

MATH 216: FOUNDATIONS OF ALGEBRAIC GEOMETRY

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

I can illustrate the ... approach with the ... image of a nut to be opened. The first analogy that came to my mind is of immersing the nut in some softening liquid, and why not simply water? From time to time you rub so the liquid penetrates better, and otherwise you let time pass. The shell becomes more flexible through weeks and months — when the time is ripe, hand pressure is enough, the shell opens like a perfectly ripened avocado!

A different image came to me a few weeks ago. The unknown thing to be known appeared to me as some stretch of earth or hard marl, resisting penetration ... the sea advances insensibly in silence, nothing seems to happen, nothing moves, the water is so far off you hardly hear it ... yet finally it surrounds the resistant substance.

— Grothendieck, *Récoltes et Semailles* p. 552-3, translation by Colin McLarty

1.1 Goals

These are an updated version of notes accompanying a hard year-long class taught at Stanford in 2009-2010. I am currently editing them and adding a few more sections, and I hope a reasonably complete (if somewhat rough) version over the 2010-11 academic year at the site <http://math216.wordpress.com/>.

In any class, choices must be made as to what the course is about, and who it is for — there is a finite amount of time, and any addition of material or explanation or philosophy requires a corresponding subtraction. So these notes are highly inappropriate for most people and most classes. Here are my goals. (I do not claim that these goals are achieved; but they motivate the choices made.)

These notes currently have a very particular audience in mind: Stanford Ph.D. students, postdocs and faculty in a variety of fields, who may want to use algebraic geometry in a sophisticated way. This includes algebraic and arithmetic geometers, but also topologists, number theorists, symplectic geometers, and others.

The notes deal purely with the algebraic side of the subject, and completely neglect analytic aspects.

They assume little prior background (see §1.2), and indeed most students have little prior background. Readers with less background will necessarily have to work harder. It would be great if the reader had seen varieties before, but many students haven't, and the course does not assume it — and similarly for category theory, homological algebra, more advanced commutative algebra, differential geometry, Surprisingly often, what we need can be developed quickly from scratch. The cost is that the course is much denser; the benefit is that more people can follow it; they don't reach a point where they get thrown. (On the other hand, people who already have some familiarity with algebraic geometry, but want to

understand the foundations more completely should not be bored, and will focus on more subtle issues.)

The notes seek to cover everything that one should see in a first course in the subject, including theorems, proofs, and examples.

They seek to be complete, and not leave important results as black boxes pulled from other references.

There are lots of exercises. I have found that unless I have some problems I can think through, ideas don't get fixed in my mind. Some are trivial — that's okay, and even desirable. As few necessary ones as possible should be hard, but the reader should have the background to deal with them — they are not just an excuse to push material out of the text.

There are optional (starred \star) sections of topics worth knowing on a second or third (but not first) reading. You should not read double-starred sections ($\star\star$) unless you really really want to, but you should be aware of their existence.

The notes are intended to be readable, although certainly not easy reading.

In short, after a year of hard work, students should have a broad familiarity with the foundations of the subject, and be ready to attend seminars, and learn more advanced material. They should not just have a vague intuitive understanding of the ideas of the subject; they should know interesting examples, know why they are interesting, and be able to prove interesting facts about them.

I have greatly enjoyed thinking through these notes, and teaching the corresponding classes, in a way I did not expect. I have had the chance to think through the structure of algebraic geometry from scratch, not blindly accepting the choices made by others. (Why do we need this notion? Aha, this forces us to consider this other notion earlier, and now I see why this third notion is so relevant...) I have repeatedly realized that ideas developed in Paris in the 1960's are simpler than I initially believed, once they are suitably digested.

1.1.1. Implications. We will work with as much generality as we need for most readers, and no more. In particular, we try to have hypotheses that are as general as possible without making proofs harder. The right hypotheses can make a proof easier, not harder, because one can remember how they get used. As an inflammatory example, the notion of quasiseparated comes up early and often. The cost is that one extra word has to be remembered, on top of an overwhelming number of other words. But once that is done, it is not hard to remember that essentially every scheme anyone cares about is quasiseparated. Furthermore, whenever the hypotheses "quasicompact and quasiseparated" turn up, the reader will likely immediately see a key idea of the proof.

Similarly, there is no need to work over an algebraically closed field, or even a field. Geometers needn't be afraid of arithmetic examples or of algebraic examples; a central insight of algebraic geometry is that the same formalism applies without change.

1.1.2. Costs. Choosing these priorities requires that others be shortchanged, and it is best to be up front about these. Because of our goal is to be comprehensive, and to understand everything one should know after a first course, it will necessarily take longer to get to interesting sample applications. You may be misled into thinking that one has to work this hard to get to these applications — it is not true!

1.2 Background and conventions

All rings are assumed to be commutative unless explicitly stated otherwise. All rings are assumed to contain a unit, denoted 1. Maps of rings must send 1 to 1. We don't require that $0 \neq 1$; in other words, the "0-ring" (with one element) is a ring. (There is a ring map from any ring to the 0-ring; the 0-ring only maps to itself. The 0-ring is the final object in the category of rings.) We accept the axiom of choice. In particular, any proper ideal in a ring is contained in a maximal ideal. (The axiom of choice also arises in the argument that the category of A -modules has enough injectives, see Exercise 23.2.E.)

The reader should be familiar with some basic notions in commutative ring theory, in particular the notion of ideals (including prime and maximal ideals) and localization. For example, the reader should be able to show that if S is a multiplicative set of a ring A (which we assume to contain 1), then the primes of $S^{-1}A$ are in natural bijection with those primes of A not meeting S (§4.2.6). Tensor products and exact sequences of A -modules will be important. We will use the notation (A, \mathfrak{m}) or (A, \mathfrak{m}, k) for local rings — A is the ring, \mathfrak{m} its maximal ideal, and $k = A/\mathfrak{m}$ its residue field. We will use (in Proposition 14.7.1) the structure theorem for finitely generated modules over a principal ideal domain A : any such module can be written as the direct sum of principal modules $A/(a)$.

1.2.1. Caution about on foundational issues. We will not concern ourselves with subtle foundational issues (set-theoretic issues involving universes, etc.). It is true that some people should be careful about these issues. (If you are one of these rare people, a good start is [KS, §1.1].)

1.2.2. Further background. It may be helpful to have books on other subjects handy that you can dip into for specific facts, rather than reading them in advance. In commutative algebra, Eisenbud [E] is good for this. Other popular choices are Atiyah-Macdonald [AM] and Matsumura [M-CRT]. For homological algebra, Weibel [W] is simultaneously detailed and readable.

Background from other parts of mathematics (topology, geometry, complex analysis) will of course be helpful for developing intuition.

Finally, it may help to keep the following quote in mind.

Algebraic geometry seems to have acquired the reputation of being esoteric, exclusive, and very abstract, with adherents who are secretly plotting to take over all the rest of mathematics. In one respect this last point is accurate.

— David Mumford

Part I

Preliminaries

CHAPTER 2

Some category theory

That which does not kill me, makes me stronger. — Nietzsche

2.1 Motivation

Before we get to any interesting geometry, we need to develop a language to discuss things cleanly and effectively. This is best done in the language of categories. There is not much to know about categories to get started; it is just a very useful language. Like all mathematical languages, category theory comes with an embedded logic, which allows us to abstract intuitions in settings we know well to far more general situations.

Our motivation is as follows. We will be creating some new mathematical objects (such as schemes, and certain kinds of sheaves), and we expect them to act like objects we have seen before. We could try to nail down precisely what we mean by “act like”, and what minimal set of things we have to check in order to verify that they act the way we expect. Fortunately, we don’t have to — other people have done this before us, by defining key notions, such as *abelian categories*, which behave like modules over a ring.

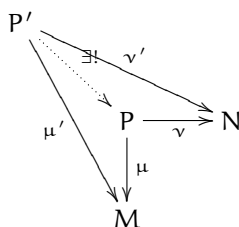
Our general approach will be as follows. I will try to tell what you need to know, and no more. (This I promise: if I use the word “topoi”, you can shoot me.) I will begin by telling you things you already know, and describing what is essential about the examples, in a way that we can abstract a more general definition. We will then see this definition in less familiar settings, and get comfortable with using it to solve problems and prove theorems.

For example, we will define the notion of *product* of schemes. We could just give a definition of product, but then you should want to know why this precise definition deserves the name of “product”. As a motivation, we revisit the notion of product in a situation we know well: (the category of) sets. One way to define the product of sets U and V is as the set of ordered pairs $\{(u, v) : u \in U, v \in V\}$. But someone from a different mathematical culture might reasonably define it as the set of symbols $\{u^v : u \in U, v \in V\}$. These notions are “obviously the same”. Better: there is “an obvious bijection between the two”.

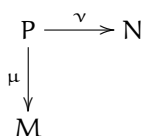
This can be made precise by giving a better definition of product, in terms of a *universal property*. Given two sets M and N , a product is a set P , along with maps $\mu : P \rightarrow M$ and $\nu : P \rightarrow N$, such that for any set P' with maps $\mu' : P' \rightarrow M$ and

$\nu' : P' \rightarrow N$, these maps must factor *uniquely* through P :

(2.1.0.1)

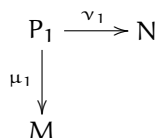


(The symbol \exists means “there exists”, and the symbol $!$ here means “unique”.) Thus a **product** is a *diagram*

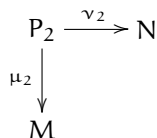


and not just a set P , although the maps μ and ν are often left implicit.

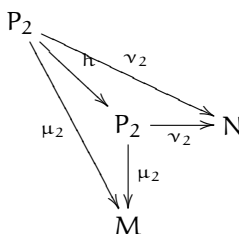
This definition agrees with the traditional definition, with one twist: there isn't just a single product; but any two products come with a *unique* isomorphism between them. In other words, the product is unique up to unique isomorphism. Here is why: if you have a product



and I have a product



then by the universal property of my product (letting (P_2, μ_2, ν_2) play the role of (P, μ, ν) , and (P_1, μ_1, ν_1) play the role of (P', μ', ν') in (2.1.0.1)), there is a unique map $f : P_1 \rightarrow P_2$ making the appropriate diagram commute (i.e. $\mu_1 = \mu_2 \circ f$ and $\nu_1 = \nu_2 \circ f$). Similarly by the universal property of your product, there is a unique map $g : P_2 \rightarrow P_1$ making the appropriate diagram commute. Now consider the universal property of my product, this time letting (P_2, μ_2, ν_2) play the role of both (P, μ, ν) and (P', μ', ν') in (2.1.0.1). There is a unique map $h : P_2 \rightarrow P_2$ such that



commutes. However, I can name two such maps: the identity map id_{P_2} , and $g \circ f$. Thus $g \circ f = \text{id}_{P_2}$. Similarly, $f \circ g = \text{id}_{P_1}$. Thus the maps f and g arising from

the universal property are bijections. In short, there is a unique bijection between P_1 and P_2 preserving the “product structure” (the maps to M and N). This gives us the right to name any such product $M \times N$, since any two such products are uniquely identified.

This definition has the advantage that it works in many circumstances, and once we define categories, we will soon see that the above argument applies verbatim in any category to show that products, if they exist, are unique up to unique isomorphism. Even if you haven’t seen the definition of category before, you can verify that this agrees with your notion of product in some category that you have seen before (such as the category of vector spaces, where the maps are taken to be linear maps; or the category of smooth manifolds, where the maps are taken to be smooth maps).

This is handy even in cases that you understand. For example, one way of defining the product of two manifolds M and N is to cut them both up into charts, then take products of charts, then glue them together. But if I cut up the manifolds in one way, and you cut them up in another, how do we know our resulting manifolds are the “same”? We could wave our hands, or make an annoying argument about refining covers, but instead, we should just show that they are “categorical products” and hence canonically the “same” (i.e. isomorphic). We will formalize this argument in §2.3.

Another set of notions we will abstract are categories that “behave like modules”. We will want to define kernels and cokernels for new notions, and we should make sure that these notions behave the way we expect them to. This leads us to the definition of *abelian categories*, first defined by Grothendieck in his Tôhoku paper [Gr].

In this chapter, we’ll give an informal introduction to these and related notions, in the hope of giving just enough familiarity to comfortably use them in practice.

2.2 Categories and functors

We begin with an informal definition of categories and functors.

2.2.1. Categories.

A **category** consists of a collection of **objects**, and for each pair of objects, a set of maps, or **morphisms** (or **arrows** or **maps**), between them. The collection of objects of a category \mathcal{C} are often denoted $\text{obj}(\mathcal{C})$, but we will usually denote the collection also by \mathcal{C} . If $A, B \in \mathcal{C}$, then the morphisms from A to B are denoted $\text{Mor}(A, B)$. A morphism is often written $f : A \rightarrow B$, and A is said to be the **source** of f , and B the **target** of f . (Of course, $\text{Mor}(A, B)$ is taken to be disjoint from $\text{Mor}(A', B')$ unless $A = A'$ and $B = B'$.)

Morphisms compose as expected: there is a composition $\text{Mor}(A, B) \times \text{Mor}(B, C) \rightarrow \text{Mor}(A, C)$, and if $f \in \text{Mor}(A, B)$ and $g \in \text{Mor}(B, C)$, then their composition is denoted $g \circ f$. Composition is associative: if $f \in \text{Mor}(A, B)$, $g \in \text{Mor}(B, C)$, and $h \in \text{Mor}(C, D)$, then $h \circ (g \circ f) = (h \circ g) \circ f$. For each object $A \in \mathcal{C}$, there is always an **identity morphism** $\text{id}_A : A \rightarrow A$, such that when you (left- or right-)compose a morphism with the identity, you get the same morphism. More precisely, if $f : A \rightarrow B$ is a morphism, then $f \circ \text{id}_A = f = \text{id}_B \circ f$. (If you wish, you may check

that “identity morphisms are unique”: there is only one morphism deserving the name id_A .)

If we have a category, then we have a notion of **isomorphism** between two objects (a morphism $f : A \rightarrow B$ such that there exists some — necessarily unique — morphism $g : B \rightarrow A$, where $f \circ g$ and $g \circ f$ are the identity on B and A respectively), and a notion of **automorphism** of an object (an isomorphism of the object with itself).

2.2.2. Example. The prototypical example to keep in mind is the category of sets, denoted *Sets*. The objects are sets, and the morphisms are maps of sets. (Because Russell’s paradox shows that there is no set of all sets, we did not say earlier that there is a set of all objects. But as stated in §1.2, we are deliberately omitting all set-theoretic issues.)

2.2.3. Example. Another good example is the category Vec_k of vector spaces over a given field k . The objects are k -vector spaces, and the morphisms are linear transformations. (What are the isomorphisms?)

2.2.A. UNIMPORTANT EXERCISE. A category in which each morphism is an isomorphism is called a **groupoid**. (This notion is not important in these notes. The point of this exercise is to give you some practice with categories, by relating them to an object you know well.)

(a) A perverse definition of a group is: a groupoid with one object. Make sense of this.

(b) Describe a groupoid that is not a group.

2.2.B. EXERCISE. If A is an object in a category \mathcal{C} , show that the invertible elements of $\text{Mor}(A, A)$ form a group (called the **automorphism group of A** , denoted $\text{Aut}(A)$). What are the automorphism groups of the objects in Examples 2.2.2 and 2.2.3? Show that two isomorphic objects have isomorphic automorphism groups. (For readers with a topological background: if X is a topological space, then the fundamental groupoid is the category where the objects are points of X , and the morphisms $x \rightarrow y$ are paths from x to y , up to homotopy. Then the automorphism group of x_0 is the (pointed) fundamental group $\pi_1(X, x_0)$. In the case where X is connected, and $\pi_1(X)$ is not abelian, this illustrates the fact that for a connected groupoid — whose definition you can guess — the automorphism groups of the objects are all isomorphic, but not canonically isomorphic.)

2.2.4. Example: abelian groups. The abelian groups, along with group homomorphisms, form a category *Ab*.

2.2.5. Important example: modules over a ring. If A is a ring, then the A -modules form a category Mod_A . (This category has additional structure; it will be the prototypical example of an *abelian category*, see §2.6.) Taking $A = k$, we obtain Example 2.2.3; taking $A = \mathbb{Z}$, we obtain Example 2.2.4.

2.2.6. Example: rings. There is a category *Rings*, where the objects are rings, and the morphisms are morphisms of rings (which send 1 to 1 by our conventions, §1.2).

2.2.7. Example: topological spaces. The topological spaces, along with continuous maps, form a category *Top*. The isomorphisms are homeomorphisms.

In all of the above examples, the objects of the categories were in obvious ways sets with additional structure. This needn't be the case, as the next example shows.

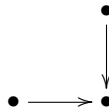
2.2.8. Example: partially ordered sets. A **partially ordered set**, or **poset**, is a set S along with a binary relation \geq on S satisfying:

- (i) $x \geq x$ (reflexivity),
- (ii) $x \geq y$ and $y \geq z$ imply $x \geq z$ (transitivity), and
- (iii) if $x \geq y$ and $y \geq x$ then $x = y$.

A partially ordered set (S, \geq) can be interpreted as a category whose objects are the elements of S , and with a single morphism from x to y if and only if $x \geq y$ (and no morphism otherwise).

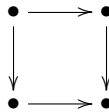
A trivial example is (S, \geq) where $x \geq y$ if and only if $x = y$. Another example is

(2.2.8.1)



Here there are three objects. The identity morphisms are omitted for convenience, and the two non-identity morphisms are depicted. A third example is

(2.2.8.2)



Here the “obvious” morphisms are again omitted: the identity morphisms, and the morphism from the upper left to the lower right. Similarly,



depicts a partially ordered set, where again, only the “generating morphisms” are depicted.

2.2.9. Example: the category of subsets of a set, and the category of open sets in a topological space. If X is a set, then the subsets form a partially ordered set, where the order is given by inclusion. Similarly, if X is a topological space, then the *open* sets form a partially ordered set, where the order is given by inclusion.

2.2.10. Example. A **subcategory** \mathcal{A} of a category \mathcal{B} has as its objects some of the objects of \mathcal{B} , and some of the morphisms, such that the morphisms of \mathcal{A} include the identity morphisms of the objects of \mathcal{A} , and are closed under composition. (For example, (2.2.8.1) is in an obvious way a subcategory of (2.2.8.2).)

2.2.11. Functors.

A **covariant functor** F from a category \mathcal{A} to a category \mathcal{B} , denoted $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$, is the following data. It is a map of objects $F : \text{obj}(\mathcal{A}) \rightarrow \text{obj}(\mathcal{B})$, and for each $A_1, A_2 \in \mathcal{A}$, and morphism $m : A_1 \rightarrow A_2$, a morphism $F(m) : F(A_1) \rightarrow F(A_2)$ in \mathcal{B} . We require that F preserves identity morphisms (for $A \in \mathcal{A}$, $F(\text{id}_A) = \text{id}_{F(A)}$), and that F preserves composition ($F(m_1 \circ m_2) = F(m_1) \circ F(m_2)$). (You may wish to verify that covariant functors send isomorphisms to isomorphisms.)

If $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ and $G : \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$ are covariant functors, then we define a functor $G \circ F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$ in the obvious way. Composition of functors is associative in an evident sense.

2.2.12. Example: a forgetful functor. Consider the functor from the category of vector spaces (over a field k) Vec_k to $Sets$, that associates to each vector space its underlying set. The functor sends a linear transformation to its underlying map of sets. This is an example of a **forgetful functor**, where some additional structure is forgotten. Another example of a forgetful functor is $Mod_A \rightarrow Ab$ from A -modules to abelian groups, remembering only the abelian group structure of the A -module.

2.2.13. Topological examples. Examples of covariant functors include the fundamental group functor π_1 , which sends a topological space X with choice of a point $x_0 \in X$ to a group $\pi_1(X, x_0)$ (what are the objects and morphisms of the source category?), and the i th homology functor $Top \rightarrow Ab$, which sends a topological space X to its i th homology group $H_i(X, \mathbb{Z})$. The covariance corresponds to the fact that a (continuous) morphism of pointed topological spaces $f : X \rightarrow Y$ with $f(x_0) = y_0$ induces a map of fundamental groups $\pi_1(X, x_0) \rightarrow \pi_1(Y, y_0)$, and similarly for homology groups.

2.2.14. Example. Suppose A is an object in a category \mathcal{C} . Then there is a functor $h^A : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow Sets$ sending $B \in \mathcal{C}$ to $Mor(A, B)$, and sending $f : B_1 \rightarrow B_2$ to $Mor(A, B_1) \rightarrow Mor(A, B_2)$ described by

$$[g : A \rightarrow B_1] \mapsto [f \circ g : A \rightarrow B_1 \rightarrow B_2].$$

This seemingly silly functor ends up surprisingly being an important concept, and will come up repeatedly for us. (Warning only for experts: this is strictly speaking a lie: why should $Mor(A, B)$ be a set? But as stated in Caution 1.2.1, we will deliberately ignore these foundational issues, and we will in general pass them by without comment. Feel free to patch the problem on your time, perhaps by working in a *small category*, defined in §2.4.1. But don't be distracted from our larger goal.)

2.2.15. Full and faithful functors. A covariant functor $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ is **faithful** if for all $A, A' \in \mathcal{A}$, the map $Mor_{\mathcal{A}}(A, A') \rightarrow Mor_{\mathcal{B}}(F(A), F(A'))$ is injective, and **full** if it is surjective. A functor that is full and faithful is **fully faithful**. A subcategory $\mathcal{i} : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ is a **full subcategory** if \mathcal{i} is full. Thus a subcategory \mathcal{A}' of \mathcal{A} is full if and only if for all $A, B \in \text{obj}(\mathcal{A}')$, $Mor_{\mathcal{A}'}(A, B) = Mor_{\mathcal{A}}(A, B)$.

2.2.16. Definition. A **contravariant functor** is defined in the same way as a covariant functor, except the arrows switch directions: in the above language, $F(A_1 \rightarrow A_2)$ is now an arrow from $F(A_2)$ to $F(A_1)$. (Thus $\mathcal{F}(m_2 \circ m_1) = \mathcal{F}(m_1) \circ \mathcal{F}(m_2)$, not $\mathcal{F}(m_2) \circ \mathcal{F}(m_1)$.)

It is wise to always state whether a functor is covariant or contravariant. If it is not stated, the functor is often assumed to be covariant.

(Sometimes people describe a contravariant functor $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{D}$ as a covariant functor $\mathcal{C}^{\text{opp}} \rightarrow \mathcal{D}$, where \mathcal{C}^{opp} is the same category as \mathcal{C} except that the arrows go in the opposite direction. Here \mathcal{C}^{opp} is said to be the **opposite category** to \mathcal{C} .)

2.2.17. Linear algebra example. If Vec_k is the category of k -vector spaces (introduced in Example 2.2.12), then taking duals gives a contravariant functor $\cdot^\vee : \text{Vec}_k \rightarrow \text{Vec}_k$. Indeed, to each linear transformation $f : V \rightarrow W$, we have a dual transformation $f^\vee : W^\vee \rightarrow V^\vee$, and $(f \circ g)^\vee = g^\vee \circ f^\vee$.

2.2.18. Topological example (cf. Example 2.2.13). The i th cohomology functor $H^i(\cdot, \mathbb{Z}) : \text{Top} \rightarrow \text{Ab}$ is a contravariant functor.

2.2.19. Example. There is a contravariant functor $\text{Top} \rightarrow \text{Rings}$ taking a topological space X to the real-valued continuous functions on X . A morphism of topological spaces $X \rightarrow Y$ (a continuous map) induces the pullback map from functions on Y to maps on X .

2.2.20. Example (cf. Example 2.2.14). Suppose A is an object of a category \mathcal{C} . Then there is a contravariant functor $h_A : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \text{Sets}$ sending $B \in \mathcal{C}$ to $\text{Mor}(B, A)$, and sending the morphism $f : B_1 \rightarrow B_2$ to the morphism $\text{Mor}(B_2, A) \rightarrow \text{Mor}(B_1, A)$ via

$$[g : B_2 \rightarrow A] \mapsto [g \circ f : B_1 \rightarrow B_2 \rightarrow A].$$

This example initially looks weird and different, but Examples 2.2.17 and 2.2.19 may be interpreted as special cases; do you see how? What is A in each case?

2.2.21. * Natural transformations (and natural isomorphisms) of functors, and equivalences of categories.

(This notion won't come up in an essential way until at least Chapter 7, so you shouldn't read this section until then.) Suppose F and G are two functors from \mathcal{A} to \mathcal{B} . A **natural transformation of functors** $F \rightarrow G$ is the data of a morphism $m_a : F(a) \rightarrow G(a)$ for each $a \in \mathcal{A}$ such that for each $f : a \rightarrow a'$ in \mathcal{A} , the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} F(a) & \xrightarrow{F(f)} & F(a') \\ m_a \downarrow & & \downarrow m_{a'} \\ G(a) & \xrightarrow{G(f)} & G(a') \end{array}$$

commutes. A **natural isomorphism** of functors is a natural transformation such that each m_a is an isomorphism. The data of functors $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ and $F' : \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ such that $F \circ F'$ is naturally isomorphic to the identity functor $I_{\mathcal{B}}$ on \mathcal{B} and $F' \circ F$ is naturally isomorphic to $I_{\mathcal{A}}$ is said to be an **equivalence of categories**. "Equivalence of categories" is an equivalence relation on categories. The right meaning of when two categories are "essentially the same" is not isomorphism (a functor giving bijections of objects and morphisms) but an equivalence. Exercises 2.2.C and 2.2.D might give you some vague sense of this. Later exercises (for example, that "rings" and "affine schemes" are essentially the same, once arrows are reversed, Exercise 7.3.D) may help too.

Two examples might make this strange concept more comprehensible. The double dual of a finite-dimensional vector space V is *not* V , but we learn early to say that it is canonically isomorphic to V . We can make that precise as follows. Let $f.d.\text{Vec}_k$ be the category of finite-dimensional vector spaces over k . Note that this category contains oodles of vector spaces of each dimension.

2.2.C. EXERCISE. Let $\cdot^{\vee\vee} : f.d.Vec_k \rightarrow f.d.Vec_k$ be the double dual functor from the category of finite-dimensional vector spaces over k to itself. Show that $\cdot^{\vee\vee}$ is naturally isomorphic to the identity functor on $f.d.Vec_k$. (Without the finite-dimensional hypothesis, we only get a natural transformation of functors from id to $\cdot^{\vee\vee}$.)

Let \mathcal{V} be the category whose objects are k^n for each n (there is one vector space for each n), and whose morphisms are linear transformations. This latter space can be thought of as vector spaces with bases, and the morphisms are honest matrices. There is an obvious functor $\mathcal{V} \rightarrow f.d.Vec_k$, as each k^n is a finite-dimensional vector space.

2.2.D. EXERCISE. Show that $\mathcal{V} \rightarrow f.d.Vec_k$ gives an equivalence of categories, by describing an “inverse” functor. (Recall that we are being cavalier about set-theoretic assumption, see Caution 1.2.1, so feel free to simultaneously choose bases for each vector space in $f.d.Vec_k$. To make this precise, you will need to use Godel-Bernays set theory or else replace $f.d.Vec_k$ with a very similar small category, but we won’t worry about this.)

2.2.22. ★★ *Aside for experts.* Your argument for Exercise 2.2.D will show that (modulo set-theoretic issues) this definition of equivalence of categories is the same as another one commonly given: a covariant functor $F : A \rightarrow B$ is an equivalence of categories if it is fully faithful and every object of B is isomorphic to an object of the form $F(a)$ (F is *essentially surjective*). One can show that such a functor has a *quasiinverse*, i.e., that there is a functor $G : B \rightarrow A$, which is also an equivalence, and for which there exist natural isomorphisms $G(F(A)) \cong A$ and $F(G(B)) \cong B$.

2.3 Universal properties determine an object up to unique isomorphism

Given some category that we come up with, we often will have ways of producing new objects from old. In good circumstances, such a definition can be made using the notion of a *universal property*. Informally, we wish that there were an object with some property. We first show that if it exists, then it is essentially unique, or more precisely, is unique up to unique isomorphism. Then we go about constructing an example of such an object to show existence.

Explicit constructions are sometimes easier to work with than universal properties, but with a little practice, universal properties are useful in proving things quickly and slickly. Indeed, when learning the subject, people often find explicit construction more appealing, and use them more often in proofs, but as they become more experienced, find universal property arguments more elegant and insightful.

2.3.1. Products were defined by universal property. We have seen one important example of a universal property argument already in §2.1: products. You should go back and verify that our discussion there gives a notion of product in any category, and shows that products, *if they exist*, are unique up to unique isomorphism.

2.3.2. Initial, final, and zero objects. Here are some simple but useful concepts that will give you practice with universal property arguments. An object of a category \mathcal{C} is an **initial object** if it has precisely one map to every object. It is a **final object** if it has precisely one map from every object. It is a **zero object** if it is both an initial object and a final object.

2.3.A. EXERCISE. Show that any two initial objects are uniquely isomorphic. Show that any two final objects are uniquely isomorphic.

In other words, *if* an initial object exists, it is unique up to unique isomorphism, and similarly for final objects. This (partially) justifies the phrase “*the* initial object” rather than “*an* initial object”, and similarly for “*the* final object” and “*the* zero object”.

2.3.B. EXERCISE. What are the initial and final objects in *Sets*, *Rings*, and *Top* (if they exist)? How about in the two examples of §2.2.9?

2.3.3. Localization of rings and modules. Another important example of a definition by universal property is the notion of *localization* of a ring. We first review a constructive definition, and then reinterpret the notion in terms of universal property. A multiplicative subset S of a ring A is a subset closed under multiplication containing 1. We define a ring $S^{-1}A$. The elements of $S^{-1}A$ are of the form a/s where $a \in A$ and $s \in S$, and define $(a_1/s_1) \times (a_2/s_2) = (a_1 a_2)/(s_1 s_2)$, and $(a_1/s_1) + (a_2/s_2) = (s_2 a_1 + s_1 a_2)/(s_1 s_2)$. We say that $a_1/s_1 = a_2/s_2$ if *for some* $s \in S$, $s(s_2 a_1 - s_1 a_2) = 0$. (This implies that $S^{-1}A$ is the 0-ring if $0 \in S$.) We have a canonical map $A \rightarrow S^{-1}A$ given by $a \mapsto a/1$.

There are two particularly important flavors of multiplicative subsets. The first is $\{1, f, f^2, \dots\}$, where $f \in A$. This localization is denoted A_f . The second is $A - \mathfrak{p}$, where \mathfrak{p} is a prime ideal. This localization $S^{-1}A$ is denoted $A_{\mathfrak{p}}$. (Notational warning: If \mathfrak{p} is a prime ideal, then $A_{\mathfrak{p}}$ means you’re allowed to divide by elements not in \mathfrak{p} . However, if $f \in A$, A_f means you’re allowed to divide by f . This can be confusing. For example, if (f) is a prime ideal, then $A_f \neq A_{(f)}$.)

2.3.C. EXERCISE. Verify that $A \rightarrow S^{-1}A$ satisfies the following universal property: $S^{-1}A$ is initial among A -algebras B where every element of S is sent to a unit in B . (Recall: the data of “an A -algebra B ” and “a ring map $A \rightarrow B$ ” the same.) Translation: any map $A \rightarrow B$ where every element of S is sent to a unit must factor uniquely through $A \rightarrow S^{-1}A$.

Warning: sometimes localization is first introduced in the special case where A is an integral domain. In that case, $A \hookrightarrow S^{-1}A$, but this isn’t always true, as shown by the following result.

2.3.D. EXERCISE. Show that $A \rightarrow S^{-1}A$ is injective if and only if S contains no zero-divisors. (A **zero-divisor** of a ring A is an element a such that there is a non-zero element b with $ab = 0$. The other elements of A are called **non-zero-divisors**. For example, a unit is never a zero-divisor. Counter-intuitively, 0 is a zero-divisor in a ring A if and only if A is not the 0-ring.)

In fact, it is cleaner to *define* $A \rightarrow S^{-1}A$ by this universal property, and to show that it exists, and to use the universal property to check various properties

$S^{-1}A$ has. Let's get some practice with this by *defining* localizations of modules by universal property. Suppose M is an A -module. We define the A -module map $\phi : M \rightarrow S^{-1}M$ as being initial among A -module maps $M \rightarrow N$ such that elements of S are invertible in N ($s \times \cdot : N \rightarrow N$ is an isomorphism for all $s \in S$). More precisely, any such map $\alpha : M \rightarrow N$ factors uniquely through ϕ :

$$\begin{array}{ccc} M & \xrightarrow{\phi} & S^{-1}M \\ & \searrow \alpha & \downarrow \exists! \\ & & N \end{array}$$

Translation: $M \rightarrow S^{-1}M$ is universal (initial) among A -module maps from M to modules that are actually $S^{-1}A$ -modules.

Notice: (i) this determines $\phi : M \rightarrow S^{-1}M$ up to unique isomorphism (you should think through what this means); (ii) we are defining not only $S^{-1}M$, but also the map ϕ at the same time; and (iii) essentially by definition the A -module structure on $S^{-1}M$ extends to an $S^{-1}A$ -module structure.

2.3.E. EXERCISE. Show that $\phi : M \rightarrow S^{-1}M$ exists, by constructing something satisfying the universal property. Hint: define elements of $S^{-1}M$ to be of the form m/s where $m \in M$ and $s \in S$, and $m_1/s_1 = m_2/s_2$ if and only if for some $s \in S$, $s(s_2m_1 - s_1m_2) = 0$. Define the additive structure by $(m_1/s_1) + (m_2/s_2) = (s_2m_1 + s_1m_2)/(s_1s_2)$, and the $S^{-1}A$ -module structure (and hence the A -module structure) is given by $(a_1/s_1) \circ (m_2/s_2) = (a_1m_2)/(s_1s_2)$.

2.3.F. EXERCISE. Show that localization commutes with finite products. In other words, if M_1, \dots, M_n are A -modules, describe an isomorphism $S^{-1}(M_1 \times \dots \times M_n) \rightarrow S^{-1}M_1 \times \dots \times S^{-1}M_n$. Show that localization does not necessarily commute with infinite products. (Hint: $(1, 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, \dots) \in \mathbb{Q} \times \mathbb{Q} \times \dots$)

2.3.4. Tensor products. Another important example of a universal property construction is the notion of a **tensor product** of A -modules

$$\otimes_A : \quad \text{obj}(\text{Mod}_A) \times \text{obj}(\text{Mod}_A) \longrightarrow \text{obj}(\text{Mod}_A)$$

$$(M, N) \longmapsto M \otimes_A N$$

The subscript A is often suppressed when it is clear from context. The tensor product is often defined as follows. Suppose you have two A -modules M and N . Then elements of the tensor product $M \otimes_A N$ are finite A -linear combinations of symbols $m \otimes n$ ($m \in M$, $n \in N$), subject to relations $(m_1 + m_2) \otimes n = m_1 \otimes n + m_2 \otimes n$, $m \otimes (n_1 + n_2) = m \otimes n_1 + m \otimes n_2$, $a(m \otimes n) = (am) \otimes n = m \otimes (an)$ (where $a \in A$, $m_1, m_2 \in M$, $n_1, n_2 \in N$). More formally, $M \otimes_A N$ is the free A -module generated by $M \times N$, quotiented by the submodule generated by $(m_1 + m_2) \otimes n - m_1 \otimes n - m_2 \otimes n$, $m \otimes (n_1 + n_2) - m \otimes n_1 - m \otimes n_2$, $a(m \otimes n) - (am) \otimes n$, and $a(m \otimes n) - m \otimes (an)$ for $a \in A$, $m, m_1, m_2 \in M$, $n, n_1, n_2 \in N$.

If A is a field k , we recover the tensor product of vector spaces.

2.3.G. EXERCISE (IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN TENSOR PRODUCTS BEFORE). Calculate $\mathbb{Z}/(10) \otimes_{\mathbb{Z}} \mathbb{Z}/(12)$. (This exercise is intended to give some hands-on practice with tensor products.)

2.3.H. IMPORTANT EXERCISE: RIGHT-EXACTNESS OF $\cdot \otimes_A N$. Show that $\cdot \otimes_A N$ gives a covariant functor $Mod_A \rightarrow Mod_A$. Show that $\cdot \otimes_A N$ is a **right-exact functor**, i.e. if

$$M' \rightarrow M \rightarrow M'' \rightarrow 0$$

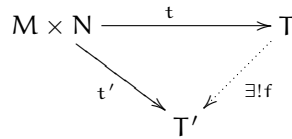
is an exact sequence of A -modules (which means $f : M \rightarrow M''$ is surjective, and M' surjects onto the kernel of f ; see §2.6), then the induced sequence

$$M' \otimes_A N \rightarrow M \otimes_A N \rightarrow M'' \otimes_A N \rightarrow 0$$

is also exact. This exercise is repeated in Exercise 2.6.F, but you may get a lot out of doing it now. (You will be reminded of the definition of right-exactness in §2.6.4.)

The constructive definition \otimes is a weird definition, and really the “wrong” definition. To motivate a better one: notice that there is a natural A -bilinear map $M \times N \rightarrow M \otimes_A N$. (If $M, N, P \in Mod_A$, a map $f : M \times N \rightarrow P$ is **A -bilinear** if $f(m_1 + m_2, n) = f(m_1, n) + f(m_2, n)$, $f(m, n_1 + n_2) = f(m, n_1) + f(m, n_2)$, and $f(am, n) = f(m, an) = af(m, n)$.) Any A -bilinear map $M \times N \rightarrow C$ factors through the tensor product uniquely: $M \times N \rightarrow M \otimes_A N \rightarrow C$. (Think this through!)

We can take this as the *definition* of the tensor product as follows. It is an A -module T along with an A -bilinear map $t : M \times N \rightarrow T$, such that given any A -bilinear map $t' : M \times N \rightarrow T'$, there is a unique A -linear map $f : T \rightarrow T'$ such that $t' = f \circ t$.



2.3.I. EXERCISE. Show that $(T, t : M \times N \rightarrow T)$ is unique up to unique isomorphism. Hint: first figure out what “unique up to unique isomorphism” means for such pairs. Then follow the analogous argument for the product.

In short: given M and N , there is an A -bilinear map $t : M \times N \rightarrow M \otimes_A N$, unique up to unique isomorphism, defined by the following universal property: for any A -bilinear map $t' : M \times N \rightarrow T'$ there is a unique A -linear map $f : M \otimes_A N \rightarrow T'$ such that $t' = f \circ t$.

As with all universal property arguments, this argument shows uniqueness *assuming existence*. To show existence, we need an explicit construction.

2.3.J. EXERCISE. Show that the construction of §2.3.4 satisfies the universal property of tensor product.

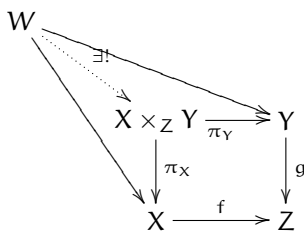
The two exercises below are some useful facts about tensor products with which you should be familiar.

2.3.K. IMPORTANT EXERCISE. (a) If M is an A -module and $A \rightarrow B$ is a morphism of rings, show that $B \otimes_A M$ naturally has the structure of a B -module. Show that this describes a functor $Mod_A \rightarrow Mod_B$.

(b) If further $A \rightarrow C$ is a morphism of rings, show that $B \otimes_A C$ has the structure of a ring. Hint: multiplication will be given by $(b_1 \otimes c_1)(b_2 \otimes c_2) = (b_1 b_2) \otimes (c_1 c_2)$. (Exercise 2.3.T will interpret this construction as a coproduct.)

2.3.L. IMPORTANT EXERCISE. If S is a multiplicative subset of A and M is an A -module, describe a natural isomorphism $(S^{-1}A) \otimes_A M \cong S^{-1}M$ (as $S^{-1}A$ -modules and as A -modules).

2.3.5. Important Example: Fibered products. (This notion will be essential later.) Suppose we have morphisms $f : X \rightarrow Z$ and $g : Y \rightarrow Z$ (in *any* category). Then the **fibered product** is an object $X \times_Z Y$ along with morphisms $\pi_X : X \times_Z Y \rightarrow X$ and $\pi_Y : X \times_Z Y \rightarrow Y$, where the two compositions $f \circ \pi_X, g \circ \pi_Y : X \times_Z Y \rightarrow Z$ agree, such that given any object W with maps to X and Y (whose compositions to Z agree), these maps factor through some unique $W \rightarrow X \times_Z Y$:



(Warning: the definition of the fibered product depends on f and g , even though they are omitted from the notation $X \times_Z Y$.)

By the usual universal property argument, if it exists, it is unique up to unique isomorphism. (You should think this through until it is clear to you.) Thus the use of the phrase “the fibered product” (rather than “a fibered product”) is reasonable, and we should reasonably be allowed to give it the name $X \times_Z Y$. We know what maps to it are: they are precisely maps to X and maps to Y that agree as maps to Z .

Depending on your religion, the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X \times_Z Y & \xrightarrow{\pi_Y} & Y \\ \downarrow \pi_X & & \downarrow g \\ X & \xrightarrow{f} & Z \end{array}$$

is called a **fibered/pullback/Cartesian diagram/square** (six possibilities).

The right way to interpret the notion of fibered product is first to think about what it means in the category of sets.

2.3.M. EXERCISE. Show that in *Sets*,

$$X \times_Z Y = \{(x \in X, y \in Y) : f(x) = g(y)\}.$$

More precisely, show that the right side, equipped with its evident maps to X and Y , satisfies the universal property of the fibered product. (This will help you build intuition for fibered products.)

2.3.N. EXERCISE. If X is a topological space, show that fibered products always exist in the category of open sets of X , by describing what a fibered product is. (Hint: it has a one-word description.)

2.3.O. EXERCISE. If Z is the final object in a category \mathcal{C} , and $X, Y \in \mathcal{C}$, show that “ $X \times_Z Y = X \times Y$ ”: “the” fibered product over Z is uniquely isomorphic to “the” product. (This is an exercise about unwinding the definition.)

2.3.P. USEFUL EXERCISE: TOWERS OF FIBER DIAGRAMS ARE FIBER DIAGRAMS. If the two squares in the following commutative diagram are fiber diagrams, show that the “outside rectangle” (involving U, V, Y , and Z) is also a fiber diagram.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} U & \longrightarrow & V \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ W & \longrightarrow & X \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ Y & \longrightarrow & Z \end{array}$$

2.3.Q. EXERCISE. Given $X \rightarrow Y \rightarrow Z$, show that there is a natural morphism $X \times_Y X \rightarrow X \times_Z X$, assuming that both fibered products exist. (This is trivial once you figure out what it is saying. The point of this exercise is to see why it is trivial.)

2.3.R. USEFUL EXERCISE: THE MAGIC DIAGRAM. Suppose we are given morphisms $X_1, X_2 \rightarrow Y$ and $Y \rightarrow Z$. Describe the natural morphism $X_1 \times_Y X_2 \rightarrow X_1 \times_Z X_2$. Show that the following diagram is a fibered square.

$$\boxed{\begin{array}{ccc} X_1 \times_Y X_2 & \longrightarrow & X_1 \times_Z X_2 \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ Y & \longrightarrow & Y \times_Z Y \end{array}}$$

This diagram is surprisingly incredibly useful — so useful that we will call it the **magic diagram**.

2.3.6. Coproducts. Define **coproduct** in a category by reversing all the arrows in the definition of product. Define **fibered coproduct** in a category by reversing all the arrows in the definition of fibered product.

2.3.S. EXERCISE. Show that coproduct for *Sets* is disjoint union. (This is why we use the notation \coprod for disjoint union.)

2.3.T. EXERCISE. Suppose $A \rightarrow B, C$ are two ring morphisms, so in particular B and C are A -modules. Recall (Exercise 2.3.K) that $B \otimes_A C$ has a ring structure. Show that there is a natural morphism $B \rightarrow B \otimes_A C$ given by $b \mapsto b \otimes 1$. (This is not necessarily an inclusion, see Exercise 2.3.G.) Similarly, there is a natural morphism $C \rightarrow B \otimes_A C$. Show that this gives a fibered coproduct on rings, i.e. that

$$\begin{array}{ccc} B \otimes_A C & \longleftarrow & C \\ \uparrow & & \uparrow \\ B & \longleftarrow & A \end{array}$$

satisfies the universal property of fibered coproduct.

2.3.7. Monomorphisms and epimorphisms.

2.3.8. Definition. A morphism $f : X \rightarrow Y$ is a **monomorphism** if any two morphisms $g_1, g_2 : Z \rightarrow X$ such that $f \circ g_1 = f \circ g_2$ must satisfy $g_1 = g_2$. In other words, for any other object Z , the natural map $\text{Hom}(Z, X) \rightarrow \text{Hom}(Z, Y)$ is an injection. This is a generalization of an injection of sets. In other words, there is at most one way of filling in the dotted arrow so that the following diagram commutes.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & Z & \\ & \downarrow \text{dotted} & \searrow \\ \leq 1 & & \\ & X & \xrightarrow{f} Y. \end{array}$$

Intuitively, it is the categorical version of an injective map, and indeed this notion generalizes the familiar notion of injective maps of sets. (The reason we don't use the word "injective" is that in some contexts, "injective" will have an intuitive meaning which may not agree with "monomorphism". This is also the case with "epimorphism" vs. "surjective".)

2.3.U. EXERCISE. Show that the composition of two monomorphisms is a monomorphism.

2.3.V. EXERCISE. Prove that a morphism $X \rightarrow Y$ is a monomorphism if and only if the induced morphism $X \rightarrow X \times_Y X$ is an isomorphism. We may then take this as the definition of monomorphism. (Monomorphisms aren't central to future discussions, although they will come up again. This exercise is just good practice.)

2.3.W. EXERCISE. Suppose $Y \rightarrow Z$ is a monomorphism, and $X_1, X_2 \rightarrow Y$ are two morphisms. Show that $X_1 \times_Y X_2$ and $X_1 \times_Z X_2$ are canonically isomorphic. We will use this later when talking about fibered products. (Hint: for any object V , give a natural bijection between maps from V to the first and maps from V to the second. It is also possible to use the magic diagram, Exercise 2.3.R.)

The notion of an **epimorphism** is "dual" to the definition of monomorphism, where all the arrows are reversed. This concept will not be central for us, although it turns up in the definition of an abelian category. Intuitively, it is the categorical version of a surjective map.

2.3.9. Representable functors and Yoneda's lemma. Much of our discussion about universal properties can be cleanly expressed in terms of representable functors, under the rubric of "Yoneda's Lemma". Yoneda's lemma is an easy fact stated in a complicated way. Informally speaking, you can essentially recover an object in a category by knowing the maps into it. For example, we have seen that the data of maps to $X \times Y$ are naturally (canonically) the data of maps to X and to Y . Indeed, we now taken this as the *definition* of $X \times Y$.

Recall Example 2.2.20. Suppose A is an object of category \mathcal{C} . For any object $C \in \mathcal{C}$, we have a set of morphisms $\text{Mor}(C, A)$. If we have a morphism $f : B \rightarrow C$, we get a map of sets

$$(2.3.9.1) \quad \text{Mor}(C, A) \rightarrow \text{Mor}(B, A),$$

by composition: given a map from C to A , we get a map from B to A by precomposing with $f : B \rightarrow C$. Hence this gives a contravariant functor $h_A : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathit{Sets}$. Yoneda's Lemma states that the functor h_A determines A up to unique isomorphism. More precisely:

2.3.X. IMPORTANT EXERCISE THAT EVERYONE SHOULD DO ONCE IN THEIR LIFE (YONEDA'S LEMMA). Given two objects A and A' in a category \mathcal{C} , and bijections

$$(2.3.9.2) \quad i_C : \text{Mor}(C, A) \rightarrow \text{Mor}(C, A')$$

that commute with the maps (2.3.9.1). Prove i_C is induced from a unique isomorphism $A \rightarrow A'$. (Hint: This sounds hard, but it really is not. This statement is so general that there are really only a couple of things that you could possibly try. For example, if you're hoping to find an isomorphism $A \rightarrow A'$, where will you find it? Well, you are looking for an element $\text{Mor}(A, A')$. So just plug in $C = A$ to (2.3.9.2), and see where the identity goes. You will quickly find the desired morphism; show that it is an isomorphism, then show that it is unique.)

There is an analogous statement with the arrows reversed, where instead of maps into A , you think of maps *from* A . The role of the contravariant functor h_A of Example 2.2.20 is played by the covariant functor h^A of Example 2.2.14. Because the proof is the same (with the arrows reversed), you needn't think it through.

Yoneda's lemma properly refers to a more general statement. Although it looks more complicated, it is no harder to prove.

2.3.Y. ★ EXERCISE.

(a) Suppose A and B are objects in a category \mathcal{C} . Give a bijection between the natural transformations $h^A \rightarrow h^B$ of covariant functors $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathit{Sets}$ (see Example 2.2.14 for the definition) and the morphisms $B \rightarrow A$.

(b) State and prove the corresponding fact for contravariant functors h_A (see Exercise 2.2.20). Remark: A contravariant functor F from \mathcal{C} to Sets is said to be **representable** if there is a natural isomorphism

$$\xi : F \xrightarrow{\sim} h_A .$$

Thus the representing object A is determined up to unique isomorphism by the pair (F, ξ) . There is a similar definition for covariant functors. (We will revisit this in §7.6, and this problem will appear again as Exercise 7.6.B.)

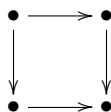
(c) **Yoneda's lemma.** Suppose F is a covariant functor $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathit{Sets}$, and $A \in \mathcal{C}$. Give a bijection between the natural transformations $h^A \rightarrow F$ and $F(A)$. State the corresponding fact for contravariant functors.

In fancy terms, Yoneda's lemma states the following. Given a category \mathcal{C} , we can produce a new category, called the *functor category* of \mathcal{C} , where the objects are contravariant functors $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathit{Sets}$, and the morphisms are natural transformations of such functors. We have a functor (which we can usefully call h) from \mathcal{C} to its functor category, which sends A to h_A . Yoneda's Lemma states that this is a fully faithful functor, called the *Yoneda embedding*. (Fully faithful functors were defined in §2.2.15.)

2.4 Limits and colimits

Limits and colimits provide two important examples defined by universal properties. They generalize a number of familiar constructions. I'll give the definition first, and then show you why it is familiar. For example, fractions will be motivating examples of colimits (Exercise 2.4.B(a)), and the p-adic numbers (Example 2.4.3) will be motivating examples of limits.

2.4.1. Limits. We say that a category is a **small category** if the objects and the morphisms are sets. (This is a technical condition intended only for experts.) Suppose \mathcal{I} is any small category, and \mathcal{C} is any category. Then a functor $F : \mathcal{I} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$ (i.e. with an object $A_i \in \mathcal{C}$ for each element $i \in \mathcal{I}$, and appropriate commuting morphisms dictated by \mathcal{I}) is said to be a **diagram indexed by \mathcal{I}** . We call \mathcal{I} an **index category**. Our index categories will be partially ordered sets (Example 2.2.8), in which in particular there is at most one morphism between any two objects. (But other examples are sometimes useful.) For example, if \square is the category



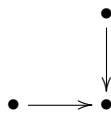
and \mathcal{A} is a category, then a functor $\square \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ is precisely the data of a commuting square in \mathcal{A} .

Then the **limit** is an object $\varprojlim_{\mathcal{I}} A_i$ of \mathcal{C} along with morphisms $f_j : \varprojlim_{\mathcal{I}} A_i \rightarrow A_j$ such that if $m : j \rightarrow k$ is a morphism in \mathcal{I} , then

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \varprojlim_{\mathcal{I}} A_i & & \\ f_j \downarrow & \searrow f_k & \\ A_j & \xrightarrow{F(m)} & A_k \end{array}$$

commutes, and this object and maps to each A_i are universal (final) with respect to this property. More precisely, given any other object W along with maps $g_i : W \rightarrow A_i$ commuting with the $F(m)$ (if $m : i \rightarrow j$ is a morphism in \mathcal{I} , then $g_j = F(m) \circ g_i$), then there is a unique map $g : W \rightarrow \varprojlim_{\mathcal{I}} A_i$ so that $g_i = f_i \circ g$ for all i . (In some cases, the limit is sometimes called the **inverse limit** or **projective limit**. We won't use this language.) By the usual universal property argument, if the limit exists, it is unique up to unique isomorphism.

2.4.2. Examples: products. For example, if \mathcal{I} is the partially ordered set



we obtain the fibered product.

If \mathcal{I} is

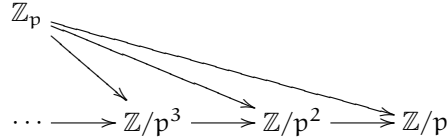


we obtain the product.

If \mathcal{I} is a set (i.e. the only morphisms are the identity maps), then the limit is called the **product** of the A_i , and is denoted $\prod_i A_i$. The special case where \mathcal{I} has two elements is the example of the previous paragraph.

If \mathcal{I} has an initial object e , then A_e is the limit, and in particular the limit always exists.

2.4.3. Example: the p -adic numbers. The p -adic numbers, \mathbb{Z}_p , are often described informally (and somewhat unnaturally) as being of the form $\mathbb{Z}_p = ? + ?p + ?p^2 + ?p^3 + \dots$. They are an example of a limit in the category of rings:



Limits do not always exist for any index category \mathcal{I} . However, you can often easily check that limits exist if the objects of your category can be interpreted as sets with additional structure, and arbitrary products exist (respecting the set-like structure).

2.4.A. IMPORTANT EXERCISE. Show that in the category *Sets*,

$$\left\{ (a_i)_{i \in I} \in \prod_i A_i : F(m)(a_i) = a_j \text{ for all } m \in \text{Mor}_{\mathcal{I}}(i, j) \in \text{Mor}(\mathcal{I}) \right\},$$

along with the obvious projection maps to each A_i , is the limit $\varprojlim_{\mathcal{I}} A_i$.

This clearly also works in the category Mod_A of A -modules, and its specializations such as Vec_k and Ab .

From this point of view, $2 + 3p + 2p^2 + \dots \in \mathbb{Z}_p$ can be understood as the sequence $(2, 2 + 3p, 2 + 3p + 2p^2, \dots)$.

2.4.4. Colimits. More immediately relevant for us will be the dual (arrow-reversed version) of the notion of limit (or inverse limit). We just flip all the arrows in that definition, and get the notion of a **colimit**. Again, if it exists, it is unique up to unique isomorphism. (In some cases, the colimit is sometimes called the **direct limit**, **inductive limit**, or **injective limit**. We won't use this language. I prefer using limit/colimit in analogy with kernel/cokernel and product/coproduct. This is more than analogy, as kernels and products may be interpreted as limits, and similarly with cokernels and coproducts. Also, I remember that kernels "map to", and cokernels are "mapped to", which reminds me that a limit maps *to* all the objects in the big commutative diagram indexed by \mathcal{I} ; and a colimit has a map *from* all the objects.)

Even though we have just flipped the arrows, colimits behave quite differently from limits.

2.4.5. Example. The group $5^{-\infty}\mathbb{Z}$ of rational numbers whose denominators are powers of 5 is a colimit $\varinjlim 5^{-i}\mathbb{Z}$. More precisely, $5^{-\infty}\mathbb{Z}$ is the colimit of

$$\mathbb{Z} \longrightarrow 5^{-1}\mathbb{Z} \longrightarrow 5^{-2}\mathbb{Z} \longrightarrow \dots$$

The colimit over an index set I is called the **coproduct**, denoted $\coprod_i A_i$, and is the dual (arrow-reversed) notion to the product.

2.4.B. EXERCISE. (a) Interpret the statement “ $\mathbb{Q} = \varinjlim \frac{1}{n}\mathbb{Z}$ ”. (b) Interpret the union of the some subsets of a given set as a colimit. (Dually, the intersection can be interpreted as a limit.) The objects of the category in question are the subsets of the given set.

Colimits don’t always exist, but there are two useful large classes of examples for which they do.

2.4.6. Definition. A nonempty partially ordered set (S, \geq) is **filtered** (or is said to be a **filtered set**) if for each $x, y \in S$, there is a z such that $x \geq z$ and $y \geq z$. More generally, a category \mathcal{I} is **filtered** if:

- (i) for each $x, y \in \mathcal{I}$, there is a $z \in \mathcal{I}$ and arrows $x \rightarrow z$ and $y \rightarrow z$, and
- (ii) for every two arrows $u, v : x \rightarrow y$, there is an arrow $w : y \rightarrow z$ such that $w \circ u = w \circ v$.

(Other terminologies are also commonly used, such as “directed partially ordered set” and “filtered index category”, respectively.)

2.4.C. EXERCISE. Suppose \mathcal{I} is filtered. (We will be almost exclusively using the case where \mathcal{I} is a filtered set.) Show that any diagram in *Sets* indexed by \mathcal{I} has the following as a colimit:

$$\left\{ a \in \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} A_i \right\} / (a_i \in A_i) \sim (f(a_i) \in A_j) \text{ for every } f : A_i \rightarrow A_j \text{ in the diagram.}$$

This idea applies to many categories whose objects can be interpreted as sets with additional structure (such as abelian groups, A -modules, groups, etc.). For example, in Example 2.4.5, each element of the colimit is an element of something upstairs, but you can’t say in advance what it is an element of. For example, $17/125$ is an element of the $5^{-3}\mathbb{Z}$ (or $5^{-4}\mathbb{Z}$, or later ones), but not $5^{-2}\mathbb{Z}$. More generally, in the category of A -modules Mod_A , each element a of the colimit $\varinjlim A_i$ can be interpreted as an element of *some* $a \in A_i$. The element $a \in \varinjlim A_i$ is 0 if there is some $m : i \rightarrow j$ such that $F(m)(a) = 0$ (i.e. if it becomes 0 “later in the diagram”). Furthermore, two elements interpreted as $a_i \in A_i$ and $a_j \in A_j$ are the same if there are some arrows $m : i \rightarrow k$ and $n : j \rightarrow k$ such that $F(m)(a_i) = F(n)(a_j)$, i.e. if they become the same “later in the diagram”. To add two elements interpreted as $a_i \in A_i$ and $a_j \in A_j$, we choose arrows $m : i \rightarrow k$ and $n : j \rightarrow k$, and then interpret their sum as $F(m)(a_i) + F(n)(a_j)$.

2.4.D. EXERCISE. Verify that the A -module described above is indeed the colimit.

2.4.E. USEFUL EXERCISE (LOCALIZATION AS COLIMIT). Generalize Exercise 2.4.B(a) to interpret localization of a ring as a colimit over a filtered set: suppose S is a multiplicative set of A , and interpret $S^{-1}A = \varinjlim \frac{1}{s}A$ where the limit is over $s \in S$.

A variant of this construction works without the filtered condition, if you have another means of “connecting elements in different objects of your diagram”. For example:

2.4.F. EXERCISE: COLIMITS OF A -MODULES WITHOUT THE FILTERED CONDITION. Suppose you are given a diagram of A -modules indexed by \mathcal{I} : $F : \mathcal{I} \rightarrow Mod_A$,

where we let $A_i := F(i)$. Show that the colimit is $\bigoplus_{i \in \mathcal{I}} A_i$ modulo the relations $a_j - F(m)(a_i)$ for every $m : i \rightarrow j$ in \mathcal{I} (i.e. for every arrow in the diagram).

The following exercise shows that you have to be careful to remember which category you are working in.

2.4.G. UNIMPORTANT EXERCISE. Consider the filtered set of abelian groups $p^{-n}\mathbb{Z}_p/\mathbb{Z}_p$. Show that this system has colimit $\mathbb{Q}_p/\mathbb{Z}_p$ in the category of abelian groups, and the colimit 0 in the category of finite abelian groups. Here \mathbb{Q}_p is the fraction field of \mathbb{Z}_p , which can be interpreted as $\cup p^{-n}\mathbb{Z}_p$.

2.4.7. Summary. One useful thing to informally keep in mind is the following. In a category where the objects are “set-like”, an element of a limit can be thought of as an element in each object in the diagram, that are “compatible” (Exercise 2.4.A). And an element of a colimit can be thought of (“has a representative that is”) an element of a single object in the diagram (Exercise 2.4.C). Even though the definitions of limit and colimit are the same, just with arrows reversed, these interpretations are quite different.

2.5 Adjoints

We next come to an very useful construction closely related to universal properties. Just as a universal property “essentially” (up to unique isomorphism) determines an object in a category (assuming such an object exists), “adjoints” essentially determine a functor (again, assuming it exists). Two *covariant* functors $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ and $G : \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ are **adjoint** if there is a natural bijection for all $A \in \mathcal{A}$ and $B \in \mathcal{B}$

$$(2.5.0.1) \quad \tau_{AB} : \text{Mor}_{\mathcal{B}}(F(A), B) \rightarrow \text{Mor}_{\mathcal{A}}(A, G(B)).$$

We say that (F, G) form an **adjoint pair**, and that F is **left-adjoint** to G (and G is **right-adjoint** to F). By “natural” we mean the following. For all $f : A \rightarrow A'$ in \mathcal{A} , we require

$$(2.5.0.2) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} \text{Mor}_{\mathcal{B}}(F(A'), B) & \xrightarrow{Ff^*} & \text{Mor}_{\mathcal{B}}(F(A), B) \\ \downarrow \tau_{A'B} & & \downarrow \tau_{AB} \\ \text{Mor}_{\mathcal{A}}(A', G(B)) & \xrightarrow{f^*} & \text{Mor}_{\mathcal{A}}(A, G(B)) \end{array}$$

to commute, and for all $g : B \rightarrow B'$ in \mathcal{B} we want a similar commutative diagram to commute. (Here f^* is the map induced by $f : A \rightarrow A'$, and Ff^* is the map induced by $Ff : F(A) \rightarrow F(A')$.)

2.5.A. EXERCISE. Write down what this diagram should be. (Hint: do it by extending diagram (2.5.0.2) above.)

2.5.B. EXERCISE. Show that the map τ_{AB} (2.5.0.1) is given as follows. For each A there is a map $\eta_A : A \rightarrow GF(A)$ so that for any $g : F(A) \rightarrow B$, the corresponding

$f : A \rightarrow G(B)$ is given by the composition

$$A \xrightarrow{\eta_A} GF(A) \xrightarrow{Gg} G(B).$$

Similarly, there is a map $\epsilon_B : FG(B) \rightarrow B$ for each B so that for any $f : A \rightarrow G(B)$, the corresponding map $g : F(A) \rightarrow B$ is given by the composition

$$F(A) \xrightarrow{Ff} FG(B) \xrightarrow{\epsilon_B} B.$$

Here is an example of an adjoint pair.

2.5.C. EXERCISE. Suppose $M, N,$ and P are A -modules. Describe a bijection $\text{Hom}_A(M \otimes_A N, P) \leftrightarrow \text{Hom}_A(M, \text{Hom}_A(N, P))$. (Hint: try to use the universal property.)

2.5.D. EXERCISE. Show that $\cdot \otimes_A N$ and $\text{Hom}_A(N, \cdot)$ are adjoint functors.

2.5.1. ★ Fancier remarks we won't use. You can check that the left adjoint determines the right adjoint up to unique natural isomorphism, and vice versa, by a universal property argument. The maps η_A and ϵ_B of Exercise 2.5.B are called the **unit** and **counit** of the adjunction. This leads to a different characterization of adjunction. Suppose functors $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ and $G : \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ are given, along with natural transformations $\epsilon : FG \rightarrow \text{id}$ and $\eta : \text{id} \rightarrow GF$ with the property that $G\epsilon \circ \eta G = \text{id}_G$ (for each $B \in \mathcal{B}$, the composition of $\eta_{G(B)} : G(B) \rightarrow GFG(B)$ and $G(\epsilon_B) : GFG(B) \rightarrow G(B)$ is the identity) and $\eta F \circ F\epsilon = \text{id}_F$. Then you can check that F is left adjoint to G . These facts aren't hard to check, so if you want to use them, you should verify everything for yourself.

2.5.2. Examples from other fields. For those familiar with representation theory: Frobenius reciprocity may be understood in terms of adjoints. Suppose V is a finite-dimensional representation of a finite group G , and W is a representation of a subgroup $H < G$. Then induction and restriction are an adjoint pair $(\text{Ind}_H^G, \text{Res}_H^G)$ between the category of G -modules and the category of H -modules.

Topologists' favorite adjoint pair may be the suspension functor and the loop space functor.

2.5.3. Example: groupification. Here is another motivating example: getting an abelian group from an abelian semigroup. An abelian semigroup is just like an abelian group, except you don't require an inverse. One example is the non-negative integers $0, 1, 2, \dots$ under addition. Another is the positive integers under multiplication $1, 2, \dots$. From an abelian semigroup, you can create an abelian group. Here is a formalization of that notion. If S is a semigroup, then its **groupification** is a map of semigroups $\pi : S \rightarrow G$ such that G is a group, and any other map of semigroups from S to a group G' factors *uniquely* through G .

$$\begin{array}{ccc} S & \longrightarrow & G \\ & \searrow \pi & \downarrow \exists! \\ & & G' \end{array}$$

2.5.E. EXERCISE. Construct groupification H from the category of abelian semigroups to the category of abelian groups. (One possibility of a construction: given an abelian semigroup S , the elements of its groupification $H(S)$ are (a, b) , which you may think of as $a - b$, with the equivalence that $(a, b) \sim (c, d)$ if $a + d + e = b + c + e$ for some $e \in S$. Describe addition in this group, and show that it satisfies the properties of an abelian group. Describe the semigroup map $S \rightarrow H(S)$.) Let F be the forgetful morphism from the category of abelian groups Ab to the category of abelian semigroups. Show that H is left-adjoint to F .

(Here is the general idea for experts: We have a full subcategory of a category. We want to “project” from the category to the subcategory. We have

$$\text{Mor}_{\text{category}}(S, H) = \text{Mor}_{\text{subcategory}}(G, H)$$

automatically; thus we are describing the left adjoint to the forgetful functor. How the argument worked: we constructed something which was in the smaller category, which automatically satisfies the universal property.)

2.5.F. EXERCISE. Show that if a semigroup is *already* a group then the identity morphism is the groupification (“the semigroup is groupified by itself”), by the universal property. (Perhaps better: the identity morphism is *a* groupification — but we don’t want tie ourselves up in knots over categorical semantics.)

2.5.G. EXERCISE. The purpose of this exercise is to give you some practice with “adjoints of forgetful functors”, the means by which we get groups from semigroups, and sheaves from presheaves. Suppose A is a ring, and S is a multiplicative subset. Then $S^{-1}A$ -modules are a fully faithful subcategory of the category of A -modules (meaning: the objects of the first category are a subset of the objects of the second; and the morphisms between any two objects of the second that are secretly objects of the first are just the morphisms from the first). Then $M \rightarrow S^{-1}M$ can be interpreted as an adjoint to the forgetful functor $S^{-1}M \rightarrow M$. Figure out the correct statement (e.g. which is the left adjoint?), and prove that it holds.

(Here is the larger story. Every $S^{-1}A$ -module is an A -module, and this is an injective map, so we have a covariant forgetful functor $F : \text{Mod}_{S^{-1}A} \rightarrow \text{Mod}_A$. In fact this is a fully faithful functor: it is injective on objects, and the morphisms between any two $S^{-1}A$ -modules *as A -modules* are just the same when they are considered as $S^{-1}A$ -modules. Then there is a functor $G : \text{Mod}_A \rightarrow \text{Mod}_{S^{-1}A}$, which might reasonably be called “localization with respect to S ”, which is left-adjoint to the forgetful functor. Translation: If M is an A -module, and N is an $S^{-1}A$ -module, then $\text{Mor}(GM, N)$ (morphisms as $S^{-1}A$ -modules, which are the same as morphisms as A -modules) are in natural bijection with $\text{Mor}(M, FN)$ (morphisms as A -modules).)

Here is a table of adjoints that will come up for us.

situation	category \mathcal{A}	category \mathcal{B}	left-adjoint $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$	right-adjoint $G : \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$
A-modules (Ex. 2.5.D)			$\cdot \otimes_A N$	$\text{Hom}_A(N, \cdot)$
ring maps $A \rightarrow B$	Mod_A	Mod_B	$\cdot \otimes_A B$ (extension of scalars)	forgetful (restriction of scalars)
(pre)sheaves on a topological space X (Ex. 3.4.K)	presheaves on X	sheaves on X	sheafification	forgetful
(semi)groups (§2.5.3)	semigroups	groups	groupification	forgetful
sheaves, $f : X \rightarrow Y$ (Ex. 3.6.B)	sheaves on Y	sheaves on X	f^{-1}	f_*
sheaves of abelian groups or \mathcal{O} -modules, open immersions $f : U \hookrightarrow Y$ (Ex. 3.6.H)	sheaves on U	sheaves on Y	$f_!$	f^{-1}
quasicoherent sheaves, $f : X \rightarrow Y$ (Prop. 17.3.5)	quasicoherent sheaves on Y	quasicoherent sheaves on X	f^*	f_*

Other examples will also come up, such as the adjoint pair (\sim, Γ_\bullet) between graded modules over a graded ring, and quasicoherent sheaves on the corresponding projective scheme (§16.4).

2.5.4. Useful comment for experts. One last comment only for people who have seen adjoints before: If (F, G) is an adjoint pair of functors, then F commutes with colimits, and G commutes with limits. Also, limits commute with limits and colimits commute with colimits. We will prove these facts (and a little more) in §2.6.10.

2.6 Kernels, cokernels, and exact sequences: A brief introduction to abelian categories

Since learning linear algebra, you have been familiar with the notions and behaviors of kernels, cokernels, etc. Later in your life you saw them in the category of abelian groups, and later still in the category of A -modules. Each of these notions generalizes the previous one.

We will soon define some new categories (certain sheaves) that will have familiar-looking behavior, reminiscent of that of modules over a ring. The notions of kernels, cokernels, images, and more will make sense, and they will behave “the way we expect” from our experience with modules. This can be made precise through the notion of an *abelian category*. Abelian categories are the right general setting in which one can do “homological algebra”, in which notions of kernel, cokernel, and so on are used, and one can work with complexes and exact sequences.

We will see enough to motivate the definitions that we will see in general: monomorphism (and subobject), epimorphism, kernel, cokernel, and image. But in these notes we will avoid having to show that they behave “the way we expect”

in a general abelian category because the examples we will see are directly interpretable in terms of modules over rings. In particular, it is not worth memorizing the definition of abelian category.

Two central examples of an abelian category are the category Ab of abelian groups, and the category Mod_A of A -modules. The first is a special case of the second (just take $A = \mathbb{Z}$). As we give the definitions, you should verify that Mod_A is an abelian category.

We first define the notion of *additive category*. We will use it only as a stepping stone to the notion of an abelian category.

2.6.1. Definition. A category \mathcal{C} is said to be **additive** if it satisfies the following properties.

- Ad1. For each $A, B \in \mathcal{C}$, $\text{Mor}(A, B)$ is an abelian group, such that composition of morphisms distributes over addition. (You should think about what this means — it translates to two distinct statements).
- Ad2. \mathcal{C} has a zero object, denoted 0 . (This is an object that is simultaneously an initial object and a final object, Definition 2.3.2.)
- Ad3. It has products of two objects (a product $A \times B$ for any pair of objects), and hence by induction, products of any finite number of objects.

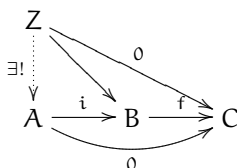
In an additive category, the morphisms are often called homomorphisms, and Mor is denoted by Hom . In fact, this notation Hom is a good indication that you're working in an additive category. A functor between additive categories preserving the additive structure of Hom , is called an **additive functor**.

2.6.2. Remarks. It is a consequence of the definition of additive category that finite direct products are also finite direct sums (coproducts) — the details don't matter to us. The symbol \oplus is used for this notion. Also, it is quick to show that additive functors send zero objects to zero objects (show that a is a 0-object if and only if $\text{id}_a = 0_a$; additive functors preserve both id and 0), and preserves products.

One motivation for the name 0-object is that the 0-morphism in the abelian group $\text{Hom}(A, B)$ is the composition $A \rightarrow 0 \rightarrow B$.

Real (or complex) Banach spaces are an example of an additive category. The category of free A -modules is another. The category of A -modules Mod_A is also an example, but it has even more structure, which we now formalize as an example of an abelian category.

2.6.3. Definition. Let \mathcal{C} be an additive category. A **kernel** of a morphism $f : B \rightarrow C$ is a map $i : A \rightarrow B$ such that $f \circ i = 0$, and that is universal with respect to this property. Diagrammatically:



(Note that the kernel is not just an object; it is a morphism of an object to B .) Hence it is unique up to unique isomorphism by universal property nonsense. A **cokernel** is defined dually by reversing the arrows — do this yourself. The kernel of

$f : B \rightarrow C$ is the limit (§2.4) of the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & & 0 \\ & & \downarrow \\ B & \xrightarrow{f} & C \end{array}$$

and similarly the cokernel is a colimit.

If $i : A \rightarrow B$ is a monomorphism, then we say that A is a **subobject** of B , where the map i is implicit. Dually, there is the notion of **quotient object**, defined dually to subobject.

An **abelian category** is an additive category satisfying three additional properties.

- (1) Every map has a kernel and cokernel.
- (2) Every monomorphism is the kernel of its cokernel.
- (3) Every epimorphism is the cokernel of its kernel.

It is a non-obvious (and imprecisely stated) fact that every property you want to be true about kernels, cokernels, etc. follows from these three. (Warning: in part of the literature, additional hypotheses are imposed as part of the definition.)

The **image** of a morphism $f : A \rightarrow B$ is defined as $\text{im}(f) = \ker(\text{coker } f)$. It is the unique factorization

$$A \xrightarrow{\text{epi.}} \text{im}(f) \xrightarrow{\text{mono.}} B$$

It is the cokernel of the kernel, and the kernel of the cokernel. The reader may want to verify this as an exercise. It is unique up to unique isomorphism. The cokernel of a monomorphism is called the **quotient**.

We will leave the foundations of abelian categories untouched. The key thing to remember is that if you understand kernels, cokernels, images and so on in the category of modules over a ring Mod_A , you can manipulate objects in any abelian category. This is made precise by Freyd-Mitchell Embedding Theorem. (The Freyd-Mitchell Embedding Theorem: If \mathcal{A} is an abelian category such that $\text{Hom}(a, a')$ is a set for all $a, a' \in \mathcal{A}$, then there is a ring A and an exact, fully faithful functor from \mathcal{A} into Mod_A , which embeds \mathcal{A} as a full subcategory. A proof is sketched in [W, §1.6], and references to a complete proof are given there. The moral is that to prove something about a diagram in some abelian category, we may pretend that it is a diagram of modules over some ring, and we may then “diagram-chase” elements. Moreover, any fact about kernels, cokernels, and so on that holds in Mod_A holds in any abelian category.) However, the abelian categories we will come across will obviously be related to modules, and our intuition will clearly carry over, so we needn’t invoke a theorem whose proof we haven’t read. For example, we’ll show that sheaves of abelian groups on a topological space X form an abelian category (§3.5), and the interpretation in terms of “compatible germs” will connect notions of kernels, cokernels etc. of sheaves of abelian groups to the corresponding notions of abelian groups.

2.6.4. Complexes, exactness, and homology.

We say a sequence

$$(2.6.4.1) \quad A \xrightarrow{f} B \xrightarrow{g} C$$

is a **complex** if $g \circ f = 0$, and is **exact** if $\ker g = \text{im } f$. An exact sequence with five terms, the first and last of which are 0, is a **short exact sequence**. Note that $A \xrightarrow{f} B \longrightarrow C \longrightarrow 0$ being exact is equivalent to describing C as a cokernel of f (with a similar statement for $0 \longrightarrow A \longrightarrow B \xrightarrow{g} C$).

If you would like practice in playing with these notions before thinking about homology, you can prove the Snake Lemma (stated in Example 2.7.5, with a stronger version in Exercise 2.7.B), or the Five Lemma (stated in Example 2.7.6, with a stronger version in Exercise 2.7.C).

If (2.6.4.1) is a complex, then its **homology** (often denoted H) is $\ker g / \text{im } f$. We say that the $\ker g$ are the **cycles**, and $\text{im } f$ are the **boundaries** (so homology is “cycles mod boundaries”). If the complex is indexed in decreasing order, the indices are often written as subscripts, and H_i is the homology at $A_{i+1} \rightarrow A_i \rightarrow A_{i-1}$. If the complex is indexed in increasing order, the indices are often written as superscripts, and the homology H^i at $A^{i-1} \rightarrow A^i \rightarrow A^{i+1}$ is often called **cohomology**.

An exact sequence

$$(2.6.4.2) \quad A^\bullet : \quad \cdots \longrightarrow A^{i-1} \xrightarrow{f^{i-1}} A^i \xrightarrow{f^i} A^{i+1} \xrightarrow{f^{i+1}} \cdots$$

can be “factored” into short exact sequences

$$0 \longrightarrow \ker f^i \longrightarrow A^i \longrightarrow \ker f^{i+1} \longrightarrow 0$$

which is helpful in proving facts about long exact sequences by reducing them to facts about short exact sequences.

More generally, if (2.6.4.2) is assumed only to be a complex, then it can be “factored” into short exact sequences.

$$(2.6.4.3) \quad 0 \longrightarrow \ker f^i \longrightarrow A^i \longrightarrow \text{im } f^i \longrightarrow 0$$

$$0 \longrightarrow \text{im } f^{i-1} \longrightarrow \ker f^i \longrightarrow H^i(A^\bullet) \longrightarrow 0$$

2.6.A. EXERCISE. Describe exact sequences

$$(2.6.4.4) \quad 0 \longrightarrow \text{im } f^i \longrightarrow A^{i+1} \longrightarrow \text{coker } f^i \longrightarrow 0$$

$$0 \longrightarrow H^i(A^\bullet) \longrightarrow \text{coker } f^{i-1} \longrightarrow \text{im } f^i \longrightarrow 0$$

(These are somehow dual to (2.6.4.3). In fact in some mirror universe this might have been given as the standard definition of homology.)

2.6.B. EXERCISE. Suppose

$$0 \xrightarrow{d^0} A^1 \xrightarrow{d^1} \cdots \xrightarrow{d^{n-1}} A^n \xrightarrow{d^n} 0$$

is a complex of finite-dimensional k -vector spaces (often called A^\bullet for short). Show that $\sum (-1)^i \dim A^i = \sum (-1)^i h^i(A^\bullet)$. (Recall that $h^i(A^\bullet) = \dim \ker(d^i) / \text{im}(d^{i-1})$.) In particular, if A^\bullet is exact, then $\sum (-1)^i \dim A^i = 0$. (If you haven’t dealt much with cohomology, this will give you some practice.)

2.6.C. IMPORTANT EXERCISE. Suppose \mathcal{C} is an abelian category. Define the category $\text{Com}_{\mathcal{C}}$ as follows. The objects are infinite complexes

$$A^{\bullet} : \quad \cdots \longrightarrow A^{i-1} \xrightarrow{f^{i-1}} A^i \xrightarrow{f^i} A^{i+1} \xrightarrow{f^{i+1}} \cdots$$

in \mathcal{C} , and the morphisms $A^{\bullet} \rightarrow B^{\bullet}$ are commuting diagrams

$$(2.6.4.5) \quad \begin{array}{ccccccc} A^{\bullet} : & \cdots & \longrightarrow & A^{i-1} & \xrightarrow{f^{i-1}} & A^i & \xrightarrow{f^i} & A^{i+1} & \xrightarrow{f^{i+1}} & \cdots \\ \downarrow & & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \\ B^{\bullet} : & \cdots & \longrightarrow & B^{i-1} & \xrightarrow{g^{i-1}} & B^i & \xrightarrow{g^i} & B^{i+1} & \xrightarrow{g^{i+1}} & \cdots \end{array}$$

Show that $\text{Com}_{\mathcal{C}}$ is an abelian category. (Feel free to deal with the special case $\text{Mod}_{\mathcal{A}}$.)

2.6.D. IMPORTANT EXERCISE. Show that (2.6.4.5) induces a map of homology $H(A^i) \rightarrow H(B^i)$. (Again, feel free to deal with the special case $\text{Mod}_{\mathcal{A}}$.)

We will later define when two maps of complexes are *homotopic* (§23.1), and show that homotopic maps induce isomorphisms on cohomology (Exercise 23.1.A), but we won't need that any time soon.

2.6.5. Theorem (Long exact sequence). — *A short exact sequence of complexes*

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 0^{\bullet} : & \cdots & \longrightarrow & 0 & \longrightarrow & 0 & \longrightarrow & 0 & \longrightarrow & \cdots \\ \downarrow & & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \\ A^{\bullet} : & \cdots & \longrightarrow & A^{i-1} & \xrightarrow{f^{i-1}} & A^i & \xrightarrow{f^i} & A^{i+1} & \xrightarrow{f^{i+1}} & \cdots \\ \downarrow & & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \\ B^{\bullet} : & \cdots & \longrightarrow & B^{i-1} & \xrightarrow{g^{i-1}} & B^i & \xrightarrow{g^i} & B^{i+1} & \xrightarrow{g^{i+1}} & \cdots \\ \downarrow & & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \\ C^{\bullet} : & \cdots & \longrightarrow & C^{i-1} & \xrightarrow{h^{i-1}} & C^i & \xrightarrow{h^i} & C^{i+1} & \xrightarrow{h^{i+1}} & \cdots \\ \downarrow & & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \\ 0^{\bullet} : & \cdots & \longrightarrow & 0 & \longrightarrow & 0 & \longrightarrow & 0 & \longrightarrow & \cdots \end{array}$$

induces a long exact sequence in cohomology

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \cdots & \longrightarrow & H^{i-1}(C^{\bullet}) & \longrightarrow & & & \\ & & & & & & \\ H^i(A^{\bullet}) & \longrightarrow & H^i(B^{\bullet}) & \longrightarrow & H^i(C^{\bullet}) & \longrightarrow & \\ & & & & & & \\ H^{i+1}(A^{\bullet}) & \longrightarrow & \cdots & & & & \end{array}$$

(This requires a definition of the *connecting homomorphism* $H^{i-1}(C^{\bullet}) \rightarrow H^i(A^{\bullet})$, which is natural in an appropriate sense.) For a concise proof in the case of complexes of modules, and a discussion of how to show this in general, see [W, §1.3]. It

will also come out of our discussion of spectral sequences as well (again, in the category of modules over a ring), see Exercise 2.7.E, but this is a somewhat perverse way of proving it.

2.6.6. Exactness of functors. If $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ is a covariant additive functor from one abelian category to another, we say that F is **right-exact** if the exactness of

$$A' \longrightarrow A \longrightarrow A'' \longrightarrow 0,$$

in \mathcal{A} implies that

$$F(A') \longrightarrow F(A) \longrightarrow F(A'') \longrightarrow 0$$

is also exact. Dually, we say that F is **left-exact** if the exactness of

$$0 \longrightarrow A' \longrightarrow A \longrightarrow A'' \qquad \text{implies}$$

$$0 \longrightarrow F(A') \longrightarrow F(A) \longrightarrow F(A'') \qquad \text{is exact.}$$

A contravariant functor is **left-exact** if the exactness of

$$A' \longrightarrow A \longrightarrow A'' \longrightarrow 0 \qquad \text{implies}$$

$$0 \longrightarrow F(A'') \longrightarrow F(A) \longrightarrow F(A') \qquad \text{is exact.}$$

The reader should be able to deduce what it means for a contravariant functor to be **right-exact**.

A covariant or contravariant functor is **exact** if it is both left-exact and right-exact.

2.6.E. EXERCISE. Suppose F is an exact functor. Show that applying F to an exact sequence preserves exactness. For example, if F is covariant, and $A' \rightarrow A \rightarrow A''$ is exact, then $FA' \rightarrow FA \rightarrow FA''$ is exact. (This will be generalized in Exercise 2.6.H(c).)

2.6.F. EXERCISE. Suppose A is a ring, $S \subset A$ is a multiplicative subset, and M is an A -module.

(a) Show that localization of A -modules $Mod_A \rightarrow Mod_{S^{-1}A}$ is an exact covariant functor.

(b) Show that $\cdot \otimes M$ is a right-exact covariant functor $Mod_A \rightarrow Mod_A$. (This is a repeat of Exercise 2.3.H.)

(c) Show that $\text{Hom}(M, \cdot)$ is a left-exact covariant functor $Mod_A \rightarrow Mod_A$.

(d) Show that $\text{Hom}(\cdot, M)$ is a left-exact contravariant functor $Mod_A \rightarrow Mod_A$.

2.6.G. EXERCISE. Suppose M is a **finitely presented** A -module: M has a finite number of generators, and with these generators it has a finite number of relations; or usefully equivalently, fits in an exact sequence

$$(2.6.6.1) \qquad A^{\oplus q} \rightarrow A^{\oplus p} \rightarrow M \rightarrow 0$$

Use (2.6.6.1) and the left-exactness of Hom to describe an isomorphism

$$S^{-1} \text{Hom}_A(M, N) \cong \text{Hom}_{S^{-1}A}(S^{-1}M, S^{-1}N).$$

(You might be able to interpret this in light of a variant of Exercise 2.6.H below, for left-exact contravariant functors rather than right-exact covariant functors.)

2.6.7. ★ Two useful facts in homological algebra.

We now come to two (sets of) facts I wish I had learned as a child, as they would have saved me lots of grief. They encapsulate what is best and worst of abstract nonsense. The statements are so general as to be nonintuitive. The proofs are very short. They generalize some specific behavior it is easy to prove in an ad hoc basis. Once they are second nature to you, many subtle facts will be come obvious to you as special cases. And you will see that they will get used (implicitly or explicitly) repeatedly.

2.6.8. ★ Interaction of homology and (right/left-)exact functors.

You might wait to prove this until you learn about cohomology in Chapter 20, when it will first be used in a serious way.

2.6.H. IMPORTANT EXERCISE (THE FHHF THEOREM). This result can take you far, and perhaps for that reason it has sometimes been called the fernbahnhof (Fernbahnhof) theorem. Suppose $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ is a covariant functor of abelian categories. Suppose C^\bullet is a complex in \mathcal{A} .

- (a) (*F right-exact yields* $FH^\bullet \longrightarrow H^\bullet F$) If F is right-exact, describe a natural morphism $FH^\bullet \rightarrow H^\bullet F$. (More precisely, for each i , the left side is F applied to the cohomology at piece i of C^\bullet , while the right side is the cohomology at piece i of FC^\bullet .)
- (b) (*F left-exact yields* $FH^\bullet \longleftarrow H^\bullet F$) If F is left-exact, describe a natural morphism $FH^\bullet \rightarrow H^\bullet F$. (More precisely, for each i , the left side is F applied to the cohomology at piece i of C^\bullet , while the right side is the cohomology at piece i of FC^\bullet .)
- (c) (*F exact yields* $FH^\bullet \longleftarrow H^\bullet F$) If F is exact, show that the morphisms of (a) and (b) are inverses and thus isomorphisms.

Hint for (a): use $C^p \xrightarrow{d^p} C^{p+1} \longrightarrow \text{coker } d^p \longrightarrow 0$ to give an isomorphism $F \text{coker } d^p \cong \text{coker } Fd^p$. Then use the first line of (2.6.4.4) to give a surjection $F \text{im } d^p \twoheadrightarrow \text{im } Fd^p$. Then use the second line of (2.6.4.4) to give the desired map $FH^p C^\bullet \longrightarrow H^p FC^\bullet$. While you are at it, you may as well describe a map for the fourth member of the quartet $\{\ker, \text{coker}, \text{im}, H, \}$: $F \ker d^p \longrightarrow \ker Fd^p$.

2.6.9. If this makes your head spin, you may prefer to think of it in the following specific case, where both \mathcal{A} and \mathcal{B} are the category of A -modules, and F is $\cdot \otimes N$ for some fixed N -module. Your argument in this case will translate without change to yield a solution to Exercise 2.6.H(a) and (c) in general. If $\otimes N$ is exact, then N is called a **flat** A -module. (The notion of flatness will turn out to be very important, and is discussed in detail in Chapter 24.)

For example, localization is exact, so $S^{-1}A$ is a *flat* A -algebra for all multiplicative sets S . Thus taking cohomology of a complex of A -modules commutes with localization — something you could verify directly.

2.6.10. ★ Interaction of adjoints, (co)limits, and (left- and right-) exactness.

A surprising number of arguments boil down the statement:

Limits commute with limits and right-adjoints. In particular, because kernels are limits, both right-adjoints and limits are left exact.

as well as its dual:

Colimits commute with colimits and left-adjoints. In particular, because cokernels are colimits, both left-adjoints and colimits are left exact.

These statements were promised in §2.5.4. The latter has a useful extension:

In an abelian category, colimits over filtered index categories are exact.

(“Filtered” was defined in §2.4.6.) If you want to use these statements (for example, later in these notes), you will have to prove them. Let’s now make them precise.

2.6.I. EXERCISE (KERNELS COMMUTE WITH LIMITS). Suppose \mathcal{C} is an abelian category, and $a : \mathcal{I} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$ and $b : \mathcal{I} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$ are two diagrams in \mathcal{C} indexed by \mathcal{I} . For convenience, let $A_i = a(i)$ and $B_i = b(i)$ be the objects in those two diagrams. Let $h_i : A_i \rightarrow B_i$ be maps commuting with the maps in the diagram. (Translation: h is a natural transformation of functors $a \rightarrow b$, see §2.2.21.) Then the $\ker h_i$ form another diagram in \mathcal{C} indexed by \mathcal{I} . Describe a natural isomorphism $\varinjlim \ker h_i \cong \ker(\varinjlim A_i \rightarrow \varinjlim B_i)$.

2.6.J. EXERCISE. Make sense of the statement that “limits commute with limits” in a general category, and prove it. (Hint: recall that kernels are limits. The previous exercise should be a corollary of this one.)

2.6.11. Proposition (right-adjoints commute with limits). — Suppose $(F : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{D}, G : \mathcal{D} \rightarrow \mathcal{C})$ is a pair of adjoint functors. If $A = \varinjlim A_i$ is a limit in \mathcal{D} of a diagram indexed by I , then $GA = \varinjlim GA_i$ (with the corresponding maps $GA \rightarrow GA_i$) is a limit in \mathcal{C} .

Proof. We must show that $GA \rightarrow GA_i$ satisfies the universal property of limits. Suppose we have maps $W \rightarrow GA_i$ commuting with the maps of \mathcal{I} . We wish to show that there exists a unique $W \rightarrow GA$ extending the $W \rightarrow GA_i$. By adjointness of F and G , we can restate this as: Suppose we have maps $FW \rightarrow A_i$ commuting with the maps of \mathcal{I} . We wish to show that there exists a unique $FW \rightarrow A$ extending the $FW \rightarrow A_i$. But this is precisely the universal property of the limit. \square

Of course, the dual statements to Exercise 2.6.J and Proposition 2.6.11 hold by the dual arguments.

If F and G are additive functors between abelian categories, and (F, G) is an adjoint pair, then (as kernels are limits and cokernels are colimits) G is left-exact and F is right-exact.

2.6.K. EXERCISE. Show that in an abelian category, colimits over filtered index categories are exact. Right-exactness follows from the above discussion, so the issue is left-exactness. (Possible hint: After you show that localization is exact, Exercise 2.6.F(a), or sheafification is exact, Exercise 3.5.D, in a hands on way, you will be easily able to prove this. Conversely, this exercise will quickly imply those two.)

2.6.L. EXERCISE. Show that filtered colimits commute with homology. Hint: use the FHHF Theorem (Exercise 2.6.H), and the previous Exercise.

In light of Exercise 2.6.L, you may want to think about how limits (and colimits) commute with homology in general, and which way maps go; The statement of the FHHF Theorem should suggest the answer. (Are limits analogous to left-exact functors, or right-exact functors?) We won't directly use this insight.

2.6.12. * Dreaming of derived functors. When you see a left-exact functor, you should always dream that you are seeing the end of a long exact sequence. If

$$0 \rightarrow M' \rightarrow M \rightarrow M'' \rightarrow 0$$

is an exact sequence in abelian category \mathcal{A} , and $F : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{B}$ is a left-exact functor, then

$$0 \rightarrow FM' \rightarrow FM \rightarrow FM''$$

is exact, and you should always dream that it should continue in some natural way. For example, the next term should depend only on M' , call it R^1FM' , and if it is zero, then $FM \rightarrow FM''$ is an epimorphism. This remark holds true for left-exact and contravariant functors too. In good cases, such a continuation exists, and is incredibly useful. We will discuss this in Chapter 23.

2.7 * Spectral sequences

Spectral sequences are a powerful book-keeping tool for proving things involving complicated commutative diagrams. They were introduced by Leray in the 1940's at the same time as he introduced sheaves. They have a reputation for being abstruse and difficult. It has been suggested that the name 'spectral' was given because, like spectres, spectral sequences are terrifying, evil, and dangerous. I have heard no one disagree with this interpretation, which is perhaps not surprising since I just made it up.

Nonetheless, the goal of this section is to tell you enough that you can use spectral sequences without hesitation or fear, and why you shouldn't be frightened when they come up in a seminar. What is perhaps different in this presentation is that we will use spectral sequence to prove things that you may have already seen, and that you can prove easily in other ways. This will allow you to get some hands-on experience for how to use them. We will also see them only in the special case of double complexes (which is the version by far the most often used in algebraic geometry), and not in the general form usually presented (filtered complexes, exact couples, etc.). See [W, Ch. 5] for more detailed information if you wish.

You should *not* read this section when you are reading the rest of Chapter 2. Instead, you should read it just before you need it for the first time. When you finally *do* read this section, you *must* do the exercises.

For concreteness, we work in the category Vec_k of vector spaces over a field k . However, everything we say will apply in any abelian category, such as the category Mod_A of A -modules.

2.7.1. Double complexes.

A **double complex** is a collection of vector spaces $E^{p,q}$ ($p, q \in \mathbb{Z}$), and “rightward” morphisms $d_{\rightarrow}^{p,q} : E^{p,q} \rightarrow E^{p,q+1}$ and “upward” morphisms $d_{\uparrow}^{p,q} : E^{p,q} \rightarrow E^{p+1,q}$. In the superscript, the first entry denotes the row number, and the second entry denotes the column number, in keeping with the convention for matrices, but opposite to how the (x, y) -plane is labeled. The subscript is meant to suggest the direction of the arrows. We will always write these as d_{\rightarrow} and d_{\uparrow} and ignore the superscripts. We require that d_{\rightarrow} and d_{\uparrow} satisfying (a) $d_{\rightarrow}^2 = 0$, (b) $d_{\uparrow}^2 = 0$, and one more condition: (c) either $d_{\rightarrow}d_{\uparrow} = d_{\uparrow}d_{\rightarrow}$ (all the squares commute) or $d_{\rightarrow}d_{\uparrow} + d_{\uparrow}d_{\rightarrow} = 0$ (they all anticommute). Both come up in nature, and you can switch from one to the other by replacing $d_{\uparrow}^{p,q}$ with $(-1)^q d_{\uparrow}^{p,q}$. So I will assume that all the squares anticommute, but that you know how to turn the commuting case into this one. (You will see that there is no difference in the recipe, basically because the image and kernel of a homomorphism f equal the image and kernel respectively of $-f$.)

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 E^{p+1,q} & \xrightarrow{d_{\rightarrow}^{p+1,q}} & E^{p+1,q+1} \\
 \uparrow d_{\uparrow}^{p,q} & \text{anticommutes} & \uparrow d_{\uparrow}^{p,q+1} \\
 E^{p,q} & \xrightarrow{d_{\rightarrow}^{p,q}} & E^{p,q+1}
 \end{array}$$

There are variations on this definition, where for example the vertical arrows go downwards, or some different subset of the $E^{p,q}$ are required to be zero, but I will leave these straightforward variations to you.

From the double complex we construct a corresponding (single) complex E^\bullet with $E^k = \bigoplus_i E^{i,k-i}$, with $d = d_{\rightarrow} + d_{\uparrow}$. In other words, when there is a *single* superscript k , we mean a sum of the k th antidiagonal of the double complex. The single complex is sometimes called the **total complex**. Note that $d^2 = (d_{\rightarrow} + d_{\uparrow})^2 = d_{\rightarrow}^2 + (d_{\rightarrow}d_{\uparrow} + d_{\uparrow}d_{\rightarrow}) + d_{\uparrow}^2 = 0$, so E^\bullet is indeed a complex.

The **cohomology** of the single complex is sometimes called the **hypercohomology** of the double complex. We will instead use the phrase “cohomology of the double complex”.

Our initial goal will be to find the cohomology of the double complex. You will see later that we secretly also have other goals.

A spectral sequence is a recipe for computing some information about the cohomology of the double complex. I won’t yet give the full recipe. Surprisingly, this fragmentary bit of information is sufficient to prove lots of things.

2.7.2. Approximate Definition. A **spectral sequence with rightward orientation** is a sequence of tables or **pages** $\rightarrow E_0^{p,q} \rightarrow E_1^{p,q} \rightarrow E_2^{p,q}, \dots$ ($p, q \in \mathbb{Z}$), where $\rightarrow E_0^{p,q} = E^{p,q}$, along with a differential

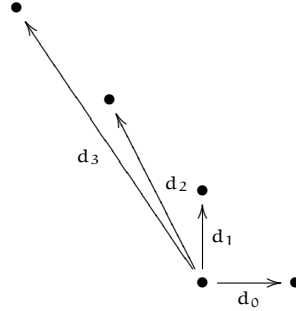
$$\rightarrow d_r^{p,q} : \rightarrow E_r^{p,q} \rightarrow \rightarrow E_r^{p+r, q-r+1}$$

with $\rightarrow d_r^{p,q} \circ \rightarrow d_r^{p,q} = 0$, and with an isomorphism of the cohomology of $\rightarrow d_r$ at $\rightarrow E_r^{p,q}$ (i.e. $\ker \rightarrow d_r^{p,q} / \text{im } \rightarrow d_r^{p-r, q+r-1}$) with $\rightarrow E_{r+1}^{p,q}$.

The orientation indicates that our 0th differential is the rightward one: $d_0 = d_{\rightarrow}$. The left subscript “ \rightarrow ” is usually omitted.

The order of the morphisms is best understood visually:

(2.7.2.1)

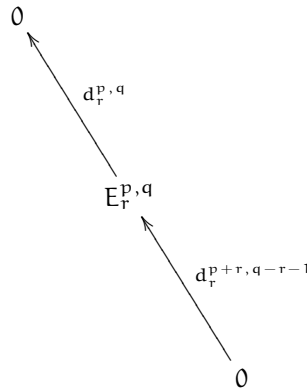


(the morphisms each apply to different pages). Notice that the map always is “degree 1” in the grading of the single complex E^\bullet .

The actual definition describes what $E_r^{\bullet, \bullet}$ and $d_r^{\bullet, \bullet}$ really are, in terms of $E^{\bullet, \bullet}$. We will describe d_0 , d_1 , and d_2 below, and you should for now take on faith that this sequence continues in some natural way.

Note that $E_r^{p, q}$ is always a subquotient of the corresponding term on the 0th page $E_0^{p, q} = E^{p, q}$. In particular, if $E^{p, q} = 0$, then $E_r^{p, q} = 0$ for all r , so $E_r^{p, q} = 0$ unless $p, q \in \mathbb{Z}^{\geq 0}$.

Suppose now that $E^{\bullet, \bullet}$ is a **first quadrant double complex**, i.e. $E^{p, q} = 0$ for $p < 0$ or $q < 0$. Then for any fixed p, q , once r is sufficiently large, $E_{r+1}^{p, q}$ is computed from $(E_r^{\bullet, \bullet}, d_r)$ using the complex



and thus we have canonical isomorphisms

$$E_r^{p, q} \cong E_{r+1}^{p, q} \cong E_{r+2}^{p, q} \cong \dots$$

We denote this module $E_\infty^{p, q}$. The same idea works in other circumstances, for example if the double complex is only nonzero in a finite number of rows — $E^{p, q} = 0$ unless $p_0 < p < p_q$. This will come up for example in the long exact sequence and mapping cone discussion (Exercises 2.7.E and 2.7.F below).

We now describe the first few pages of the spectral sequence explicitly. As stated above, the differential d_0 on $E_0^{\bullet, \bullet} = E^{\bullet, \bullet}$ is defined to be d_{\rightarrow} . The rows are

complexes:

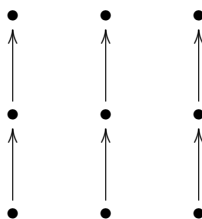


The 0th page E_0 :



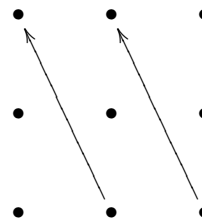
and so E_1 is just the table of cohomologies of the rows. You should check that there are now vertical maps $d_1^{p,q} : E_1^{p,q} \rightarrow E_1^{p+1,q}$ of the row cohomology groups, induced by d_\uparrow , and that these make the columns into complexes. (This is essentially the fact that a map of complexes induces a map on homology.) We have “used up the horizontal morphisms”, but “the vertical differentials live on”.

The 1st page E_1 :



We take cohomology of d_1 on E_1 , giving us a new table, $E_2^{p,q}$. It turns out that there are natural morphisms from each entry to the entry two above and one to the left, and that the composition of these two is 0. (It is a very worthwhile exercise to work out how this natural morphism d_2 should be defined. Your argument may be reminiscent of the connecting homomorphism in the Snake Lemma 2.7.5 or in the long exact sequence in cohomology arising from a short exact sequence of complexes, Exercise 2.6.C. This is no coincidence.)

The 2nd page E_2 :



This is the beginning of a pattern.

Then it is a theorem that there is a filtration of $H^k(E^\bullet)$ by $E_\infty^{p,q}$ where $p + q = k$. (We can't yet state it as an official **Theorem** because we haven't precisely defined the pages and differentials in the spectral sequence.) More precisely, there is a filtration

$$(2.7.2.2) \quad E_\infty^{0,k} \subset E_\infty^{1,k-1} \subset E_\infty^{2,k-2} \dots \subset E_\infty^{0,k} \subset H^k(E^\bullet)$$

where the quotients are displayed above each inclusion. (I always forget which way the quotients are supposed to go, i.e. whether $E^{k,0}$ or $E^{0,k}$ is the subobject. One way of remembering it is by having some idea of how the result is proved.)

We say that the spectral sequence $\rightarrow E_2^{\bullet,\bullet}$ **converges** to $H^\bullet(E^\bullet)$. We often say that $\rightarrow E_2^{\bullet,\bullet}$ (or any other page) **abuts** to $H^\bullet(E^\bullet)$.

Although the filtration gives only partial information about $H^\bullet(E^\bullet)$, sometimes one can find $H^\bullet(E^\bullet)$ precisely. One example is if all $E_\infty^{i,k-i}$ are zero, or if all but one of them are zero (e.g. if $E_r^{i,k-i}$ has precisely one non-zero row or column, in which case one says that the spectral sequence *collapses* at the r th step, although we will not use this term). Another example is in the category of vector spaces over a field, in which case we can find the dimension of $H^k(E^\bullet)$. Also, in lucky circumstances, E_2 (or some other small page) already equals E_∞ .

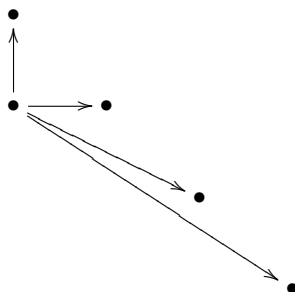
2.7.A. EXERCISE: INFORMATION FROM THE SECOND PAGE. Show that $H^0(E^\bullet) = E_\infty^{0,0} = E_2^{0,0}$ and

$$0 \longrightarrow E_2^{0,1} \longrightarrow H^1(E^\bullet) \longrightarrow E_2^{1,0} \xrightarrow{d_2^{1,0}} E_2^{0,2} \longrightarrow H^2(E^\bullet).$$

2.7.3. The other orientation.

You may have observed that we could as well have done everything in the opposite direction, i.e. reversing the roles of horizontal and vertical morphisms. Then the sequences of arrows giving the spectral sequence would look like this (compare to (2.7.2.1)).

(2.7.3.1)



This spectral sequence is denoted $\uparrow E_{\bullet}^{\bullet}$ (“with the upwards orientation”). Then we would again get pieces of a filtration of $H^\bullet(E^\bullet)$ (where we have to be a bit careful with the order with which $\uparrow E_{\infty}^{p,q}$ corresponds to the subquotients — it is in the opposite order to that of (2.7.2.2) for $\rightarrow E_{\infty}^{p,q}$). Warning: in general there is no isomorphism between $\rightarrow E_{\infty}^{p,q}$ and $\uparrow E_{\infty}^{p,q}$.

In fact, this observation that we can start with either the horizontal or vertical maps was our secret goal all along. Both algorithms compute information about the same thing ($H^\bullet(E^\bullet)$), and usually we don’t care about the final answer — we often care about the answer we get in one way, and we get it by doing the spectral sequence in the *other* way.

2.7.4. Examples.

We are now ready to see how this is useful. The moral of these examples is the following. In the past, you may have proved various facts involving various sorts of diagrams, by chasing elements around. Now, you will just plug them into a spectral sequence, and let the spectral sequence machinery do your chasing for you.

and the spectral sequence converges at this step. We wish to show that those two question marks are zero. But they are precisely the cohomology groups of the total complex that we just showed *were* zero — so we're done!

The best way to become comfortable with this sort of argument is to try it out yourself several times, and realize that it really is easy. So you should do the following exercises!

2.7.C. EXERCISE: THE SUBTLE FIVE LEMMA. By looking at the spectral sequence proof of the Five Lemma above, prove a subtler version of the Five Lemma, where one of the isomorphisms can instead just be required to be an injection, and another can instead just be required to be a surjection. (I am deliberately not telling you which ones, so you can see how the spectral sequence is telling you how to improve the result.)

2.7.D. EXERCISE. If β and δ (in (2.7.6.1)) are injective, and α is surjective, show that γ is injective. Give the dual statement (whose proof is of course essentially the same).

2.7.E. EXERCISE. Use spectral sequences to show that a short exact sequence of complexes gives a long exact sequence in cohomology (Exercise 2.6.C).

2.7.F. EXERCISE (THE MAPPING CONE). Suppose $\mu : A^\bullet \rightarrow B^\bullet$ is a morphism of complexes. Suppose C^\bullet is the single complex associated to the double complex $A^\bullet \rightarrow B^\bullet$. (C^\bullet is called the *mapping cone* of μ .) Show that there is a long exact sequence of complexes:

$$\cdots \rightarrow H^{i-1}(C^\bullet) \rightarrow H^i(A^\bullet) \rightarrow H^i(B^\bullet) \rightarrow H^i(C^\bullet) \rightarrow H^{i+1}(A^\bullet) \rightarrow \cdots .$$

(There is a slight notational ambiguity here; depending on how you index your double complex, your long exact sequence might look slightly different.) In particular, we will use the fact that μ induces an isomorphism on cohomology if and only if the mapping cone is exact. (We won't use it until the proof of Theorem 20.2.4.)

The Grothendieck (or composition of functor) spectral sequence (Exercise 23.3.D) will be an important example of a spectral sequence that specializes in a number of useful ways.

You are now ready to go out into the world and use spectral sequences to your heart's content!

2.7.7. **★ Complete definition of the spectral sequence, and proof.**

You should most definitely not read this section any time soon after reading the introduction to spectral sequences above. Instead, flip quickly through it to convince yourself that nothing fancy is involved.

We consider the rightwards orientation. The upwards orientation is of course a trivial variation of this.

2.7.8. Goals. We wish to describe the pages and differentials of the spectral sequence explicitly, and prove that they behave the way we said they did. More precisely, we wish to:

- (a) describe $E_r^{p,q}$,
- (b) verify that $H^k(E^\bullet)$ is filtered by $E_\infty^{p,k-p}$ as in (2.7.2.2),
- (c) describe d_r and verify that $d_r^2 = 0$, and

(d) verify that $E_{r+1}^{p,q}$ is given by cohomology using d_r .

Before tackling these goals, you can impress your friends by giving this short description of the pages and differentials of the spectral sequence. We say that an element of $E^{\bullet,\bullet}$ is a (p, q) -strip if it is an element of $\bigoplus_{l \geq 0} E^{p+l, q-l}$ (see Fig. 2.1). Its non-zero entries lie on a semi-infinite antidiagonal starting with position (p, q) . We say that the (p, q) -entry (the projection to $E^{p,q}$) is the *leading term* of the (p, q) -strip. Let $\boxed{S^{p,q}} \subset E^{\bullet,\bullet}$ be the submodule of all the (p, q) -strips. Clearly $S^{p,q} \subset E^{p+q}$, and $S^{0,k} = E^k$.

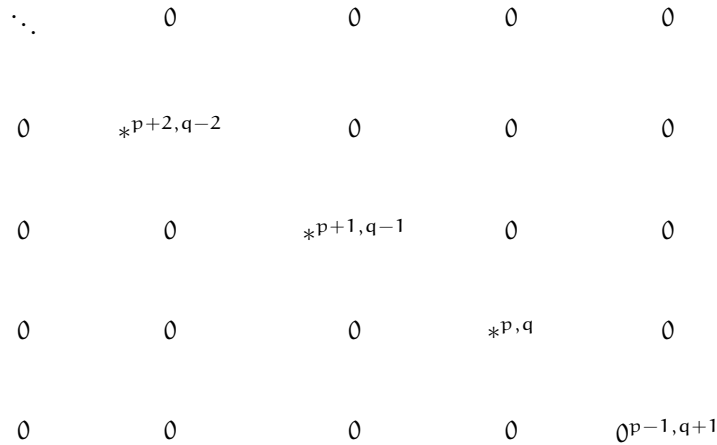
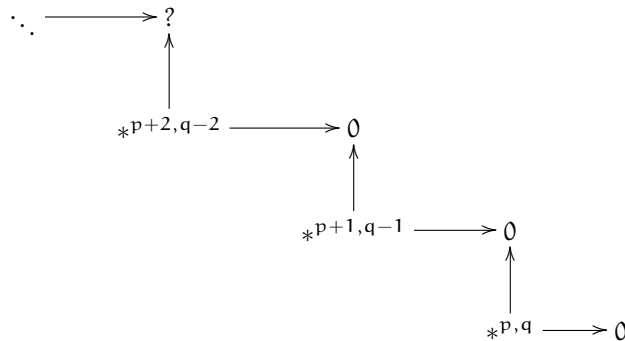


FIGURE 2.1. A (p, q) -strip (in $S^{p,q} \subset E^{p+q}$). Clearly $S^{0,k} = E^k$.

Note that the differential $d = d_{\uparrow} + d_{\rightarrow}$ sends a (p, q) -strip x to a $(p, q + 1)$ -strip dx . If dx is furthermore a $(p + r, q + r + 1)$ -strip ($r \in \mathbb{Z}^{\geq 0}$), we say that x is an r -closed (p, q) -strip. We denote the set of such $\boxed{S_r^{p,q}}$ (so for example $S_0^{p,q} = S^{p,q}$, and $S_0^{0,k} = E^k$). An element of $S_r^{p,q}$ may be depicted as:



2.7.9. Preliminary definition of $E_r^{p,q}$. We are now ready to give a first definition of $E_r^{p,q}$, which by construction should be a subquotient of $E^{p,q} = E_0^{p,q}$. We describe it as such by describing two submodules $Y_r^{p,q} \subset X_r^{p,q} \subset E^{p,q}$, and defining $E_r^{p,q} =$

$X_r^{p,q}/Y_r^{p,q}$. Let $X_r^{p,q}$ be those elements of $E^{p,q}$ that are the leading terms of r -closed (p, q) -strips. Note that by definition, d sends $(r-1)$ -closed $S^{p-(r-1), q+(r-1)-1}$ -strips to (p, q) -strips. Let $Y_r^{p,q}$ be the leading $((p, q))$ -terms of the differential d of $(r-1)$ -closed $(p-(r-1), q+(r-1)-1)$ -strips (where the differential is considered as a (p, q) -strip).

We next give the definition of the differential d_r of such an element $x \in X_r^{p,q}$. We take *any* r -closed (p, q) -strip with leading term x . Its differential d is a $(p+r, q-r+1)$ -strip, and we take its leading term. The choice of the r -closed (p, q) -strip means that this is not a well-defined element of $E^{p,q}$. But it is well-defined modulo the $(r-1)$ -closed $(p+1, r+1)$ -strips, and hence gives a map $E_r^{p,q} \rightarrow E_r^{p+r, q-r+1}$.

This definition is fairly short, but not much fun to work with, so we will forget it, and instead dive into a snakes' nest of subscripts and superscripts.

We begin with making some quick but important observations about (p, q) -strips.

2.7.G. EXERCISE. Verify the following.

- $S^{p,q} = S^{p+1, q-1} \oplus E^{p,q}$.
- (Any closed (p, q) -strip is r -closed for all r .) Any element x of $S^{p,q} = S_0^{p,q}$ that is a cycle (i.e. $dx = 0$) is automatically in $S_r^{p,q}$ for all r . For example, this holds when x is a boundary (i.e. of the form dy).
- Show that for fixed p, q ,

$$S_0^{p,q} \supset S_1^{p,q} \supset \dots \supset S_r^{p,q} \supset \dots$$

stabilizes for $r \gg 0$ (i.e. $S_r^{p,q} = S_{r+1}^{p,q} = \dots$). Denote the stabilized module $S_\infty^{p,q}$. Show $S_\infty^{p,q}$ is the set of closed (p, q) -strips (those (p, q) -strips annihilated by d , i.e. the cycles). In particular, $S_r^{0,k}$ is the set of cycles in E^k .

2.7.10. Defining $E_r^{p,q}$.

Define $X_r^{p,q} := S_r^{p,q}/S_{r-1}^{p+1, q-1}$ and $Y := dS_{r-1}^{p-(r-1), q+(r-1)-1}/S_{r-1}^{p+1, q-1}$. Then $Y_r^{p,q} \subset X_r^{p,q}$ by Exercise 2.7.G(b). We define

$$(2.7.10.1) \quad E_r^{p,q} = \frac{X_r^{p,q}}{Y_r^{p,q}} = \frac{S_r^{p,q}}{dS_{r-1}^{p-(r-1), q+(r-1)-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+1, q-1}}$$

We have completed Goal 2.7.8(a).

You are welcome to verify that these definitions of $X_r^{p,q}$ and $Y_r^{p,q}$ and hence $E_r^{p,q}$ agree with the earlier ones of §2.7.9 (and in particular $X_r^{p,q}$ and $Y_r^{p,q}$ are both submodules of $E^{p,q}$), but we won't need this fact.

2.7.H. EXERCISE: $E_\infty^{p, k-p}$ GIVES SUBQUOTIENTS OF $H^k(E^\bullet)$. By Exercise 2.7.G(c), $E_r^{p,q}$ stabilizes as $r \rightarrow \infty$. For $r \gg 0$, interpret $S_r^{p,q}/dS_{r-1}^{p-(r-1), q+(r-1)-1}$ as the cycles in $S_\infty^{p,q} \subset E^{p+q}$ modulo those boundary elements of dE^{p+q-1} contained in $S_\infty^{p,q}$. Finally, show that $H^k(E^\bullet)$ is indeed filtered as described in (2.7.2.2).

We have completed Goal 2.7.8(b).

2.7.11. Definition of d_r .

We shall see that the map $d_r : E_r^{p,q} \rightarrow E^{p+r,q-r+1}$ is just induced by our differential d . Notice that d sends r -closed (p, q) -strips $S_r^{p,q}$ to $(p+r, q-r+1)$ -strips $S^{p+r,q-r+1}$, by the definition “ r -closed”. By Exercise 2.7.G(b), the image lies in $S_r^{p+r,q-r+1}$.

2.7.I. EXERCISE. Verify that d sends

$$dS_{r-1}^{p-(r-1),q+(r-1)-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} \rightarrow dS_{r-1}^{(p+r)-(r-1),(q-r+1)+(r-1)-1} + S_{r-1}^{(p+r)+1,(q-r+1)-1}.$$

(The first term on the left goes to 0 from $d^2 = 0$, and the second term on the left goes to the first term on the right.)

Thus we may define

$$d_r : E_r^{p,q} = \frac{S_r^{p,q}}{dS_{r-1}^{p-(r-1),q+(r-1)-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}} \rightarrow$$

$$\frac{S_r^{p+r,q-r+1}}{dS_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+r+1,q-r}} = E_r^{p+r,q-r+1}$$

and clearly $d_r^2 = 0$ (as we may interpret it as taking an element of $S_r^{p,q}$ and applying d twice).

We have accomplished Goal 2.7.8(c).

2.7.12. *Verifying that the cohomology of d_r at $E_r^{p,q}$ is $E_{r+1}^{p,q}$.* We are left with the unpleasant job of verifying that the cohomology of

$$(2.7.12.1) \quad \frac{S_r^{p-r,q+r-1}}{dS_{r-1}^{p-2r+1,q-3} + S_{r-1}^{p-r+1,q+r-2}} \xrightarrow{d_r} \frac{S_r^{p,q}}{dS_{r-1}^{p-r+1,q+r-2} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}}$$

$$\xrightarrow{d_r} \frac{S_r^{p+r,q-r+1}}{dS_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+r+1,q-r}}$$

is naturally identified with

$$\frac{S_{r+1}^{p,q}}{dS_{r-1}^{p-r,q+r-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}}$$

and this will conclude our final Goal 2.7.8(d).

We begin by understanding the kernel of the right map of (2.7.12.1). Suppose $a \in S_r^{p,q}$ is mapped to 0. This means that $da = db + c$, where $b \in S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}$. If $u = a - b$, then $u \in S_r^{p,q}$, while $du = c \in S_{r-1}^{p+r+1,q-r} \subset S^{p+r+1,q-r}$, from which u is r -closed, i.e. $u \in S_{r+1}^{p,q}$. Hence $a = b + u + x$ where $dx = 0$, from which $a - x = b + c \in S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} + S_{r-1}^{p,q}$. However, $x \in S_r^{p,q}$, so $x \in S_{r+1}^{p,q}$ by Exercise 2.7.G(b). Thus $a \in S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} + S_{r+1}^{p,q}$. Conversely, any $a \in S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} + S_{r+1}^{p,q}$ satisfies

$$da \in dS_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} + dS_{r+1}^{p,q} \subset dS_{r-1}^{p+r,q-r+1} + S_{r-1}^{p+r+1,q-r}$$

(using $dS_{r+1}^{p,q} \subset S_0^{p+r+1,q-r}$ and Exercise 2.7.G(b)) so any such a is indeed in the kernel of

$$S_r^{p,q} \rightarrow \frac{S_r^{p+r,q-r+1}}{dS_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+r+1,q-r}}.$$

Hence the kernel of the right map of (2.7.12.1) is

$$\ker = \frac{S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} + S_{r+1}^{p,q}}{dS_{r-1}^{p-r+1,q+r-2} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}}.$$

Next, the image of the left map of (2.7.12.1) is immediately

$$\text{im} = \frac{dS_r^{p-r,q+r-1} + dS_{r-1}^{p-r+1,q+r-2} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}}{dS_{r-1}^{p-r+1,q+r-2} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}} = \frac{dS_r^{p-r,q+r-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}}{dS_{r-1}^{p-r+1,q+r-2} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}}$$

(as $S_r^{p-r,q+r-1}$ contains $S_{r-1}^{p-r+1,q+r-1}$).

Thus the cohomology of (2.7.12.1) is

$$\ker / \text{im} = \frac{S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} + S_{r+1}^{p,q}}{dS_r^{p-r,q+r-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}} = \frac{S_{r+1}^{p,q}}{S_{r+1}^{p,q} \cap (dS_r^{p-r,q+r-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1})}$$

where the equality on the right uses the fact that $dS_r^{p-r,q+r+1} \subset S_{r+1}^{p,q}$ and an isomorphism theorem. We thus must show

$$S_{r+1}^{p,q} \cap (dS_r^{p-r,q+r-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}) = dS_r^{p-r,q+r-1} + S_{r+1}^{p,q}.$$

However,

$$S_{r+1}^{p,q} \cap (dS_r^{p-r,q+r-1} + S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}) = dS_r^{p-r,q+r-1} + S_{r+1}^{p,q} \cap S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}$$

and $S_{r+1}^{p,q} \cap S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1}$ consists of (p, q) -strips whose differential vanishes up to row $p+r$, from which $S_{r+1}^{p,q} \cap S_{r-1}^{p+1,q-1} = S_r^{p,q}$ as desired.

This completes the explanation of how spectral sequences work for a first-quadrant double complex. The argument applies without significant change to more general situations, including filtered complexes.

CHAPTER 3

Sheaves

It is perhaps surprising that geometric spaces are often best understood in terms of (nice) functions on them. For example, a differentiable manifold that is a subset of \mathbb{R}^n can be studied in terms of its differentiable functions. Because “geometric spaces” can have few (everywhere-defined) functions, a more precise version of this insight is that the structure of the space can be well understood by considering all functions on all open subsets of the space. This information is encoded in something called a *sheaf*. Sheaves were introduced by Leray in the 1940’s, and Serre introduced them to algebraic geometry. (The reason for the name is will be somewhat explained in Remark 3.4.3.) We will define sheaves and describe useful facts about them. We will begin with a motivating example to convince you that the notion is not so foreign.

One reason sheaves are slippery to work with is that they keep track of a huge amount of information, and there are some subtle local-to-global issues. There are also three different ways of getting a hold of them.

- in terms of open sets (the definition §3.2) — intuitive but in some ways the least helpful
- in terms of stalks (see §3.4.1)
- in terms of a base of a topology (§3.7).

Knowing which to use requires experience, so it is essential to do a number of exercises on different aspects of sheaves in order to truly understand the concept.

3.1 Motivating example: The sheaf of differentiable functions.

Consider differentiable functions on the topological space $X = \mathbb{R}^n$ (or more generally on a smooth manifold X). The sheaf of differentiable functions on X is the data of all differentiable functions on all open subsets on X . We will see how to manage this data, and observe some of its properties. On each open set $U \subset X$, we have a ring of differentiable functions. We denote this ring of functions $\mathcal{O}(U)$.

Given a differentiable function on an open set, you can restrict it to a smaller open set, obtaining a differentiable function there. In other words, if $U \subset V$ is an inclusion of open sets, we have a “restriction map” $\text{res}_{V,U} : \mathcal{O}(V) \rightarrow \mathcal{O}(U)$.

Take a differentiable function on a big open set, and restrict it to a medium open set, and then restrict that to a small open set. The result is the same as if you restrict the differentiable function on the big open set directly to the small open set.

In other words, if $U \hookrightarrow V \hookrightarrow W$, then the following diagram commutes:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{O}(W) & \xrightarrow{\text{res}_{W,V}} & \mathcal{O}(V) \\ & \searrow \text{res}_{W,U} & \swarrow \text{res}_{V,U} \\ & \mathcal{O}(U) & \end{array}$$

Next take two differentiable functions f_1 and f_2 on a big open set U , and an open cover of U by some $\{U_i\}$. Suppose that f_1 and f_2 agree on each of these U_i . Then they must have been the same function to begin with. In other words, if $\{U_i\}_{i \in I}$ is a cover of U , and $f_1, f_2 \in \mathcal{O}(U)$, and $\text{res}_{U,U_i} f_1 = \text{res}_{U,U_i} f_2$, then $f_1 = f_2$. Thus we can *identify* functions on an open set by looking at them on a covering by small open sets.

Finally, given the same U and cover $\{U_i\}$, take a differentiable function on each of the U_i — a function f_1 on U_1 , a function f_2 on U_2 , and so on — and they agree on the pairwise overlaps. Then they can be “glued together” to make one differentiable function on all of U . In other words, given $f_i \in \mathcal{O}(U_i)$ for all i , such that $\text{res}_{U_i, U_i \cap U_j} f_i = \text{res}_{U_j, U_i \cap U_j} f_j$ for all i and j , then there is some $f \in \mathcal{O}(U)$ such that $\text{res}_{U,U_i} f = f_i$ for all i .

The entire example above would have worked just as well with continuous function, or smooth functions, or just plain functions. Thus all of these classes of “nice” functions share some common properties. We will soon formalize these properties in the notion of a sheaf.

3.1.1. The germ of a differentiable function. Before we do, we first give another definition, that of the germ of a differentiable function at a point $p \in X$. Intuitively, it is a “shred” of a differentiable function at p . Germs are objects of the form $\{(f, \text{open } U) : p \in U, f \in \mathcal{O}(U)\}$ modulo the relation that $(f, U) \sim (g, V)$ if there is some open set $W \subset U, V$ containing p where $f|_W = g|_W$ (i.e., $\text{res}_{U,W} f = \text{res}_{V,W} g$). In other words, two functions that are the same in a neighborhood of p (but may differ elsewhere) have the same germ. We call this set of germs the stalk at p , and denote it \mathcal{O}_p . Notice that the stalk is a ring: you can add two germs, and get another germ: if you have a function f defined on U , and a function g defined on V , then $f + g$ is defined on $U \cap V$. Moreover, $f + g$ is well-defined: if f' has the same germ as f , meaning that there is some open set W containing p on which they agree, and g' has the same germ as g , meaning they agree on some open W' containing p , then $f' + g'$ is the same function as $f + g$ on $U \cap V \cap W \cap W'$.

Notice also that if $p \in U$, you get a map $\mathcal{O}(U) \rightarrow \mathcal{O}_p$. Experts may already see that we are talking about germs as colimits.

We can see that \mathcal{O}_p is a local ring as follows. Consider those germs vanishing at p , which we denote $\mathfrak{m}_p \subset \mathcal{O}_p$. They certainly form an ideal: \mathfrak{m}_p is closed under addition, and when you multiply something vanishing at p by any other function, the result also vanishes at p . We check that this ideal is maximal by showing that the quotient map is a field:

$$(3.1.1.1) \quad 0 \longrightarrow \mathfrak{m} := \text{ideal of germs vanishing at } p \longrightarrow \mathcal{O}_p \xrightarrow{f \mapsto f(p)} \mathbb{R} \longrightarrow 0$$

3.1.A. EXERCISE. Show that this is the only maximal ideal of \mathcal{O}_p . (Hint: show that every element of $\mathcal{O}_p \setminus \mathfrak{m}$ is invertible.)

Note that we can interpret the value of a function at a point, or the value of a germ at a point, as an element of the local ring modulo the maximal ideal. (We will see that this doesn't work for more general sheaves, but *does* work for things behaving like sheaves of functions. This will be formalized in the notion of a *local-ringed space*, which we will see, briefly, in §7.3.

3.1.2. *Aside.* Notice that $\mathfrak{m}/\mathfrak{m}^2$ is a module over $\mathcal{O}_p/\mathfrak{m} \cong \mathbb{R}$, i.e. it is a real vector space. It turns out to be naturally (whatever that means) the cotangent space to the manifold at p . This insight will prove handy later, when we define tangent and cotangent spaces of schemes.

3.1.B. EXERCISE FOR THOSE WITH DIFFERENTIAL GEOMETRIC BACKGROUND. Prove this.

3.2 Definition of sheaf and presheaf

We now formalize these notions, by defining presheaves and sheaves. Presheaves are simpler to define, and notions such as kernel and cokernel are straightforward. Sheaves are more complicated to define, and some notions such as cokernel require more thought. But sheaves are more useful because they are in some vague sense more geometric; you can get information about a sheaf locally.

3.2.1. Definition of sheaf and presheaf on a topological space X .

To be concrete, we will define sheaves of sets. However, in the definition the category *Sets* can be replaced by any category, and other important examples are abelian groups Ab , k -vector spaces Vec_k , rings *Rings*, modules over a ring Mod_A , and more. (You may have to think more when dealing with a category of objects that aren't "sets with additional structure", but there aren't any new complications. In any case, this won't be relevant for us.) Sheaves (and presheaves) are often written in calligraphic font. The fact that \mathcal{F} is a sheaf on a topological space X is often written as

$$\begin{array}{c} \mathcal{F} \\ | \\ X \end{array}$$

3.2.2. Definition: Presheaf. A **presheaf** \mathcal{F} on a topological space X is the following data.

- To each open set $U \subset X$, we have a set $\mathcal{F}(U)$ (e.g. the set of differentiable functions in our motivating example). (Notational warning: Several notations are in use, for various good reasons: $\mathcal{F}(U) = \Gamma(U, \mathcal{F}) = H^0(U, \mathcal{F})$. We will use them all.) The elements of $\mathcal{F}(U)$ are called **sections of \mathcal{F} over U** .
- For each inclusion $U \hookrightarrow V$ of open sets, we have a **restriction map** $\text{res}_{V,U} : \mathcal{F}(V) \rightarrow \mathcal{F}(U)$ (just as we did for differentiable functions).
The data is required to satisfy the following two conditions.
 - The map $\text{res}_{U,U}$ is the identity: $\text{res}_{U,U} = \text{id}_{\mathcal{F}(U)}$.

• If $U \hookrightarrow V \hookrightarrow W$ are inclusions of open sets, then the restriction maps commute, i.e.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{F}(W) & \xrightarrow{\text{res}_{W,V}} & \mathcal{F}(V) \\ & \searrow \text{res}_{W,U} & \swarrow \text{res}_{V,U} \\ & \mathcal{F}(U) & \end{array}$$

commutes.

3.2.A. EXERCISE FOR CATEGORY-LOVERS: “A PRESHEAF IS THE SAME AS A CONTRAVARIANT FUNCTOR”. Given any topological space X , we have a “category of open sets” (Example 2.2.9), where the objects are the open sets and the morphisms are inclusions. Verify that the data of a presheaf is precisely the data of a contravariant functor from the category of open sets of X to the category of sets. (This interpretation is surprisingly useful.)

3.2.3. Definition: Stalks and germs. We define the stalk of a sheaf at a point in two equivalent ways. One will be hands-on, and the other will be as a colimit.

3.2.4. Define the **stalk** of a presheaf \mathcal{F} at a point p to be the set of **germs** of \mathcal{F} at p , denoted \mathcal{F}_p , as in the example of §3.1.1. Germs correspond to sections over some open set containing p , and two of these sections are considered the same if they agree on some smaller open set. More precisely: the stalk is

$$\{(f, \text{open } U) : p \in U, f \in \mathcal{O}(U)\}$$

modulo the relation that $(f, U) \sim (g, V)$ if there is some open set $W \subset U, V$ where $\text{res}_{U,W} f = \text{res}_{V,W} g$.

3.2.5. A useful (and better) equivalent definition of a stalk is as a colimit of all $\mathcal{F}(U)$ over all open sets U containing p :

$$\mathcal{F}_p = \varinjlim \mathcal{F}(U).$$

The index category is a directed set (given any two such open sets, there is a third such set contained in both), so these two definitions are the same by Exercise 2.4.C. Hence we can define stalks for sheaves of sets, groups, rings, and other things for which colimits exist for directed sets.

If $p \in U$, and $f \in \mathcal{F}(U)$, then the image of f in \mathcal{F}_p is called the **germ of f at p** . (Warning: unlike the example of §germofdiffun, in general, the value of a section at a point doesn’t make sense.)

3.2.6. Definition: Sheaf. A presheaf is a **sheaf** if it satisfies two more axioms. Notice that these axioms use the additional information of when some open sets cover another.

Identity axiom. If $\{U_i\}_{i \in I}$ is an open cover of U , and $f_1, f_2 \in \mathcal{F}(U)$, and $\text{res}_{U,U_i} f_1 = \text{res}_{U,U_i} f_2$, then $f_1 = f_2$.

(A presheaf satisfying the identity axiom is called a **separated presheaf**, but we will not use that notation in any essential way.)

Gluability axiom. If $\{U_i\}_{i \in I}$ is an open cover of U , then given $f_i \in \mathcal{F}(U_i)$ for all i , such that $\text{res}_{U_i, U_i \cap U_j} f_i = \text{res}_{U_j, U_i \cap U_j} f_j$ for all i, j , then there is some $f \in \mathcal{F}(U)$ such that $\text{res}_{U,U_i} f = f_i$ for all i .

In mathematics, definitions often come paired: “at most one” and “at least one”. In this case, identity means there is at most one way to glue, and gluability means that there is at least one way to glue.

(For experts, and scholars of the empty set only: an additional axiom sometimes included is that $F(\emptyset)$ is a one-element set, and in general, for a sheaf with values in a category, $F(\emptyset)$ is required to be the final object in the category. This actually follows from the above definitions, assuming that the empty product is appropriately defined as the final object.)

Example. If U and V are disjoint, then $\mathcal{F}(U \cup V) = \mathcal{F}(U) \times \mathcal{F}(V)$. Here we use the fact that $F(\emptyset)$ is the final object.

The **stalk of a sheaf** at a point is just its stalk as a presheaf — the same definition applies — and similarly for the **germs** of a section of a sheaf.

3.2.B. UNIMPORTANT EXERCISE: PRESHEAVES THAT ARE NOT SHEAVES. Show that the following are presheaves on \mathbb{C} (with the usual topology), but not sheaves: (a) bounded functions, (b) holomorphic functions admitting a holomorphic square root.

Both of the presheaves in the previous Exercise satisfy the identity axiom. A “natural” example failing even the identity axiom will be given in Remark 3.7.2.

We now make a couple of points intended only for category-lovers.

3.2.7. Interpretation in terms of the equalizer exact sequence. The two axioms for a presheaf to be a sheaf can be interpreted as “exactness” of the “equalizer exact sequence”: $\cdot \longrightarrow \mathcal{F}(U) \longrightarrow \prod \mathcal{F}(U_i) \rightrightarrows \prod \mathcal{F}(U_i \cap U_j)$. Identity is exactness at $\mathcal{F}(U)$, and gluability is exactness at $\prod \mathcal{F}(U_i)$. I won’t make this precise, or even explain what the double right arrow means. But you may be able to figure it out from the context.

3.2.C. EXERCISE. The gluability axiom may be interpreted as saying that $\mathcal{F}(\cup_{i \in I} U_i)$ is a certain limit. What is that limit?

We now give a number of examples of sheaves.

3.2.D. EXERCISE. (a) Verify that the examples of §3.1 are indeed sheaves (of differentiable functions, or continuous functions, or smooth functions, or functions on a manifold or \mathbb{R}^n).

(b) Show that real-valued continuous functions on (open sets of) a topological space X form a sheaf.

3.2.8. Important Example: Restriction of a sheaf. Suppose \mathcal{F} is a sheaf on X , and $U \subset X$ is an open set. Define the **restriction of \mathcal{F} to U** , denoted $\mathcal{F}|_U$, to be the collection $\mathcal{F}|_U(V) = \mathcal{F}(V)$ for all $V \subset U$. Clearly this is a sheaf on U .

3.2.9. Important Example: skyscraper sheaf. Suppose X is a topological space, with $p \in X$, and S is a set. Then S_p defined by

$$S_p(U) = \begin{cases} S & \text{if } p \in U, \text{ and} \\ \{e\} & \text{if } p \notin U \end{cases}$$

forms a sheaf. Here $\{e\}$ is any one-element set. (Check this if it isn't clear to you.) This is called a **skyscraper sheaf**, because the informal picture of it looks like a skyscraper at p . There is an analogous definition for sheaves of abelian groups, except $S_p(\mathcal{U}) = \{0\}$ if $p \in \mathcal{U}$; and for sheaves with values in a category more generally, $S_p(\mathcal{U})$ should be a final object. (Warning: the notation S_p is imperfect, as the subscript of a point also denotes the stalk.)

3.2.E. IMPORTANT EXERCISE: CONSTANT PRESHEAF AND LOCALLY CONSTANT SHEAF. (a) Let X be a topological space, and S a set. Define $\mathcal{F}(\mathcal{U}) = S$ for all open sets \mathcal{U} . Show that this forms a presheaf (with restriction maps the identity), and satisfies the identity axiom. We denote this presheaf $\underline{S}^{\text{pre}}$. Show that this needn't form a sheaf. This is called the **constant presheaf with values in S** .

(b) Now let $\mathcal{F}(\mathcal{U})$ be the maps to S that are **locally constant**, i.e. for any point x in \mathcal{U} , there is a neighborhood of x where the function is constant. Show that this is a *sheaf*. (A better description is this: endow S with the discrete topology, and let $\mathcal{F}(\mathcal{U})$ be the continuous maps $\mathcal{U} \rightarrow S$.) We will call this the **locally constant sheaf**. This is usually called the **constant sheaf**. We denote this sheaf \underline{S} .

3.2.F. EXERCISE (“MORPHISMS GLUE”). Suppose Y is a topological space. Show that “continuous maps to Y ” form a sheaf of sets on X . More precisely, to each open set \mathcal{U} of X , we associate the set of continuous maps to Y . Show that this forms a sheaf. (Example 3.2.D(b), with $Y = \mathbb{R}$, and Exercise 3.2.E(b), with $Y = S$ with the discrete topology, are both special cases.)

3.2.G. EXERCISE. This is a fancier example of the previous exercise.

(a) (sheaf of sections of a map) Suppose we are given a continuous map $f : Y \rightarrow X$. Show that “sections of f ” form a sheaf. More precisely, to each open set \mathcal{U} of X , associate the set of continuous maps s to Y such that $f \circ s = \text{id}_{\mathcal{U}}$. Show that this forms a sheaf. (For those who have heard of vector bundles, these are a good example.) This is motivation for the phrase “section of a sheaf”.

(b) (This exercise is for those who know what a topological group is. If you don't know what a topological group is, you might be able to guess.) Suppose that Y is a topological group. Show that continuous maps to Y form a sheaf of *groups*. (Example 3.2.D(b), with $Y = \mathbb{R}$, is a special case.)

3.2.10. * *The espace étalé of a (pre)sheaf.* Depending on your background, you may prefer the following perspective on sheaves, which we will not discuss further. Suppose \mathcal{F} is a presheaf (e.g. a sheaf) on a topological space X . Construct a topological space Y along with a continuous map to X as follows: as a set, Y is the disjoint union of all the stalks of \mathcal{F} . This also describes a natural set map $Y \rightarrow X$. We topologize Y as follows. Each section s of \mathcal{F} over an open set \mathcal{U} determines a section of $Y \rightarrow X$ over \mathcal{U} , sending s to each of its germs for each $x \in \mathcal{U}$. The topology on Y is the weakest topology such that these sections are continuous. This is called the **espace étalé** of \mathcal{F} . Then the reader may wish to show that (a) if \mathcal{F} is a sheaf, then the sheaf of sections of $Y \rightarrow X$ (see the previous exercise 3.2.G(a)) can be naturally identified with the sheaf \mathcal{F} itself. (b) Moreover, if \mathcal{F} is a presheaf, the sheaf of sections of $Y \rightarrow X$ is the *sheafification* of \mathcal{F} , to be defined in Definition 3.4.5 (see Remark 3.4.7). Example 3.2.E may be interpreted as an example of this construction.

3.2.H. IMPORTANT EXERCISE: THE PUSHFORWARD SHEAF OR DIRECT IMAGE SHEAF. Suppose $f : X \rightarrow Y$ is a continuous map, and \mathcal{F} is a sheaf on X . Then define $f_*\mathcal{F}$ by $f_*\mathcal{F}(V) = \mathcal{F}(f^{-1}(V))$, where V is an open subset of Y . Show that $f_*\mathcal{F}$ is a sheaf. This is called a **direct image sheaf** or **pushforward sheaf**. More precisely, $f_*\mathcal{F}$ is called the **pushforward of \mathcal{F} by f** .

The skyscraper sheaf (Example 3.2.9) can be interpreted as the pushforward of the constant sheaf \underline{S} on a one-point space p , under the morphism $f : \{p\} \rightarrow X$.

Once we realize that sheaves form a category, we will see that the pushforward is a functor from sheaves on X to sheaves on Y (Exercise 3.3.A).

3.2.I. EXERCISE (PUSHFORWARD INDUCES MAPS OF STALKS). Suppose $f : X \rightarrow Y$ is a continuous map, and \mathcal{F} is a sheaf of sets (or rings or A -modules) on X . If $f(x) = y$, describe the natural morphism of stalks $(f_*\mathcal{F})_y \rightarrow \mathcal{F}_x$. (You can use the explicit definition of stalk using representatives, §3.2.4, or the universal property, §3.2.5. If you prefer one way, you should try the other.) Once we define the category of sheaves of sets on a topological space in §3.3.1, you will see that your construction will make the following diagram commute:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{Sets}_X & \xrightarrow{f_*} & \text{Sets}_Y \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ \text{Sets} & \longrightarrow & \text{Sets} \end{array}$$

3.2.11. Important Example: Ringed spaces, and \mathcal{O}_X -modules. Suppose \mathcal{O}_X is a sheaf of rings on a topological space X (i.e. a sheaf on X with values in the category of *Rings*). Then (X, \mathcal{O}_X) is called a **ringed space**. The sheaf of rings is often denoted by \mathcal{O}_X , pronounced “oh-of- X ”. This sheaf is called the **structure sheaf** of the ringed space. We now define the notion of an **\mathcal{O}_X -module**. The notion is analogous to one we’ve seen before: just as we have modules over a ring, we have \mathcal{O}_X -modules over the structure sheaf (of rings) \mathcal{O}_X .

There is only one possible definition that could go with this name. An \mathcal{O}_X -module is a sheaf of abelian groups \mathcal{F} with the following additional structure. For each U , $\mathcal{F}(U)$ is an $\mathcal{O}_X(U)$ -module. Furthermore, this structure should behave well with respect to restriction maps: if $U \subset V$, then

$$(3.2.11.1) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{O}_X(V) \times \mathcal{F}(V) & \xrightarrow{\text{action}} & \mathcal{F}(V) \\ \text{res}_{V,U} \times \text{res}_{V,U} \downarrow & & \downarrow \text{res}_{V,U} \\ \mathcal{O}_X(U) \times \mathcal{F}(U) & \xrightarrow{\text{action}} & \mathcal{F}(U) \end{array}$$

commutes. (You should convince yourself that I haven’t forgotten anything.)

Recall that the notion of A -module generalizes the notion of abelian group, because an abelian group is the same thing as a \mathbb{Z} -module. Similarly, the notion of \mathcal{O}_X -module generalizes the notion of sheaf of abelian groups, because the latter is the same thing as a $\underline{\mathbb{Z}}$ -module, where $\underline{\mathbb{Z}}$ is the locally constant sheaf with values

in \mathbb{Z} . Hence when we are proving things about \mathcal{O}_X -modules, we are also proving things about sheaves of abelian groups.

3.2.12. *For those who know about vector bundles.* The motivating example of \mathcal{O}_X -modules is the sheaf of sections of a vector bundle. If X is a differentiable manifold, and $\pi : V \rightarrow X$ is a vector bundle over X , then the sheaf of differentiable sections $\phi : X \rightarrow V$ is an \mathcal{O}_X -module. Indeed, given a section s of π over an open subset $U \subset X$, and a function f on U , we can multiply s by f to get a new section fs of π over U . Moreover, if V is a smaller subset, then we could multiply f by s and then restrict to V , or we could restrict both f and s to V and then multiply, and we would get the same answer. That is precisely the commutativity of (3.2.11.1).

3.3 Morphisms of presheaves and sheaves

3.3.1. Whenever one defines a new mathematical object, category theory teaches to try to understand maps between them. We now define morphisms of presheaves, and similarly for sheaves. In other words, we will describe the *category of presheaves* (of sets, abelian groups, etc.) and the *category of sheaves*.

A **morphism of presheaves** of sets (or indeed of sheaves with values in any category) on X , $f : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$, is the data of maps $f(U) : \mathcal{F}(U) \rightarrow \mathcal{G}(U)$ for all U behaving well with respect to restriction: if $U \hookrightarrow V$ then

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{F}(V) & \xrightarrow{f(V)} & \mathcal{G}(V) \\ \text{res}_{V,U} \downarrow & & \downarrow \text{res}_{V,U} \\ \mathcal{F}(U) & \xrightarrow{f(U)} & \mathcal{G}(U) \end{array}$$

commutes. (Notice: the underlying space of both \mathcal{F} and \mathcal{G} is X .)

Morphisms of sheaves are defined identically: the morphisms from a sheaf \mathcal{F} to a sheaf \mathcal{G} are precisely the morphisms from \mathcal{F} to \mathcal{G} as presheaves. (Translation: The category of sheaves on X is a full subcategory of the category of presheaves on X .)

An example of a morphism of sheaves is the map from the sheaf of differentiable functions on \mathbb{R} to the sheaf of continuous functions. This is a “forgetful map”: we are forgetting that these functions are differentiable, and remembering only that they are continuous.

We may as well set some notation: let Sets_X , Ab_X , etc. denote the category of sheaves of sets, abelian groups, etc. on a topological space X . Let $\text{Mod}_{\mathcal{O}_X}$ denote the category of \mathcal{O}_X -modules on a ringed space (X, \mathcal{O}_X) . Let $\text{Sets}_X^{\text{pre}}$, etc. denote the category of presheaves of sets, etc. on X .

3.3.2. *Side-remark for category-lovers.* If you interpret a presheaf on X as a contravariant functor (from the category of open sets), a morphism of presheaves on X is a natural transformation of functors (§2.2.21).

3.3.A. EXERCISE. Suppose $f : X \rightarrow Y$ is a continuous map of topological spaces (i.e. a morphism in the category of topological spaces). Show that pushforward

gives a functor $Sets_X \rightarrow Sets_Y$. Here $Sets$ can be replaced by many other categories. (Watch out for some possible confusion: a presheaf is a functor, and presheaves form a category. It may be best to forget that presheaves form a functor for now.)

3.3.B. IMPORTANT EXERCISE AND DEFINITION: “SHEAF Hom”. Suppose \mathcal{F} and \mathcal{G} are two sheaves of sets on X . (In fact, it will suffice that \mathcal{F} is a presheaf.) Let $\text{Hom}(\mathcal{F}, \mathcal{G})$ be the collection of data

$$\text{Hom}(\mathcal{F}, \mathcal{G})(U) := \text{Hom}(\mathcal{F}|_U, \mathcal{G}|_U).$$

(Recall the notation $\mathcal{F}|_U$, the restriction of the sheaf to the open set U , Example 3.2.8.) Show that this is a sheaf of sets on X . This is called the “sheaf Hom”. Show that if \mathcal{G} is a sheaf of abelian groups, then $\text{Hom}(\mathcal{F}, \mathcal{G})$ is a sheaf of abelian groups. Implicit in this fact is that $\text{Hom}(\mathcal{F}, \mathcal{G})$ is an abelian group. (This exercise is somewhat tedious, but in the end very rewarding.) The same construction will “obviously” work for sheaves with values in any category.

Warning: Hom does not commute with taking stalks. More precisely: it is not true that $\text{Hom}(\mathcal{F}, \mathcal{G})_p$ is isomorphic to $\text{Hom}(\mathcal{F}_p, \mathcal{G}_p)$. (Can you think of a counterexample? Does there at least exist a map from one of these to the other?)

We will use many variants of the definition of Hom. For example, if \mathcal{F} and \mathcal{G} are sheaves of abelian groups on X , then $\text{Hom}_{Ab_X}(\mathcal{F}, \mathcal{G})$ is defined by taking $\text{Hom}(\mathcal{F}, \mathcal{G})(U)$ to be the maps *as sheaves of abelian groups* $\mathcal{F}|_U \rightarrow \mathcal{G}|_U$. Similarly, if \mathcal{F} and \mathcal{G} are \mathcal{O}_X -modules, we define $\text{Hom}_{Mod_{\mathcal{O}_X}}(\mathcal{F}, \mathcal{G})$ in the analogous way. Obnoxiously, the subscripts Ab_X and $Mod_{\mathcal{O}_X}$ are essentially always dropped (here and in the literature), so be careful which category you are working in! We call $\text{Hom}_{Mod_{\mathcal{O}_X}}(\mathcal{F}, \mathcal{O}_X)$ the *dual* of the \mathcal{O}_X -module \mathcal{F} , and denoted it \mathcal{F}^\vee .

3.3.C. UNIMPORTANT EXERCISE (REALITY CHECK).

- If \mathcal{F} is a sheaf of sets on X , then show that $\text{Hom}(\underline{\{p\}}, \mathcal{F}) \cong \mathcal{F}$, where $\underline{\{p\}}$ is the (locally) constant sheaf corresponding to the one element set $\{p\}$.
- If \mathcal{F} is a sheaf of abelian groups on X , then show that $\text{Hom}_{Ab_X}(\underline{\mathbb{Z}}, \mathcal{F}) \cong \mathcal{F}$.
- If \mathcal{F} is an \mathcal{O}_X -module, then show that $\text{Hom}_{Mod_{\mathcal{O}_X}}(\mathcal{O}_X, \mathcal{F}) \cong \mathcal{F}$.

A key idea in (b) and (c) is that 1 “generates” (in some sense) $\underline{\mathbb{Z}}$ (in (b)) and \mathcal{O}_X (in (c)).

3.3.3. Presheaves of abelian groups (and even “presheaf \mathcal{O}_X -modules”) form an abelian category.

We can make module-like constructions using presheaves of abelian groups on a topological space X . (In this section, all (pre)sheaves are of abelian groups.) For example, we can clearly add maps of presheaves and get another map of presheaves: if $f, g : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$, then we define the map $f + g$ by $(f + g)(V) = f(V) + g(V)$. (There is something small to check here: that the result is indeed a map of presheaves.) In this way, presheaves of abelian groups form an additive category (Definition 2.6.1). For exactly the same reasons, sheaves of abelian groups also form an additive category.

If $f : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$ is a morphism of presheaves, define the **presheaf kernel** $\ker_{\text{pre}} f$ by $(\ker_{\text{pre}} f)(U) = \ker f(U)$.

3.3.D. EXERCISE. Show that $\ker_{\text{pre}} f$ is a presheaf. (Hint: if $U \hookrightarrow V$, there is a natural map $\text{res}_{V,U} : \mathcal{G}(V)/f(V)(\mathcal{F}(V)) \rightarrow \mathcal{G}(U)/f(U)(\mathcal{F}(U))$ by chasing the following

diagram:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
 0 & \longrightarrow & \ker_{\text{pre}} f(V) & \longrightarrow & \mathcal{F}(V) & \longrightarrow & \mathcal{G}(V) \\
 & & \downarrow \exists! & & \downarrow \text{res}_{V,U} & & \downarrow \text{res}_{V,U} \\
 0 & \longrightarrow & \ker_{\text{pre}} f(U) & \longrightarrow & \mathcal{F}(U) & \longrightarrow & \mathcal{G}(U)
 \end{array}$$

You should check that the restriction maps compose as desired.)

Define the **presheaf cokernel** $\text{coker}_{\text{pre}} f$ similarly. It is a presheaf by essentially the same argument.

3.3.E. EXERCISE: THE COKERNEL DESERVES ITS NAME. Show that the presheaf cokernel satisfies the universal property of cokernels (Definition 2.6.3) in the category of presheaves.

Similarly, $\ker_{\text{pre}} f \rightarrow \mathcal{F}$ satisfies the universal property for kernels in the category of presheaves.

It is not too tedious to verify that presheaves of abelian groups form an abelian category, and the reader is free to do so. The key idea is that all abelian-categorical notions may be defined and verified “open set by open set”. We needn’t worry about restriction maps — they “come along for the ride”. Hence we can define terms such as **subpresheaf**, **image presheaf**, **quotient presheaf**, **cokernel presheaf**, and they behave the way one expect. You construct kernels, quotients, cokernels, and images open set by open set. Homological algebra (exact sequences and so forth) works, and also “works open set by open set”. In particular:

3.3.F. EASY EXERCISE. Show (or observe) that for a topological space X with open set U , $\mathcal{F} \mapsto \mathcal{F}(U)$ gives a functor from presheaves of abelian groups on X , Ab_X^{pre} , to abelian groups, Ab . Then show that this functor is exact.

3.3.G. EXERCISE. Show that $0 \rightarrow \mathcal{F}_1 \rightarrow \mathcal{F}_2 \rightarrow \cdots \rightarrow \mathcal{F}_n \rightarrow 0$ is exact if and only if $0 \rightarrow \mathcal{F}_1(U) \rightarrow \mathcal{F}_2(U) \rightarrow \cdots \rightarrow \mathcal{F}_n(U) \rightarrow 0$ is exact for all U .

The above discussion essentially carries over without change to presheaves with values in any abelian category. (Think this through if you wish.)

However, we are interested in more geometric objects, sheaves, where things can be understood in terms of their local behavior, thanks to the identity and gluing axioms. We will soon see that sheaves of abelian groups also form an abelian category, but a complication will arise that will force the notion of *sheafification* on us. Sheafification will be the answer to many of our prayers. We just don’t realize it yet.

To begin with, sheaves Ab_X may be easily seen to form an additive category (essentially because presheaves Ab_X^{pre} already do, and sheaves form a full subcategory).

Kernels work just as with presheaves:

3.3.H. IMPORTANT EXERCISE. Suppose $f : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$ is a morphism of *sheaves*. Show that the presheaf kernel $\ker_{\text{pre}} f$ is in fact a sheaf. Show that it satisfies the universal property of kernels (Definition 2.6.3). (Hint: the second question follows immediately from the fact that $\ker_{\text{pre}} f$ satisfies the universal property in the category of *presheaves*.)

Thus if f is a morphism of sheaves, we define

$$\ker f := \ker_{\text{pre}} f.$$

The problem arises with the cokernel.

3.3.I. IMPORTANT EXERCISE. Let X be \mathbb{C} with the classical topology, let $\underline{\mathbb{Z}}$ be the locally constant sheaf on X with group \mathbb{Z} , \mathcal{O}_X the sheaf of holomorphic functions, and \mathcal{F} the *presheaf* of functions admitting a holomorphic logarithm. (Why is \mathcal{F} not a sheaf?) Consider

$$0 \longrightarrow \underline{\mathbb{Z}} \longrightarrow \mathcal{O}_X \xrightarrow{f \mapsto \exp 2\pi i f} \mathcal{F} \longrightarrow 0$$

where $\underline{\mathbb{Z}} \rightarrow \mathcal{O}_X$ is the natural inclusion. Show that this is an exact sequence of *presheaves* on X . Show that \mathcal{F} is *not* a sheaf. (Hint: \mathcal{F} does not satisfy the gluability axiom. The problem is that there are functions that don't have a logarithm but locally have a logarithm.) This will come up again in Example 3.4.9.

We will have to put our hopes for understanding cokernels of sheaves on hold for a while. We will first learn to understand sheaves using stalks.

3.4 Properties determined at the level of stalks, and sheafification

3.4.1. Properties determined by stalks. In this section, we will see that lots of facts about sheaves can be checked “at the level of stalks”. This isn't true for presheaves, and reflects the local nature of sheaves. We will see that sections and morphisms are determined “by their stalks”, and the property of a morphism being an isomorphism may be checked at stalks. (The last one is the trickiest.)

3.4.A. IMPORTANT EXERCISE (sections are determined by germs). Prove that a section of a sheaf of sets is determined by its germs, i.e. the natural map

$$(3.4.1.1) \quad \mathcal{F}(U) \rightarrow \prod_{p \in U} \mathcal{F}_p$$

is injective. Hint 1: you won't use the gluability axiom, so this is true for separated presheaves. Hint 2: it is false for presheaves in general, see Exercise 3.4.F, so you *will* use the identity axiom. (Your proof will also apply to sheaves of groups, rings, etc.)

This exercise suggests an important question: which elements of the right side of (3.4.1.1) are in the image of the left side?

3.4.2. Important definition. We say that an element $\prod_{p \in U} s_p$ of the right side $\prod_{p \in U} \mathcal{F}_p$ of (3.4.1.1) consists of **compatible germs** if for all $p \in U$, there is some representative $(U_p, s'_p \in \mathcal{F}(U_p))$ for s_p (where $p \in U_p \subset U$) such that the germ of s'_p at all $y \in U_p$ is s_y . You will have to think about this a little. Clearly any section s of \mathcal{F} over U gives a choice of compatible germs for U — take $(U_p, s'_p) = (U, s)$.

3.4.B. IMPORTANT EXERCISE. Prove that any choice of compatible germs for \mathcal{F} over U is the image of a section of \mathcal{F} over U . (Hint: you will use gluability.)

We have thus completely described the image of (3.4.1.1), in a way that we will find useful.

3.4.3. Remark. This perspective is part of the motivation for the agricultural terminology “sheaf”: it is (the data of) a bunch of stalks, bundled together appropriately.

Now we throw morphisms into the mix.

3.4.C. EXERCISE. Show a morphism of (pre)sheaves (of sets, or rings, or abelian groups, or \mathcal{O}_X -modules) induces a morphism of stalks. More precisely, if $\phi : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$ is a morphism of (pre)sheaves on X , and $p \in X$, describe a natural map $\phi_p : \mathcal{F}_p \rightarrow \mathcal{G}_p$. (You may wish to state this in the language of functors.)

3.4.D. EXERCISE (morphisms are determined by stalks). Show that morphisms of sheaves are determined by morphisms of stalks. Hint: consider the following diagram.

$$(3.4.3.1) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{F}(U) & \longrightarrow & \mathcal{G}(U) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ \prod_{p \in U} \mathcal{F}_p & \longrightarrow & \prod_{p \in U} \mathcal{G}_p \end{array}$$

3.4.E. TRICKY EXERCISE (isomorphisms are determined by stalks). Show that a morphism of sheaves is an isomorphism if and only if it induces an isomorphism of all stalks. Hint: Use (3.4.3.1). Injectivity uses the previous exercise 3.4.D. Surjectivity will use gluability, and is more subtle.

3.4.F. EXERCISE. (a) Show that Exercise 3.4.A is false for general presheaves.
 (b) Show that Exercise 3.4.D is false for general presheaves.
 (c) Show that Exercise 3.4.E is false for general presheaves.
 (General hint for finding counterexamples of this sort: consider a 2-point space with the discrete topology, i.e. every subset is open.)

3.4.4. Sheafification.

Every sheaf is a presheaf (and indeed by definition sheaves on X form a full subcategory of the category of presheaves on X). Just as groupification (§2.5.3) gives a group that best approximates a semigroup, sheafification gives the sheaf that best approximates a presheaf, with an analogous universal property. (One possible example to keep in mind is the sheafification of the presheaf of holomorphic functions admitting a square root on \mathbb{C} with the classical topology.)

3.4.5. Definition. If \mathcal{F} is a presheaf on X , then a morphism of presheaves $\text{sh} : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{F}^{\text{sh}}$ on X is a **sheafification of \mathcal{F}** if \mathcal{F}^{sh} is a sheaf, and for any other sheaf \mathcal{G} , and any presheaf morphism $g : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$, there exists a *unique* morphism of sheaves

$f : \mathcal{F}^{\text{sh}} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$ making the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{F} & \xrightarrow{\text{sh}} & \mathcal{F}^{\text{sh}} \\ & \searrow g & \downarrow f \\ & & \mathcal{G} \end{array}$$

commute.

3.4.G. EXERCISE. Show that sheafification is unique up to unique isomorphism. Show that if \mathcal{F} is a sheaf, then the sheafification is $\mathcal{F} \xrightarrow{\text{id}} \mathcal{F}$. (This should be second nature by now.)

3.4.6. Construction. We next show that any presheaf of sets (or groups, rings, etc.) has a sheafification. Suppose \mathcal{F} is a *presheaf*. Define \mathcal{F}^{sh} by defining $\mathcal{F}^{\text{sh}}(\mathcal{U})$ as the set of compatible germs of the presheaf \mathcal{F} over \mathcal{U} . Explicitly:

$$\mathcal{F}^{\text{sh}}(\mathcal{U}) := \{(f_x \in \mathcal{F}_x)_{x \in \mathcal{U}} : \forall x \in \mathcal{U}, \exists x \in V \subset \mathcal{U}, s \in \mathcal{F}(V) : s_y = f_y \forall y \in V\}.$$

(Those who want to worry about the empty set are welcome to.)

3.4.H. EASY EXERCISE. Show that \mathcal{F}^{sh} (using the tautological restriction maps) forms a sheaf.

3.4.I. EASY EXERCISE. Describe a natural map of presheaves $\text{sh} : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{F}^{\text{sh}}$.

3.4.J. EXERCISE. Show that the map sh satisfies the universal property of sheafification (Definition 3.4.5). (This is easier than you might fear.)

3.4.K. USEFUL EXERCISE, NOT JUST FOR CATEGORY-LOVERS. Show that the sheafification functor is left-adjoint to the forgetful functor from sheaves on X to presheaves on X . This is not difficult — it is largely a restatement of the universal property. But it lets you use results from §2.6.10, and can “explain” why you don’t need to sheafify when taking kernel, and why you need to sheafify when taking cokernel and (soon, in Exercise 3.5.H) \otimes .

3.4.L. EASY EXERCISE. Use the universal property to show that for any morphism of presheaves $\phi : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$, we get a natural induced morphism of sheaves $\phi^{\text{sh}} : \mathcal{F}^{\text{sh}} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}^{\text{sh}}$. Show that sheafification is a functor from presheaves on X to sheaves on X .

3.4.M. EXERCISE. Show $\mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{F}^{\text{sh}}$ induces an isomorphism of stalks. (Possible hint: Use the concrete description of the stalks. Another possibility once you read Remark 3.6.3: judicious use of adjoints.)

3.4.7. \star Remark. The *espace étalé* construction (§3.2.10) yields a different-sounding description of sheafification which may be preferred by some readers. The fundamental idea is identical. This is essentially the same construction as the one given here. Another construction is described in [EH].

3.4.8. Subsheaves and quotient sheaves.

3.4.N. EXERCISE. Suppose $\phi : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$ is a morphism of sheaves (of sets) on a topological space X . Show that the following are equivalent.

- (a) ϕ is a monomorphism in the category of sheaves.
- (b) ϕ is injective on the level of stalks: $\phi_x : \mathcal{F}_x \rightarrow \mathcal{G}_x$ injective for all $x \in X$.
- (c) ϕ is injective on the level of open sets: $\phi(\mathcal{U}) : \mathcal{F}(\mathcal{U}) \rightarrow \mathcal{G}(\mathcal{U})$ is injective for all open $\mathcal{U} \subset X$.

(Possible hints: for (b) implies (a), recall that morphisms are determined by stalks, Exercise 3.4.D. For (a) implies (b), judiciously choose a skyscraper sheaf. For (a) implies (c), use the “indicator sheaf” with one section over every open set contained in \mathcal{U} , and no section over any other open set.)

If these conditions hold, we say that \mathcal{F} is a **subsheaf** of \mathcal{G} (where the “inclusion” ϕ is sometimes left implicit).

3.4.O. EXERCISE. Continuing the notation of the previous exercise, show that the following are equivalent.

- (a) ϕ is an epimorphism in the category of sheaves.
- (b) ϕ is surjective on the level of stalks: $\phi_x : \mathcal{F}_x \rightarrow \mathcal{G}_x$ surjective for all $x \in X$.

If these conditions hold, we say that \mathcal{G} is a **quotient sheaf** of \mathcal{F} .

Thus *monomorphisms and epimorphisms — subsheafiness and quotient sheafiness — can be checked at the level of stalks.*

Both exercises generalize readily to sheaves with values in any category, where “injective” is replaced by “monomorphism” and “surjective” is replaced by “epimorphism”.

Notice that there was no part (c) to Exercise 3.4.O, and Example 3.4.9 shows why. (But there is a version of (c) that *implies* (a) and (b): surjectivity on all open sets in the base of a topology implies surjectivity of the map of sheaves, Exercise 3.7.E.)

3.4.9. Example (cf. Exercise 3.3.I). Let $X = \mathbb{C}$ with the classical topology, and define \mathcal{O}_X to be the sheaf of holomorphic functions, and \mathcal{O}_X^* to be the sheaf of invertible (nowhere zero) holomorphic functions. This is a sheaf of abelian groups under multiplication. We have maps of sheaves

$$(3.4.9.1) \quad 0 \longrightarrow \underline{\mathbb{Z}} \xrightarrow{\times 2\pi i} \mathcal{O}_X \xrightarrow{\exp} \mathcal{O}_X^* \longrightarrow 1$$

where $\underline{\mathbb{Z}}$ is the locally constant sheaf associated to \mathbb{Z} . (You can figure out what the sheaves 0 and 1 mean; they are isomorphic, and are written in this way for reasons that may be clear.) We will soon interpret this as an exact sequence of sheaves of abelian groups (the *exponential exact sequence*), although we don’t yet have the language to do so.

3.4.P. ENLIGHTENING EXERCISE. Show that $\mathcal{O}_X \xrightarrow{\exp} \mathcal{O}_X^*$ describes \mathcal{O}_X^* as a quotient sheaf of \mathcal{O}_X . Show that it is not surjective on all open sets.

This is a great example to get a sense of what “surjectivity” means for sheaves: nowhere vanishing holomorphic functions have logarithms locally, but they need not globally.

3.5 Sheaves of abelian groups, and \mathcal{O}_X -modules, form abelian categories

We are now ready to see that sheaves of abelian groups, and their cousins, \mathcal{O}_X -modules, form abelian categories. In other words, we may treat them similarly to vector spaces, and modules over a ring. In the process of doing this, we will see that this is much stronger than an analogy; kernels, cokernels, exactness, and so forth can be understood at the level of germs (which are just abelian groups), and the compatibility of the germs will come for free.

The category of sheaves of abelian groups is clearly an additive category (Definition 2.6.1). In order to show that it is an abelian category, we must show that any morphism $\phi : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$ has a kernel and a cokernel. We have already seen that ϕ has a kernel (Exercise 3.3.H): the presheaf kernel is a sheaf, and is a kernel in the category of sheaves.

3.5.A. EXERCISE. Show that the stalk of the kernel is the kernel of the stalks: there is a natural isomorphism

$$(\ker(\mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}))_x \cong \ker(\mathcal{F}_x \rightarrow \mathcal{G}_x).$$

We next address the issue of the cokernel. Now $\phi : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$ has a cokernel in the category of presheaves; call it \mathcal{H}^{pre} (where the superscript is meant to remind us that this is a presheaf). Let $\mathcal{H}^{\text{pre}} \xrightarrow{\text{sh}} \mathcal{H}$ be its sheafification. Recall that the cokernel is defined using a universal property: it is the colimit of the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{F} & \xrightarrow{\phi} & \mathcal{G} \\ \downarrow & & \\ 0 & & \end{array}$$

in the category of presheaves. We claim that \mathcal{H} is the cokernel of ϕ in the category of sheaves, and show this by proving the universal property. Given any sheaf \mathcal{E} and a commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{F} & \xrightarrow{\phi} & \mathcal{G} \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ 0 & \longrightarrow & \mathcal{E} \end{array}$$

We construct

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \mathcal{F} & \xrightarrow{\phi} & \mathcal{G} & & \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow & \searrow & \\ 0 & \longrightarrow & \mathcal{H}^{\text{pre}} & \xrightarrow{\text{sh}} & \mathcal{H} \\ & & & & \downarrow \\ & & & & \mathcal{E} \end{array}$$

We show that there is a unique morphism $\mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}$ making the diagram commute. As \mathcal{H}^{pre} is the cokernel in the category of presheaves, there is a unique morphism

of presheaves $\mathcal{H}^{\text{pre}} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}$ making the diagram commute. But then by the universal property of sheafification (Definition 3.4.5), there is a unique morphism of *sheaves* $\mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}$ making the diagram commute.

3.5.B. EXERCISE. Show that the stalk of the cokernel is naturally isomorphic to the cokernel of the stalk.

We have now defined the notions of kernel and cokernel, and verified that they may be checked at the level of stalks. We have also verified that the properties of a morphism being a monomorphism or epimorphism are also determined at the level of stalks (Exercises 3.4.N and 3.4.O). Hence sheaves of abelian groups on X form an abelian category.

We see more: all structures coming from the abelian nature of this category may be checked at the level of stalks. For example:

3.5.C. EXERCISE. Suppose $\phi : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$ is a morphism of sheaves of abelian groups. Show that the image sheaf $\text{im } \phi$ is the sheafification of the image presheaf. (You must use the definition of image in an abelian category. In fact, this gives the accepted definition of image sheaf for a morphism of sheaves of sets.) Show that the stalk of the image is the image of the stalk.

As a consequence, **exactness of a sequence of sheaves may be checked at the level of stalks.** In particular:

3.5.D. IMPORTANT EXERCISE. Show that taking the stalk of a sheaf of abelian groups is an exact functor. More precisely, if X is a topological space and $p \in X$ is a point, show that taking the stalk at p defines an exact functor $Ab_X \rightarrow Ab$.

3.5.E. EXERCISE (LEFT-EXACTNESS OF THE GLOBAL SECTION FUNCTOR). Suppose $U \subset X$ is an open set, and $0 \rightarrow \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ is an exact sequence of sheaves of abelian groups. Show that

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{F}(U) \rightarrow \mathcal{G}(U) \rightarrow \mathcal{H}(U)$$

is exact. (You can do this “by hand”, or use the fact that sheafification is an adjoint.) Show that the global section functor need not be exact. (Hint: the exponential exact sequence (3.4.9.1).)

3.5.F. EXERCISE: LEFT-EXACTNESS OF PUSHFORWARD. Suppose $0 \rightarrow \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$ is an exact sequence of sheaves of abelian groups on X . If $f : X \rightarrow Y$ is a continuous map, show that

$$0 \rightarrow f_*\mathcal{F} \rightarrow f_*\mathcal{G} \rightarrow f_*\mathcal{H}$$

is exact. (The previous exercise, dealing with the left-exactness of the global section functor can be interpreted as a special case of this, in the case where Y is a point.)

3.5.G. EXERCISE. Show that if (X, \mathcal{O}_X) is a ringed space, then \mathcal{O}_X -modules form an abelian category. (There isn’t much more to check!)

We end with a useful construction using some of the ideas in this section.

3.5.H. IMPORTANT EXERCISE: TENSOR PRODUCTS OF \mathcal{O}_X -MODULES. (a) Suppose \mathcal{O}_X is a sheaf of rings on X . Define (categorically) what we should mean by **tensor**

product of two \mathcal{O}_X -modules. Give an explicit construction, and show that it satisfies your categorical definition. *Hint:* take the “presheaf tensor product” — which needs to be defined — and sheafify. Note: $\otimes_{\mathcal{O}_X}$ is often written \otimes when the subscript is clear from the context. (An example showing sheafification is necessary will arise in Example 15.1.1.))

(b) Show that the tensor product of stalks is the stalk of tensor product.

3.5.1. Conclusion. Just as presheaves are abelian categories because all abelian-categorical notions make sense open set by open set, sheaves are abelian categories because all abelian-categorical notions make sense stalk by stalk.

3.6 The inverse image sheaf

We next describe a notion that is fundamental, but rather intricate. We will not need it for some time, so this may be best left for a second reading. Suppose we have a continuous map $f : X \rightarrow Y$. If \mathcal{F} is a sheaf on X , we have defined the pushforward or direct image sheaf $f_*\mathcal{F}$, which is a sheaf on Y . There is also a notion of inverse image sheaf. (We will not call it the pullback sheaf, reserving that name for a later construction for quasicoherent sheaves, §17.3.) This is a covariant functor f^{-1} from sheaves on Y to sheaves on X . If the sheaves on Y have some additional structure (e.g. group or ring), then this structure is respected by f^{-1} .

3.6.1. Definition by adjoint: elegant but abstract. We define f^{-1} as the left-adjoint to f_* .

This isn’t really a definition; we need a construction to show that the adjoint exists. Note that we then get canonical maps $f^{-1}f_*\mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{F}$ (associated to the identity in $\text{Mor}_Y(f_*\mathcal{F}, f_*\mathcal{F})$) and $\mathcal{G} \rightarrow f_*f^{-1}\mathcal{G}$ (associated to the identity in $\text{Mor}_X(f^{-1}\mathcal{G}, f^{-1}\mathcal{G})$).

3.6.2. Construction: concrete but ugly. Define the temporary notation $f^{-1}\mathcal{G}^{\text{pre}}(\mathcal{U}) = \varinjlim_{V \supset f(\mathcal{U})} \mathcal{G}(V)$. (Recall the explicit description of colimit: sections are sections on open sets containing $f(\mathcal{U})$, with an equivalence relation. Note that $f(\mathcal{U})$ won’t be an open set in general.)

3.6.A. EXERCISE. Show that this defines a presheaf on X .

Now define the **inverse image of \mathcal{G}** by $f^{-1}\mathcal{G} := (f^{-1}\mathcal{G}^{\text{pre}})^{\text{sh}}$. The next exercise shows that this satisfies the universal property. But you may wish to try the later exercises first, and come back to Exercise 3.6.3 later. (For the later exercises, try to give two proofs, one using the universal property, and the other using the explicit description.)

3.6.B. IMPORTANT TRICKY EXERCISE. If $f : X \rightarrow Y$ is a continuous map, and \mathcal{F} is a sheaf on X and \mathcal{G} is a sheaf on Y , describe a bijection

$$\text{Mor}_X(f^{-1}\mathcal{G}, \mathcal{F}) \leftrightarrow \text{Mor}_Y(\mathcal{G}, f_*\mathcal{F}).$$

Observe that your bijection is “natural” in the sense of the definition of adjoints (i.e. functorial in both \mathcal{F} and \mathcal{G}).

3.6.3. Remark. As a special case, if X is a point $p \in Y$, we see that $f^{-1}\mathcal{G}$ is the stalk of \mathcal{G}_p , and maps from the stalk \mathcal{G} to a set S are the same as maps of sheaves on Y from \mathcal{G} to the skyscraper sheaf with set S supported at p . You may prefer to prove this special case by hand directly before solving Exercise 3.6.B, as it is enlightening. (It can also be useful — can you use it to solve Exercises 3.4.M and 3.4.O?)

3.6.C. EXERCISE. Show that the stalks of $f^{-1}\mathcal{G}$ are the same as the stalks of \mathcal{G} . More precisely, if $f(p) = q$, describe a natural isomorphism $\mathcal{G}_q \cong (f^{-1}\mathcal{G})_p$. (Possible hint: use the concrete description of the stalk, as a colimit. Recall that stalks are preserved by sheafification, Exercise 3.4.M. Alternatively, use adjointness.) This, along with the notion of compatible stalks, may give you a way of thinking about inverse image sheaves.

3.6.D. EXERCISE (EASY BUT USEFUL). If U is an open subset of Y , $i : U \rightarrow Y$ is the inclusion, and \mathcal{G} is a sheaf on Y , show that $i^{-1}\mathcal{G}$ is naturally isomorphic to $\mathcal{G}|_U$.

3.6.E. EXERCISE (EASY BUT USEFUL). If $y \in Y$, $i : \{y\} \rightarrow Y$ is the inclusion, and \mathcal{G} is a sheaf on Y , show that $i^{-1}(\mathcal{G})$ is naturally isomorphic to the stalk \mathcal{G}_y .

3.6.F. EXERCISE. Show that f^{-1} is an exact functor from sheaves of abelian groups on Y to sheaves of abelian groups on X (cf. Exercise 3.5.D). (Hint: exactness can be checked on stalks, and by Exercise 3.6.C, the stalks are the same.) The identical argument will show that f^{-1} is an exact functor from \mathcal{O}_Y -modules (on Y) to $f^{-1}\mathcal{O}_Y$ -modules (on X), but don't bother writing that down. (Remark for experts: f^{-1} is a left-adjoint, hence right-exact by abstract nonsense, as discussed in §2.6.10. Left-exactness holds because colimits over directed systems are exact.)

3.6.G. EXERCISE. (a) Suppose $Z \subset Y$ is a closed subset, and $i : Z \hookrightarrow Y$ is the inclusion. If \mathcal{F} is a sheaf on Z , then show that the stalk $(i_*\mathcal{F})_y$ is a one element-set if $y \notin Z$, and \mathcal{F}_y if $y \in Z$.

(b) *Definition:* Define the **support** of a sheaf \mathcal{F} of sets, denoted $\text{Supp } \mathcal{F}$, as the locus where the stalks are not the one-element set:

$$\text{Supp } \mathcal{F} := \{x \in X : |\mathcal{F}_x| \neq 1\}.$$

(More generally, if the sheaf has value in some category, the support consists of points where the stalk is not the final object. For sheaves of abelian groups, the support consists of points with non-zero stalks.) Suppose $\text{Supp } \mathcal{F} \subset Z$ where Z is closed. Show that the natural map $\mathcal{F} \rightarrow i_*i^{-1}\mathcal{F}$ is an isomorphism. Thus a sheaf supported on a closed subset can be considered a sheaf on that closed subset. ("Support" is a useful notion, and will arise again in §14.7.E.)

3.6.H. EXTENSION BY ZERO $f_!$: AN OCCASIONAL LEFT-ADJOINT TO f^{-1} . In addition to always being a left-adjoint, f^{-1} can sometimes be a right-adjoint. Suppose $i : U \hookrightarrow Y$ is an open immersion of ringed spaces. Define **extension by zero** $i_! : \text{Mod}_{\mathcal{O}_U} \rightarrow \text{Mod}_{\mathcal{O}_Y}$ as follows. Suppose \mathcal{F} is an \mathcal{O}_U -module. For open $W \subset Y$, $i_!\mathcal{F}(W) = \mathcal{F}(W)$ if $W \subset U$, and 0 otherwise (with the obvious restriction maps). Note that $i_!\mathcal{F}$ is an \mathcal{O}_Y -module, and that this clearly defines a functor.

(a) For $y \in Y$, show that $(i_!\mathcal{F})_y = \mathcal{F}_y$ if $y \in U$, and 0 otherwise.

(b) Show that $i_!$ is an exact functor.

(c) Describe an inclusion $i_!i^{-1}\mathcal{F} \hookrightarrow \mathcal{F}$.

(d) Show that $(i_!, i^{-1})$ is an adjoint pair, so there is a natural bijection $\text{Hom}_{\mathcal{O}_Y}(i_! \mathcal{F}, \mathcal{G}) \leftrightarrow \text{Hom}_{\mathcal{O}_U}(\mathcal{F}|_U, \mathcal{G}|_U)$ for any \mathcal{O}_Y -module \mathcal{G} . (In particular, the sections of \mathcal{G} over U can be identified with $\text{Hom}_{\mathcal{O}_Y}(i_! \mathcal{O}_U, \mathcal{G})$.)

3.7 Recovering sheaves from a “sheaf on a base”

Sheaves are natural things to want to think about, but hard to get our hands on. We like the identity and gluing axioms, but they make proving things trickier than for presheaves. We have discussed how we can understand sheaves using stalks. We now introduce a second way of getting a hold of sheaves, by introducing the notion of a *sheaf on a base*. Warning: this way of understanding an entire sheaf from limited information is confusing. It may help to keep sight of the central insight that this limited information lets you understand germs, and the notion of when they are compatible (with nearby germs).

First, we define the notion of a **base of a topology**. Suppose we have a topological space X , i.e. we know which subsets U_i of X are open. Then a base of a topology is a subcollection of the open sets $\{B_j\} \subset \{U_i\}$, such that each U_i is a union of the B_j . Here is one example that you have seen early in your mathematical life. Suppose $X = \mathbb{R}^n$. Then the way the usual topology is often first defined is by defining *open balls* $B_r(x) = \{y \in \mathbb{R}^n : |y - x| < r\}$, and declaring that any union of open balls is open. So the balls form a base of the classical topology — we say they *generate* the classical topology. As an application of how we use them, to check continuity of some map $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^n$, you need only think about the pullback of balls on \mathbb{R}^n .

Now suppose we have a sheaf \mathcal{F} on X , and a base $\{B_i\}$ on X . Then consider the information $(\{\mathcal{F}(B_i)\}, \{\text{res}_{B_i, B_j} : \mathcal{F}(B_i) \rightarrow \mathcal{F}(B_j)\})$, which is a subset of the information contained in the sheaf — we are only paying attention to the information involving elements of the base, not all open sets.

We can recover the entire sheaf from this information. This is because we can determine the stalks from this information, and we can determine when germs are compatible.

3.7.A. EXERCISE. Make this precise.

This suggests a notion, that of a **sheaf on a base**. A sheaf of sets (rings etc.) on a base $\{B_i\}$ is the following. For each B_i in the base, we have a set $\mathcal{F}(B_i)$. If $B_i \subset B_j$, we have maps $\text{res}_{B_j, B_i} : \mathcal{F}(B_j) \rightarrow \mathcal{F}(B_i)$. (Things called B are always assumed to be in the base.) If $B_i \subset B_j \subset B_k$, then $\text{res}_{B_k, B_i} = \text{res}_{B_j, B_i} \circ \text{res}_{B_k, B_j}$. So far we have defined a **presheaf on a base** $\{B_i\}$.

We also require the **base identity** axiom: If $B = \cup B_i$, then if $f, g \in \mathcal{F}(B)$ such that $\text{res}_{B, B_i} f = \text{res}_{B, B_i} g$ for all i , then $f = g$.

We require the **base gluing** axiom too: If $B = \cup B_i$, and we have $f_i \in \mathcal{F}(B_i)$ such that f_i agrees with f_j on any basic open set contained in $B_i \cap B_j$ (i.e. $\text{res}_{B_i, B_k} f_i = \text{res}_{B_j, B_k} f_j$ for all $B_k \subset B_i \cap B_j$) then there exists $f \in \mathcal{F}(B)$ such that $\text{res}_{B, B_i} f = f_i$ for all i .

3.7.1. Theorem. — Suppose $\{B_i\}$ is a base on X , and F is a sheaf of sets on this base. Then there is a sheaf \mathcal{F} extending F (with isomorphisms $\mathcal{F}(B_i) \cong F(B_i)$ agreeing with the restriction maps). This sheaf \mathcal{F} is unique up to unique isomorphism

Proof. We will define \mathcal{F} as the sheaf of compatible germs of F .

Define the **stalk** of a base presheaf F at $p \in X$ by

$$F_p = \varinjlim F(B_i)$$

where the colimit is over all B_i (in the base) containing p .

We will say a family of germs in an open set U is compatible near p if there is a section s of F over some B_i containing p such that the germs over B_i are precisely the germs of s . More formally, define

$$\mathcal{F}(U) := \{(f_p \in F_p)_{p \in U} : \text{for all } p \in U, \text{ there exists } B \text{ with } p \subset B \subset U, s \in F(B), \\ \text{with } s_q = f_q \text{ for all } q \in B\}$$

where each B is in our base.

This is a sheaf (for the same reasons as the sheaf of compatible germs was earlier, cf. Exercise 3.4.H).

I next claim that if U is in our base, the natural map $F(U) \rightarrow \mathcal{F}(U)$ is an isomorphism.

3.7.B. TRICKY EXERCISE. Describe the inverse map $\mathcal{F}(U) \rightarrow F(U)$, and verify that it is indeed inverse. Possible hint: elements of $\mathcal{F}(U)$ are determined by stalks, as are elements of $F(U)$. \square

Thus sheaves on X can be recovered from their “restriction to a base”. This is a statement about *objects* in a category, so we should hope for a similar statement about *morphisms*.

3.7.C. IMPORTANT EXERCISE: MORPHISMS OF SHEAVES CORRESPOND TO MORPHISMS OF SHEAVES ON A BASE. Suppose $\{B_i\}$ is a base for the topology of X .

(a) Verify that a morphism of sheaves is determined by the induced morphism of sheaves on the base.

(b) Show that a morphism of sheaves on the base (i.e. such that the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} F(B_i) & \longrightarrow & G(B_i) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ F(B_j) & \longrightarrow & G(B_j) \end{array}$$

commutes for all $B_j \hookrightarrow B_i$) gives a morphism of the induced sheaves. (Possible hint: compatible stalks.)

3.7.D. IMPORTANT EXERCISE. Suppose $X = \cup U_i$ is an open cover of X , and we have sheaves \mathcal{F}_i on U_i along with isomorphisms $\phi_{ij} : \mathcal{F}_i|_{U_i \cap U_j} \rightarrow \mathcal{F}_j|_{U_i \cap U_j}$ (with ϕ_{ii} the identity) that agree on triple overlaps (i.e. $\phi_{jk} \circ \phi_{ij} = \phi_{ij}$ on $U_i \cap U_j \cap U_k$). Show that these sheaves can be glued together into a sheaf \mathcal{F} on X (unique up to unique isomorphism), such that $\mathcal{F}_i = \mathcal{F}|_{U_i}$, and the isomorphisms over $U_i \cap U_j$ are the obvious ones. (Thus we can “glue sheaves together”, using limited patching information.) Warning: we are not assuming this is a finite cover, so you use by induction. (You can use the ideas of this section to solve this problem, but you

don't necessarily need to. Hint: As the base, take those open sets contained in *some* U_i .)

3.7.2. Remark for experts. Exercise 3.7.D almost says that the “set” of sheaves forms a sheaf itself, but not quite. Making this precise leads one to the notion of a *stack*.

3.7.E. UNIMPORTANT EXERCISE. Suppose a morphism of sheaves $\mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$ on a base B_i is surjective for all B_i (i.e. $\mathcal{F}(B_i) \rightarrow \mathcal{G}(B_i)$ is surjective for all i). Show that the morphism of sheaves (*not* on the base) is surjective. The converse is not true, unlike the case for injectivity. This gives a useful criterion for surjectivity (“surjectivity on small enough open sets”).

Part II

Schemes

Toward affine schemes: the underlying set, and the underlying topological space

The very idea of scheme is of infantile simplicity — so simple, so humble, that no one before me thought of stooping so low. So childish, in short, that for years, despite all the evidence, for many of my erudite colleagues, it was really “not serious”! — Grothendieck

4.1 Toward schemes

We are now ready to consider the notion of a *scheme*, which is the type of geometric space central to algebraic geometry. We should first think through what we mean by “geometric space”. You have likely seen the notion of a manifold, and we wish to abstract this notion so that it can be generalized to other settings, notably so that we can deal with non-smooth and arithmetic objects.

The key insight behind this generalization is the following: we can understand a geometric space (such as a manifold) well by understanding the functions on this space. More precisely, we will understand it through the sheaf of functions on the space. If we are interested in differentiable manifolds, we will consider differentiable functions; if we are interested in smooth manifolds, we will consider smooth functions; and so on.

Thus we will define a scheme to be the following data

- *The set*: the points of the scheme
- *The topology*: the open sets of the scheme
- *The structure sheaf*: the sheaf of “algebraic functions” (a sheaf of rings) on the scheme.

Recall that a topological space with a sheaf of rings is called a *ringed space* (§3.2.11).

We will try to draw pictures throughout. Pictures can help develop geometric intuition, which can guide the algebraic development (and, eventually, vice versa). Some people find pictures very helpful, while others are repulsed or nonplussed or confused.

We will try to make all three notions as intuitive as possible. For the set, in the key example of complex (affine) varieties (roughly, things cut out in \mathbb{C}^n by polynomials), we will see that the points are the “traditional points” (n -tuples of complex numbers), plus some extra points that will be handy to have around. For the topology, we will require that “algebraic functions vanish on closed sets”, and require nothing else. For the sheaf of algebraic functions (the structure sheaf), we will expect that in the complex plane, $(3x^2 + y^2)/(2x + 4xy + 1)$ should be

an algebraic function on the open set consisting of points where the denominator doesn't vanish, and this will largely motivate our definition.

4.1.1. Example: Differentiable manifolds. As motivation, we return to our example of differentiable manifolds, reinterpreting them in this light. We will be quite informal in this discussion. Suppose X is a manifold. It is a topological space, and has a *sheaf of differentiable functions* \mathcal{O}_X (see §3.1). This gives X the structure of a ringed space. We have observed that evaluation at a point $p \in X$ gives a surjective map from the stalk to \mathbb{R}

$$\mathcal{O}_{X,p} \twoheadrightarrow \mathbb{R},$$

so the kernel, the (germs of) functions vanishing at p , is a maximal ideal \mathfrak{m}_X (see §3.1.1).

We could *define* a differentiable real manifold as a topological space X with a sheaf of rings. We would require that there is a cover of X by open sets such that on each open set the ringed space is isomorphic to a ball around the origin in \mathbb{R}^n (with the sheaf of differentiable functions on that ball). With this definition, the ball is the basic patch, and a general manifold is obtained by gluing these patches together. (Admittedly, a great deal of geometry comes from how one chooses to patch the balls together!) In the algebraic setting, the basic patch is the notion of an *affine scheme*, which we will discuss soon. (In the definition of manifold, there is an additional requirement that the topological space be Hausdorff, to avoid pathologies. Schemes are often required to be “separated” to avoid essentially the same pathologies. Separatedness will be discussed in Chapter 11.)

Functions are determined by their values at points. This is an obvious statement, but won't be true for schemes in general. We will see an example in Exercise 4.2.A(a), and discuss this behavior further in §4.2.9.

Morphisms of manifolds. How can we describe differentiable maps of manifolds $X \rightarrow Y$? They are certainly continuous maps — but which ones? We can pull back functions along continuous maps. Differentiable functions pull back to differentiable functions. More formally, we have a map $f^{-1}\mathcal{O}_Y \rightarrow \mathcal{O}_X$. (The inverse image sheaf f^{-1} was defined in §3.6.) Inverse image is left-adjoint to pushforward, so we also get a map $f^\# : \mathcal{O}_Y \rightarrow f_*\mathcal{O}_X$.

Certainly given a differentiable map of manifolds, differentiable functions pull back to differentiable functions. It is less obvious that *this is a sufficient condition for a continuous function to be differentiable.*

4.1.A. IMPORTANT EXERCISE FOR THOSE WITH A LITTLE EXPERIENCE WITH MANIFOLDS. Prove that a continuous function of differentiable manifolds $f : X \rightarrow Y$ is differentiable if differentiable functions pull back to differentiable functions, i.e. if pullback by f gives a map $\mathcal{O}_Y \rightarrow f_*\mathcal{O}_X$. (Hint: check this on small patches. Once you figure out what you are trying to show, you'll realize that the result is immediate.)

4.1.B. EXERCISE. Show that a morphism of differentiable manifolds $f : X \rightarrow Y$ with $f(p) = q$ induces a morphism of stalks $f^\# : \mathcal{O}_{Y,q} \rightarrow \mathcal{O}_{X,p}$. Show that $f^\#(\mathfrak{m}_{Y,q}) \subset \mathfrak{m}_{X,p}$. In other words, if you pull back a function that vanishes at q , you get a function that vanishes at p — not a huge surprise. (In §7.3, we formalize this by saying that maps of differentiable manifolds are maps of local-ringed spaces.)

4.1.2. *Aside.* Here is a little more for experts: Notice that this induces a map on tangent spaces (see Aside 3.1.2)

$$(m_{X,p}/m_{X,p}^2)^\vee \rightarrow (m_{Y,q}/m_{Y,q}^2)^\vee.$$

This is the tangent map you would geometrically expect. Again, it is interesting that the cotangent map $m_{Y,q}/m_{Y,q}^2 \rightarrow m_{X,p}/m_{X,p}^2$ is algebraically more natural than the tangent map (there are no “duals”).

Experts are now free to try to interpret other differential-geometric information using only the map of topological spaces and map of sheaves. For example: how can one check if f is smooth? How can one check if f is an immersion? (We will see that the algebro-geometric version of these notions are *smooth morphism* and *locally closed immersion*, see Chapter 25 and §9.1.2 respectively.)

4.1.3. *Side Remark.* Manifolds are covered by disks that are all isomorphic. This isn’t true for schemes (even for “smooth complex varieties”). There are examples of two “smooth complex curves” (Riemann surfaces) X and Y so that no non-empty open subset of X is isomorphic to a non-empty open subset of Y . And there is an example of a Riemann surface X such that no two open subsets of X are isomorphic. Informally, this is because in the Zariski topology on schemes, all non-empty open sets are “huge” and have more “structure”.

4.1.4. *Other examples.* If you are interested in differential geometry, you will be interested in differentiable manifolds, on which the functions under consideration are differentiable functions. Similarly, if you are interested in topology, you will be interested in topological spaces, on which you will consider the continuous function. If you are interested in complex geometry, you will be interested in complex manifolds (or possibly “complex analytic varieties”), on which the functions are holomorphic functions. In each of these cases of interesting “geometric spaces”, the topological space and sheaf of functions is clear. The notion of scheme fits naturally into this family.

4.2 The underlying set of affine schemes

For any ring A , we are going to define something called $\text{Spec } A$, the **spectrum** of A . In this section, we will define it as a set, but we will soon endow it with a topology, and later we will define a sheaf of rings on it (the structure sheaf). Such an object is called an *affine scheme*. Later $\text{Spec } A$ will denote the set along with the topology, and a sheaf of functions. But for now, as there is no possibility of confusion, $\text{Spec } A$ will just be the set.

4.2.1. The set $\text{Spec } A$ is the set of prime ideals of A . The point of $\text{Spec } A$ corresponding to the prime ideal \mathfrak{p} will be denoted $[\mathfrak{p}]$. Elements $a \in A$ will be called **functions** on $\text{Spec } A$, and their **value** at the point $[\mathfrak{p}]$ will be $a \pmod{\mathfrak{p}}$. *This is weird: a function can take values in different places at different points — the function 7 on $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$ takes the value $1 \pmod{2}$ at $[(2)]$ and $1 \pmod{3}$ at $[(3)]$.* “An element a of the ring lying in a prime ideal \mathfrak{p} ” translates to “a function a that is 0 at the point $[\mathfrak{p}]$ ” or “a function a vanishing at the point $[\mathfrak{p}]$ ”, and we will use these phrases interchangeably. Notice that if you add or multiply two functions, you add or multiply

their values at all points; this is a translation of the fact that $A \rightarrow A/\mathfrak{p}$ is a homomorphism of rings. These translations are important — make sure you are very comfortable with them! They should become second nature.

We now give some examples.

Example 1 (the complex affine line): $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{C}}^1 := \text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[x]$. Let's find the prime ideals. As $\mathbb{C}[x]$ is an integral domain, (0) is prime. Also, $(x - a)$ is prime, where $a \in \mathbb{C}$: it is even a maximal ideal, as the quotient by this ideal is field:

$$0 \longrightarrow (x - a) \longrightarrow \mathbb{C}[x] \xrightarrow{f \mapsto f(a)} \mathbb{C} \longrightarrow 0$$

(This exact sequence should remind you of (3.1.1.1) in our motivating example of manifolds.)

We now show that there are no other prime ideals. We use the fact that $\mathbb{C}[x]$ has a division algorithm, and is a unique factorization domain. Suppose \mathfrak{p} is a prime ideal. If $\mathfrak{p} \neq (0)$, then suppose $f(x) \in \mathfrak{p}$ is a non-zero element of smallest degree. It is not constant, as prime ideals can't contain 1. If $f(x)$ is not linear, then factor $f(x) = g(x)h(x)$, where $g(x)$ and $h(x)$ have positive degree. (Here we use that \mathbb{C} is algebraically closed.) Then $g(x) \in \mathfrak{p}$ or $h(x) \in \mathfrak{p}$, contradicting the minimality of the degree of f . Hence there is a linear element $x - a$ of \mathfrak{p} . Then I claim that $\mathfrak{p} = (x - a)$. Suppose $f(x) \in \mathfrak{p}$. Then the division algorithm would give $f(x) = g(x)(x - a) + m$ where $m \in \mathbb{C}$. Then $m = f(x) - g(x)(x - a) \in \mathfrak{p}$. If $m \neq 0$, then $1 \in \mathfrak{p}$, giving a contradiction.

Thus we have a picture of $\text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[x]$ (see Figure 4.1). There is one point for each complex number, plus one extra point $[(0)]$. The point $[(x - a)]$ we will reasonably associate to $a \in \mathbb{C}$. Where should we picture the point $[(0)]$? The best way of thinking about it is somewhat zen. It is somewhere on the complex line, but nowhere in particular. Because (0) is contained in all of these primes, we will somehow associate it with this line passing through all the other points. $[(0)]$ is called the "generic point" of the line; it is "generically on the line" but you can't pin it down any further than that. We will place it far to the right for lack of anywhere better to put it. You will notice that we sketch $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{C}}^1$ as one-dimensional in the real sense; this is to later remind ourselves that this will be a one-dimensional space, where dimensions are defined in an algebraic (or complex-geometric) sense. (Dimension will be defined in Chapter 12.)

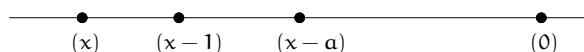


FIGURE 4.1. A picture of $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{C}}^1 = \text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[x]$

To give you some feeling for this space, we make some statements that are currently undefined, but suggestive. The functions on $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{C}}^1$ are the polynomials. So $f(x) = x^2 - 3x + 1$ is a function. What is its value at $[(x - 1)]$, which we think of as the point $1 \in \mathbb{C}$? Answer: $f(1)$! Or equivalently, we can evaluate $f(x)$ modulo $x - 1$ — this is the same thing by the division algorithm. (What is its value at (0) ? It is $f(x) \pmod{0}$, which is just $f(x)$.)

Here is a more complicated example: $g(x) = (x - 3)^3/(x - 2)$ is a “rational function”. It is defined everywhere but $x = 2$. (When we know what the structure sheaf is, we will be able to say that it is an element of the structure sheaf on the open set $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{C}}^1 - \{2\}$.) $g(x)$ has a triple zero at 3, and a single pole at 2.

Example 2 (the affine line over $k = \bar{k}$): $\mathbb{A}_{\bar{k}}^1 := \text{Spec } k[x]$ where k is an algebraically closed field. This is called the affine line over k . All of our discussion in the previous example carries over without change. We will use the same picture, which is after all intended to just be a metaphor.

Example 3: $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$. An amazing fact is that from our perspective, this will look a lot like the affine line $\mathbb{A}_{\bar{k}}^1$. The integers, like $\bar{k}[x]$, form a unique factorization domain, with a division algorithm. The prime ideals are: (0) , and (p) where p is prime. Thus everything from Example 1 carries over without change, even the picture. Our picture of $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$ is shown in Figure 4.2.



FIGURE 4.2. A “picture” of $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$, which looks suspiciously like Figure 4.1

Let’s blithely carry over our discussion of functions to this space. 100 is a function on $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$. It’s value at (3) is “1 (mod 3)”. It’s value at (2) is “0 (mod 2)”, and in fact it has a double zero. $27/4$ is a rational function on $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$, defined away from (2) . It has a double pole at (2) , a triple zero at (3) . (You can make this precise after reading this precise in §13.3.) Its value at (5) is

$$27 \times 4^{-1} \equiv 2 \times (-1) \equiv 3 \pmod{5}.$$

Example 4: silly but important examples. $\text{Spec } k$ where k is any field is boring: only one point. $\text{Spec } 0$, where 0 is the zero-ring, is the empty set, as 0 has no prime ideals.

4.2.A. A SMALL EXERCISE ABOUT SMALL SCHEMES. (a) Describe the set $\text{Spec } k[\epsilon]/(\epsilon^2)$. This is called the ring of **dual numbers**, and will turn out to be quite useful. You should think of ϵ as a very small number, so small that its square is 0 (although it itself is not 0). It is a non-zero function whose value at all points is zero, thus giving our first example of functions not being determined by their values at points. We will discuss this phenomenon further in §4.2.9.

(b) Describe the set $\text{Spec } k[x]_{(x)}$. We will see this scheme again repeatedly, starting with §4.2.6 and Exercise 4.4.J.

In Example 2, we restricted to the case of algebraically closed fields for a reason: things are more subtle if the field is not algebraically closed.

Example 5 (the affine line over \mathbb{R}): $\mathbb{R}[x]$. Using the fact that $\mathbb{R}[x]$ is a unique factorization domain, we see that the primes are (0) , $(x - a)$ where $a \in \mathbb{R}$, and $(x^2 + ax + b)$ where $x^2 + ax + b$ is an irreducible quadratic. The latter two are maximal ideals, i.e. their quotients are fields. For example: $\mathbb{R}[x]/(x - 3) \cong \mathbb{R}$, $\mathbb{R}[x]/(x^2 + 1) \cong \mathbb{C}$.

4.2.B. UNIMPORTANT EXERCISE. Show that for the last type of prime, of the form $(x^2 + ax + b)$, the quotient is *always* isomorphic to \mathbb{C} .

So we have the points that we would normally expect to see on the real line, corresponding to real numbers; the generic point 0; and new points which we may interpret as *conjugate pairs* of complex numbers (the roots of the quadratic). This last type of point should be seen as more akin to the real numbers than to the generic point. You can picture $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{R}}^1$ as the complex plane, folded along the real axis. But the key point is that Galois-conjugate points (such as i and $-i$) are considered glued.

Let's explore functions on this space; consider the function $f(x) = x^3 - 1$. Its value at the point $[(x-2)]$ is $f(x) = 7$, or perhaps better, $7 \pmod{x-2}$. How about at $(x^2 + 1)$? We get

$$x^3 - 1 \equiv -x - 1 \pmod{x^2 + 1},$$

which may be profitably interpreted as $-i - 1$.

One moral of this example is that we can work over a non-algebraically closed field if we wish. It is more complicated, but we can recover much of the information we wanted.

4.2.C. EXERCISE. Describe the set $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{Q}}^1$. (This is harder to picture in a way analogous to $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{R}}^1$. But the rough cartoon of points on a line, as in Figure 4.1, remains a reasonable sketch.)

Example 6 (the affine line over \mathbb{F}_p): $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{F}_p}^1 = \text{Spec } \mathbb{F}_p[x]$. As in the previous examples, this has a division algorithm, so the prime ideals are of the form (0) or $(f(x))$ where $f(x) \in \mathbb{F}_p[x]$ is an irreducible polynomial, which can be of any degree. Irreducible polynomials correspond to sets of Galois conjugates in $\overline{\mathbb{F}_p}$.

Note that $\text{Spec } \mathbb{F}_p[x]$ has p points corresponding to the elements of \mathbb{F}_p , but also (infinitely) many more. This makes this space much richer than simply p points. For example, a polynomial $f(x)$ is not determined by its values at the p elements of \mathbb{F}_p , but it is determined by its values at the points of $\text{Spec } \mathbb{F}_p$. (As we have mentioned before, this is not true for all schemes.)

You should think about this, even if you are a geometric person — this intuition will later turn up in geometric situations. Even if you think you are interested only in working over an algebraically closed field (such as \mathbb{C}), you will have non-algebraically closed fields (such as $\mathbb{C}(x)$) forced upon you.

Example 7 (the complex affine plane): $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{C}}^2 = \text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[x, y]$. (As with Examples 1 and 2, our discussion will apply with \mathbb{C} replaced by *any* algebraically closed field.) Sadly, $\mathbb{C}[x, y]$ is not a principal ideal domain: (x, y) is not a principal ideal. We can quickly name *some* prime ideals. One is (0) , which has the same flavor as the (0) ideals in the previous examples. $(x-2, y-3)$ is prime, and indeed maximal, because $\mathbb{C}[x, y]/(x-2, y-3) \cong \mathbb{C}$, where this isomorphism is via $f(x, y) \mapsto f(2, 3)$. More generally, $(x-a, y-b)$ is prime for any $(a, b) \in \mathbb{C}^2$. Also, if $f(x, y)$ is an irreducible polynomial (e.g. $y - x^2$ or $y^2 - x^3$) then $(f(x, y))$ is prime.

4.2.D. EXERCISE. (Feel free to skip this exercise, as we will see a different proof of this in §12.2.3.) Show that we have identified all the prime ideals of $\mathbb{C}[x, y]$. (Hint: Suppose \mathfrak{p} is a prime ideal that is not principal. Show you can find $f(x, y), g(x, y) \in \mathfrak{p}$ with no common factor. By considering the Euclidean algorithm in the Euclidean

domain $k(y)[x]$, show that you can find a nonzero $h(x) \in (f(x, y), g(x, y)) \subset \mathfrak{p}$. Using primality, show that you can one of the linear factors of $h(x)$, say $(x - a)$, is in \mathfrak{p} . Similarly show there is some $(y - b) \in \mathfrak{p}$.)

We can now attempt to draw a picture of this space. The maximal primes correspond to the traditional points in \mathbb{C}^2 : $[(x-a, y-b)]$ corresponds to $(a, b) \in \mathbb{C}^2$. We now have to visualize the “bonus points”. $[(0)]$ somehow lives behind all of the traditional points; it is somewhere on the plane, but nowhere in particular. So for example, it does not lie on the parabola $y = x^2$. The point $[(y - x^2)]$ lies on the parabola $y = x^2$, but nowhere in particular on it. You can see from this picture that we already want to think about “dimension”. The primes $(x - a, y - b)$ are somehow of dimension 0, the primes $(f(x, y))$ are of dimension 1, and (0) is somehow of dimension 2. (All of our dimensions here are *complex* or *algebraic* dimensions. The complex plane \mathbb{C}^2 has real dimension 4, but complex dimension 2. Complex dimensions are in general half of real dimensions.) We won’t define dimension precisely until Chapter 12, but you should feel free to keep it in mind before then.

Note too that maximal ideals correspond to “smallest” points. Smaller ideals correspond to “bigger” points. “One prime ideal contains another” means that the points “have the opposite containment.” All of this will be made precise once we have a topology. This order-reversal is a little confusing, and will remain so even once we have made the notions precise.

We now come to the obvious generalization of Example 7, affine n -space.

Example 8 (complex affine n -space): $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{C}}^n := \text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[x_1, \dots, x_n]$. (More generally, \mathbb{A}_A^n is defined to be $\text{Spec } A[x_1, \dots, x_n]$, where A is an arbitrary ring.)

For concreteness, let’s consider $n = 3$. We now have an interesting question in what at first appears to be pure algebra: What are the prime ideals of $\mathbb{C}[x, y, z]$?

Analogously to before, $(x - a, y - b, z - c)$ is a prime ideal. This is a maximal ideal, with residue field \mathbb{C} ; we think of these as “0-dimensional points”. We will often write (a, b, c) for $[(x - a, y - b, z - c)]$ because of our geometric interpretation of these ideals. There are no more maximal ideals, by Hilbert’s Weak Nullstellensatz. (This is sometimes called the “weak version” of the Nullstellensatz.)

4.2.2. Hilbert’s Weak Nullstellensatz. — *If k is an algebraically closed field, then the maximal ideals $k[x_1, \dots, x_n]$ are precisely those of the form $(x_1 - a_1, \dots, x_n - a_n)$, where $a_i \in k$.*

We may as well state a slightly stronger version now.

4.2.3. Hilbert’s Nullstellensatz. — *The maximal ideals of $k[x_1, \dots, x_n]$ are precisely those with residue field a finite extension of k .*

4.2.E. EASY EXERCISE. Show that the Nullstellensatz implies the Weak Nullstellensatz.

You will prove the Nullstellensatz in Exercise 12.2.B. There are other prime ideals too. We have (0) , which corresponds to a “3-dimensional point”. We have $(f(x, y, z))$, where f is irreducible. To this we associate the hypersurface $f = 0$, so this is “2-dimensional” in nature. But we have not found them all! One clue: we have prime ideals of “dimension” 0, 2, and 3 — we are missing “dimension

1". Here is one such prime ideal: (x, y) . We picture this as the locus where $x = y = 0$, which is the z -axis. This is a prime ideal, as the corresponding quotient $\mathbb{C}[x, y, z]/(x, y) \cong \mathbb{C}[z]$ is an integral domain (and should be interpreted as the functions on the z -axis). There are lots of one-dimensional primes, and it is not possible to classify them in a reasonable way. It will turn out that they correspond to things that we think of as irreducible curves. Thus remarkably the answer to the purely algebraic question ("what are the primes of $\mathbb{C}[x, y, z]$ ") is fundamentally geometric!

The fact that the closed points $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{Q}}^1$ can be interpreted as points of $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ where Galois-conjugates are glued together (Exercise 4.2.C) extends to $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{Q}}^n$. For example, in $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{Q}}^2$, $(\sqrt{2}, \sqrt{2})$ is glued to $(-\sqrt{2}, -\sqrt{2})$ but not to $(\sqrt{2}, -\sqrt{2})$. The following exercise will give you some idea of how this works.

4.2.F. EXERCISE. Describe the maximal ideal of $\mathbb{Q}[x, y]$ corresponding $(\sqrt{2}, \sqrt{2})$ and $(-\sqrt{2}, -\sqrt{2})$. Describe the maximal ideal of $\mathbb{Q}[x, y]$ corresponding $(\sqrt{2}, -\sqrt{2})$ and $(-\sqrt{2}, \sqrt{2})$. What are the residue fields in both cases?

4.2.4. Quotients and localizations. Two natural ways of getting new rings from old — quotients and localizations — have interpretations in terms of spectra.

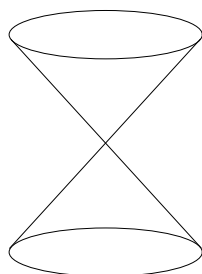
4.2.5. Quotients: $\text{Spec } A/I$ as a subset of $\text{Spec } A$. It is an important fact that the primes of A/I are in bijection with the primes of A containing I .

4.2.G. ESSENTIAL ALGEBRA EXERCISE (MANDATORY IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN IT BEFORE). Suppose A is a ring, and I an ideal of A . Let $\phi : A \rightarrow A/I$. Show that ϕ^{-1} gives an inclusion-preserving bijection between primes of A/I and primes of A containing I . Thus we can picture $\text{Spec } A/I$ as a subset of $\text{Spec } A$.

As an important motivational special case, you now have a picture of *complex affine varieties*. Suppose A is a finitely generated \mathbb{C} -algebra, generated by x_1, \dots, x_n , with relations $f_1(x_1, \dots, x_n) = \dots = f_r(x_1, \dots, x_n) = 0$. Then this description in terms of generators and relations naturally gives us an interpretation of $\text{Spec } A$ as a subset of $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{C}}^n$, which we think of as "traditional points" (n -tuples of complex numbers) along with some "bonus" points (we haven't yet fully described). To see which of the traditional points are in $\text{Spec } A$, we simply solve the equations $f_1 = \dots = f_r = 0$. For example, $\text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[x, y, z]/(x^2 + y^2 - z^2)$ may be pictured as shown in Figure 4.3. (Admittedly this is just a "sketch of the \mathbb{R} -points", but we will still find it helpful later.) This entire picture carries over (along with the Nullstellensatz) with \mathbb{C} replaced by any algebraically closed field. Indeed, the picture of Figure 4.3 can be said to depict $k[x, y, z]/(x^2 + y^2 - z^2)$ for most algebraically closed fields k (although it is misleading in characteristic 2, because of the coincidence $x^2 + y^2 - z^2 = (x + y + z)^2$).

4.2.6. Localizations: $\text{Spec } S^{-1}A$ as a subset of $\text{Spec } A$. The following exercise shows how prime behave under localization.

4.2.H. ESSENTIAL ALGEBRA EXERCISE (MANDATORY IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN IT BEFORE). Suppose S is a multiplicative subset of A . The map $\text{Spec } S^{-1}A \rightarrow \text{Spec } A$ gives an order-preserving bijection of the primes of $S^{-1}A$ with the primes of A that *don't meet* the multiplicative set S .

FIGURE 4.3. A “picture” of $\text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[x, y, z]/(x^2 + y^2 - z^2)$

Recall from §2.3.3 that there are two important flavors of localization. The first is $A_f = \{1, f, f^2, \dots\}^{-1}A$ where $f \in A$. A motivating example is $A = \mathbb{C}[x, y]$, $f = y - x^2$. The second is $A_{\mathfrak{p}} = (A - \mathfrak{p})^{-1}A$, where \mathfrak{p} is a prime ideal. A motivating example is $A = \mathbb{C}[x, y]$, $S = A - (x, y)$.

If $S = \{1, f, f^2, \dots\}$, the primes of $S^{-1}A$ are just those primes not containing f — the points where “ f doesn’t vanish”. (In §4.5, we will call this a *distinguished open set*, once we know what open sets are.) So to picture $\text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[x, y]_{y-x^2}$, we picture the affine plane, and throw out those points on the parabola $y - x^2$ — the points (a, a^2) for $a \in \mathbb{C}$ (by which we mean $[(x - a, y - a^2)]$), as well as the “new kind of point” $[(y - x^2)]$.

In general, inverting zero-divisors can make things behave a bit oddly. Consider the case $A = \mathbb{C}[x, y]/(xy)$ and $f = x$. What is the localization A_f ? We can use geometric intuition to figure out what it is. $\text{Spec } k[x, y]/(xy)$ “is” the union of the two axes in the plane. Localizing means throwing out the locus where x vanishes. So we are left with the x -axis, minus the origin, so we expect $\text{Spec } k[x]_x$. So there should be some natural isomorphism $(k[x, y]/(xy))_x \cong k[x]_x$.

4.2.I. EXERCISE. Show that these two rings are isomorphic. (You will see that y on the left goes to 0 on the right.)

If $S = A - \mathfrak{p}$, the primes of $S^{-1}A$ are just the primes of A contained in \mathfrak{p} . In our example $A = k[x, y]$, $\mathfrak{p} = (x, y)$, we keep all those points corresponding to “things through the origin”, i.e. the 0-dimensional point (x, y) , the 2-dimensional point (0) , and those 1-dimensional points $(f(x, y))$ where $f(0, 0) = 0$, i.e. those “irreducible curves through the origin”. You can think of this being a shred of the plane near the origin; anything not actually “visible” at the origin is discarded (see Figure 4.4).

A special case of this is when $A = \text{Spec } k[x]$, and $\mathfrak{p} = (x)$ (or more generally when \mathfrak{p} is any maximal ideal). Then $A_{\mathfrak{p}}$ has only two prime ideals (Exercise 4.2.A(b)). You should see this as the germ of a “smooth curve”, where one point is the “classical point”, and the other is the “generic point of the curve”. This is an example of a discrete valuation ring, and indeed all discrete valuation rings should be visualized in such a way. We will discuss discrete valuation rings in §13.3. By then we will have justified the use of the words “smooth”

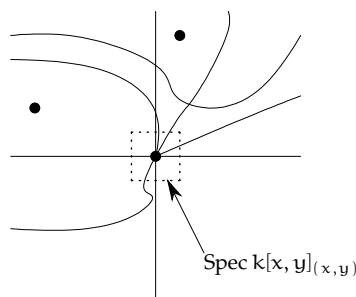


FIGURE 4.4. Picturing $\text{Spec } k[x, y]_{(x,y)}$ as a “shred of \mathbb{A}_k^2 ”. Only those points near the origin remain.

and “curve”. (Reality check: try to picture Spec of \mathbb{Z} localized at (2) and at (0) . How do the pictures differ?)

4.2.7. Important fact: Maps of rings induce maps of spectra (as sets). We now make an observation that will later grow up to be morphisms of schemes.

4.2.J. IMPORTANT EASY EXERCISE. If $\phi : B \rightarrow A$ is a map of rings, and \mathfrak{p} is a prime ideal of A , show that $\phi^{-1}(\mathfrak{p})$ is a prime ideal of B .

Hence a map of rings $\phi : B \rightarrow A$ induces a map of sets $\text{Spec } A \rightarrow \text{Spec } B$ “in the opposite direction”. This gives a contravariant functor from the category of rings to the category of sets: the composition of two maps of rings induces the composition of the corresponding maps of spectra.

4.2.K. EASY EXERCISE. Let B be a ring.

(a) Suppose $I \subset B$ is an ideal. Show that the map $\text{Spec } B/I \rightarrow \text{Spec } B$ is the inclusion of §4.2.5.

(b) Suppose $S \subset B$ is a multiplicative set. Show that the map $\text{Spec } S^{-1}B \rightarrow \text{Spec } B$ is the inclusion of §4.2.6.

4.2.8. An explicit example. In the case of affine complex varieties (or indeed affine varieties over any algebraically closed field), the translation between maps given by explicit formulas and maps of rings is quite direct. For example, consider a map from the parabola \mathbb{C}^2 (with coordinates a and b) given by $b = a^2$, to the “curve” in \mathbb{C}^3 (with coordinates x , y , and z) cut out by the equations $y = x^2$ and $z = y^2$. Suppose the map sends the point $(a, b) \in \mathbb{C}^2$ to the point $(a, b, b^2) \in \mathbb{C}^3$. In our new language, we have map

$$\text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[a, b]/(b - a^2) \longrightarrow \text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[x, y, z]/(y - x^2, z - y^2)$$

given by

$$\mathbb{C}[a, b]/(b - a^2) \longleftarrow \mathbb{C}[x, y, z]/(y - x^2, z - y^2)$$

$$(a, b, b^2) \longleftarrow (x, y, z),$$

i.e. $x \mapsto a$, $y \mapsto b$, and $z \mapsto b^2$. If the idea is not yet clear, the following two exercises may help.

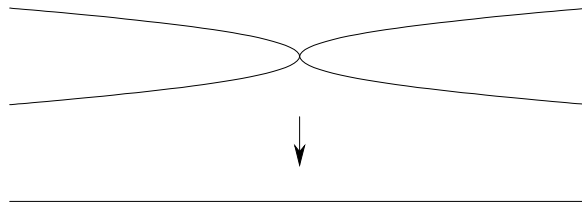


FIGURE 4.5. The map $\mathbb{C} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ given by $y \mapsto y^2$

4.2.L. EXERCISE (SPECIAL CASE). Consider the map of complex manifolds sending $\mathbb{C} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ via $y \mapsto y^2$; you can picture it as the projection of the parabola $x = y^2$ in the plane to the x -axis (see Figure 4.5). Interpret the corresponding map of rings is given by $\mathbb{C}[x] \mapsto \mathbb{C}[y]$ by $x \mapsto y^2$. Verify that the preimage (the fiber) above the point $a \in \mathbb{C}$ is the point(s) $\pm\sqrt{a} \in \mathbb{C}$, using the definition given above. (A more sophisticated version of this example appears in Example 10.3.3.)

4.2.M. EXERCISE (GENERAL CASE). (a) Show that the map

$$\phi : (y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n) \mapsto (f_1(x_1, \dots, x_m), f_2(x_1, \dots, x_m), \dots, f_n(x_1, \dots, x_m))$$

determines a map

$$\text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[x_1, \dots, x_m]/I \rightarrow \text{Spec } \mathbb{C}[y_1, \dots, y_n]/J$$

if $\phi(J) \subset I$.

(b) Via the identification of the Nullstellensatz, interpret the map of (a) as a map $\mathbb{C}^m \rightarrow \mathbb{C}^n$ given by

$$(x_1, \dots, x_m) \mapsto (f_1(x_1, \dots, x_m), \dots, f_n(x_1, \dots, x_m)).$$

The converse to (a) isn't quite true. Once you have more experience and intuition, you can figure out when it is true, and when it can be false. The failure of the converse to hold has to do with nilpotents, which we come to very shortly (§4.2.9).

4.2.N. EXERCISE. Consider the map of sets $f : \mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{Z}}^n \rightarrow \text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$, given by the ring map $\mathbb{Z} \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}[x_1, \dots, x_n]$. If p is prime, describe a bijection between the fiber $f^{-1}([(p)])$ and $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{F}_p}^n$. This exercise may give you a sense of how to picture maps (see Figure 4.6), and in particular why you can think of $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{Z}}^n$ is an “ \mathbb{A}^n -bundle” over $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$. (Can you interpret the fiber over $[(0)]$ as \mathbb{A}_k^n for some field k ?)

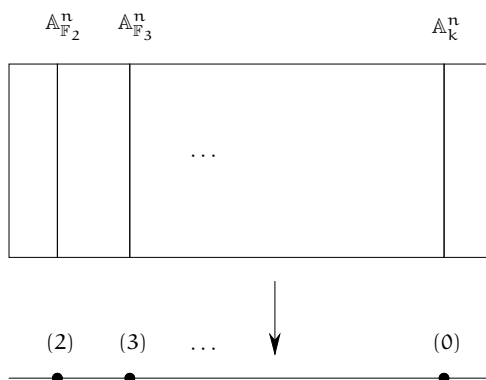


FIGURE 4.6. A picture of $\mathbb{A}_{\mathbb{Z}}^n \rightarrow \text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$ as a “family of \mathbb{A}^n ’s”, or an “ \mathbb{A}^n -bundle over $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$ ”. What is k ?

4.2.9. Functions are not determined by their values at points: the fault of nilpotents. We conclude this section by describing some strange behavior. We are developing machinery that will let us bring our geometric intuition to algebra. There is one point where your intuition will be false, so you should know now, and adjust your intuition appropriately. David Mumford wrote [M-CAS, p. 12]: *It is this aspect of schemes which was most scandalous when Grothendieck defined them.*

Suppose we have a function (ring element) vanishing at all points. Then it is not necessarily the zero function! The translation of this question is: is the intersection of all prime ideals necessarily just 0 ? The answer is no, as is shown by the example of the ring of dual numbers $k[\epsilon]/(\epsilon^2)$: $\epsilon \neq 0$, but $\epsilon^2 = 0$. (We saw this scheme in Exercise 4.2.A(a).) Any function whose power is zero certainly lies in the intersection of all prime ideals.

4.2.O. EXERCISE. Ring elements that have a power that is 0 are called **nilpotents**. (a) If I is an ideal of nilpotents, show that the inclusion $\text{Spec } B/I \rightarrow \text{Spec } B$ of Exercise 4.2.G is a bijection. Thus nilpotents don’t affect the underlying set. (We will soon see in §4.4.5 that they won’t affect the topology either — the difference will be in the structure sheaf.) (b) (easy) Show that the nilpotents of a ring B form an ideal. This ideal is called the **nilradical**, and is denoted \mathfrak{N} .

Thus the nilradical is contained in the intersection of all the prime ideals. The converse is also true:

4.2.10. Theorem. — *The nilradical $\mathfrak{N}(A)$ is the intersection of all the primes of A .*

4.2.P. EXERCISE. If you don’t know this theorem, then look it up, or even better, prove it yourself. (Hint: Use the fact that any proper ideal of A is contained in a maximal ideal, which requires the axiom of choice. Possible further hint: Suppose $x \notin \mathfrak{N}(A)$. We wish to show that there is a prime ideal not containing x . Show that A_x is not the 0 -ring, by showing that $1 \neq 0$.)

4.2.11. In particular, although it is upsetting that functions are not determined by their values at points, we have precisely specified what the failure of this intuition is: two functions have the same values at points if and only if they differ by a nilpotent. You should think of this geometrically: a function vanishes at every point of the spectrum of a ring if and only if it has a power that is zero. And if there are no non-zero nilpotents — if $\mathfrak{N} = (0)$ — then functions *are* determined by their values at points. If a ring has no non-zero nilpotents, we say that it is **reduced**.

4.2.Q. FUN UNIMPORTANT EXERCISE: DERIVATIVES WITHOUT DELTAS AND EPSILONS. Suppose we have a polynomial $f(x) \in k[x]$. Instead, we work in $k[x, \epsilon]/\epsilon^2$. What then is $f(x + \epsilon)$? (Do a couple of examples, then prove the pattern you observe.) This is a hint that nilpotents will be important in defining differential information (Ch. 22).

4.3 Visualizing schemes I: generic points

For years, you have been able to picture $x^2 + y^2 = 1$ in the plane, and you now have an idea of how to picture $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$. If we are claiming to understand rings as geometric objects (through the Spec functor), then we should wish to develop geometric insight into them. To develop geometric intuition about schemes, it is helpful to have pictures in your mind, extending your intuition about geometric spaces you are already familiar with. As we go along, we will empirically develop some idea of what schemes should look like. This section summarizes what we have gleaned so far.

Some mathematicians prefer to think completely algebraically, and never think in terms of pictures. Many others will be disturbed by the fact that this is an art, not a science. And finally, this hand-waving will necessarily never be used in the rigorous development of the theory. For these reasons, you may wish to skip these sections. However, having the right picture in your mind can greatly help understanding what facts should be true, and how to prove them.

Our starting point is the example of “affine complex varieties” (things cut out by equations involving a finite number variables over \mathbb{C}), and more generally similar examples over arbitrary algebraically closed fields. We begin with notions that are intuitive (“traditional” points behaving the way you expect them to), and then add in the two features which are new and disturbing, generic points and non-reduced behavior. You can then extend this notion to seemingly different spaces, such as $\text{Spec } \mathbb{Z}$.

Hilbert’s Weak Nullstellensatz 4.2.2 shows that the “traditional points” are present as points of the scheme, and this carries over to any algebraically closed field. If the field is not algebraically closed, the traditional points are glued together into clumps by Galois conjugation, as in Examples 5 (the real affine line) and 6 (the affine line over \mathbb{F}_p) in §4.2 above. This is a geometric interpretation of Hilbert’s Nullstellensatz 4.2.3.

But we have some additional points to add to the picture. You should remember that they “correspond” to “irreducible” “closed” (algebraic) subsets. As motivation, consider the case of the complex affine plane (Example 7): we had

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