

Learning about probabilistic inference and forecasting
by playing with multivariate normal distributions
(with examples in R)

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Abstract

The properties of the normal distribution under linear transformation, as well the easy way to compute the covariance matrix of marginals and conditionals, offer a unique opportunity to get an insight about several aspects of uncertainties in measurements. The way to build the initial covariance matrix in a few, but conceptually relevant cases is illustrated: several observations made with (possibly) different instruments measuring the same quantity; effect of systematics (although limited to *offset*, in order to stick to linear models) on the determination of the ‘true value’, as well in the prediction of future observations; correlations which arise when different quantities are measured with the same instrument affected by an offset uncertainty; inferences and predictions based on averages; inference about constrained values. Many numerical examples are provided, exploiting the ability of the R language to handle large matrices and to produce high quality plots. Some of the results are framed in the general problem of ‘propagation of evidence’, crucial in analyzing graphical models of knowledge.

*“So far as the theories of mathematics are about reality, they are not certain;
so far as they are certain, they are not about reality.”*
(A. Einstein)

*“If we were not ignorant there would be no probability,
there could only be certainty. But our ignorance cannot
be absolute, for then there would be no longer any probability at all.”*
(H. Poincaré)

“Probability is good sense reduced to a calculus”
(S. Laplace)

“All models are wrong but some are useful”
(G. Box)

1 Introduction

The opening quotes set up the frame in which this paper has been written: in the sciences we always deal with uncertainties; being in condition on uncertainty we can only state ‘somehow’ how much we believe something; in order to do that we need to build up probabilistic models based on good sense. For example, if we are uncertain about the value we are going to *read on* an instrument, we can make probabilistic assessments about it. But in general our interest is the *numerical value of a physics quantity*. We are usually in great condition of uncertainty before the measurement, but we still remain with some degree of uncertainty after the measurement has been performed. Models enter in the construction of the the causal network which connects physics quantities to what we can observe on the instruments. They are also important because it is convenient to use, whenever it is possible, probability distributions, instead than to assign individual probabilities to each individual ‘value’ (after suitable discretization) that a physics quantity might assume.

As we know, there are good reasons why in many cases the Gaussian distribution (or *normal* distribution) offers a *reasonable* and *convenient* description of the probability that the quantity of interest lies within some bounds. But it is important to remember that, as it was clear to Gauss [2] when he derived the famous distribution for the measurement errors, one should not take literally the fact that the variable appearing in the formula can range from minus infinite to plus infinite: an apple cannot have infinite mass, or a negative one!

Sticking hereafter to Gaussian distributions, it is clear that if we are only interested to the probability density function (pdf) of a variable at the time, we can only describe our uncertainty about that quantity, and nothing more. The game becomes interesting when we study the joint distribution of several variables, because this is the way we can learn about some of them assuming the values of the others. For example, if we assume the joint pdf $f(x_1, x_2 | I)$ of variables X_1 and X_2 under the state of information I (on which we ground our assumptions), we can evaluate $f(x_1 | x_2, I)$, that is the pdf adding the extra condition $X_2 = x_2$, which is usually not the same as $f(x_1 | I)$, that is the pdf of X_1 for any value X_2 might assume.¹

Let us take for example the three diagrams of Fig. 1 to which we give a physical interpretation:

1. In the diagram on the left the variable X_1 might represent the numerical value of a physics quantity, on which we are in condition on uncertainty, modelled by

$$X_1 \sim \mathcal{N}(X_0, \sigma_1), \tag{1}$$

¹The pdf $f(x_1 | I)$ is called *marginal*, although there is never special about this name, since all distributions of a single variable can be thought as being ‘marginal’ to all other possible quantities which we are not interested about. $f(x_1 | x_2, I)$ is instead ‘called’ *conditional*, although it is a matter of fact that all distributions are conditional to a given state of information, here indicated by I . Note that throughout this paper will shall use the same symbol $f()$ for all pdf’s, as it is customary among physicists – I have met mathematics oriented guys getting mad by the equation $f(x, y) = f(x|y) \cdot f(y)$ because, they say, “the three functions cannot be the same”...

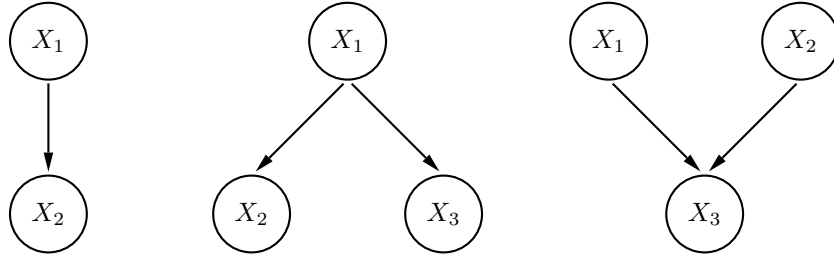


Figure 1: Basic models of joint probabilities

where X_0 and σ_1 are suitable parameters to state our ‘ignorance’ about X_1 (‘complete ignorance’, if it does ever exist, is recovered in the limit $\sigma_1 \rightarrow \infty$). Instead, X_2 is then what we read on an instrument when we apply it to X_1 . That is, even if we knew X_1 , we are still uncertain about what we can read on the instrument, as it is well understood. Modelling this uncertainty by a normal distribution we have, for any value of X_1

$$X_{2|X_1} \sim \mathcal{N}(X_1, \sigma_{2|1}), \quad (2)$$

where $\sigma_{2|1}$ is a compact symbol for $\sigma(X_{2|X_1})$ and which is in general different from $\sigma_2 \equiv \sigma(X_2)$. In fact our uncertainty about X_2 (for any possible value of X_1) must be larger than that about X_1 itself, for obvious reasons – we shall see later the details.

2. In the diagram on the center X_3 might represent a second observation done *independently* applying in general a second (possibly different) instrument to the identical value X_1 . This means that $X_{2|X_1}$ and $X_{3|X_1}$ are independent, although X_2 and X_3 are not, as we shall see.
3. In the diagram on the right X_3 is the observation read on the instrument applies to X_1 , but possibly influenced by X_2 , that might then represent a kind of *systematics*.

Note, how it has been precisely stated, that X_2 of the first and of the second diagrams, as well as X_3 of the other two, are the *readings* on the instruments and not the result of the measurement! This is because by “result of the measurement” we mean statements about the quantity of interest and not about the quantities read on the instruments (think for example at the an experiment measuring the Higgs boson mass, making use of the information recorded by the detector!). In this case the “result of the measurement” would be $f(x_1 | \mathbf{data}, I)$ where **data** stands for the set of observed variables.

The diagrams of the figure can be complicated, using sets of data, with systematics effects common to observations in each subset. The aim of this paper is to help in developing some intuition of what is going on in problems of this kind, with the only simplification that all pdf’s of interest are normal.

2 Technical premises (with some exercises)

We assume that the reader is familiar with some basic concepts related to *uncertain numbers* and *uncertain vectors*, usually met under the name of “random variables”.

2.1 Normal (Gaussian) distribution

$X \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu, \sigma)$:

$$f(x | \mathcal{N}(\mu, \sigma)) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}\sigma} \exp\left[-\frac{(x - \mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right] \quad (3)$$

with

$$E[X] = \mu \quad (4)$$

$$\text{Var}[X] = \sigma^2 \quad (5)$$

$$\sigma[X] = \sqrt{\text{Var}[X]} = \sigma. \quad (6)$$

(We remind that in most physics applications $x \rightarrow \pm\infty$ simply means $|x - \mu|/\sigma \gg 1$.)

In the R language [1] there are functions (`dnorm()`, `pnorm()` and `qnorm()`, respectively) to calculate the pdf, the cumulative function, usually indicated with “ $F(x)$ ”, as well as its inverse, as shown in the following, self explaining examples² (>’ is the R console prompt):

```
> dnorm(0, 0, 1)
[1] 0.3989423
> 1/sqrt(2*pi) # (just a check)
[1] 0.3989423
> pnorm(0, 0, 1)
[1] 0.5
> pnorm(7, 5, 2) - pnorm(3, 5, 2)
[1] 0.6826895
> qnorm(0.5, 5, 2)
[1] 5
> qnorm(1, 5, 2)
[1] Inf
> qnorm(0, 5, 2)
[1] -Inf
```

Note the capability of the language to handle infinities, as it can be cross checked by

```
> pnorm(Inf, 5, 2)
[1] 1
```

And here are the instructions to produce the plots of figure 2.

```
mu <- 5; sigma <- 2; x <- seq(mu-5*sigma, mu+5*sigma, len=101)
plot(x, dnorm(x, mu, sigma), ty='l', ylab='f(x)', col='blue')
points(x, dnorm(x, mu, sigma*1.5), ty='l', lty=2, col='blue')
points(x, dnorm(x, mu, sigma*2), ty='l', lty=3, col='blue')
```

²For information about the language see one of the many tutorial available on the web. Most functions we shall use here have self explaining names. For an help, for example about `dnorm()`, just enter

```
> ?dnorm
```

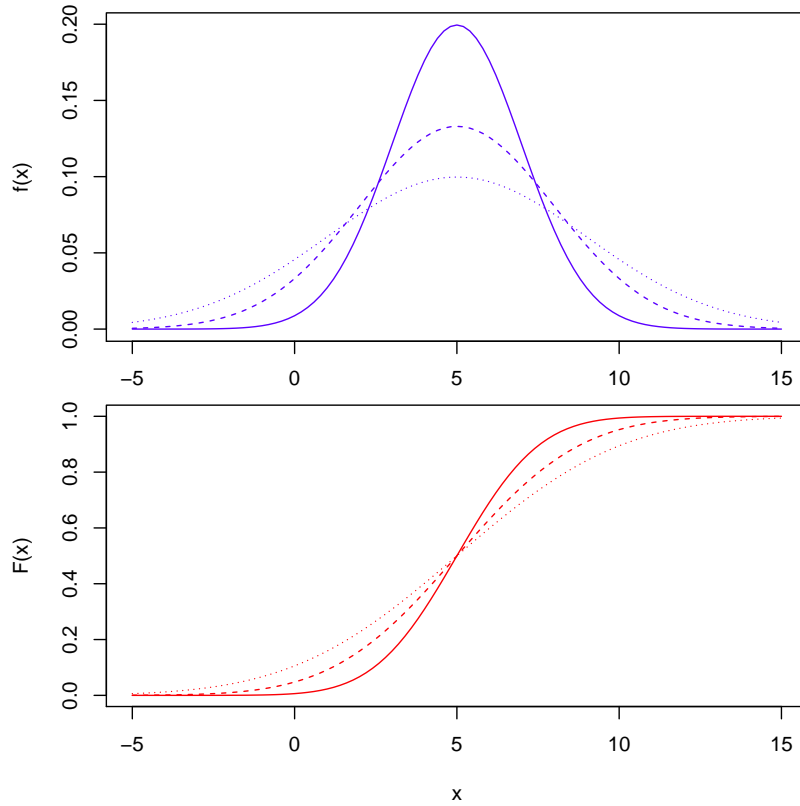


Figure 2: Gaussian probability density function (above) and cumulative function (below) for $\mu = 5$ and $\sigma = 2, 3$ and 4 (solid, dashed and pointed).

```
plot(x, pnorm(x, mu, sigma), ty='l', ylab='F(x)', col='red')
points(x, pnorm(x, mu, sigma*1.5), ty='l', lty=2, col='red')
points(x, pnorm(x, mu, sigma*2), ty='l', lty=3, col='red')
```

2.2 Bivariate and multivariate normal distribution

A bivariate normal distribution is defined by

$$f(\mathbf{x} | \mathcal{N}(\boldsymbol{\mu}, \mathbf{V})) = \frac{1}{2\pi\sigma_1\sigma_2\sqrt{1-\rho_{12}^2}} \exp\left\{-\frac{1}{2(1-\rho_{12}^2)} \left[\frac{(x_1-\mu_1)^2}{\sigma_1^2} - 2\rho_{12} \frac{(x_1-\mu_1)(x_2-\mu_2)}{\sigma_1\sigma_2} + \frac{(x_2-\mu_2)^2}{\sigma_2^2} \right]\right\}, \quad (7)$$

where

$$\mathbf{x} = (x_1, x_2) \quad (8)$$

$$\boldsymbol{\mu} = (\mu_1, \mu_2) \quad (9)$$

$$E[X_i] = \mu_i \quad (10)$$

$$\text{Var}[X_i] = \sigma_i^2 \quad (11)$$

$$\sigma[X_i] \equiv \sqrt{\text{Var}[X_i]} = \sigma_i \quad (12)$$

$$\rho_{12} = \frac{\text{Cov}[X_1, X_2]}{\sigma_1 \sigma_2}, \quad (13)$$

with variances and covariances forming the *covariance matrix*

$$\mathbf{V} = \begin{pmatrix} \text{Var}[X_1] & \text{Cov}[X_1, X_2] \\ \text{Cov}[X_1, X_2] & \text{Var}[X_2] \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & \rho_{12} \sigma_1 \sigma_2 \\ \rho_{12} \sigma_1 \sigma_2 & \sigma_2^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (14)$$

The bivariate pdf (7) can be rewritten in a compact form as

$$f(\mathbf{x} | \mathcal{N}(\boldsymbol{\mu}, \mathbf{V})) = (2\pi)^{-n/2} |\mathbf{V}|^{-1/2} \exp \left[-\frac{1}{2} (\mathbf{x} - \boldsymbol{\mu})^T \mathbf{V}^{-1} (\mathbf{x} - \boldsymbol{\mu}) \right], \quad (15)$$

where $|\mathbf{V}|$ stands for $\det(\mathbf{V})$. This expression is valid for any number n of variables and it turns, in the case \mathbf{V} is diagonal into

$$\frac{1}{(2\pi)^{n/2} \prod_i \sigma_i} \exp \left[-\frac{1}{2} \frac{\sum_i (x_i - \mu_i)^2}{\sigma_i^2} \right]. \quad (16)$$

2.2.1 Multivariate normals in R

Functions to calculate multivariate normal pdf's, as well as cumulative functions and random generators are provided in R via the package `mnormt`³ that needs first to be installed⁴ issuing

```
> install.packages("mnormt")
```

and then loaded by the command

```
> library(mnormt)
```

Then we have to define the values of the parameters and built up the vector of the central values and the covariance matrix. Here is an example:

```
> m1=0.4; m2=2; s1=1; s2=0.5; rho=0.6
```

```
> mu <- c(m1, m2)
```

³<http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/mnormt/>

⁴For all technical details about R (open source and multi-platform!) see the R web site [1].

```
> ( V <- rbind( c( s1^2, rho*s1*s2), c(rho*s1*s2, s2^2) ) )
      [,1] [,2]
[1,] 1.0 0.30
[2,] 0.3 0.25
```

Then we can evaluate the joint pdf in a point (x_1, x_2) , e.g.

```
> dmnorm(c(0.5, 1.5), mu, V)
[1] 0.1645734
```

Or we can evaluate $P(X_1 \leq 0.5 \ \& \ X_2 \leq 1.5)$, or $P(X_1 \leq \mu_1 \ \& \ X_2 \leq \mu_2)$, respectively, with

```
> pmnorm(c(0.5, 1.5), mu, V)
[1] 0.140636
```

and

```
> pmnorm(mu, mu, V)
[1] 0.3524164
```

2.3 Graphical representation of normal bivariate

If we like to visualize the joint distribution we need a 3D graphical package, for example `rgl`⁵ or `plot3D`.⁶ We need to evaluate the joint pdf on a grid of values ‘ x ’ and ‘ y ’ and provide them to the suited function. Here are the instructions that use the `persp3d()` of the `rgl` package:

```
> library(rgl)
> fun <- function(x1,x2) dmnorm(cbind(x1, x2), mu, V)
> x1 <- seq(m1-3*s1, m1+3*s1, len=51)
> x2 <- seq(m2-3*s2, m2+3*s2, len=51)
> f <- outer(x1, x2, fun)
> persp3d(x1, x2, f, col='cyan', xlab="x1", ylab="x2", zlab="f(x1,y2)")
```

After the plot is shown in the graphics window, the window can be enlarged and the plot rotated at wish. Figure 3 shows in the upper two plots two views of the same distribution.

Here are also the instructions to use `plot3D()`:

```
> library(plot3D)
> M <- mesh(x1, x2)
> surf3D(M$x, M$y, f, bty='b2', phi = 30, theta = -20,
+ xlab='x1', ylab='x2', zlab='f(x1,x2)')
```

The result is shown in the lower plot of Fig. 3.

Another convenient and often used representation of normal bivariate is to draw iso-pdf contours, i.e. lines in correspondence of the points in the plane (x_1, x_2) such as $f(x_1, x_2 | I) = \text{const}$. This requires that the *quadratic form* at the exponent of Eq. (7) [that is what is written in general as $(\mathbf{x} - \boldsymbol{\mu})^T \mathbf{V}^{-1} (\mathbf{x} - \boldsymbol{\mu})$] has a fixed value. In the two dimensional case of Eq. (7) we recognize the expression of an ellipse. We have in R the

⁵<https://r-forge.r-project.org/projects/rgl/>

⁶<http://www.r-bloggers.com/3d-plots-in-r/>

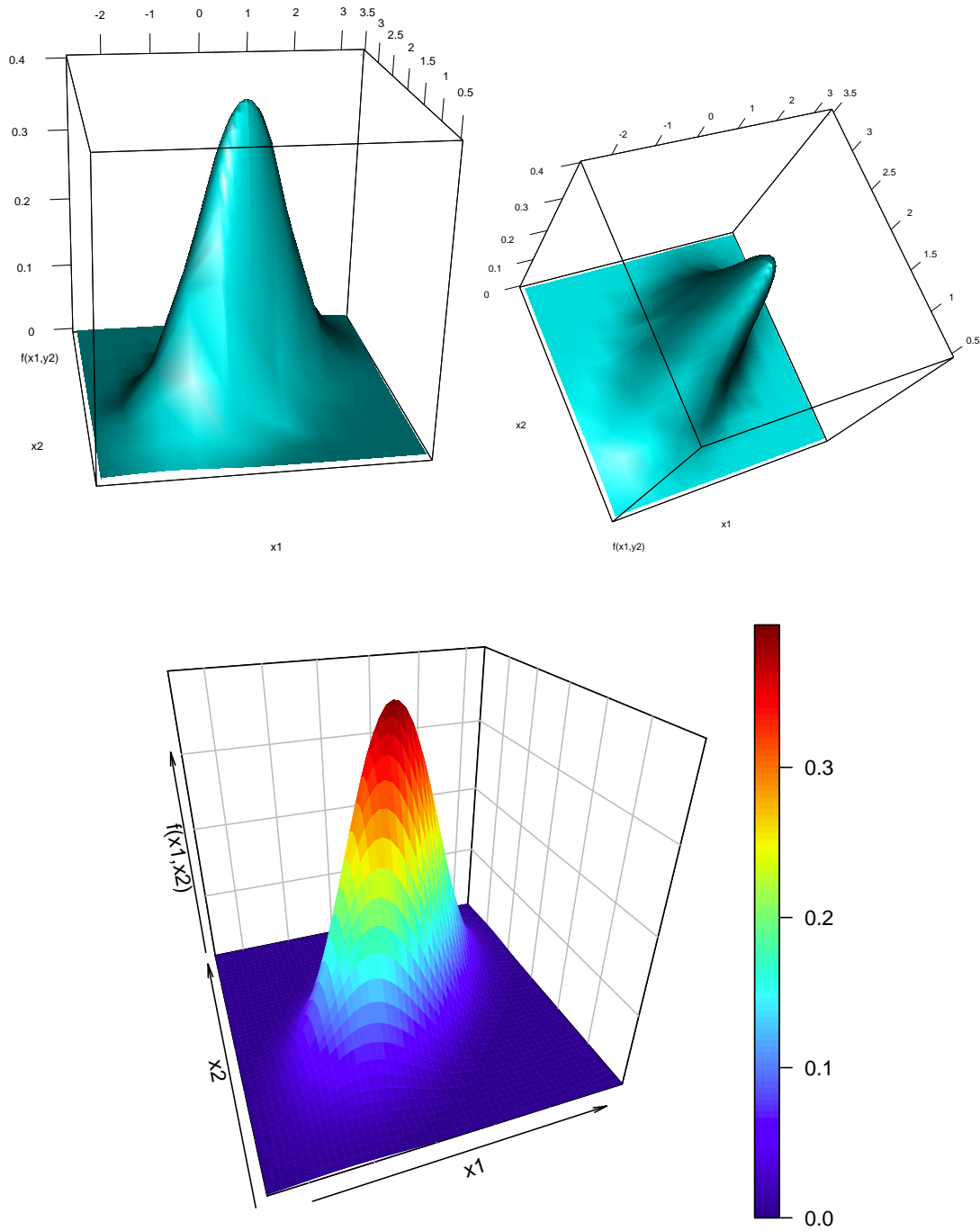


Figure 3: Three views of the bivariate normal distribution obtained with the R code provided in the text ($\mu_1 = 0.4$, $\mu_2 = 2$, $\sigma_1 = 0.1$, $\sigma_2 = 0.5$, $\rho_{12} = 0.6$). The above two are obtained by `perp3d()` of the package `rgl`, producing interactive 3D plots. The one below is produced by `surf3D()` of the package `plot3D`.

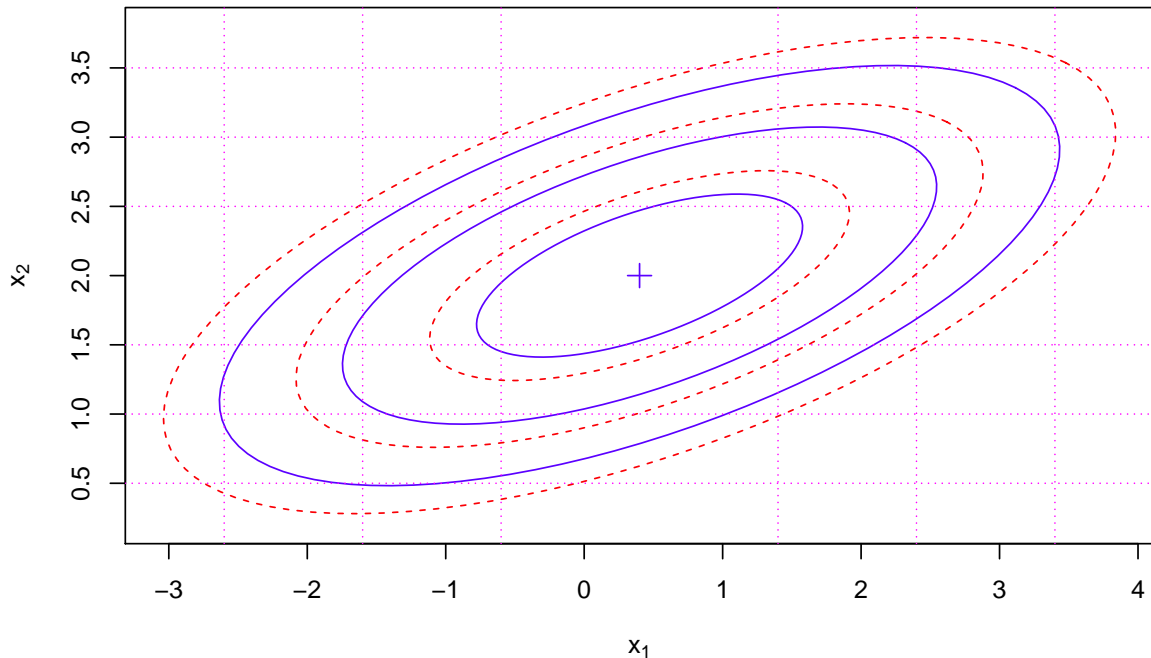


Figure 4: Contour plots of the same bivariate normal of Fig. 3. The solid lines show the ellipses inside which there is, from the smaller to the larger, 50%, 90% and 99% probability that a point (x_1, x_2) falls inside them. The dashed ellipses define instead the 68.3%, 95.5% and 99.73% probability contours [these are the (in-)famous $1\text{-}\sigma$, $2\text{-}\sigma$ and $3\text{-}\sigma$ contours, not simply related to the standard deviations of the individual variable, whose $1\text{-}\sigma$, $2\text{-}\sigma$ and $3\text{-}\sigma$ bounds are indicated by the dotted vertical and horizontal lines].

convenient package `ellipse`⁷ to evaluate the points of such an ellipse, given the vector of expected values, the covariance matrix and the probability that a point falls inside it. Here is the script that applies the function to the same bivariate normal of Fig. 3, thus producing the contour plots of Fig. 4:

```
plot( ellipse(V, centre=mu, level=0.9973), ty='l', lty=2, col='red',
      asp=1, xlab=expression(x[1]), ylab=expression(x[2])) )
points( ellipse(V, centre=mu, level=0.99), ty='l', col='blue')
points( ellipse(V, centre=mu, level=0.954), ty='l', lty=2, col='red')
points( ellipse(V, centre=mu, level=0.5), ty='l', col='blue')
points( ellipse(V, centre=mu, level=0.683), ty='l', lty=2, col='red')
points( ellipse(V, centre=mu, level=0.90), ty='l', col='blue')
points(mu[1], mu[2], pch=3, cex=1.5, col='blue')
for(k in 1:3) {
  abline(v=mu[1]-k*sqrt(V[1,1]), lty=3, col='magenta')
  abline(v=mu[1]+k*sqrt(V[1,1]), lty=3, col='magenta')
```

⁷<http://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/ellipse/>

```

abline(h=mu[2]-k*sqrt(V[2,2]), lty=3, col='magenta')
abline(h=mu[2]+k*sqrt(V[2,2]), lty=3, col='magenta')
}

```

The probability to find a point inside the ellipse contour is defined by the argument `level` (see Appendix). The ellipses drawn with solid lines define, in order of size, 50%, 90% and 99% contours. For comparison there are also the contours at 68.3%, 95.5% and 99.73%, which define the *highly confusing* 1- σ , 2- σ and 3- σ contours. Indeed, the probability that each of the variable falls in the interval of $E[X_i] \pm k \sigma[X_i]$ has little to do with these ellipses. If we are interested to the probability that a point falls in a rectangles defined by $(E[X_1] \pm k \sigma[X_1] \& E[X_2] \pm k \sigma[X_2])$ the probability needs to be calculated making the integral of the joint distribution inside the rectangle (some of these rectangles are shown in Fig. 4 by the dotted lines, that indicate 1- σ , 2- σ and 3- σ bound in the individual variable).

Let us see how to evaluate in R the probability that a point falls in a rectangle, making use of the cumulative probability function `pmnorm()`. In fact the probability in a rectangle is related to the cumulative distribution by the following relation

$$\begin{aligned}
P[(x_{1_m} \leq X_1 \leq x_{1_M}) \& (x_{2_m} \leq X_2 \leq x_{2_M})] &= P[(X_1 \leq x_{1_M}) \& (X_2 \leq x_{2_M})] \\
&\quad - P[(X_1 \leq x_{1_M}) \& (X_2 \leq x_{2_m})] \\
&\quad - P[(X_1 \leq x_{1_m}) \& (X_2 \leq x_{2_M})] \\
&\quad + P[(X_1 \leq x_{1_m}) \& (X_2 \leq x_{2_1})], \quad (17)
\end{aligned}$$

that can be implemented in an R function:

```

p.rect.norm <- function(xlim, ylim, mu, V, sigmas=FALSE, ...) {
  # The argument '...' might be useful to pass extra arguments to pmnorm.
  if ( (length(mu) != 2) | sum( dim(V) != c(2,2) ) # some check
        | (length(xlim) != 2) | (length(ylim) != 2) ) {
    print("wrong dimensions in one of parameters")
    return(NULL)
  } else if ( sum( eigen(V)$values <= 0 ) > 0 ) {
    cat( sprintf("V is not positively defined\n") )
    return(NULL)
  }
  # If argument 'sigmas' is TRUE:
  if( sigmas ) { # rectangular defined in units of individual sigma around mu
    xlim <- mu[1] + xlim * sqrt(V[1,1])
    ylim <- mu[2] + ylim * sqrt(V[2,2])
  }
  library(mnormt)
  p.rect <- pmnorm( c(xlim[2], ylim[2]), mu, V, ... ) -
    pmnorm( c(xlim[2], ylim[1]), mu, V, ... ) -
    pmnorm( c(xlim[1], ylim[2]), mu, V, ... ) +
    pmnorm( c(xlim[1], ylim[1]), mu, V, ... )
  return(p.rect)
}

```

For example⁸

```
> p.rect.norm(c(m1-s1, m1+s1), c(m2-s2, m2+s2), mu, V)
[1] 0.5138685
> p.rect.norm(c(-1, 1), c(-1, 1), mu, V, sigmas=TRUE)
[1] 0.5138685
```

As a cross check, let us calculate the probabilities in strips of plus/minus one standard deviations around the averages (the ‘strips’ provide a good intuition of what a ‘marginal’ is):

```
> p.rect.norm(c(-1, 1), c(-10, 10), mu, V, sigmas=TRUE)
[1] 0.6826895
> p.rect.norm(c(-10, 10), c(-1, 1), mu, V, sigmas=TRUE)
[1] 0.6826895
```

2.4 Marginals (and ‘multivariate marginals’) of multivariate normals

A nice feature of the multivariate normal distribution is that if we are just interested to a subset of variables alone, neglecting which value the other ones can take (‘marginalizing’), we just drop from μ and from V the uninteresting values, or the relative rows and columns, respectively. For example, if we have – see subsection 6.1.2 –

$$\mu = \begin{pmatrix} 1.96 \\ 0.02 \\ 1.98 \end{pmatrix} \quad V = \begin{pmatrix} 1.96 & -0.98 & 0.98 \\ -0.98 & 0.99 & 0.01 \\ 0.98 & 0.01 & 1.99 \end{pmatrix} \quad (18)$$

marginalizing over the second variable (i.e. being only interested in the first and the third) we obtain

$$\mu' = \begin{pmatrix} 1.96 \\ 1.98 \end{pmatrix} \quad V' = \begin{pmatrix} 1.96 & 0.98 \\ 0.98 & 1.99 \end{pmatrix} \quad (19)$$

Here is a function that returns expected values and variance of the multivariate ‘marginal’

```
marginal.norm <- function(mu, V, x.m) {
  # x.m is a vector with logical values (or non zero) indicating
  # the elements on which to marginalise (the others are 0, NA or FALSE)
  x.m[is.na(x.m)] <- FALSE
  v <- which( as.logical(x.m) )
  list(mu=mu[v], V=V[v, v])
}
```

(Note how the function has been written in a very compact form, exploiting some peculiarities of the R language. In particular, the elements of $x.m$ to which we are interested can be TRUE, or can be a numeric value different from zero; the others can be FALSE, 0 or NA.)

⁸For Monte Carlo oriented guys, here is how to cross check the results (don’t expect to reproduce 51313!):

```
> xy <- rmnorm(100000, mu, V)
> length( xy[,1][ xy[,1] > m1 - s1 & xy[,1] < m1+s1 & xy[,2] > m2 - s2 & xy[,2] < m2+s2 ] )
[1] 51313
```

2.5 Conditional distribution of a variable, given its bivariate distribution with another variable

A different problem is the pdf of one of variables, say X_1 , for a given value of the other. This is not as straightforward as the marginal (and for this reason in this subsection we only consider the bivariate case). Fortunately the distribution is still a Gaussian, with *shifted central value* and *squeezed width*:

$$X_1|_{x_2} \sim \mathcal{N}\left(\mu_1 + \rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} (x_2 - \mu_2), \sigma_1 \sqrt{1 - \rho_{12}^2}\right), \quad (20)$$

i.e.

$$\mathbb{E}[X_1] = \mu_1 + \rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} (x_2 - \mu_2) \quad (21)$$

$$\text{Var}[X_1] = \sigma_1^2 \cdot (1 - \rho_{12}^2) \quad (22)$$

$$\sigma[X_1] = \sigma_1 \cdot \sqrt{1 - \rho_{12}^2}. \quad (23)$$

And, by symmetry,

$$X_2|_{x_1} \sim \mathcal{N}\left(\mu_2 + \rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_2}{\sigma_1} (x_1 - \mu_1), \sigma_2 \sqrt{1 - \rho_{12}^2}\right). \quad (24)$$

Mnemonic rules to remember Eqs. (21) and (22) are

- the shift of the expected value depends linearly on the correlation coefficient as well on the difference between the value of the conditionand (x_2) and its expected value (μ_2); the ratio σ_1/σ_2 can be seen as a minimal dimensional factor in order to get a quantity that has the same dimensions of μ_1 (remember that X_1 and X_2 have in general different physical dimensions);
- the variance is reduced by a factor which depends on the absolute value of the correlation coefficient, but not on its sign. In particular it goes to zero if $|\rho_{12}| \rightarrow 1$, limit in which the two quantities become linear dependent, while it does not change if $\rho_{12} \rightarrow 0$, since the two variables become independent and they cannot effect each other. (In general independence implies $\rho = 0$. For the normal bivariate it is also true the other way around.)

An example of a bivariate distribution (from [4], with x_1 and x_2 indicated as customary with x and y) is given in Fig. 5, which shows also the marginals and some conditionals.

2.5.1 Evaluation of a conditional from a given bivariate normal

As an exercise, lets prove (20), with the purpose of show some useful tricks to simplify the calculations. If we take literally the rule to evaluate $f(x_1 x_2 | I)$ knowing that $f(x_1, x_2 | I)$ is given by (7) we need to calculate

$$f(x_1 | x_2, I) = \frac{f(x_1, x_2 | I)}{f(x_2 | I)}. \quad (25)$$

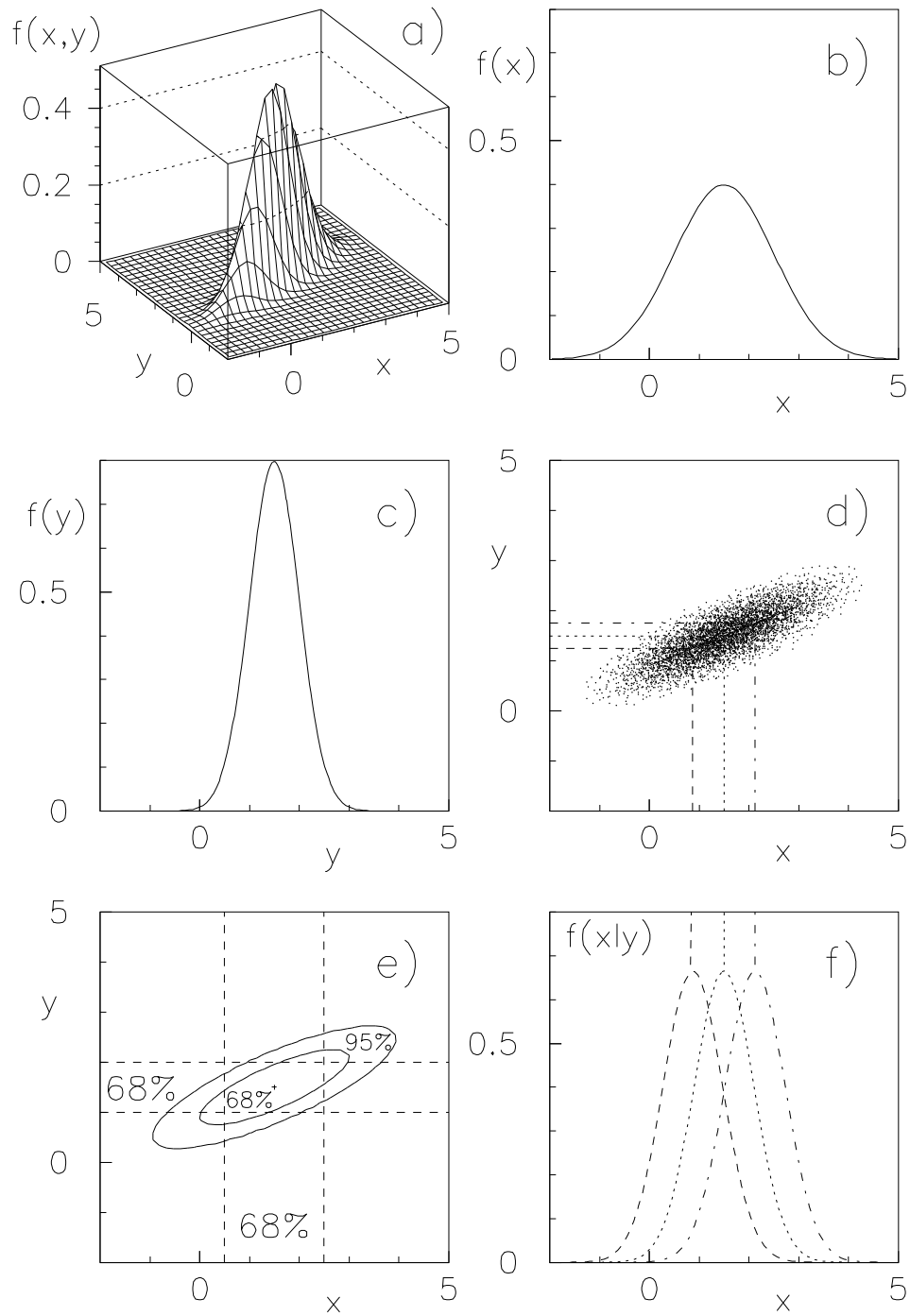


Figure 5: Example of bivariate normal distribution.

The trick is to make the calculations neglecting all irrelevant multiplicative factors, starting from the whole denominator $f(x_2 | I)$, which is a number given $X_2 = x_2$ (whatever its value might be!).

Here are the details (note that additive terms in the exponential are factors in the function of interest!):⁹

$$\begin{aligned}
f(x_1 | x_2, I) &\propto f(x_1, x_2 | I) \\
&\propto \exp \left\{ -\frac{1}{2(1-\rho_{12}^2)} \left[\frac{(x_1 - \mu_1)^2}{\sigma_1^2} - 2\rho_{12} \frac{(x_1 - \mu_1)(x_2 - \mu_2)}{\sigma_1 \sigma_2} + \frac{(x_2 - \mu_2)^2}{\sigma_2^2} \right] \right\} \\
&\propto \exp \left\{ -\frac{1}{2(1-\rho_{12}^2)\sigma_1^2} \left[(x_1 - \mu_1)^2 - 2\rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} (x_1 - \mu_1)(x_2 - \mu_2) \right] \right\} \\
&\propto \exp \left\{ -\frac{1}{2(1-\rho_{12}^2)\sigma_1^2} \left[x_1^2 - 2\mu_1 x_1 + \mu_1^2 - 2\rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} (x_2 - \mu_2) x_1 \right] \right\}, \\
&\propto \exp \left\{ -\frac{1}{2(1-\rho_{12}^2)\sigma_1^2} \left[x_1^2 - 2x_1 \left[\mu_1 + \rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} (x_2 - \mu_2) \right] \right] \right\} \\
&\propto \exp \left\{ -\frac{1}{2(1-\rho_{12}^2)\sigma_1^2} \left[x_1^2 - 2x_1 \left[\mu_1 + \rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} (x_2 - \mu_2) \right] + \left[\mu_1 + \rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} (x_2 - \mu_2) \right]^2 \right] \right\} \\
&\propto \exp \left\{ -\frac{1}{2(1-\rho_{12}^2)\sigma_1^2} \left(x_1 - \left[\mu_1 + \rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} (x_2 - \mu_2) \right] \right)^2 \right\} \tag{26}
\end{aligned}$$

in which we recognize a Gaussian with expected value $\mu_1 + \rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} (x_2 - \mu_2)$ and standard deviation $\sigma_1 \sqrt{1 - \rho_{12}^2}$ (and therefore the normalization factor can be obtained without any calculation).

2.6 Linear combinations

Linear transformations of variables are important because there are several practical problems to which they apply. There are also other cases in which the transformation is not rigorously linear, but it can be still approximately linearized in the region of interest, where the probability mass is concentrated. There are well known theorems that relate expected values and covariance matrix of the *input quantities* to expected values and covariance matrix of the *output quantities*. The most famous case is when a single output quantity Y depends on several variables \mathbf{X} . So, given

$$Y = \sum_i c_i X_i, \tag{27}$$

⁹Essentially the trick consists in observing that if we have a pdf proportional to $\exp[-h^2(x^2 + \alpha x)]$, then it is also proportional to

$$\exp \left[-h^2 \left(x^2 + 2 \frac{\alpha}{2} x + \left(\frac{\alpha}{2} \right)^2 \right) \right] = \exp \left[-h^2 \left(x - \left(-\frac{\alpha}{2} \right) \right)^2 \right],$$

that is a Gaussian with $\mu = -\alpha/2$ and $\sigma^2 = 1/(2h^2)$.

there is a relation which always holds, no matter if the X_i are independent or not and whichever are the pdf's which describe them:

$$E[Y] = \sum_i c_i E[X_i]. \quad (28)$$

In the special case that the X_i are also **independent**, we have

$$\text{Var}[Y] = \sum_i c_i^2 \text{Var}[X_i]. \quad (29)$$

Instead it is not always simple to calculate the pdf of Y in the most general case. There are however two remarkable cases, which we assume known and just recall them here, in which Y is normally distributed:

1. **linear combinations of normally distributed variables** are still normal;
2. the **Central Limit Theorem** states that if we have ‘many’¹⁰ **independent variables** their linear combination is normally distributed with variance equal to $\sum_i c_i^2 \text{Var}[X_i]$ if none of the non-normal components dominates the overall variance, i.e. if $c_j^2 \text{Var}[X_j] \ll \sum_i c_i^2 \text{Var}[X_i]$, where j denotes any of those non-normal components.

Since in this paper we only stick to normal pdf's, the only task will be to evaluate the covariance matrix of the set of variables of interest, depending on the problem.

The general transformation from n input variables to m output variable is given by¹¹

$$Y_i = c_{ij} X_j, \quad (30)$$

or, in a compact form that use the *transformation matrix* \mathbf{C} , whose elements are the c_{ij} ,

$$\mathbf{Y} = \mathbf{C} \mathbf{X}. \quad (31)$$

Expected value and covariance matrix of the output quantities are given by

$$E[\mathbf{Y}] = \mathbf{C} E[\mathbf{X}] \quad (32)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_Y = \mathbf{C} \mathbf{V}_X \mathbf{C}^T \quad (33)$$

For example, if $\boldsymbol{\mu}_X = (2, -3)$, with $\sigma_{X_1} = 0.2$, $\sigma_{X_2} = 0.5$ and $\rho_{X_{12}} = -0.8$, and the transformation rule is given by

$$Y_1 = X_1 + 2 X_2 \quad (34)$$

$$Y_2 = -X_1 + X_2, \quad (35)$$

¹⁰The theorem says “for n that goes to infinity”! Some practice is then needed to judge when it is large enough – often n around 10 is can be considered ‘large’, in other cases even 10^6 is not enough! (Think of one million of variables described by a Poisson distribution with $\lambda = 10^{-6}$.)

¹¹We neglect a possible extra constant term in the linear combination because this plays no role in the uncertainty.

i.e.

$$\mathbf{C} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ -1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad (36)$$

we get in R: ¹²

```
> mu.X <- c(2, -3)
> s.X <- c(0.2, 0.5)
> rho.X <- -0.8
> V.X <- outer(s.X, s.X)
> V.X[1,2] <- V.X[2,1] <- V.X[1,2]*rho.X
> V.X
      [,1] [,2]
[1,] 0.04 -0.08
[2,] -0.08 0.25
> ( cor.X <- V.X / outer(s.X,s.X) )
      [,1] [,2]
[1,] 1.0 -0.8
[2,] -0.8 1.0
> ( C <- rbind( c(1,2), c(-1,1) ) )
      [,1] [,2]
[1,] 1 2
[2,] -1 1
> ( mu.Y <- as.vector( C %*% mu.X ) )
[1] -4 -5
> ( V.Y <- C %*% V.X %*% t(C) )
      [,1] [,2]
[1,] 0.72 0.54
[2,] 0.54 0.45
> ( s.Y <- sqrt(diag(V.Y)) )
[1] 0.8485281 0.6708204
> ( cor.Y <- V.Y / outer(s.Y,s.Y) )
      [,1] [,2]
[1,] 1.0000000 0.9486833
[2,] 0.9486833 1.0000000
```

Let us get a visual representation of the probability distribution of \mathbf{X} and \mathbf{Y} using this time, instead of iso-pdf ellipses, points in the $X - Y$ plane produced by the random generator provided by the package `mnormt` (see result in Fig. 6):

```
> n=5000; r.X <- rmnorm(n, mu.X, V.X); r.Y <- rmnorm(n, mu.Y, V.Y)
> plot(r.X, col='magenta', xlim=c(-7,2), ylim=c(-8,-1), cex=0.2,
+ asp=1, xlab='X1 , Y1', ylab='X2 , Y2')
> points(r.Y, col='cyan', cex=0.2)
```

¹²The function `outer()` produces by default a matrix which is by default is the *outer* product of two vectors, i.e. $\mathbf{v}_1 \mathbf{v}_2^T$. But it has a third parameter `FUN` which which it is possible to evaluate different function on the 'grid' defined by the Cartesian product of the two vector. Try for example

```
> outer(1:3, 1:3, '+')
> outer(1:3, 1:3, function(x,y) x + y^2)
> round( outer(0:10, 0:10, function(x,y) sin(x)*cos(y)), 2 )
```

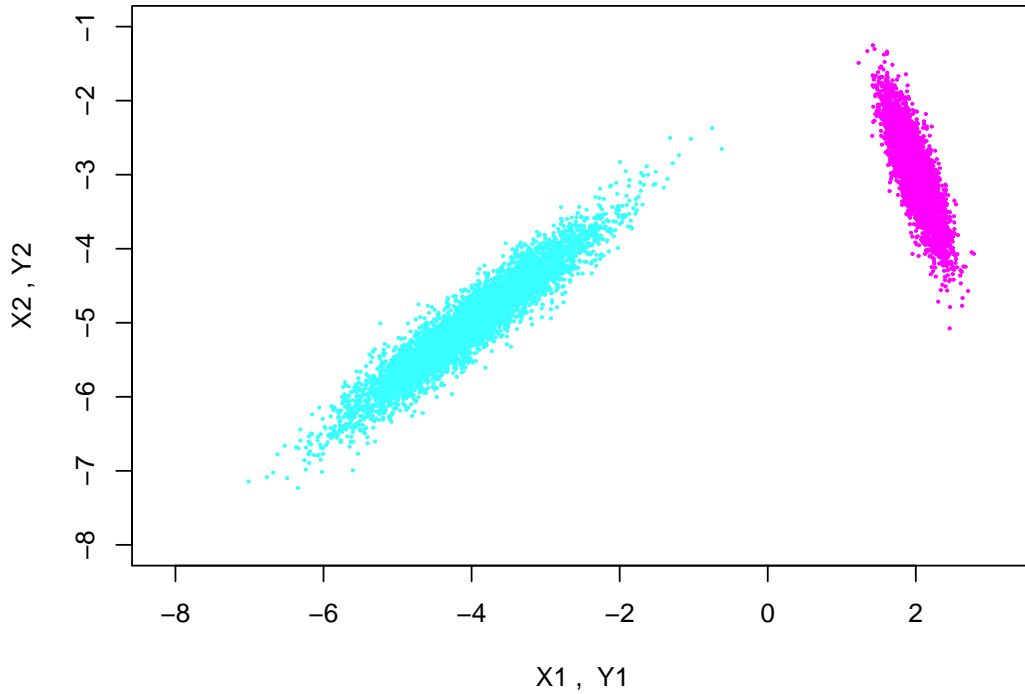



Figure 6: Monte Carlo sampling of two multivariate normal distributions (see text).

2.7 Conditional distributions in many dimensions

Instead, a less known rule is that which gives the covariance matrix of a conditional distribution with a number of variables above two. For example we might have 5 variables X_1, X_2, \dots, X_5 and could be interested in the expected values and the covariance matrix of (X_1, X_4, X_5) , given (X_2, X_3) . Problems of this kind might look a mere mathematical curiosity, but they are indeed important to understand how we learn from data and we make probabilistic predictions using probability theory.

Compact formulae to solve this problems can be found in Ref. [3]. If we partition $\boldsymbol{\mu}$ and \mathbf{V} into the the subsets of variable on which we want to condition and the other ones, i.e.

$$\boldsymbol{\mu} = \begin{pmatrix} \boldsymbol{\mu}_1 \\ \boldsymbol{\mu}_2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (37)$$

$$\mathbf{V} = \begin{pmatrix} \mathbf{V}_{11} & \mathbf{V}_{12} \\ \mathbf{V}_{21} & \mathbf{V}_{22} \end{pmatrix} \quad (38)$$

the result is

$$E \left[\mathbf{X}_1 | \mathbf{X}_2 = \mathbf{a} \right] = \boldsymbol{\mu}_1 + \mathbf{V}_{12} \mathbf{V}_{22}^{-1} (\mathbf{a} - \boldsymbol{\mu}_2) \quad (39)$$

$$\mathbf{V} \left[\mathbf{X}_1 | \mathbf{X}_2 \right] = \mathbf{V}_{11} - \mathbf{V}_{12} \mathbf{V}_{22}^{-1} \mathbf{V}_{21} \quad (40)$$

(And analogous formulae for $E \left[\mathbf{X}_2 | \mathbf{X}_1 = \mathbf{b} \right]$ and $\text{Var} \left[\mathbf{X}_2 | \mathbf{X}_1 = \mathbf{b} \right]$.)

In the case of a bivariate distributions we recover easily Eqs. (21)-(22), as it follows.

Expected value: \mathbf{V}_{12} is the off-diagonal term $\rho_{12}\sigma_1\sigma_2$, while \mathbf{V}_{22} is equal to σ_2^2 . Eq. (39) becomes then

$$\begin{aligned} E[X_1 | X_2] &= \mu_1 + \rho_{12} \sigma_1 \sigma_2 \frac{1}{\sigma_2^2} (a - \mu_2) \\ &= \mu_1 + \rho_{12} \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} (a - \mu_2) \end{aligned} \quad (41)$$

Variance: The remaining two terms of interest are also very simple: \mathbf{V}_{11} is σ_1^2 , while \mathbf{V}_{21} is equal to \mathbf{V}_{12} . It follows

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Var}[X_1 | X_2] &= \sigma_1^2 - \rho_{12} \sigma_1 \sigma_2 \frac{1}{\sigma_2^2} \rho_{12} \sigma_1 \sigma_2 \\ &= \sigma_1^2 - \rho_{12}^2 \sigma_1^2 \\ &= \sigma_1^2 (1 - \rho_{12}^2). \end{aligned} \quad (42)$$

Note that, while the conditioned expected value depends on the conditionand vector \mathbf{a} , the conditioned variance does not.

3 R implementation of the rule to condition multivariate normal distributions

At this point, having set up all our tools, here is the R function which implements the above formulae:

```
norm.mult.cond <- function(mu, V, x.c, full=TRUE) {
  out <- NULL
  n <- length(mu)

  # Checks on dimensions of mu and V
  if ( sum(dim(V) != n) ) {
    cat( sprintf("dimensions of V incompatible with length of mu\n") )
    return(out)
  }
}
```

```

# number of conditionand variables
nc <- length(x.c[!is.na(x.c)])
# peculiar/anomalous cases
if( (length(x.c) > n) | (nc > n) ) {
  cat( sprintf("x.c has more elements than mu\n") )
  return(out)
} else if (nc == 0) { # No condition
  out$mu <- mu
  out$V <- V
  return(out)
} else if(nc == n) {
  out$mu <- x.c # exact values
  out$V <- NULL # covariance matrix is meaningless
  return(out)
}

# Apply Eaton's formulae (=> Wiki)
v.c <- which(!is.na(x.c)) # conditioning variables
v <- which(is.na(x.c)) # variables of interest
V11 <- V[v, v] # Sigma_11 in Wiki
V22 <- V[v.c, v.c] # Sigma_22 " "
V12 <- V[v, v.c] # Sigma_12 " "
V21 <- V[v.c, v] # Sigma_21 " "
mu.cond <- mu[v] + V12 %*% solve(V22) %*% (x.c[!is.na(x.c)] - mu[v.c])
V.cond <- V11 - V12 %*% solve(V22) %*% V21
if(!full) { # returns only interesting part
  out$mu <- as.vector(mu.cond)
  out$V <- V.cond
} else { # returns all (better to understand!!)
  mu1 <- mu
  V1 <- V
  mu1[v] <- mu.cond
  mu1[v.c] <- x.c[!is.na(x.c)]
  V1[v, v] <- V.cond
  V1[v.c, v.c] <- 0
  V1[v, v.c] <- 0
  V1[v.c, v] <- 0
  out$mu <- as.vector(mu1)
  out$V <- V1
}
return(out)
}

```

(The conditionand vector $x.c$ has to contain numbers in the positions corresponding to the variables on which we want to condition, and NA, i.e. ‘not available’, or ‘unknown’, in the others, as we shall see in the examples.)

Let us try with a simple case of two normal quantities $\mu_X = (2, -3)$ of section 2.6. The question is how our uncertainty on μ_{X_1} change if *we assume* $\mu_{X_2} = -2$:

```

> ( V.X.cond <- norm.mult.cond(mu.X, V.X, c(NA, -2)) )
$mu
[1] 1.68 -2.00

$V
      [,1] [,2]
[1,] 0.0144  0
[2,] 0.0000  0

> sqrt(diag(V.X.cond$V))
[1] 0.12 0.00

```

The effect of the conditions to shift the expected value of μ_{X_1} from 2 to 1.68 and to squeeze its *standard uncertainty* to 0.12. If we provide our result in the conventional form “expected value \pm standard uncertainty”, the assumption (or ‘knowledge’) $X_2 = -2$ updates our ‘knowledge’ about X_1 from ‘ 2.00 ± 0.20 ’ to ‘ 1.67 ± 0.12 ’.

4 The ‘simplest experiment’

Let us go back to the first diagram of Fig. 1, that we repeat here for convenience:



It describes the situation in which we have the physical quantity X_1 , that is a parameter of our physical model of reality, and the reading on an instrument, X_2 , *caused* by X_1 .

The instrument has been well calibrate, such to give X_2 around X_1 , but it is not perfect, as usual. In other words, even if we new X_1 we were not sure about the value we would read. For simplicity, let us model this uncertainty by a normal distribution, i.e.

$$X_2|_{X_1} \sim \mathcal{N}(X_1, \sigma_{2|1}). \quad (43)$$

But we usually do not know X_1 , and therefore we are even more uncertain about what we shall read on the instrument. In fact we are dealing with a joint distribution describing the joint uncertainty about the two quantities, that is

$$f(x_1, x_2 | I) = f(x_2 | x_1, I) \cdot f(x_1 | I). \quad (44)$$

Our knowledge about X_2 will be given, instead, by $f(x_2 | I) = \int_{\{x_1\}} f(x_1, x_2 | I) dx_1$, a distribution characterized by $\text{Var}[X_2] \neq \text{Var}[X_2|_{X_1}]$.

It is convenient to model our uncertainty about X_1 with a normal distribution, with a standard deviation σ_1 much larger than $\sigma_{2|1}$ – if we make a measurement we want to gain knowledge about that quantity! – and centered around the values we roughly expect.¹³

In order to simplify the calculations, in the exercise that follows let us assume that X_1 is centered around zero. We shall see later how to get rid of this limitation.

The joint distribution $f(x_1, x_2 | I)$ is then given by

$$f(x_1, x_2 | I) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi} \sigma_{2|1}} \exp \left[-\frac{(x_2 - x_1)^2}{2\sigma_{2|1}^2} \right] \times \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi} \sigma_1} \exp \left[-\frac{x_1^2}{2\sigma_1^2} \right] \quad (45)$$

As an exercise, let us see how to evaluate $f(x_1, x_2 | I)$. The trick, already applied before, is to manipulate the terms in the exponent in order to recover a well known pattern. Here are the details, starting from (45) rewritten dropping all irrelevant factors:

$$f(x_1, x_2 | I) \propto \exp \left[-\frac{(x_2 - x_1)^2}{2\sigma_{2|1}^2} - \frac{x_1^2}{2\sigma_1^2} \right] \quad (46)$$

$$\propto \exp \left[-\frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{x_2^2 - 2x_1x_2 + x_1^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2} + \frac{x_1^2}{\sigma_1^2} \right) \right] \quad (47)$$

$$\propto \exp \left[-\frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{x_2^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2} - \frac{2x_1x_2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2} + x_1^2 \cdot \left(\frac{1}{\sigma_{2|1}^2} + \frac{1}{\sigma_1^2} \right) \right) \right] \quad (48)$$

$$\propto \exp \left[-\frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{x_2^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2} - \frac{2x_1x_2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2} + x_1^2 \cdot \frac{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2 \cdot \sigma_1^2} \right) \right] \quad (49)$$

$$\propto \exp \left[-\frac{1}{2} \frac{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2} \left(\frac{x_2^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2} - \frac{2x_1x_2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2} + \frac{x_1^2}{\sigma_1^2} \right) \right] \quad (50)$$

$$\propto \exp \left[-\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{\frac{\sigma_{2|1}^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2}} \left(\frac{x_2^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2} - \frac{2x_1x_2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2} + \frac{x_1^2}{\sigma_1^2} \right) \right] \quad (51)$$

In this expression we recognize a bivariate distribution centered around $(0, 0)$, provided we interpret

$$\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2 = \sigma_2^2 \quad (52)$$

$$\frac{\sigma_{2|1}^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2} = 1 - \rho_{12}^2, \quad (53)$$

¹³For extensive discussions about modelling prior knowledge of physical quantities see Ref. [4] and references therein. As a practical example, think at the width of the table at which a sit in the very moment you read these lines (or any other object), and about the reading on a ruler when you try to measure it.

and after having checked the consistency of the terms multiplying $x_1 x_2$. Indeed we have

$$\rho_{12}^2 = 1 - \frac{\sigma_{2|1}^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2} = \frac{\sigma_1^2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2} \quad (54)$$

$$\rho_{12} = \frac{\sigma_1}{\sqrt{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2}} = \frac{\sigma_1}{\sigma_2} \quad (55)$$

and then the second term within parenthesis can be rewritten as

$$\frac{2 x_1 x_2}{\sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_1^2} = \frac{2 x_1 x_2}{\sigma_2 \cdot \sigma_2} = \frac{2 \rho_{12} x_1 x_2}{\sigma_1 \cdot \sigma_2}. \quad (56)$$

Then

$$f(x_1, x_2 | I) \propto \exp \left[-\frac{1}{2(1 - \rho_{12}^2)} \left(\frac{x_1^2}{\sigma_1^2} - \frac{2 \rho_{12} x_1 x_2}{\sigma_1 \cdot \sigma_2} + \frac{x_2^2}{\sigma_2^2} \right) \right] \quad (57)$$

is definitively a bivariate normal distribution with

$$\boldsymbol{\mu} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \quad (58)$$

$$\mathbf{V} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (59)$$

As a cross check, let us evaluate expected value and variance of X_2 if we assume a certain value of X_1 , for example $X_1 = x_1$:

$$\mathbb{E}[X_2 | X_1 = x_1] = 0 + \frac{\sigma_1^2}{\sigma_1^2} \cdot (x_1 - 0) = x_1 \quad (60)$$

$$\text{Var}[X_2 | X_1 = x_1] = \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 - \frac{\sigma_1^2}{\sigma_1^2} \sigma_1^2 = \sigma_{2|1}^2, \quad (61)$$

as it should be: provided we know the value of X_1 our expectation of X_2 is around its value, with standard uncertainty $\sigma_{2|1}$.

More interesting is the other way around, that is indeed the purpose of the experiment: how our knowledge about X_1 is modified by $X_2 = x_2$:

$$\mathbb{E}[X_1 | X_2 = x_2] = 0 + \frac{\sigma_1^2}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2} \cdot (x_2 - 0) = x_2 \cdot \frac{1}{1 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 / \sigma_1^2} \quad (62)$$

$$\text{Var}[X_1 | X_2 = x_2] = \sigma_1^2 - \frac{\sigma_1^2}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2} \sigma_1^2 = \sigma_{1|2}^2 \cdot \frac{1}{1 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 / \sigma_1^2}, \quad (63)$$

Contrary to the first case, this second result is initially not very intuitive: the expected value of X_1 is not exactly equal to the ‘observed’ value x_2 , unless σ_1 , that models our

prior standard uncertainty about X_1 , is much larger than the experimental resolution $\sigma_{2|1}$. Similarly, the *final standard uncertainty* is in general a smaller than $\sigma_{2|1}$, unless, again, $\sigma_{1|2}/\sigma_1 \ll 1$.¹⁴ Although initially surprising, these result are in qualitative agreement with the good sense of experienced physicists [4].

5 Several independent measurements on the same physics quantity

The next step is to see what happens when we are in the conditions to make several *independent measurements* on the same quantity X_1 , possibly with different instruments, each one characterized by a conditional standard uncertainty $\sigma_{i|1}$ and perfectly calibrated, that is $E[X_i|X_1=x_1] = x_1$. The situation can be illustrated with the diagram at the center of Fig. 1, reported here for convenience, extended to other observations:

¹⁴You might recognize in Eq. (63)

$$\frac{1}{\text{Var}[X_1|_{X_2=x_2}]} = \frac{1}{\sigma_1^2} + \frac{1}{\sigma_{2|1}^2},$$

which stems naturally from probability theory and tells how a new observation squeezes the uncertainty on the true value of a quantity. Indeed, it easy to show that Eq. 62 can be written, as rather well known (see e.g. Ref. [4]), as

$$E[X_1|_{X_2=x_2}] = \frac{E[X_1] \cdot \sigma_1^{-2} + x_2 \sigma_{2|1}^{-2}}{\sigma_1^{-2} + \sigma_{2|1}^{-2}},$$

weighted average of the prior expected value and observation, with weights equal to the prior variance and the instrument variance.

En passant we can rewrite Eqs. (62)-(63) as

$$\begin{aligned} E[X_1|_{X_2=x_2}] &= E[X_1] + \frac{\sigma_1^2}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2} (x_2 - E[X_1]) \\ \text{Var}[X_1|_{X_2=x_2}] &= \sigma_1^2 - \frac{\sigma_1^2}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2} \sigma_1^2, \end{aligned}$$

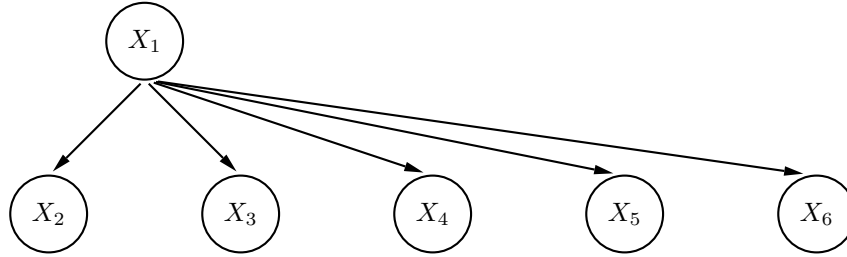
or

$$\begin{aligned} E[X_1|_{X_2=x_2}] &= E[X_1] + k (x_2 - E[X_1]) \\ \text{Var}[X_1|_{X_2=x_2}] &= \sigma_1^2 - k \sigma_1^2 = \sigma_1^2 (1 - k), \end{aligned}$$

with

$$k = \frac{\sigma_1^2}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2},$$

in order to emphasize the Kalman filter's updating rules.



We have learned that if we are able to build up the covariance matrix of the joint distribution $f(x_1, x_2, x_3 | I)$ the problem is readily solved, at least in the normal approximations we are using throughout the paper.

In principle we should repeat the previous exercise to evaluate

$$f(x_1, x_2, x_3 | I) = f(x_1 | I) \cdot f(x_2 | x_1, I) \cdot f(x_3 | x_1, x_2, I) \quad (64)$$

$$= f(x_1 | I) \cdot f(x_2 | x_1, I) \cdot f(x_3 | x_1, I), \quad (65)$$

where in the last step we have made explicit that $f(x_3 | x_1, I)$ does not depend on X_2 , once X_1 is known (but this does not imply that X_2 and X_3 are independent, as we shall see later! They are simply *conditionally independent*, i.e. independent under the condition (to be meant in general as an *hypothesis*) that X_1 has a precisely known value.)

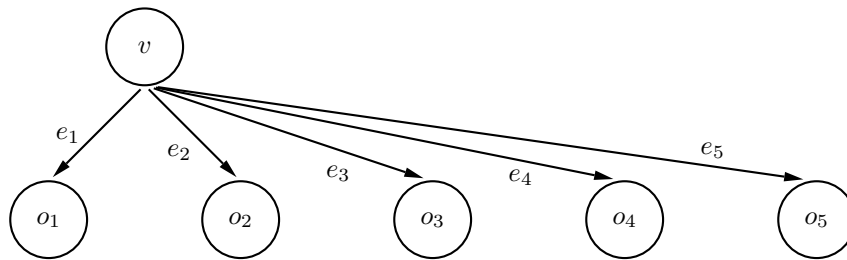
In reality we do not need to go through a similar derivation, that indeed *was just an exercise*. The easy solution arises, going back to the previous case, noting that the *observation* o_i is the sum of the value of the physics quantity v and the instrumental error e_i , i.e.

$$o_i = v + e_i, \quad (66)$$

with e_i modelled, as usual, by a normal distribution, that is, in general

$$e_i \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma_{e_i}). \quad (67)$$

The general uncertain vector \mathbf{X} will be then $\mathbf{X} = (v, o_1, o_2)$, as clarified by the following diagram:



These are then the first terms the transformation rules:

$$X_1 = v \quad (68)$$

$$X_2 = o_1 = v + e_1 \quad (69)$$

$$X_3 = o_2 = v + e_2 \quad (70)$$

from which the calculation of the covariance matrix is straightforward:

- the i -th element diagonal is given by the variance of X_i , that is σ_1^2 , $(\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{e_1}^2)$, and so on;
- the off-diagonal elements are all equal to σ_1^2 , because the only element in common in all linear combinations is v .

Hence here is the covariance matrix of interest:

$$\mathbf{V} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 & \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{3|1}^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (71)$$

5.1 Getting some insights with numerical examples

At this point, instead of trying to get analytic formulae for all conditional probabilities of interest, we prefer to use the properties of the multivariate normal distribution implemented in the function `norm.mult.cond()` seen before. And, since the game is now automatic, we enlarge our space to 6 variables, X_1 for the ‘true value’ and X_2 - X_6 for four possible ‘readings’. Although it is not any longer needed, we still set out prior central value about X_1 around 0, which is equivalent to set to 0 all expected values. (For didascallic purposes we have set σ_1 *only* 10 larger than the experimental resolutions $\sigma_{i|1}$, as we shall discuss commenting the results.) Here is the R code, with some comments:

```
> n=6; muX1=0; sigmaX1=10 # set size and initial uncertainty on X1
> mu <- rep(muX1, n) # set expected values (all equal!)
> ( sigma <- c(sigmaX1, rep(1,n-1)) ) # standard deviations
[1] 10 1 1 1 1 1
> V <- matrix(rep(sigma[1]^2, n*n), c(n,n))
> diag(V)[2:n] <- diag(V)[2:n] + sigma[2:n]^2
> V # covariance matrix
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6]
[1,] 100 100 100 100 100 100
[2,] 100 101 100 100 100 100
[3,] 100 100 101 100 100 100
[4,] 100 100 100 101 100 100
[5,] 100 100 100 100 101 100
[6,] 100 100 100 100 100 101
> (su <- sqrt(diag(V))) # standard deviations
[1] 10.00000 10.04988 10.04988 10.04988 10.04988 10.04988
> V/outer(su,su) # correlation matrix
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6]
[1,] 1.0000000 0.9950372 0.9950372 0.9950372 0.9950372 0.9950372
[2,] 0.9950372 1.0000000 0.9900990 0.9900990 0.9900990 0.9900990
[3,] 0.9950372 0.9900990 1.0000000 0.9900990 0.9900990 0.9900990
[4,] 0.9950372 0.9900990 0.9900990 1.0000000 0.9900990 0.9900990
[5,] 0.9950372 0.9900990 0.9900990 0.9900990 1.0000000 0.9900990
[6,] 0.9950372 0.9900990 0.9900990 0.9900990 0.9900990 1.0000000
```

As we can see, all variables are correlated! The reason is very simple: any precise information we get about one of them changes the pdf of all others. In physics terms, a reading on a instrument changes our opinion about the value of the quantity of interest as well as of all other readings we have not yet done (or we not yet aware of their values – in probability theory what matters is not time ordering, but ignorance).

Let us now see what happens if we condition on a **precise value of X_1** , for example $X_1 = 2$:

```
> ( mu.c <- c(2, rep(NA, n-1)) ) # conditionand
[1] 2 NA NA NA NA NA
> ( out<- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c) ) # resulting multivariate
$mu
[1] 2 2 2 2 2 2

$V
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6]
[1,]  0    0    0    0    0    0
[2,]  0    1    0    0    0    0
[3,]  0    0    1    0    0    0
[4,]  0    0    0    1    0    0
[5,]  0    0    0    0    1    0
[6,]  0    0    0    0    0    1
```

As we see, the expected values are all equal, X_1 is not longer uncertain, and all other variables become *independent*, more precisely “conditional independent”

Let’s now see what happens if we condition on the **observation $X_2 = 2$** :

```
> ( mu.c <- c(NA, 2, rep(NA, n-2)) )
[1] NA 2 NA NA NA NA
> ( out<- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c) )
$mu
[1] 1.980198 2.000000 1.980198 1.980198 1.980198 1.980198

$V
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6]
[1,] 0.990099 0 0.990099 0.990099 0.990099 0.990099
[2,] 0.000000 0 0.000000 0.000000 0.000000 0.000000
[3,] 0.990099 0 1.990099 0.990099 0.990099 0.990099
[4,] 0.990099 0 0.990099 1.990099 0.990099 0.990099
[5,] 0.990099 0 0.990099 0.990099 1.990099 0.990099
[6,] 0.990099 0 0.990099 0.990099 0.990099 1.990099

> ( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)) ) # standard deviations
[1] 0.9950372 0.0000000 1.4107087 1.4107087 1.4107087 1.4107087
> out$V / outer(out.s, out.s) # correlation matrix (besides NaN)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6]
[1,] 1.0000000 NaN 0.7053456 0.7053456 0.7053456 0.7053456
[2,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN
[3,] 0.7053456 NaN 1.0000000 0.4975124 0.4975124 0.4975124
```

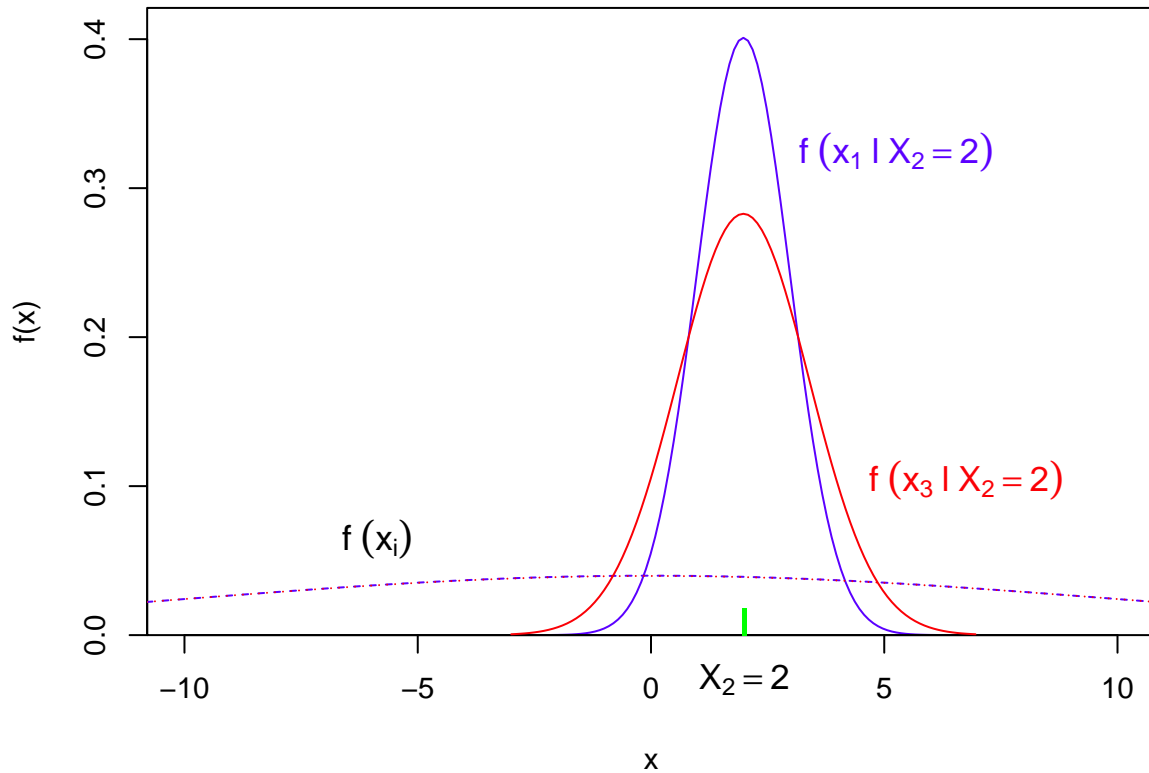


Figure 7: Normal distributions describing our uncertainty about X_1 and X_3 before (dashed line) and after (solid line) the observation $X_2 = 2$ (see text).

```
[4,] 0.7053456 NaN 0.4975124 1.0000000 0.4975124 0.4975124
[5,] 0.7053456 NaN 0.4975124 0.4975124 1.0000000 0.4975124
[6,] 0.7053456 NaN 0.4975124 0.4975124 0.4975124 1.0000000
```

The effect of the ‘measurement’ has changed all our expectations, all ‘practically equal’ to the observed value of 2, but the uncertainties about the possible ‘future observations’ are larger than those of X_1 by a factor $\sqrt{2}$ (see also Fig. 7). The reason is that X_2 and X_3 (i.e. o_1 and o_2) and all other possible readings o_3 , o_4 and o_5 ‘communicate’ each other via X_1 : their uncertainty is than the combination (quadratic combination!) of that assigned to X_1 and the that of the readings if we new exactly X_1 (that is σ_{e_i}).

Let us see if we add **another observation**, e.g. $X_3 = 1$:

```
> mu.c <- c(NA, 2, 1, NA, NA, NA)
> ( out<- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c) )
$mu
[1] 1.492537 2.000000 1.000000 1.492537 1.492537 1.492537

$V
      [,1] [,2] [,3]      [,4]      [,5]      [,6]
```

```

[1,] 0.4975124    0    0 0.4975124 0.4975124 0.4975124
[2,] 0.0000000    0    0 0.0000000 0.0000000 0.0000000
[3,] 0.0000000    0    0 0.0000000 0.0000000 0.0000000
[4,] 0.4975124    0    0 1.4975124 0.4975124 0.4975124
[5,] 0.4975124    0    0 0.4975124 1.4975124 0.4975124
[6,] 0.4975124    0    0 0.4975124 0.4975124 1.4975124

> ( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)) )
[1] 0.7053456 0.0000000 0.0000000 1.2237289 1.2237289 1.2237289

> out$V / outer(out.s, out.s)
      [,1] [,2] [,3]      [,4]      [,5]      [,6]
[1,] 1.0000000 NaN NaN 0.5763904 0.5763904 0.5763904
[2,]      NaN NaN NaN      NaN      NaN      NaN
[3,]      NaN NaN NaN      NaN      NaN      NaN
[4,] 0.5763904 NaN NaN 1.0000000 0.3322259 0.3322259
[5,] 0.5763904 NaN NaN 0.3322259 1.0000000 0.3322259
[6,] 0.5763904 NaN NaN 0.3322259 0.3322259 1.0000000

```

As we can see, after the second observation the expected values are practically equal to 1.5, average between the two readings. The uncertainty about the true value has decreased by a factor 1.41, that is $\sqrt{2}$, while the uncertainties about the forecasting decrease only by a factor 1.15, going from 1.41 to 1.22. This latter number can be understood as $\sqrt{0.705^2 + 1^2} = 1.22$, as it will be justified in a while.

Let us see what happens if we suppose that also X_1 is precisely known:

```

> mu.c <- c(3, 2, 1, NA, NA, NA)
> ( out<- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c) )
$mu
[1] 3 2 1 3 3 3

$V
      [,1] [,2] [,3]      [,4]      [,5]      [,6]
[1,]  0    0    0 0.000000e+00 0.000000e+00 0.000000e+00
[2,]  0    0    0 0.000000e+00 0.000000e+00 0.000000e+00
[3,]  0    0    0 0.000000e+00 0.000000e+00 0.000000e+00
[4,]  0    0    0 1.000000e+00 -2.302158e-12 -2.302158e-12
[5,]  0    0    0 -2.302158e-12 1.000000e+00 -2.302158e-12
[6,]  0    0    0 -2.302158e-12 -2.302158e-12 1.000000e+00

```

If X_1 is perfectly known the observations X_2 and X_3 are irrelevant, as it has to be.¹⁵

¹⁵ And if X_2 and X_3 are ‘very far’ from X_1 ? In this simple model we are using, there is little to do, because any observation from minus infinite to plus infinite is never incompatible with a any Gaussian. But we know by experience that something strange might be happened. In this case we need to put in mathematical form the model we have in mind.

Finally, going back to the physical case of interest, in which X_1 is unknown, let us add a **third observation**, e.g. $X_4 = 0$

```
> mu.c <- c(NA, 2, 1, 0, NA, NA)
> ( out<- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c) )
$mu
[1] 0.9966777 2.0000000 1.0000000 0.0000000 0.9966777 0.9966777

$V
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4]      [,5]      [,6]
[1,] 0.3322259    0    0    0 0.3322259 0.3322259
[2,] 0.0000000    0    0    0 0.0000000 0.0000000
[3,] 0.0000000    0    0    0 0.0000000 0.0000000
[4,] 0.0000000    0    0    0 0.0000000 0.0000000
[5,] 0.3322259    0    0    0 1.3322259 0.3322259
[6,] 0.3322259    0    0    0 0.3322259 1.3322259

> ( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)) )
[1] 0.5763904 0.0000000 0.0000000 0.0000000 1.1542209 1.1542209
> out$V / outer(out.s, out.s)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4]      [,5]      [,6]
[1,] 1.0000000 NaN NaN NaN 0.4993762 0.4993762
[2,]      NaN NaN NaN NaN      NaN      NaN
[3,]      NaN NaN NaN NaN      NaN      NaN
[4,]      NaN NaN NaN NaN      NaN      NaN
[5,] 0.4993762 NaN NaN NaN 1.0000000 0.2493766
[6,] 0.4993762 NaN NaN NaN 0.2493766 1.0000000
```

As we can see, the value of X_1 is with very good approximation the average of the three observations, that is 1, with a the standard uncertainty decreasing with $1/\sqrt{n}$, passing from 1.00 to 0.71 to 0.58. This is because the three pieces of information play the same weight, since $\sigma_{i|1}$, related to the ‘precision of the instrument’, is the same in all cases and equal to 1.

As far as the prediction of future observations, obviously they must be centered around the value we believe X_1 is, at the best of our knowledge, a value which changes with the observations. As far as the uncertainty and correlation coefficient, they decrease as follows (starting from the very beginning, before any observation):

Standard uncertainty: 10.05, 1.41, 1.22, 1.15.

We can see that they are a quadratic combination of the uncertainty with which we know X_1 and that with which we expect the observation given a precise value of X_1 . If we indicate the state of information at time t as $I(t)$, the rule is

$$\text{Var}[X_i | I(t)] = \text{Var}[X_1 | I(t)] + \sigma_{i|1}^2. \quad (72)$$

Asymptotically, when after many measurements the determination of X_1 is very accurate, it only remains $\sigma_{e_i}^2$, as it has to be.

Correlation coefficient: 0.990, 0.50, 0.33, 0.25.

It is initially very high because any new observation changes dramatically our expectation about the others. But then, when we have already made several observations, a new one has only very little effect on our forecasting. Asymptotically, when we have made a very large number of observations and X_1 is very well ‘determined’, all future observations become essentially “conditionally independent”.

5.2 Follows up

At this point the game can be continued with different options. One has only to re-build the initial covariance matrix and play changing the conditions.

An interesting exercise is certainly that of increasing σ_1 , for example to 100, i.e. 100 times large than the ‘precision’ of our instrument, or even 1000, to see how our conclusions change. The result will be that true value and future measurements are ‘practically’ only determined by the observations.

It could also interesting to see what happens if the different observations come from instruments having different precisions.

Finally, one could produce a (relatively) large random sample of observations measuring the same true value. Being m the number of observations, the dimensionality of our problem will be $m = n + 3$, because we have to add – obviously – X_1 and we want to have at least two future observations (X_{1+m+1} and X_{1+m+1}) in order to check their degree of correlation. Here is the R session in which we have been playing with a sample of 100 observations (for obvious reasons we shall focus only on the uncertain variables, i.e. X_1 , X_{101} and X_{102}):

```
> m <- 100; n <- m + 3 # dimensionality of the problem
> mu <- rep(0,n)
> sigma <- c(10, rep(1,n-1))
> V <- matrix(rep(sigma[1]^2, n*n), c(n,n))
> diag(V)[2:n] <- diag(V)[2:n] + sigma[2:n]^2
> ( X1.God <- 2 ) # the exact value of the quantity we are going to measure
[1] 2
> sample <- rnorm(m, X1.God, sigma[2]) # random sample
> mean(sample) # sample mean
[1] 2.094649
> mu.c <- c(NA, sample, NA, NA)
> out <- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c) # no printouts, for obvious reasons
> ( out <- marginal.norm(out$mu, out$V, c(1, rep(0, m), 1, 1)) ) # interesting part
$mu
[1] 2.094439 2.094439 2.094439

$V
      [,1] [,2] [,3]
[1,] 0.009999 0.009999 0.009999
[2,] 0.009999 1.009999 0.009999
[3,] 0.009999 0.009999 1.009999

> ( su <- sqrt(diag(out$V)) )
```

```
[1] 0.099995 1.004987 1.004987
> out$V /outer(su,su)
      [,1]      [,2]      [,3]
[1,] 1.00000000 0.09949879 0.09949879
[2,] 0.09949879 1.00000000 0.00990001
[3,] 0.09949879 0.00990001 1.00000000
```

Expected values of the true value and of the future measurements are now equal to the average of the sample, with excellent approximation. This is due to the fact that the initial uncertainty of 10 is in this case much larger than the final one of 0.10. This value is indeed equal to $\sigma_{i|1}/\sqrt{n} = 1/10$, the famous standard deviation of the mean. This means that the standard deviation of the sample, that is

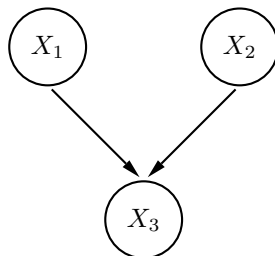
```
> sd(sample)
[1] 0.08263812
```

is not used. This is not a surprise, since in our model $\sigma_{i|1}$ are assumed to be perfectly known.¹⁶

We see that the uncertainty on the future observations is a bit larger than that on the true value, as it must be. This is because they depends on the uncertain value of the true value and the experimental resolution, combining in quadrature ($\sqrt{0.1^2 + 1^2} = 1.00499$). The correlations become small, in particular those among the future observations, which practically become ‘conditionally independent’. Indeed, the covariance matrix is that shown in Eq. (71), with σ_1 replaced by $\sigma_{1|\text{sample}}$ (what matters is the uncertainty about X_1 , not its source!).

6 Adding a simple systematic effect (‘offset’ type)

Let us now move to the second diagrams, in which X_3 gets influenced by X_1 and X_2 :



This can model the presence of a systematic effect, because we expect that the possible values of X_3 are caused by both X_1 and X_2 , and it will be then influenced by how uncertain is the quantity X_2 that acts as a systematic. The simplest case of systematic effect is an additive one, of unknown value, but with expected value 0 (the instrument has been

¹⁶A model that would allow to infer the $\sigma_{i|1}$ ’s is not any longer linear, thus going beyond the purpose of this note.

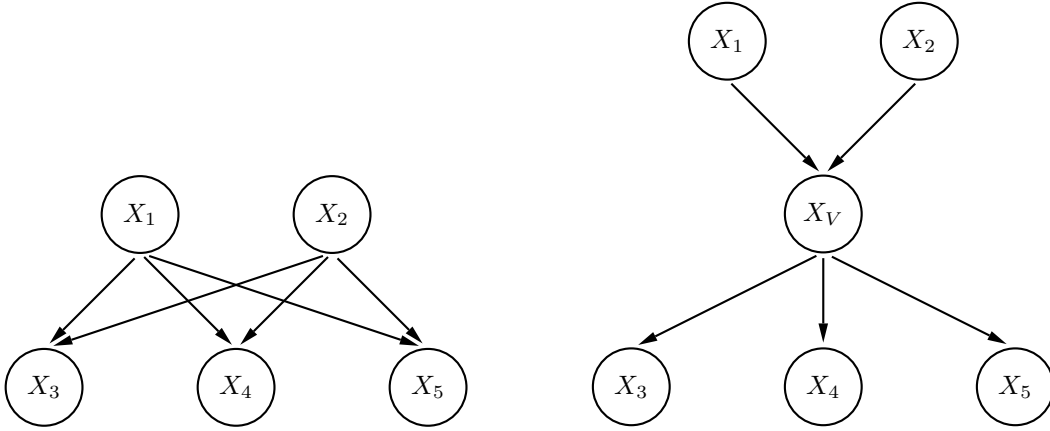


Figure 8: Diagrams to model a systematic effect.

calibrated ‘at the best’!) and a standard uncertainty σ_2 . Needless to say, we also model this uncertainty with a normal distribution, with much simplification in the calculations (and also because this is often the case).

The model can be extended to several observations, as shown in the left diagram of Fig. 8. In the figure it is also shown a different interpretation of the effect of the systematic error, which is very close to the physicist intuition. The observations X_3 , X_4 and X_5 are normally distributed around a kind of ‘virtual state’ X_V determined by the *unknown* true value X_1 and the *unknown* offset X_2 , i.e. the true ‘zero’ of the instrument. The transformation rule to build the initial covariance matrix will be then, starting from symbols that have a physical meaning (value v , ‘zero’ z , and the others as in Eqs. (70)-(70)

$$X_1 = v \tag{73}$$

$$X_2 = z \tag{74}$$

$$(X_V = v + z = X_1 + X_2) \tag{75}$$

$$X_3 = o_1 = X_V + e_1 = X_1 + X_2 + e_1 \tag{76}$$

$$X_4 = o_2 = X_V + e_2 = X_1 + X_2 + e_2 \tag{77}$$

$$X_5 = o_3 = X_V + e_3 = X_1 + X_2 + e_3 \tag{78}$$

The calculation of the variances is trivial. As far as the covariances we have

$$\text{Cov}[X_1, X_2] = 0 \tag{79}$$

$$\text{Cov}[X_1, X_i] = \sigma_1^2 \quad (i > 2) \tag{80}$$

$$\text{Cov}[X_2, X_i] = \sigma_2^2 \quad (i > 2) \tag{81}$$

$$\text{Cov}[X_i, X_j] = \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 \quad (i > 2, j > 2) \tag{82}$$

This is then the covariance matrix of interest, limited to the five variables shown in the figure (and than it is easy to continue):

$$\mathbf{V} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & 0 & \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 \\ 0 & \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_2^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{e_3}^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{e_4}^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{e_5}^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (83)$$

From such an interesting matrix we can expect interesting results, useful to *train our intuition*. But before analyzing some cases, as done in the previous section, let us make the exercise to build up the covariance matrix in a different way. The transformation rules (73)-(78) can be rewritten using the transformation matrix

$$\mathbf{C} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad (84)$$

to be applied to the diagonal matrix of the independent variables,

$$\mathbf{V}_0 = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \sigma_2^2 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \sigma_{e_3}^2 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & \sigma_{e_4}^2 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & \sigma_{e_5}^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (85)$$

Applying then the transformation rule of the covariance matrix we reobtain the above result – an implementation in R will be shown in the next subsection.

6.1 Numerical examples

Let set up the covariance matrix for 5 possible ‘observations’

```
> n=7; muX1=0; sigmaX1=10; muZ=0; sigmaZ=1      # set parameters
> mu <- c(muX1, muZ, rep(muX1+muZ, n-2))      # set expected values
> ( sigma <- c(sigmaX1, sigmaZ, rep(1,n-2)) )  # standard deviations
[1] 10 1 1 1 1 1 1
> V <- matrix(rep(0, n*n), c(n,n))           # cov matr # step 0
> V[(1:n)[-2], (1:n)[-2]] <- sigma[1]^2      # step 1
> V[(2:n), (2:n)] <- V[(2:n), (2:n)] + sigma[2]^2 # step 2
> diag(V)[3:n] <- diag(V)[3:n] + sigma[3:n]^2 # step 3
> V
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 100  0 100 100 100 100 100
[2,]  0  1  1  1  1  1  1
```

```

[3,] 100    1  102  101  101  101  101
[4,] 100    1  101  102  101  101  101
[5,] 100    1  101  101  102  101  101
[6,] 100    1  101  101  101  102  101
[7,] 100    1  101  101  101  101  102
> (su <- sqrt(diag(V)))
[1] 10.0000  1.0000 10.0995 10.0995 10.0995 10.0995 10.0995
> round( V/outer(su,su), 4)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 1.0000 0.000 0.9901 0.9901 0.9901 0.9901 0.9901
[2,] 0.0000 1.000 0.0990 0.0990 0.0990 0.0990 0.0990
[3,] 0.9901 0.099 1.0000 0.9902 0.9902 0.9902 0.9902
[4,] 0.9901 0.099 0.9902 1.0000 0.9902 0.9902 0.9902
[5,] 0.9901 0.099 0.9902 0.9902 1.0000 0.9902 0.9902
[6,] 0.9901 0.099 0.9902 0.9902 0.9902 1.0000 0.9902
[7,] 0.9901 0.099 0.9902 0.9902 0.9902 0.9902 1.0000

```

Let us also show the **alternative way to build up the covariance matrix**

```

> C <- matrix(rep(0, n*n), c(n,n))           # transf. matrix
> C[,1] <- c(1, 0, rep(1, n-2))
> C[,2] <- c(0, rep(1, n-1))
> diag(C) <- rep(1, n)
> C
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,]    1    0    0    0    0    0    0
[2,]    0    1    0    0    0    0    0
[3,]    1    1    1    0    0    0    0
[4,]    1    1    0    1    0    0    0
[5,]    1    1    0    0    1    0    0
[6,]    1    1    0    0    0    1    0
[7,]    1    1    0    0    0    0    1
> V0 <- matrix(rep(0, n*n), c(n,n))        # initial diagonal matrix
> diag(V0) <- sigma^2
> ( V <- C %*% V0 %*% t(C) )                # joint covariance matrix
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,]  100    0  100  100  100  100  100
[2,]    0    1    1    1    1    1    1
[3,]  100    1  102  101  101  101  101
[4,]  100    1  101  102  101  101  101
[5,]  100    1  101  101  102  101  101
[6,]  100    1  101  101  101  102  101
[7,]  100    1  101  101  101  101  102

```

As we see the result is identical to that obtained setting the elements ‘by hand’.

Then let us now repeat the steps previously followed without systematic offset.

6.1.1 Condition on $X_1 = 2$ (“known true value”)

```
> ( mu.c <- c(2, rep(NA, n-1)) )
[1] 2 NA NA NA NA NA NA
> ( out <- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c) )
$mu
[1] 2 0 2 2 2 2 2

$V
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,]  0    0    0    0    0    0    0
[2,]  0    1    1    1    1    1    1
[3,]  0    1    2    1    1    1    1
[4,]  0    1    1    2    1    1    1
[5,]  0    1    1    1    2    1    1
[6,]  0    1    1    1    1    2    1
[7,]  0    1    1    1    1    1    2
> ( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)) )
[1] 0.000000 1.000000 1.414214 1.414214 1.414214 1.414214 1.414214
> round( out$V / outer(out.s, out.s), 3)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] NaN  NaN  NaN  NaN  NaN  NaN  NaN
[2,] NaN 1.000 0.707 0.707 0.707 0.707 0.707
[3,] NaN 0.707 1.000 0.500 0.500 0.500 0.500
[4,] NaN 0.707 0.500 1.000 0.500 0.500 0.500
[5,] NaN 0.707 0.500 0.500 1.000 0.500 0.500
[6,] NaN 0.707 0.500 0.500 0.500 1.000 0.500
[7,] NaN 0.707 0.500 0.500 0.500 0.500 1.000
```

The condition on the ‘true value’ changes the values of the observables to its value, but it does not affect the offset, which has a role in the uncertainty of the future observations as well in their correlation. In fact, contrary to the case seen in the previous section without uncertain offset, they are not any longer independent. They would become independent if also the offset were known (try for example with “`mu.c <- c(2, 0, rep(NA, n-2))`”) to see the difference, or even better with “`mu.c <- c(2, 1, rep(NA, n-2))`”).

6.1.2 Condition on $X_3 = 2$ (“single observation”)

```
> ( mu.c <- c(NA, NA, 2, rep(NA, n-3)) )
[1] NA NA 2 NA NA NA NA
> out <- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c)
> round( out$mu, 4)
[1] 1.9608 0.0196 2.0000 1.9804 1.9804 1.9804 1.9804
> round( out$V, 4)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 1.9608 -0.9804  0 0.9804 0.9804 0.9804 0.9804
[2,] -0.9804  0.9902  0 0.0098 0.0098 0.0098 0.0098
```

```

[3,] 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000
[4,] 0.9804 0.0098 0 1.9902 0.9902 0.9902 0.9902
[5,] 0.9804 0.0098 0 0.9902 1.9902 0.9902 0.9902
[6,] 0.9804 0.0098 0 0.9902 0.9902 1.9902 0.9902
[7,] 0.9804 0.0098 0 0.9902 0.9902 0.9902 1.9902
> round( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)), 4 )
[1] 1.4003 0.9951 0.0000 1.4107 1.4107 1.4107 1.4107
> round( out$V / outer(out.s, out.s), 3)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 1.000 -0.704 NaN 0.496 0.496 0.496 0.496
[2,] -0.704 1.000 NaN 0.007 0.007 0.007 0.007
[3,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN
[4,] 0.496 0.007 NaN 1.000 0.498 0.498 0.498
[5,] 0.496 0.007 NaN 0.498 1.000 0.498 0.498
[6,] 0.496 0.007 NaN 0.498 0.498 1.000 0.498
[7,] 0.496 0.007 NaN 0.498 0.498 0.498 1.000

```

To understand the result we need to compare it with the case without uncertainty uncertainty. In that case we had $X_1 = 1.98$. Now we have $X_1 = 1.96$. The difference, although practically irrelevant, is conceptually important. It corresponds in fact to the expected value of the offset (precisely 0.0196). Indeed, the role of the observation is to give us an information about $X_1 + X_2$, sum of the true value and the offset. The fact that we use the observations to update our knowledge on the true value is simply because the offset is a priori better known than the true value, as it is well understood by experienced physicists: if the calibration is poor the instrument cannot be used for ‘measurements’. Note also the correlation that now appears between X_1 and X_2 , and in particular its negative sign: the value of the true value could increase at the ‘expenses’ of the offset, and the other way around.

6.1.3 Condition on $X_3 = 2$ and $X_4 = 1$ (“two observations”)

```

> ( mu.c <- c(NA, NA, 2, 1, rep(NA, n-4)) )
[1] NA NA 2 1 NA NA NA
> out <- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c)
> round( out$mu, 4)
[1] 1.4778 0.0148 2.0000 1.0000 1.4926 1.4926 1.4926
> round( out$V, 4)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 1.4778 -0.9852 0 0 0.4926 0.4926 0.4926
[2,] -0.9852 0.9901 0 0 0.0049 0.0049 0.0049
[3,] 0.0000 0.0000 0 0 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000
[4,] 0.0000 0.0000 0 0 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000
[5,] 0.4926 0.0049 0 0 1.4975 0.4975 0.4975
[6,] 0.4926 0.0049 0 0 0.4975 1.4975 0.4975
[7,] 0.4926 0.0049 0 0 0.4975 0.4975 1.4975
> round( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)), 4 )

```

```

[1] 1.2157 0.9951 0.0000 0.0000 1.2237 1.2237 1.2237
> round( out$V / outer(out.s, out.s), 3)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 1.000 -0.814 NaN NaN 0.331 0.331 0.331
[2,] -0.814 1.000 NaN NaN 0.004 0.004 0.004
[3,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN
[4,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN
[5,] 0.331 0.004 NaN NaN 1.000 0.332 0.332
[6,] 0.331 0.004 NaN NaN 0.332 1.000 0.332
[7,] 0.331 0.004 NaN NaN 0.332 0.332 1.000

```

The only new effect we observe is the increase (in module) of the correlation coefficient between true value and offset. This is due to the fact that the increased number of observation has increased the constrain between the two quantities. It will increase more if we use further observations, for example conditioning on "mu.c <- c(NA, NA, 2, 1, 1.5, 2.2, 0.5)", or decreasing the standard deviations $\sigma_{i|1,2}$. For example if we set all $\sigma_{i|1,2}$ to 0.1, the same conditioning on X_3 and X_3 would produce a correlation coefficient of -0.9975 . Asymptotically there will be a deterministic constrain between X_1 and X_2 of the kind $X_1 + X_2 = k$, and the two variables become *logically dependent*.

6.1.4 "Ricalibration of the offset" ($X_1 = 2$; $X_3 = 2$, $X_4 = 1$)

What happens if we instead fix the value of the true value and some values of the observables? In this case we update our information on the offset. Let us see the case in which we fix the value of the true value at 2, and the average of the two observations at 1.5.

```

> ( mu.c <- c(2, NA, 2, 1, rep(NA, n-4)) )
[1] 2 NA 2 1 NA NA NA
> out <- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c)
> round( out$mu, 4)
[1] 2.0000 -0.3333 2.0000 1.0000 1.6667 1.6667 1.6667
> round( out$V, 4)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 0 0.0000 0 0 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000
[2,] 0 0.3333 0 0 0.3333 0.3333 0.3333
[3,] 0 0.0000 0 0 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000
[4,] 0 0.0000 0 0 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000
[5,] 0 0.3333 0 0 1.3333 0.3333 0.3333
[6,] 0 0.3333 0 0 0.3333 1.3333 0.3333
[7,] 0 0.3333 0 0 0.3333 0.3333 1.3333
> round( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)), 4 )
[1] 0.0000 0.5774 0.0000 0.0000 1.1547 1.1547 1.1547
> round( out$V / outer(out.s, out.s), 3)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN
[2,] NaN 1.0 NaN NaN 0.50 0.50 0.50
[3,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN

```

[4,]	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN	NaN
[5,]	NaN	0.5	NaN	NaN	1.00	0.25	0.25
[6,]	NaN	0.5	NaN	NaN	0.25	1.00	0.25
[7,]	NaN	0.5	NaN	NaN	0.25	0.25	1.00

As a result, the expected value of the offset becomes -0.33 , with a standard deviation of 0.58 , against the (possible) intuitive guess of -0.5 (i.e. $1.5-2.0$) with a standard uncertainty of 0.71 (i.e. $1/\sqrt{2}$). The reason is that our prior knowledge on the offset had a standard uncertainty of 1 , that has to be taken into account. Indeed it can be easily checked that the ‘intuitive’ result would have been recovered if we had a very large uncertainty ($\sigma_2 \rightarrow \infty$). In fact -0.33 is the weighted average of the initial value 0 and -0.5 , with weights equal to 1 and 2 . The reason is that the result based on reconditioning provides automatically the rule of the weighted average with ‘inverse of the variances’, where the ‘variance’ associated to -0.5 would be that obtained if the prior knowledge on the offset was irrelevant (i.e. $\sigma_2 \rightarrow \infty$).

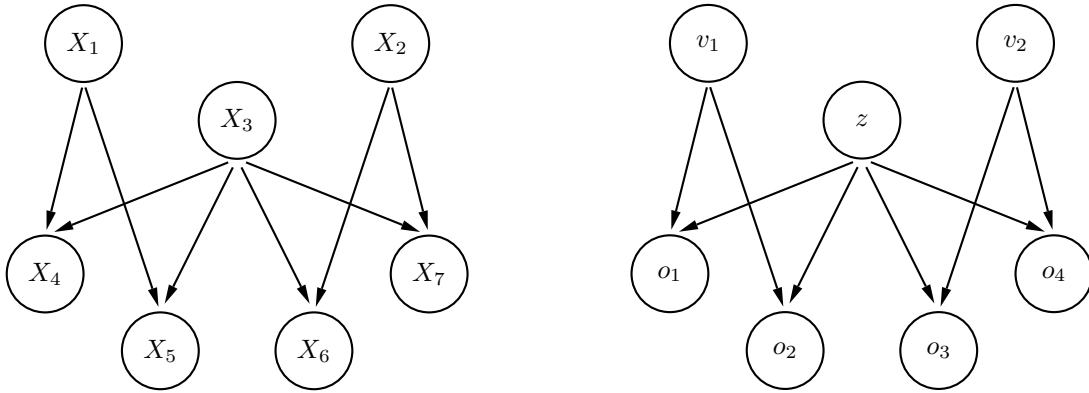


Figure 9: Model to describe the measurements of two quantities with the same instrument affected by some systematics.

7 Measuring two quantities with the same instrument affected by offset uncertainty

Another interesting issue, very common in experimental physics, is when we make several measurements on homogeneous quantities using the same instrument that, as all instruments, has unavoidable uncertainty in the calibration. The situation is sketched in the diagrams of Fig. 9, drawn with the different symbols used in the text, where X_1 and X_2 are the true values, X_3 the common offset, X_4 and X_5 the readings when the instrument is applied to X_1 , X_6 and X_7 the readings when the instrument is applied to X_2 .

From this model we can easily build the transformation matrix C

$$C = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad (86)$$

(for example it says that row 6 depends on X_2 , X_3 and e_3). Applying it to the starting diagonal matrix (v_1 , v_2 and z are *initially independent*, and the various errors e_1 - e_4 are independent) we get the covariance matrix of the joint multivariate normal of interest:

$$V = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & 0 & 0 & \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \sigma_2^2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_2^2 \\ 0 & 0 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & 0 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_3^2 + \sigma_{e_1}^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & 0 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_3^2 + \sigma_{e_2}^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 \\ 0 & \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_3^2 + \sigma_{e_3}^2 & \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_3^2 \\ 0 & \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_3^2 & \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_3^2 + \sigma_{e_4}^2 \end{pmatrix}$$

This is a very interesting covariance matrix and we leave the reader the pleasure of exploiting all possibilities. Here we only show a numerical example, with parameters similar to the ones used before for a better understanding, and just discuss a single case of conditioning.

```
> n=7; muX1=0; sigmaX1=10; muX2=0; sigmaX2=10; # set parameters
> muZ=0; sigmaZ=1
> mu <- c(muX1, muX2, muZ, rep(muX1+muZ,2), rep(muX2+muZ,2)) # set expected values
> ( sigma <- c(sigmaX1, sigmaX1, sigmaZ, rep(1, n-3)) ) # standard deviations
[1] 10 10 1 1 1 1 1
> C <- matrix(rep(0, n*n), c(n,n)) # tranformation matrix
> diag(C) <- rep(1, n)
> C[4,] <- c(1, 0, 1, 1, 0, 0, 0)
> C[5,] <- c(1, 0, 1, 0, 1, 0, 0)
> C[6,] <- c(0, 1, 1, 0, 0, 1, 0)
> C[7,] <- c(0, 1, 1, 0, 0, 0, 1)
> C
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,]  1   0   0   0   0   0   0
[2,]  0   1   0   0   0   0   0
[3,]  0   0   1   0   0   0   0
[4,]  1   0   1   1   0   0   0
[5,]  1   0   1   0   1   0   0
[6,]  0   1   1   0   0   1   0
[7,]  0   1   1   0   0   0   1
> V0 <- matrix(rep(0, n*n), c(n,n)) # covariance matrix
```

```

> diag(V0) <- sigma^2
> V <- C %*% V0 %*% t(C)
> V
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 100   0   0 100 100   0   0
[2,]   0 100   0   0   0 100 100
[3,]   0   0   1   1   1   1   1
[4,] 100   0   1 102 101   1   1
[5,] 100   0   1 101 102   1   1
[6,]   0 100   1   1   1 102 101
[7,]   0 100   1   1   1 101 102
> su <- sqrt(diag(V))                # standard uncertainties
> round( V/outer(su,su), 4)          # correlation matrix
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 1.0000 0.0000 0.000 0.9901 0.9901 0.0000 0.0000
[2,] 0.0000 1.0000 0.000 0.0000 0.0000 0.9901 0.9901
[3,] 0.0000 0.0000 1.000 0.0990 0.0990 0.0990 0.0990
[4,] 0.9901 0.0000 0.099 1.0000 0.9902 0.0098 0.0098
[5,] 0.9901 0.0000 0.099 0.9902 1.0000 0.0098 0.0098
[6,] 0.0000 0.9901 0.099 0.0098 0.0098 1.0000 0.9902
[7,] 0.0000 0.9901 0.099 0.0098 0.0098 0.9902 1.0000

```

Now let us assume we have applied our instrument once on X_1 and once on X_2 , obtaining the readings $X_4 = 1$ and $X_6 = 2$, respectively. Here is how our knowledge is updated:

```

> ( mu.c <- c(rep(NA, 3), 1, NA, 2, NA) )      # conditioning
[1] NA NA NA 1 NA 2 NA
> out <- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c)
> round( out$mu, 4)
[1] 0.9613 1.9514 0.0291 1.0000 0.9904 2.0000 1.9805
> round( out$V, 4)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 1.9514 0.9613 -0.9709 0 0.9805 0 -0.0096
[2,] 0.9613 1.9514 -0.9709 0 -0.0096 0 0.9805
[3,] -0.9709 -0.9709 0.9806 0 0.0097 0 0.0097
[4,] 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000 0 0.0000
[5,] 0.9805 -0.0096 0.0097 0 1.9902 0 0.0001
[6,] 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000 0 0.0000
[7,] -0.0096 0.9805 0.0097 0 0.0001 0 1.9902
> round( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)), 4 )
[1] 1.3969 1.3969 0.9902 0.0000 1.4107 0.0000 1.4107
> round( out$V / outer(out.s, out.s), 3)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,] 1.000 0.493 -0.702 NaN 0.498 NaN -0.005
[2,] 0.493 1.000 -0.702 NaN -0.005 NaN 0.498
[3,] -0.702 -0.702 1.000 NaN 0.007 NaN 0.007
[4,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN
[5,] 0.498 -0.005 0.007 NaN 1.000 NaN 0.000
[6,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN

```


[7,] -0.005 0.498 0.007 NaN 0.000 NaN 1.000

As expected, $X_4 = 1$ sets essentially to 1 the true value X_1 and the ‘future’ – or not yet known! – reading X_5 . Similarly, X_6 sets essentially to 2 X_2 and X_7 . (The difference from the exact value of 1 and 2, respectively, is due – let us repeat it once again – to the fact that we use, for didascallic purposes, initial standard uncertainties σ_1 and σ_2 ‘relatively small’, while the uncertainty on the common offset is ‘relatively large’.) The most interest part of the result is the 3×3 upper left part of the resulting correlation matrix, which we repeat here.

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1.000 & 0.493 & -0.702 \\ 0.493 & 1.000 & -0.702 \\ -0.702 & -0.702 & 1.000 \end{pmatrix}$$

As we have learned in the previous section, the value of the offset gets anticorrelated to the true values. Moreover the two true values get **positively correlated**, as expected: a part of our uncertainty on them is due the imprecise knowledge of the offset, which then affects both values in the same direction.

8 Inferences and forecasting based on mean values

Often our inferences and forecasting are based on averages, instead than on individual values. It is rather understood that in Gaussian samples the inference on the Gaussian ‘ μ ’ is the same if we use the mean rather than the detailed information, due to the so called property of ‘statistical sufficiency’. It is instead less clear what we should expect for a next mean, based on a sample of the same size of the first one. For example, very often one ears and reads¹⁷ something like “if we have got a mean (\bar{x}_p) and then imagine to repeat a large number of independent samples of the same size (n) of the ‘past’ one, then we expect about in the interval $\bar{x}_p \pm \sigma/\sqrt{n}$ ”, that is

$$P(\bar{x}_p - \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}} \leq \bar{x}_f \leq \bar{x}_p + \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}}) = 68\%, \quad (87)$$

a statement **wrong** by a factor $1/\sqrt{2}$ in the size of the interval (or, equivalently, about 30% in the value of expected frequency, that should be 52%) as we shall see in a while (see also Ref. [4]). In order to do this, let us play with our tool, building the minimal model to observe the effect of interest.

¹⁷ For example, we read in Ref. [5] (pp. 118-119)

“In reporting the measurement of θ as $\hat{\theta}_{obs} \pm \hat{\sigma}_{\hat{\theta}}$ one means that repeated estimates all based on n observations of x would be distributed according to a p.d.f. $g(\hat{\theta})$ centered around some true value θ and true standard deviation $\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}$, which are estimated to be $\hat{\theta}_{obs}$ and $\sigma_{\hat{\theta}}$.” Mistakes of this kind are due to a curious ideology that refuses to make probabilistic statements about uncertain values, in contrast to the physicist’ intuition (see extended discussions in Ref. [4], with hints on the way of reasoning of Gauss and Laplace).

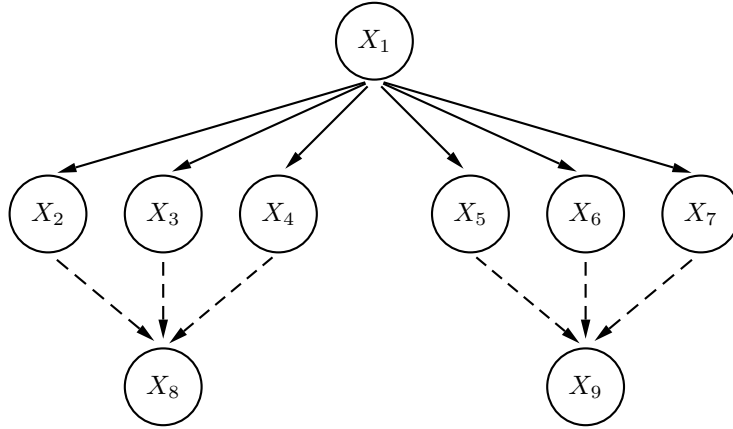


Figure 10: Past mean and future mean. X_1 is the value of the quantity, X_2 - X_4 the observations in the first samples (i.e. o_1 , o_2 and o_3), X_5 - X_7 the observations in the second samples (i.e. o_4 , o_5 and o_5). X_8 and X_9 are the sample means.

Figure 10 shows the value of a quantity (X_1) and two samples, each of three observations (X_2 - X_4 and X_5 - X_7), whose mean values are X_8 and X_9 (the dashed arrows indicate that the links are *deterministic* instead than probabilistic, since an arithmetic mean is univocally determined by the values of the sample). We only need to write down the transformation rules to get X_8 and X_9 in order to build up the extra rows of the transformation matrix. They are:

$$X_8 = \frac{1}{3}(X_2 + X_3 + X_4) = X_1 + \frac{1}{3}(e_1 + e_2 + e_3) \quad (88)$$

$$X_9 = \frac{1}{3}(X_5 + X_6 + X_7) = X_1 + \frac{1}{3}(e_4 + e_5 + e_6) \quad (89)$$

from which it follows

$$\mathbf{C} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 1/3 & 1/3 & 1/3 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1/3 & 1/3 & 1/3 \end{pmatrix} \quad (90)$$

Here is our implementation in R, where we have now used $\sigma_1 = 100$, much larger than the ‘experimental resolution’ of 1. This make, for the numerical values of the observations we

shall use, the prior on X_1 practically influential (the effect on the expected values is of the order 10^{-5}) so that we can better focus on other effects:

```

> n <- 7; muX1 <- 0; sigmaX1 <- 100; sigma.i <- 1      # parameters
> mu <- rep(muX1, n + 2)                             # expected values
> ( sigma <- c(sigmaX1, rep(sigma.i,n-1)) )
> V0 <- matrix(rep(0, n*n), c(n,n))                 # initial diagonal covariance matrix
> diag(V0) <- sigma^2

> C <- matrix(rep(0, n*n), c(n,n))                   transformation matrix
> diag(C) <- rep(1, n)
> C[,1] <- rep(1, n)
> C <- rbind( C, c(1, rep(1/3, 3), rep(0, 3)), c(1, rep(0, 3), rep(1/3, 3)) )
> round(C,3)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7]
[1,]  1 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000
[2,]  1 1.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000
[3,]  1 0.000 1.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000
[4,]  1 0.000 0.000 1.000 0.000 0.000 0.000
[5,]  1 0.000 0.000 0.000 1.000 0.000 0.000
[6,]  1 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 1.000 0.000
[7,]  1 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 1.000
[8,]  1 0.333 0.333 0.333 0.000 0.000 0.000
[9,]  1 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.333 0.333 0.333

> V <- C %*% V0 %*% t(C)                             # joint covariance matrix
> ( su <- sqrt(diag(V)) )                             # initial uncertainties
[1] 100.0000 100.0050 100.0050 100.0050 100.0050 100.0050 100.0050 100.0017
[9] 100.0017
> ( m <- dim(V)[1] )                                 # number of transformed variables
[1] 9
> round( V/outer(su,su), 5)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7] [,8] [,9]
[1,] 1.00000 0.99995 0.99995 0.99995 0.99995 0.99995 0.99995 0.99995 0.99998 0.99998
[2,] 0.99995 1.00000 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99997 0.99993
[3,] 0.99995 0.99990 1.00000 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99997 0.99993
[4,] 0.99995 0.99990 0.99990 1.00000 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99997 0.99993
[5,] 0.99995 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 1.00000 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99993 0.99997
[6,] 0.99995 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 1.00000 0.99990 0.99990 0.99993 0.99997
[7,] 0.99995 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 0.99990 1.00000 0.99993 0.99997
[8,] 0.99998 0.99997 0.99997 0.99997 0.99993 0.99993 0.99993 1.00000 0.99997
[9,] 0.99998 0.99993 0.99993 0.99993 0.99997 0.99997 0.99997 0.99997 1.00000

```

8.1 Expectations for a given value of X_1

Let us now fix X_1 at our usual value of 2:

```
> ( mu.c <- c(2, rep(NA, m-1)) )      # X1 = 2
[1] 2 NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA
> out <- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c)
> out$mu
[1] 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2
> round( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)), 4 )
[1] 0.0000 1.0000 1.0000 1.0000 1.0000 1.0000 1.0000 0.5774 0.5774
> round( out$V / outer(out.s, out.s), 4)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7] [,8] [,9]
[1,] NaN  NaN  NaN  NaN  NaN  NaN  NaN  NaN  NaN
[2,] NaN 1.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.5774 0.0000
[3,] NaN 0.0000 1.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.5774 0.0000
[4,] NaN 0.0000 0.0000 1.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.5774 0.0000
[5,] NaN 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 1.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.5774
[6,] NaN 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 1.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.5774
[7,] NaN 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 1.0000 0.0000 0.5774
[8,] NaN 0.5774 0.5774 0.5774 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 1.0000 0.0000
[9,] NaN 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.5774 0.5774 0.5774 0.0000 1.0000
```

As we already know, all observations become conditionally independent with expected value 2 and standard uncertainty 1. The averages are also expected to be around 2, but with smaller uncertainty, namely $1/\sqrt{3} \approx 0.5774$. And, obviously, the averages are correlated with each observation of its sample. For example, for X_2 and X_8 , we have, starting from the transformation rules (69) and (88), we get, being X_1 certain,

$$\text{Cov}[X_2, X_8] = \frac{1}{3} \times \sigma_{e_1}^2 \quad (91)$$

$$= \frac{1}{3} \times 1 \approx 0.33, \quad (92)$$

and then

$$\rho[X_2, X_8] = \frac{\text{Cov}[X_2, X_8]}{\sigma[X_2] \cdot \sigma[X_8]} \quad (93)$$

$$= \frac{1/3}{1 \times 1/\sqrt{3}} = \sqrt{3} \approx 0.5774, \quad (94)$$

that is exactly what we can read in the R output.

8.2 Reconditioning on the value of the first mean

Let us now see what happens if we get informed about a mean value, e.g. $X_8 = 2$.

```
> ( mu.c <- c(rep(NA, m-2), 2, NA) )      # first mean = 2
[1] NA NA NA NA NA NA NA NA 2 NA
```

```

> out <- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c)
> round(out$mu, 5)
[1] 1.99993 2.00000 2.00000 2.00000 1.99993 1.99993 1.99993 2.00000 1.99993
> round( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)), 4)
[1] 0.5773 0.8165 0.8165 0.8165 1.1547 1.1547 1.1547 0.0000 0.8165
> round(out$V, 4)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7] [,8] [,9]
[1,] 0.3333 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.3333 0.3333 0.3333 0 0.3333
[2,] 0.0000 0.6667 -0.3333 -0.3333 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000
[3,] 0.0000 -0.3333 0.6667 -0.3333 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000
[4,] 0.0000 -0.3333 -0.3333 0.6667 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000
[5,] 0.3333 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 1.3333 0.3333 0.3333 0 0.6667
[6,] 0.3333 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.3333 1.3333 0.3333 0 0.6667
[7,] 0.3333 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.3333 0.3333 1.3333 0 0.6667
[8,] 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000
[9,] 0.3333 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.6667 0.6667 0.6667 0 0.6667
> round( out$V / outer(out.s, out.s), 4)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7] [,8] [,9]
[1,] 1.0000 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.5000 0.5000 0.5000 NaN 0.7071
[2,] 0.0000 1.0 -0.5 -0.5 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 NaN 0.0000
[3,] 0.0000 -0.5 1.0 -0.5 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 NaN 0.0000
[4,] 0.0000 -0.5 -0.5 1.0 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 NaN 0.0000
[5,] 0.5000 0.0 0.0 0.0 1.0000 0.2500 0.2500 NaN 0.7071
[6,] 0.5000 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.2500 1.0000 0.2500 NaN 0.7071
[7,] 0.5000 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.2500 0.2500 1.0000 NaN 0.7071
[8,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN
[9,] 0.7071 0.0 0.0 0.0 0.7071 0.7071 0.7071 NaN 1.0000

```

The knowledge about the first average constrains X_1 to 2.00 ± 0.58 , that is $\bar{x} \pm \sigma/\sqrt{n}$, while the expectations about the next average is 2.00 ± 0.82 , that is $\bar{x} \pm \sqrt{2}\sigma/\sqrt{n}$. The future observations are instead expected to be 2.00 ± 1.15 , where the standard uncertainty comes from $\sqrt{0.577^2 + 1^2}$, quadratic combination of the uncertainty about X_1 and that of any of the future observations around X_1 .

And, as expected, there are correlations among all values which are still uncertain, with the *exception* of X_1 with X_2 , X_3 and X_4 (the observations about which we only know the mean value). This on a first sight is not very intuitive. The reason is that X_1 is fully determined by the average X_8 , and therefore our knowledge about it cannot change if we are informed about the individual values of the measurements, as we shall see in the next subsection.

Remaining on the three values that contribute to the observed mean $X_8 = 2$, their expected value is exactly 2, instead than 1.99993, a difference negligible in practice, but interesting to understand the flow of the probabilistic updates. Their values depend only on the average, and not on the prior about X_1 . Their uncertainty is the same as the uncertainty on the future average ($\sqrt{2} \times 1/\sqrt{3}$), although not easy to understand at an intuitive level. Easier to understand are their mutual anticorrelations, since their linear combination X_8 (their mean value) is fixed.

8.3 Knowing the average and one of the values that contribute to the first mean

In order to better understand the role of the mean in the inference, let us assume we also know the value of one of the three observations contributing to it, for example $X_2 = 1$.

```
> ( mu.c <- c(NA, 1, rep(NA, m-4), 2, NA) )           # first mean (X8) = 2; X2=1
[1] NA 1 NA NA NA NA NA 2 NA
> out <- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, mu.c, check=FALSE)
> round(out$mu, 4)
[1] 1.9999 1.0000 2.5000 2.5000 1.9999 1.9999 1.9999 2.0000 1.9999
> round( out.s <- sqrt(diag(out$V)), 4 )
[1] 0.5773 0.0000 0.7071 0.7071 1.1547 1.1547 1.1547 0.0000 0.8165
> round(out$V, 4)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7] [,8] [,9]
[1,] 0.3333 0 0.0 0.0 0.3333 0.3333 0.3333 0 0.3333
[2,] 0.0000 0 0.0 0.0 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000
[3,] 0.0000 0 0.5 -0.5 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000
[4,] 0.0000 0 -0.5 0.5 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000
[5,] 0.3333 0 0.0 0.0 1.3333 0.3333 0.3333 0 0.6667
[6,] 0.3333 0 0.0 0.0 0.3333 1.3333 0.3333 0 0.6667
[7,] 0.3333 0 0.0 0.0 0.3333 0.3333 1.3333 0 0.6667
[8,] 0.0000 0 0.0 0.0 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0 0.0000
[9,] 0.3333 0 0.0 0.0 0.6667 0.6667 0.6667 0 0.6667
> round( out$V / outer(out.s, out.s), 4)
      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4] [,5] [,6] [,7] [,8] [,9]
[1,] 1.0000 NaN 0 0 0.5000 0.5000 0.5000 NaN 0.7071
[2,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN
[3,] 0.0000 NaN 1 -1 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 NaN 0.0000
[4,] 0.0000 NaN -1 1 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 NaN 0.0000
[5,] 0.5000 NaN 0 0 1.0000 0.2500 0.2500 NaN 0.7071
[6,] 0.5000 NaN 0 0 0.2500 1.0000 0.2500 NaN 0.7071
[7,] 0.5000 NaN 0 0 0.2500 0.2500 1.0000 NaN 0.7071
[8,] NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN NaN
[9,] 0.7071 NaN 0 0 0.7071 0.7071 0.7071 NaN 1.0000
```

As we can see, the inference about X_1 does not change. As a consequence, also the expectations about the future observations are not affected by this extra piece of informations. Instead, we change our knowledge about X_3 and X_4 , whose expected values become 2.5, in order to compensate $X_2 = 1$ [i.e $2.5 = (3 \times 2 - 1)/2$] and they are fully anticorrelated, as more or less expected.

9 The effect of a constrain among true values

Another important issue is how the knowledge that the some quantities are intrinsically correlated changes the inference. Cases of this kind happen when several quantities are related by a deterministic relation, and a well understood case is when measuring the

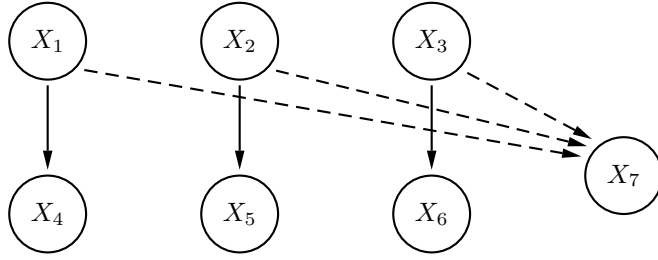


Figure 11: Inferring the internal angles of a triangle by independent measurements.

internal angles of a triangles in a flat space. Just to focus on a numerical example, let us imagine the individual angles to be determined, starting from very vague priors as

$$\alpha = 58^\circ \pm 2^\circ \quad (95)$$

$$\beta = 73^\circ \pm 2^\circ \quad (96)$$

$$\gamma = 54^\circ \pm 2^\circ. \quad (97)$$

The measurements can be independent, as we have supposed (let us forget the case of measurements with common systematics in order to focus on the effect of the constrain), but nevertheless the relation $\alpha + \beta + \gamma = 180^\circ$ will make the results correlated. The graphical model is represented in figure 11 with the extra node X_7 representing the sum of the angles and related to X_1 , X_2 and X_3 by deterministic links (dashed arrows).

9.1 Exact solution in the case of identical resolution of the goniometer and neglecting systematic effects

Being the case rather simple, especially if all uncertainties are equal, let us make the exercise of going through the exact solution. Indicating the angles all together with the variable $\mathbf{X} = \{\alpha, \beta, \gamma\}$, whose expected value is $E[\mathbf{X}] = \{a = 58^\circ, b = 73^\circ, c = 54^\circ\}$. The covariance matrix is diagonal with all terms equal to $\sigma^2 = (2^\circ)^2$. We make then the transformation to $\mathbf{Y} = \{\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \Sigma\}$, where $\Sigma = \alpha + \beta + \gamma$, and then condition on $\Sigma = 180^\circ$. The transformation matrix is then

$$\mathbf{C} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad (98)$$

from which we obtain

$$\mathbf{V}_Y = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \cdot \begin{pmatrix} \sigma^2 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \sigma^2 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \sigma^2 \end{pmatrix} \cdot \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma^2 & 0 & 0 & \sigma^2 \\ 0 & \sigma^2 & 0 & \sigma^2 \\ 0 & 0 & \sigma^2 & \sigma^2 \\ \sigma^2 & \sigma^2 & \sigma^2 & 3\sigma^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (99)$$

Conditioning on $\Sigma = 180^\circ$, that is $Y_4 = 180^\circ$, using Eqs. (39) and (40), we get

$$\mathbb{E} \begin{pmatrix} \alpha \\ \beta \\ \gamma \end{pmatrix} \Big|_{\Sigma=180^\circ} = \begin{pmatrix} a \\ b \\ c \end{pmatrix} - \frac{\Delta\varphi}{3} \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad (100)$$

with $\Delta\varphi = (a + b + c) - 180^\circ$. In practice the resulting rule is the most naive one could imagine: subtract to each value one third of the excess of their sum above 180° . (If you think that this rule is too simplistic, the reason might be that your model of uncertainty in this kind of measurements is different than that used here, implying for example scale type errors. But this kind of errors are beyond the aim of this note, because they imply non-linear transformations.)

This is the conditioned covariance matrix

$$\frac{2\sigma^2}{3} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -1/2 & -1/2 \\ -1/2 & 1 & -1/2 \\ -1/2 & -1/2 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad (101)$$

written in a form that highlights the correlation matrix. The result is finally

$$\alpha = \left(a - \frac{\Delta\varphi}{3} \right) \pm \sqrt{\frac{2}{3}} \sigma \quad (102)$$

and similar expression for β and γ , thus yielding

$$\alpha = 56.33^\circ \pm 1.63^\circ \quad (103)$$

$$\beta = 71.33^\circ \pm 1.63^\circ \quad (104)$$

$$\gamma = 52.33^\circ \pm 1.63^\circ, \quad (105)$$

with $\rho(\alpha, \beta) = \rho(\alpha, \gamma) = \rho(\beta, \gamma) = -1/2$.

9.2 Numeric implementation in R

In analogy of what we have previously done in several cases, we start from independent quantities v_1, v_2, v_3, e_1, e_2 and e_3 . For the true values of the angle we choose a flat prior, modelled with a Gaussian¹⁸ of central value (all values in degrees) 60 and $\sigma = 1000$. The expected values of the fluctuations of the observations around the true values are instead 0, with standard deviations equal to the experimental resolutions, called `sigma.gonio` in the code, so that they can be changed at wish.

¹⁸Let us remind that this does not imply we believe that the angles could be negative or larger than 180° : it is just a trick to have a pdf that is practically flat between 0 and 180° . The trick allows us to use the normal multivariate formulae of reconditioning. Obviously, one has to check that the final results are consistent with our assumptions and that the tails of the Gaussian posterior distributions are harmless, as it is the case in our example.

The transformation rules are

$$X_1 = v_1 \tag{106}$$

$$X_2 = v_2 \tag{107}$$

$$X_3 = v_3 \tag{108}$$

$$X_4 = o_1 = v_1 + e_1 \tag{109}$$

$$X_5 = o_2 = v_2 + e_2 \tag{110}$$

$$X_6 = o_3 = v_3 + e_3 \tag{111}$$

$$X_7 = v_1 + v_2 + v_3 \tag{112}$$

from which we get the transformation matrix

$$C = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \tag{113}$$

Here is the R code to calculate the expected values and covariance matrix of the three angles:

```
mu.priors <- rep(60, 3); sigma.priors <- rep(1000, 3)      # priors
sigma.gonio <- c(2, 2, 2)                               # experimental resolutions
m=6; mu0 <- c(mu.priors, rep(0, 3))
sigma <- c(sigma.priors, sigma.gonio)
V0 <- matrix(rep(0, m*m), c(m,m))                      # diagonal matrix
diag(V0)[1:3] <- sigma[1:3]^2
diag(V0)[4:6] <- sigma[4:6]^2

C <- matrix(rep(0, m*m), c(m,m))                        # tranformation matrix
diag(C) <- 1
for(i in 1:3) C[3+i, i] <- 1
C <- rbind(C, c( rep(1, 3), rep(0,3) ) )

V <- C %*% V0 %*% t(C)                                  # transformed matrix
mu <- as.vector(C %*% mu0)                              # expected values

out <- norm.mult.cond(mu, V, c(NA, NA, NA, 58, 73, 54, 180) )
angles <- marginal.norm(out$mu, out$V, rep(1,3))
```

And these are, finally, the results, shown as an R session:

```
> angles$mu
[1] 56.33335 71.33329 52.33336
```

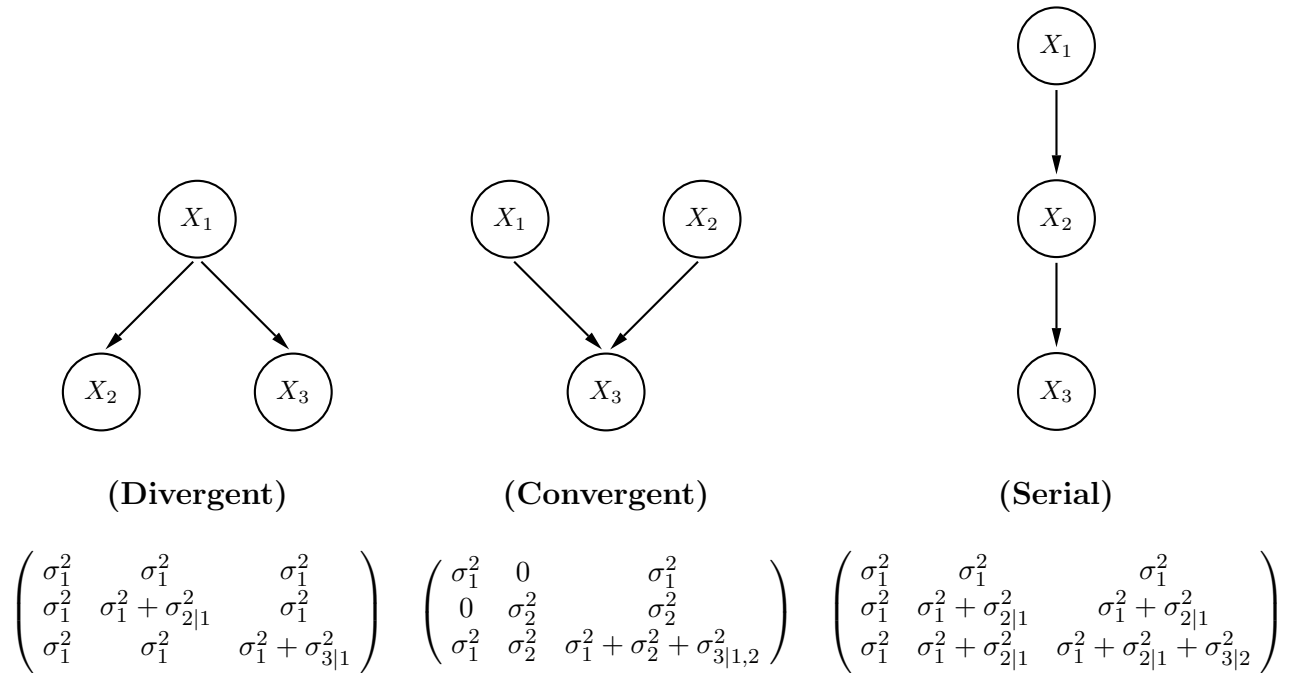


Figure 12: Basics causal connections among *nodes* of a *belief network*.

```

> ( sigma.angles <- sqrt(diag(angles$V)) )
[1] 1.63299 1.63299 1.63299
> ( corr <- angles$V / outer(sigma.angles, sigma.angles) )
      [,1]      [,2]      [,3]
[1,]  1.0000000 -0.4999976 -0.4999976
[2,] -0.4999976  1.0000000 -0.4999976
[3,] -0.4999976 -0.4999976  1.0000000

```

As we see, we get the same results obtained above, with the advantage that we can now change the experimental resolutions of the individual measurement. Or we can modify the model, in order to include the effect of common systematic, though limited to offset type, exercise left to the reader.

10 Propagation of evidence – some general remarks

Let us take again the diagrams (*graphs*) which describe two observations from the same true value and one observation resulting from a true value and a systematic effect. They are show again in Fig. 12, labelled with names related to the direction of the ‘causation’ arrows, which *diverge* from a single *node* or *converge* towards a single node. The physical interpretation is that, as we have already seen, of a single *cause* producing two *effects*, or

two *causes* responsible of a single effect, respectively. Below each graph we have also added the covariance matrix which characterize it, where $\sigma_{2|1} = \sigma[X_2|X_1]$, and so on.

For completeness we have added in the figure also graph in which the effect X_2 is itself cause of another effect (*serial connection*). Sticking to the simple linear models we are dealing with, the transformation rules of the graph characterize by a serial connection are the following:

$$X_1 = v_1 \tag{114}$$

$$X_2 = v_2 = v_1 + e_1 \tag{115}$$

$$X_3 = v_2 + e_2 = v_1 + e_1 + e_2 \tag{116}$$

from which the joint covariance matrix reported below the diagram follows, with $\sigma_{2|1} = \sigma[X_2|X_1] = \sigma_{e_1}$ and $\sigma_{3|2} = \sigma[X_3|X_2] = \sigma_{e_2}$.

Analyzing the covariance matrix of the graphs with divergent and serial connections we see that the variables are fully correlated: any *evidence* on any of the three variables changes the pdf of the other two.

Instead, in the convergent graph X_1 and X_2 are independent. Indeed, why should the physical quantity we are going to measure should depend on a calibration constant of our detector? And the other way around.¹⁹ But we have already seen in the examples that if we observe X_3 , then X_1 and X_2 become anticorrelated.

The effect of the *propagation* of a condition (*instantiation*) of one variable to the rest of the *network* is very interesting also for its practical applications, because it allows to decompose a large network in subnetworks.

10.1 Diverging connection

We have already seen in the numerical examples of subsection 5.1 that if we condition on a value of X_1 , then X_2 and X_3 become independent, and the physical reason was very easy to be understood. This is a general property of divergent graphs, usually stated referring to *parents* and *children*: in a divergent graph, if a parent is instantiated, the children become independent, i.e. *evidence does not flow any longer from one child to the other* (‘an instantiated parent blocks evidence flow among children’ – we assume that there is no other connection among them!). The possible flows of evidence are reported in figure 13.

Let us make the exercise to calculate the covariance matrix of X_2 and X_3 given X_1 . To use Eq. 40 we need to rewrite the three variables in a compact form, thus defining $\mathbf{Y}_1 = \{X_1\}$ and $\mathbf{Y}_2 = \{X_2, X_3\}$. In this case it is convenient to rewrite (40) swapping the indices, thus obtaining:

$$\mathbf{V} \left[\mathbf{Y}_2 | \mathbf{Y}_1 \right] = \mathbf{V}_{22} - \mathbf{V}_{21} \mathbf{V}_{11}^{-1} \mathbf{V}_{12}, \tag{117}$$

¹⁹In reality it is not impossible to think to sophisticated cases in which the value of the physical constant we going to measure could influence our beliefs about the performance of the detector. Let us say that the assumptions of independence between ‘true value’ and instrument offset is more than reasonable in most, if not all, experimental cases.

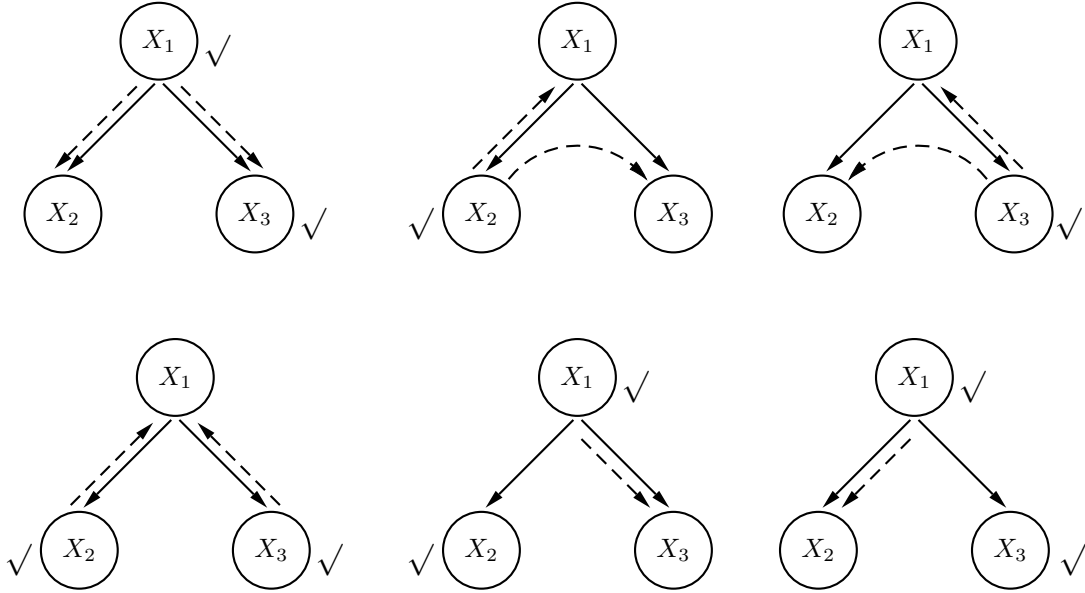


Figure 13: Divergent connection with ‘evidence’ (indicated by the symbol ‘✓’) got in some of the variables (‘instantiated nodes’). The dashed arrows show the ‘flow of evidence’, i.e. how the information flows in the ‘network’.

with

$$\mathbf{V}_{22} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 & \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{3|1}^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (118)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{21} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (119)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{11} = \sigma_1^2 \quad (120)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{11}^{-1} = \frac{1}{\sigma_1^2} \quad (121)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{12} = (\sigma_1^2 \quad \sigma_1^2) \quad (122)$$

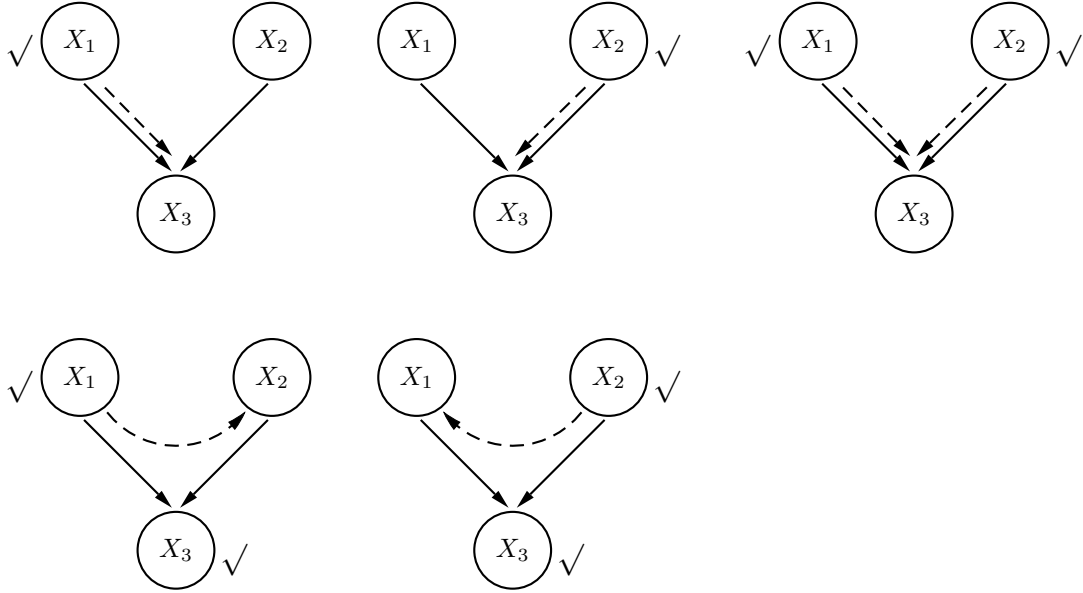
It follows

$$\mathbf{V}_{21} \mathbf{V}_{11}^{-1} \mathbf{V}_{12} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 \end{pmatrix} \cdot \frac{1}{\sigma_1^2} \cdot (\sigma_1^2 \quad \sigma_1^2) = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (123)$$

and hence

$$\mathbf{V}[\mathbf{Y}_2 | \mathbf{Y}_1] = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_{2|1}^2 & 0 \\ 0 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{3|1}^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (124)$$

As expected, the exercise shows that X_2 and X_3 have become conditionally independent.



As Fig. 13 for a converging connection.

10.2 Converging connection

Instead, on a converging connection, the parents are initially independent. That is the evidence on either parent, or on both, can influence the child(s), but cannot be transmitted from one parent to the other, as depicted in the graphs of figure 10.2. Let us make the exercise of instantiating the child, X_3 .

In this case the convenient partition is $\mathbf{Y}_1 = \{X_1, X_2\}$ and $\mathbf{Y}_2 = \{X_3\}$, and the conditional covariance matrix is obtained applying directly Eq. (40):

$$\mathbf{V}[\mathbf{Y}_1|\mathbf{Y}_2] = \mathbf{V}_{11} - \mathbf{V}_{12} \mathbf{V}_{22}^{-1} \mathbf{V}_{21}, \quad (125)$$

with

$$\mathbf{V}_{11} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & 0 \\ 0 & \sigma_2^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (126)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{12} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_2^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (127)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{22} = \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{3|1,2}^2 \quad (128)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{22}^{-1} = \left(\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{3|1,2}^2 \right)^{-1} \quad (129)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{21} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_2^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (130)$$

It follows

$$\mathbf{V}_{12} \mathbf{V}_{22}^{-1} \mathbf{V}_{21} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_2^2 \end{pmatrix} \cdot \frac{1}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{3|1,2}^2} \cdot (\sigma_1^2 \quad \sigma_2^2) = \frac{1}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{3|1,2}^2} \cdot \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^4 & \sigma_1^2 \sigma_2^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 \sigma_2^2 & \sigma_2^4 \end{pmatrix} \quad (131)$$

and hence

$$\mathbf{V}[\mathbf{Y}_1 | \mathbf{Y}_2] = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{\sigma_1^2 \cdot (\sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{3|1,2}^2)}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{3|1,2}^2} & -\frac{\sigma_1^2 \sigma_2^2}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{3|1,2}^2} \\ -\frac{\sigma_1^2 \sigma_2^2}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{3|1,2}^2} & \frac{\sigma_2^2 \cdot (\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{3|1,2}^2)}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2 + \sigma_{3|1,2}^2} \end{pmatrix} \quad (132)$$

As expected, the exercise shows that X_1 and X_2 become anticorrelated, although the correlation coefficient has not a simple intuitive explanation.

10.3 Serial connection

Let us repeat the exercise for the serial connection, depicted in figure 14. The convenient partition is now $\mathbf{Y}_1 = \{X_1, X_3\}$ and $\mathbf{Y}_2 = \{X_2\}$. And these are the details

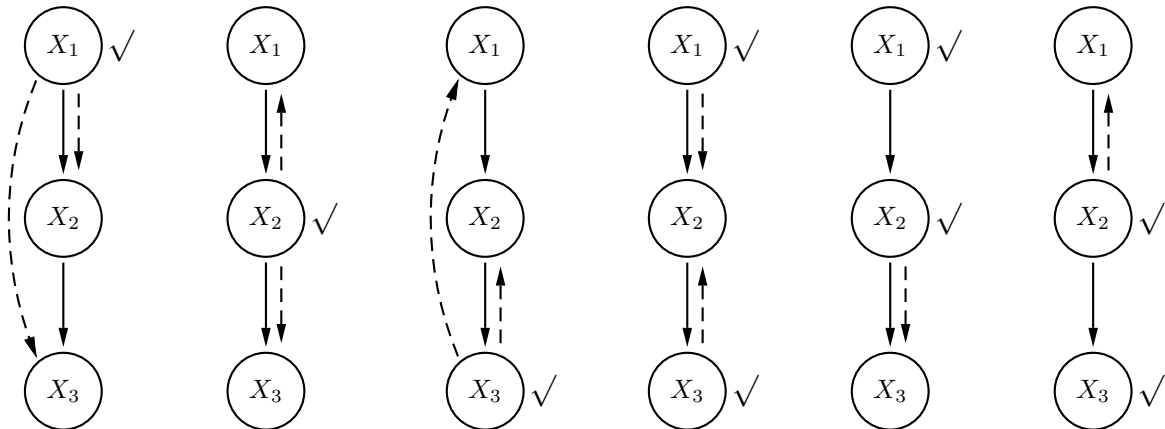


Figure 14: As Fig. 13 for a serial connection.

$$\mathbf{V}_{11} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 + \sigma_{3|2}^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (133)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{12} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (134)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{22} = \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 \quad (135)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{22}^{-1} = (\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2)^{-1} \quad (136)$$

$$\mathbf{V}_{21} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (137)$$

It follows

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{V}_{12} \mathbf{V}_{22}^{-1} \mathbf{V}_{21} &= \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 \\ \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 \end{pmatrix} \cdot \frac{1}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2} \cdot \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^2 & \sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2 \end{pmatrix} \\ &= \frac{1}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2} \cdot \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_1^4 & \sigma_1^2 \cdot (\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2) \\ \sigma_1^2 \cdot (\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2) & (\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2)^2 \end{pmatrix} \end{aligned} \quad (138)$$

and hence

$$\mathbf{V}[\mathbf{Y}_1 | \mathbf{Y}_2] = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{\sigma_1^2 \sigma_{2|1}^2}{\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_{2|1}^2} & 0 \\ 0 & \sigma_{3|2}^2 \end{pmatrix} \quad (139)$$

As expected, the exercise shows that X_1 and X_3 become now independent and the uncertainty about X_3 is simply $\sigma_{3|2}$. And also in $\sigma[X_1 | X_2]$ we recognize a familiar pattern (see also footnote 13):

$$\frac{1}{\sigma^2[X_1 | X_2]} = \frac{1}{\sigma_1^2} + \frac{1}{\sigma_{2|1}^2}. \quad (140)$$

11 Conclusions

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12 Appendix: probabilities inside contour ellipses and contour ellipsoids

Some of the best known features of the normal distribution the probability that an uncertain number X falls within $\pm k \sigma$ from μ is about 68.3%, 95.4% and 99.7% for $k = 1, 2, 3$, results

that can be restated as

$$P \left[\left(\frac{X - \mu}{\sigma} \right)^2 \leq 1 \right] = 68.3\% \quad (141)$$

$$P \left[\left(\frac{X - \mu}{\sigma} \right)^2 \leq 2 \right] = 95.4\% \quad (142)$$

$$P \left[\left(\frac{X - \mu}{\sigma} \right)^2 \leq 3 \right] = 99.7\% . \quad (143)$$

This calculation can be done directly from the pdf of the normal distribution, or even better from its cumulative, as we have seen in the numerical examples in subsection 2.1. It is however interesting to calculate it from the pdf of

$$Y = Z^2 = \left(\frac{X - \mu}{\sigma} \right)^2 .$$

Obviously Z is a ‘standard

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