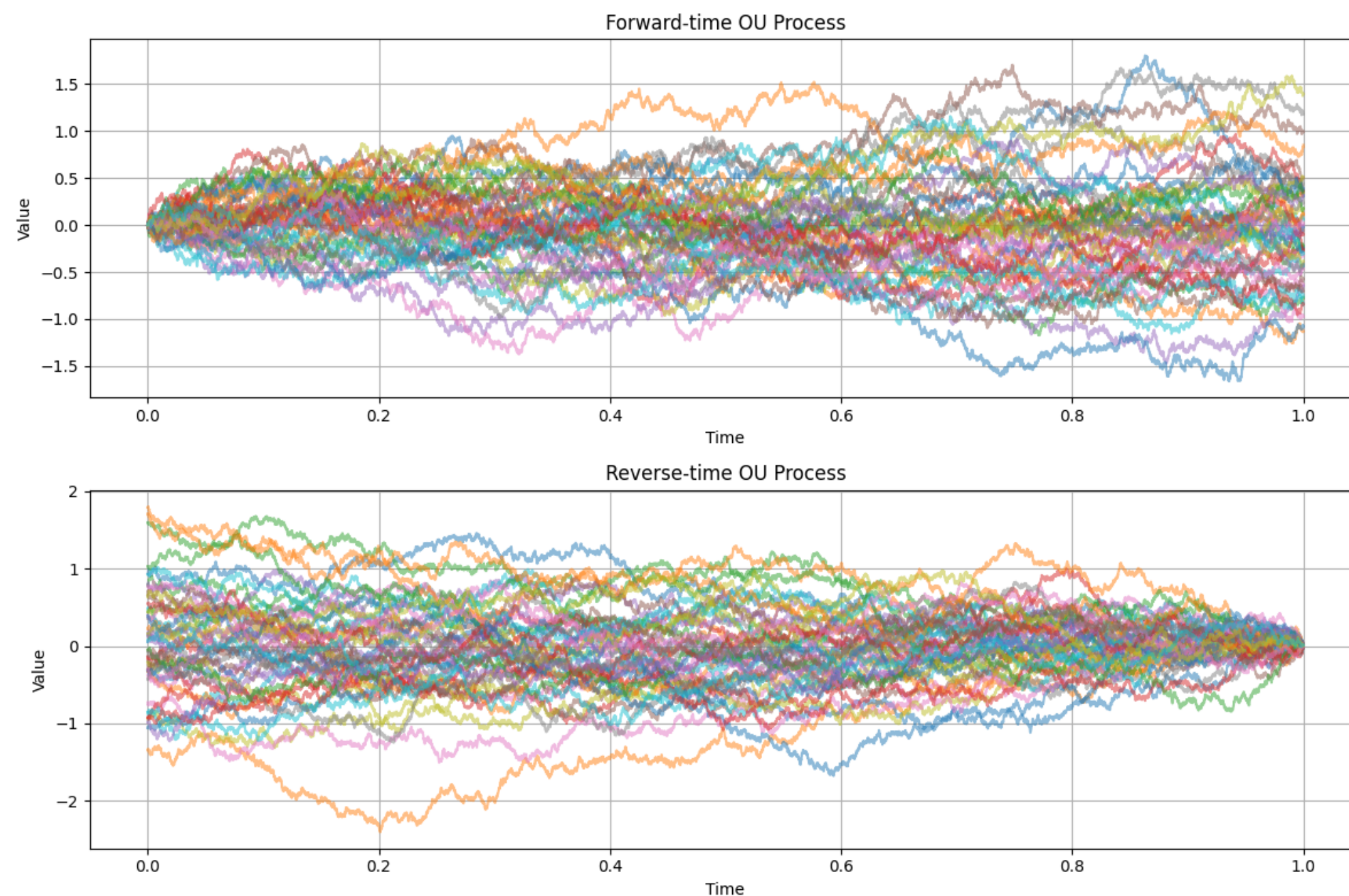
$$dX_t = b(t, X_t)dt + \sigma(t, X_t)dW_t,$$

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

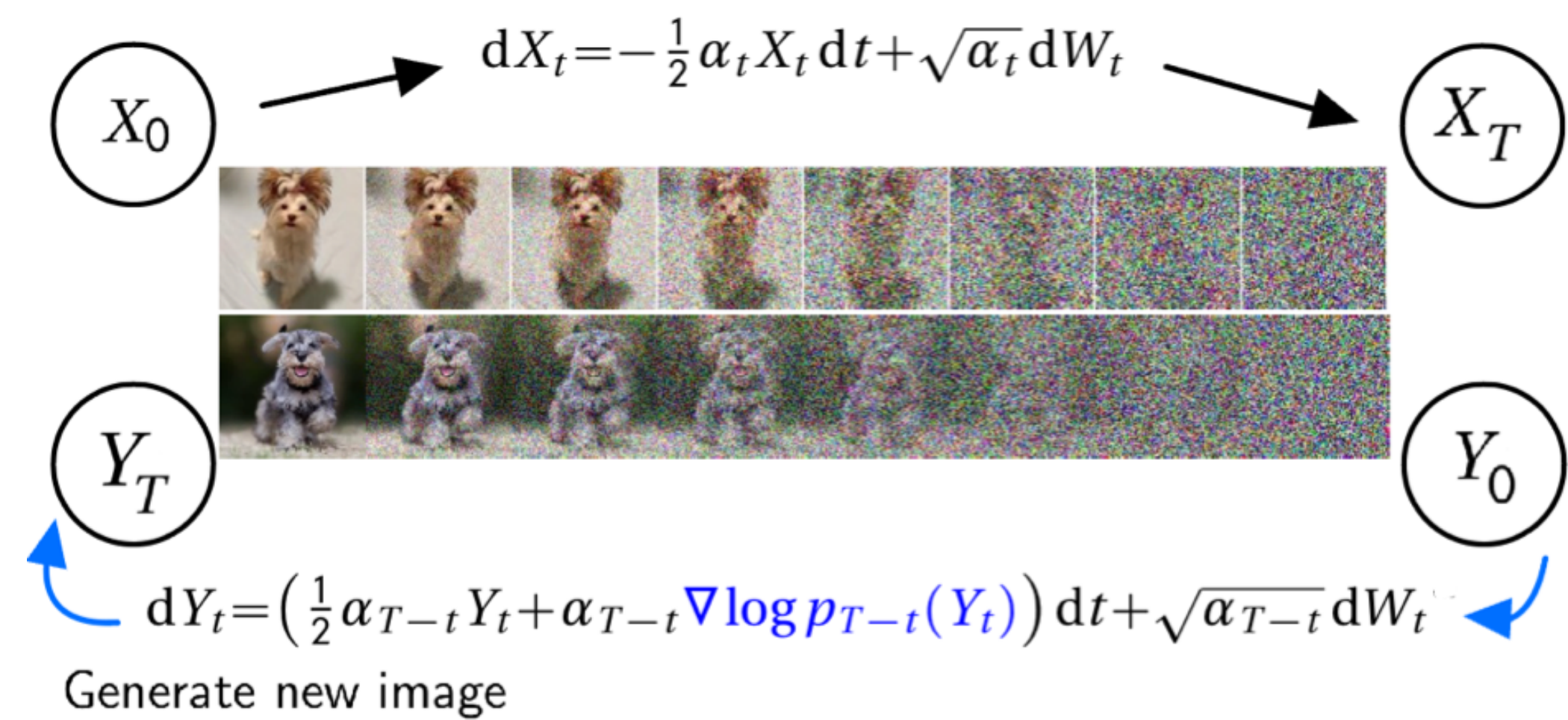


Diffusion Models

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



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



Diffusion Models

Discussion

- Score-matching loss
- Static or Dynamics?

References

Resources

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- Tomczak, J. M. (2024). *Deep Generative Modeling*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Haber, E., & Ruthotto, L. (2017). Stable architectures for deep neural networks. *Inverse problems*, 34(1), 014004.
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- Rubanova, Y., Chen, R. T., & Duvenaud, D. K. (2019). Latent ordinary differential equations for irregularly-sampled time series. *Advances in neural information processing systems*, 32.
- Song, Y., Sohl-Dickstein, J., Kingma, D. P., Kumar, A., Ermon, S., & Poole, B. (2020). Score-based generative modeling through stochastic differential equations. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2011.13456*.

References

For afternoon discussion

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Hagemann, P., Mildenerger, S., Ruthotto, L., Steidl, G., & Yang, N. (2025). **Multilevel diffusion: Infinite dimensional score-based diffusion models for image generation**. arXiv preprint arXiv:2303.04772. SIAM Journal of Mathematics in Data Science.

Park, J., Yang, N., & Chandramoorthy, N. (2024). **When are dynamical systems learned from time series data statistically accurate?**. arXiv preprint arXiv:2411.06311. NeuRIPS 2024

Li, X., Wong, T. K. L., Chen, R. T., & Duvenaud, D. (2020). **Scalable gradients for stochastic differential equations**. In International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Statistics (pp. 3870-3882). PMLR.