

Probabilistic mechanisms in human sensorimotor control Daniel Wolpert, University College London

Q. Why do we have a brain?

A. To produce adaptable and complex movements

- movement is the only way we have of
 - Interacting with the world
 - Communication: speech, gestures, writing
- sensory, memory and cognitive processes \Rightarrow future motor outputs





Why study computational sensorimotor control?



The complexity of motor control What to move where





VS.



Moving



Noise makes motor control hard

Noise = randomness

The motor system is Noisy

Perceptual noise

- Limits resolution

Motor Noise

- Limits control



David Marr's levels of understanding (1982)

- 1) the level of *computational* theory of the system
- 2) the level of *algorithm* and representation, which are used make computations
- 3) the level of *implementation*: the underlying hardware or "machinery" on which the computations are carried out.







Tutorial Outline

- Sensorimotor integration
 - Static multi-sensory integration
 - Bayesian integration
 - Dynamic sensor fusion & the Kalman filter
- Action evaluation
 - Intrinsic loss function
 - Extrinsic loss functions
- Prediction
 - Internal model and likelihood estimation
 - Sensory filtering
- Control
 - Optimal feed forward control
 - Optimal feedback control
- Motor learning of predictable and stochastic environments

Review papers on www.wolpertlab.com

Multi-sensory integration

Multiple modalities can provide information about the same quantity

- e.g. location of hand in space
 - Vision
 - Proprioception
- Sensory input can be
 - Ambiguous
 - Noisy
- What are the computations used in integrating these sources?



Ideal Observers

Consider *n* signals x_i , $i = \{1...n\}$

$$x_i = x + \varepsilon_i$$
 $\varepsilon_i = N(0, \sigma_i^2)$

Maximum likelihood estimation (MLE)

$$P(x_1, x_2, ..., x_n \mid x) = \prod_{i=1}^n P(x_i \mid x)$$

$$\hat{x} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} w_i x_i$$
 with $w_i = \frac{\sigma_i^{-2}}{\left(\sum_{j=1}^{n} \sigma_j^{-2}\right)}$

$$\sigma_{\hat{x}}^2 = \left(\sum_{j=1}^n \sigma_i^{-2}\right)^{-1} < \sigma_k^2 \quad \forall k$$

Two examples of multi-sensory integration



Visual-haptic integration (Ernst & Banks 2002)



Two alternative force choice size judgment

- Visual
- Haptic
- Visual-haptic (with discrepancy)

Visual-haptic integration



Visual-haptic integration



Optimal integration of vision and haptic information in size judgement

Visual-proprioceptive integration

Classical claim from prism adaptation "vision dominates proprioception"





Reliability of proprioception depends on location





Reliability of visual localization is anisotropic





(Van Beers, 1998)

Integration models with discrepancy



Prisms displace along the azimuth

- •Measure V and P
- •Apply visuomotor discrepancy during right hand reach
- •Measure change in V and P to get relative adaptation



(Van Beers, Wolpert & Haggard, 2002)

Visual-proprioceptive discrepancy in depth



Visual adaptation in depth > visual adaptation in azimuth (p<0.01) > Proprioceptive adaptation in depth (p<0.05) Proprioception dominates vision in depth

Priors and Reverend Thomas Bayes



1702-1761

"I now send you an essay which I have found among the papers of our deceased friend Mr Bayes, and which, in my opinion, has great merit...."

Essay towards solving a problem in the doctrine of chances. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 1764.



Bayesian Motor Learning

Real world tasks have variability, e.g. estimating ball's bounce location



Sensory feedback (Evidence) Combine multiple cues to reduce uncertainty Task statistics (Prior) Not all locations are equally likely Optimal estimate (Posterior) Bayes rule P(state|sensory input|state) P(state)

Does sensorimotor learning use Bayes rule?

If so, is it implemented

- Implicitly: mapping sensory inputs to motor outputs to minimize error?
- Explicitly: using separate representations of the statistics of the prior and sensory noise?

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Prior

Task in which we control 1) prior statistics of the task

2) sensory uncertainty



(Körding & Wolpert, Nature, 2004)

Prior

Task in which we control 1) prior statistics of the task

- 2) sensory uncertainty



(Körding & Wolpert, Nature, 2004)



After 1000 trials





Models





Supports model 2: Bayesian



Supports model 2: Bayesian

Bayesian integration

Subjects can learn

- multimodal priors
- priors over forces
- different priors one after the other



(Körding& Wolpert NIPS 2004, Körding, Ku & Wolpert J. Neurophysiol. 2004)

Statistics of the world shape our brain

Objects

Configurations of our body



- Statistics of visual/auditory stimuli ⇒ representation visual/auditory cortex
- Statistics of early experience ⇒ what can be perceived in later life (e.g. statistics of spoken language)

Statistics of action

With limited neural resources statistics of motor tasks \Rightarrow motor performance



- 4 x 6-DOF electromagnetic sensors
- battery & notebook PC



Phase relationships and symmetry bias



Multi-sensory integration

CNS

- In general the relative weightings of the senses is sensitive to their direction dependent variability
- Represents the distribution of tasks
- Estimates its own sensory uncertainty
- Combines these two sources in a Bayesian way
- Supports an optimal integration model

Loss Functions in Sensorimotor system



What is the performance criteria (loss, cost, utility, reward)?

- Often assumed in statistics & machine learning
 - that we wish to minimize squared error for analytic or algorithmic tractability
- What measure of error does the brain care about?

Loss function *f*(*error*)

	Scenario 1		Scenario 2	
	Target 2 2			
$Loss = error ^2$	Loss=4+4=8		Loss=1+9=10	×
Loss = error	Loss=2+2=4	V	Loss=1+3=4	
$Loss = error ^{\frac{1}{2}}$	Loss=1.4+1.4=2.8	×	Loss=1+1.7=2.7	

Virtual pea shooter



Probed distributions and optimal means



Shift of mean against asymmetry (n=8)



Mean squared error with robustness to outliers


Bayesian decision theory



Imposed loss function (Trommershäuser *et al 2003)*



Optimal performance with complex regions



State estimation

- State of the body/world
 - Set of time-varying parameters which together with
 - Dynamic equations of motion
 - Fixed parameters of the system (e.g. mass)
 - Allow prediction of the future behaviour

- Tennis ball
 - Position
 - Velocity
 - Spin



State estimation



Kalman filter

- Minimum variance estimator
 - Estimate time-varying state
 - Can't directly observe state but only measurement

$$\mathbf{x}_{t+1} = A\mathbf{x}_t + B\mathbf{u}_t + \mathbf{w}_t$$
$$\mathbf{y}_{t+1} = C\mathbf{x}_t + \mathbf{v}_t$$

 $\hat{\mathbf{x}}_{t+1} = A\hat{\mathbf{x}}_t + B\mathbf{u}_t + K_t[\mathbf{y}_t - C\hat{\mathbf{x}}_t]$

State estimation

$$\hat{\mathbf{x}}_{t+1} = \underbrace{A\hat{\mathbf{x}}_t + B\mathbf{u}_t}_{t} + K_t[\mathbf{y}_t - C\hat{\mathbf{x}}_t]$$

Forward Dynamic Model







Eye position

Location of object based on retinal location and gaze direction



Sensory likelihood

$P(\text{state}|\text{sensory input}) \propto P(\text{sensory input}|\text{state}) P(\text{state})$



(Wolpert & Kawato, Neural Networks 1998 Haruno, Wolpert, Kawato, Neural Computation 2001)

Sensory prediction

Our sensors report

- Afferent information:
- Re-afferent information:

changes in outside world changes we cause



Tickling

Self-administered tactile stimuli rated as less ticklish than externally administered tactile stimuli. (Weiskrantz et al, 1971)



Does prediction underlie tactile cancellation in tickle?



Gain control or precise spatio-temporal prediction?

Spatio-temporal prediction



(Blakemore, Frith & Wolpert. J. Cog. Neurosci. 1999)

The escalation of force





Perception of force



Perception of force





Defective prediction in patients with schizophrenic





- The CNS predicts sensory consequences
- Sensory cancellation in Force production
- Defects may be related to delusions of control

Motor Learning

Required if:

- organisms environment, body or task change
- changes are unpredictable so cannot be pre-specified
- want to master social convention skills e.g writing

Trade off between:

- innate behaviour (evolution)
 - hard wired
 - fast
 - resistant to change
- learning (intra-life)
 - adaptable
 - slow
 - Maleable





Motor Learning



Supervised learning is good for forward models

Predicted outcome can be compared to actual outcome to generate an error



Weakly electric fish (Bell 2001)

Produce electric pulses to

- recognize objects in the dark or in murky habitats
- for social communication.

The fish electric organ is composed of electrocytes,

- modified muscle cells producing action potentials
- EOD = electric organ discharges
- Amplitude of the signal is between 30 mV and 7V
- Driven by a pacemaker in medulla, which triggers each discharge







Sensory filtering

Skin receptors are derived from the lateral line system



Removal of expected or predicted sensory input is one of the very general functions of sensory processing.

Predictive/associative mechanisms for changing environments

Primary afferent terminate in cerebellar-like structures



Primary afferents terminate on principal cells either directly or via interneurons

Block EOD discharge with curare



Specific for Timing (120ms), Polarity, Amplitude & Spatial distribution

Proprioceptive Prediction



Tail bend affects feedback Passive Bend phase locked to stimulus:

 $\mathbf{1}^{\mathbf{+}}$ Bend

Tailbend alone Tailbend plus stimulus Tail bend alone 0 +20 -20 -20 0 Tail displacement (degs)

Learning rule

Changes in synaptic strength requires principal cell spike discharge

Change depends on timing of EPSP to spike

Anti-Hebbian learning



- Forward Model can be learned through self-supervised learning
- Anti-hebbian rule in Cerebellar like structure of he electric fish

Motor planning (what is the goal of motor control)

- Tasks are usually specified at a symbolic level
- Motor system works at a detailed level, specifying muscle activations
- Gap between high and low-level specification
- Any high level task can be achieved in infinitely many low-level ways



Motor evolution/learning results in stereotypy

Stereotypy between repetitions and individuals



Models

HOW models

- Neurophysiological or black box models
- Explain roles of brain areas/processing units in generating behavior

WHY models

- Why did the How system get to be the way it is?
- Unifying principles of movement production
 - Evolutionary/Learning
- Assume few neural constraints

The Assumption of Optimality

Movements have evolved to maximize fitness

improve through evolution/learning

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- every possible movement which can achieve a task has a cost
- we select movement with the lowest **cost**



Optimality principles

- Parsimonious performance criteria
 →Elaborate predictions
- Requires
 - Admissible control laws
 - Musculoskeletal & world model
 - Scalar quantitative definition of task performance – usually time integral of f(state, action)

Open-loop

- What is the cost
 - Occasionally task specifies cost
 - Jump as high as possible
 - Exert maximal force
 - Usually task does not specify the cost directly
 - Locomotion well modelled by energy minimization
 - Energy alone is not good for eyes or arms
What is the cost?

Saccadic eye movements

- little vision over 4 deg/sec
- frequent 2-3 /sec
- deprives us of vision for 90 minutes/day



⇒Minimize time

Arm movements



Movements are smooth

 Minimum jerk (rate of change of acceleration) of the hand (Flash & Hogan 1985)



Smoothness

• Minimum Torque change (Uno et al, 1989)



The ideal cost for goal-directed movement

- Makes sense some evolutionary/learning advantage
- Simple for CNS to measure
- Generalizes to different systems
 - e.g. eye, head, arm
- Generalizes to different tasks
 - e.g. pointing, grasping, drawing
- \rightarrow Reproduces & predicts behavior

Motor command noise



Fundamental constraint=Signal-dependent noise

- Signal-dependent noise:
 - Constant coefficient of variation
 - SD (motor command) ~ Mean (motor command)
- Evidence from
 - Experiments: SD (Force) ~ Mean (Force)
 - Modelling
 - Spikes drawn from a renewal process
 - Recruitment properties of motor units

(Jones, Hamilton & Wolpert, J. Neurophysiol., 2002)



Task optimization in the presence of SDN

An average motor command \Rightarrow probability distribution (statistics) of movement.



Controlling the statistics of action

Given SDN, Task = optimizing f(statistics)

Finding optimal trajectories for linear systems



Linear constraints with quadratic cost:

can use quadratic programming or isoperimetric optimization

Saccade predictions

3rd order linear system



Prediction: very slow saccade

22 degree saccade in 270 ms (normally \sim 70 ms)







Movement extent vs. target eccentricity



Arm movements

Obsverved

Predicted



Feedforward control

•Ignores role of feedback

•Generates desired movements

•Cannot model trial-to-trial variability

Optimal feedback control (Todorov 2004)

- Optimize performance over all possible feedback control laws
- Treats feedback law as fully programmable
 - command=f(state)
 - Models based on reinforcement learning optimal cost-to-go functions
 - Requires a Bayesian state estimator



Minimal intervention principle

- Do not correct deviations from average behaviour unless they affect task performance
 - Acting is expensive
 - energetically
 - noise
 - Leads to
 - uncontrolled manifold
 - synergies



Optimal control with SDN

- Biologically plausible theoretical underpinning for both eye, head, arm movements
- No need to construct highly derived signals to estimate the cost of the movement
- Controlling statistics in the presence of noise

What is being adapted?

- Possible to break down the control process:
- Visuomotor rearrangements
- Dynamic perturbations
- [timing, coordination, sequencing]
- Internal models captures the relationship between sensory and motor variables

Altering dynamics







Altering Kinematics





Representation of transformations



Generalization paradigm



Difficulty of learning

(Cunningham 1989, JEPP-HPP)

• Rotations of the visual field from 0—180 degrees

Difficulty

- increases from 0 to 90
- decreases from 120 to 180
- What is the natural parameterization



Viscous curl field



(Shadmehr & Mussa-Ivaldi 1994, J. Neurosci.)

Representation from generalization: Dynamic

- 1. Test: Movements over entire workspace
- 2. Learning
 - Right-hand workspace
 - Viscous field
- 3. Test: Movements over left workspace



Two possible interpretations force = f(hand velocity) or torque=f(joint velocity)

Joint-based learning of dynamics (Shadmehr & Mussa-Ivaldi 1994, J. Neurosci.)





Visuomotor coordinates



Representation-Visuomotor

- 1. Test: Pointing accuracy to a set of targets
- 2. Learning

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- visuomotor remapping
- feedback only at one target



3. Test: Pointing accuracy to a set of targets

Predictions of eye-centred spherical coordinates



- Extent of generalization
- Coordinate system of transformations

Altering dynamics: Viscous curl field



Late with force

Removal of force

Stiffness control

A muscle activation levels sets the spring constant *k* (or resting length) of the muscle



Equilibrium point control

- Set of muscle activations (*k*₁,*k*₂,*k*₃...) defines a posture
- CNS learns a spatial mapping
 - e.g. hand positions muscle activations

 $(x,y,z) \qquad \longrightarrow \qquad (k_1,k_2,k_3...)$



Equilibrium control



The hand stiffness can vary with muscle activation levels.

Controlling stiffness



Burdet et al (Nature, 2002)

Stiffness ellipses



- Internal models to learn stable tasks
- Stiffness for unpredictable tasks

Summary

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Wolpert-lab papers on www.wolpertlab.com

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