

A Nerve Theorem for Cyclic Multicategories

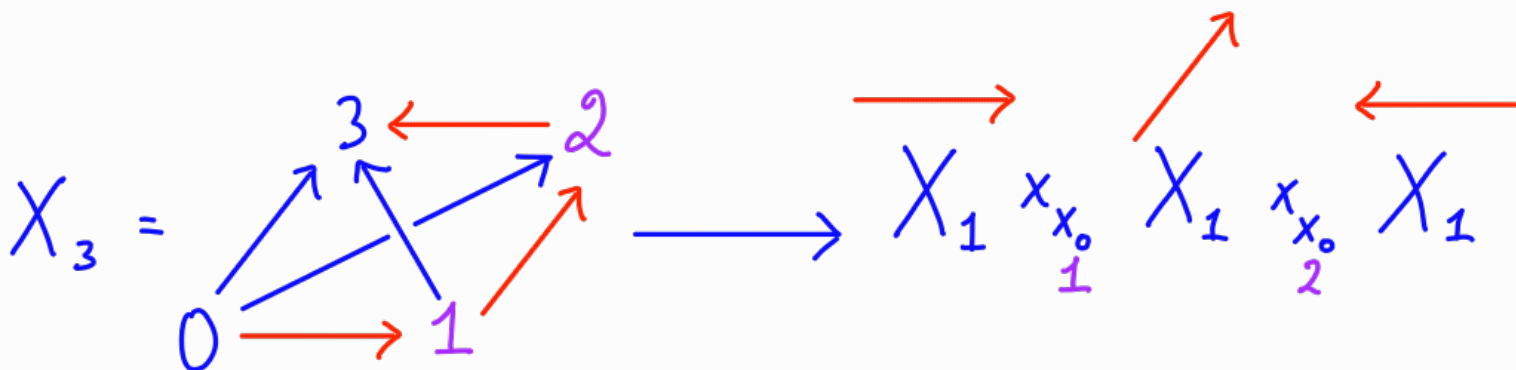
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Category Theory 2026

THE Nerve Theorem

Theorem: Let X be a simplicial set. Then $X \cong N\mathcal{C}$ for some category $\mathcal{C}$ if and only if X satisfies the Segal condition, namely for all $n \geq 2$ the map sending n -simplices of X to its spine is a bijection $X_n \longrightarrow X_1 x_{x_0} \cdots x_{x_0} X_1$.



Goal:

- Find analogous nerve theorems for cyclic multicategories and operads.
- Namely, characterize cyclic multicategories as presheaves on the category of planar trees.
- Using machinery developed by Berger, Mellies, and Weber.

Definition: Given an inclusion of a full subcategory $i_A: \mathcal{A} \hookrightarrow \mathcal{E}$, the associated nerve functor $\nu_A: \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \hat{\mathcal{A}}$ is defined as follows: for each object X of $\mathcal{E}$, $\nu_A(X)$ is given by $\nu_A(X)(A) = \mathcal{E}(i_A(A), X)$, where A is an object of $\mathcal{A}$. $\mathcal{A}$ is called a dense generator of $\mathcal{E}$ if $\mathcal{A}$ is small and ν_A is fully faithful.

Example: $[3] \in \mathcal{A} : \bullet \rightarrow \bullet \rightarrow \bullet \rightarrow \bullet$

$\hookrightarrow \mathcal{E} = \text{DirGra}$, $\mathcal{A} = \Delta_{\text{inert}} \Rightarrow \mathcal{V}_{\mathcal{A}}(G)([n])$ is the set of length n paths in G .

$\triangle$ but only with subinterval inclusions ("distance preserving")

$\hookrightarrow \mathcal{E} = \text{Cat}$, $\mathcal{A} = \Delta \Rightarrow \mathcal{V}_{\mathcal{A}}(\mathcal{E})([n])$ is the set of n composable morphisms in $\mathcal{E}$.

Definition: Let $\mathcal{E}$ be a category and let $T: \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}$.

A monad on $\mathcal{E}$ is a triple (T, η, μ) that is a monoid object in the category of endofunctors of $\mathcal{E}$.

Remark: $L: \mathcal{E} \rightleftarrows \mathcal{D}: R$ adjunction $\rightsquigarrow T = RL$ monad on $\mathcal{E}$.
(η is the unit of the adjunction and $\mu = R\varepsilon L$, where ε is the counit)

Definition: A T -algebra (x, h) is an object x of $\mathcal{E}$,

together with a morphism $h: Tx \rightarrow x$ in $\mathcal{E}$ satisfying compatibility (μ) and unit (η) axioms.

The category of T -algebras is called the Eilenberg-Moore category and denoted $\mathcal{E}^T$.

Example: $L: \text{DirGra} \rightleftharpoons \text{Cat}: R$
Free category Underlying directed graph

$\leadsto T = RL$ monad on DirGra and $\text{DirGra}^T = \text{Cat}$.

Leinster - Weber Theory

Definition: A monad T on a category $\mathcal{E}$ with dense generator A is called a monad with arities A if the composite $\eta_A T$

takes $\mathcal{A}$ -cocones in $\mathcal{E}$ to colimit-cocones in $\hat{\mathcal{A}}$.

Berger, Möllie, Weber - Monads with arities and their associated theories

Theorem: (BMW '12, Theorem 1.10) Let $\mathcal{E}$ be a category with dense generator $\mathcal{A}$. If T is a monad on $\mathcal{E}$ with arities $\mathcal{A}$, let Θ_T be the full subcategory of $\mathcal{E}^T$ spanned by the free T -algebras on the arities and $\nu_T: \mathcal{E}^T \rightarrow \hat{\Theta}_T$ is the associated nerve functor. Then the following hold:

↳ Θ_T is a dense generator for $\mathcal{E}^T$, i.e. ν_T is fully faithful.

↳ The essential image of ν_T is spanned by those presheaves whose restriction along $j_T: \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \Theta_T$ belongs to the essential image of $\nu_{\mathcal{A}}$.

“generalized” Segal condition

Example: Let T be the free category monad.

$$\mathcal{A} = \Delta_{\text{inert}} \subseteq \text{DirGra} \rightsquigarrow \Theta_T = \Delta \subseteq \text{Cat}.$$

$\hookrightarrow N: \text{Cat} \rightarrow \text{sSet}$ is fully faithful.

$\hookrightarrow X \in \text{sSet}, X \cong N\mathcal{C}$ for some category $\mathcal{C}$

$\iff j_T^* X$ is in the essential image of v_4

$\iff \exists G \in \text{DirGra}$ such that $j_T^* X \cong v_4 G$

$\iff \forall [n] \in \Delta_{\text{inert}}, X_n \cong \text{paths of length } n \text{ in } G$

$\iff \forall [n] \in \Delta_{\text{inert}}, X_n \cong E(G) x_{v(G)} \cdots x_{v(G)} E(G)$

$\iff \forall n \geq 2, X_n \cong X_1 x_{x_0} \cdots x_{x_0} X_1$

Definition: A functor $R: \mathcal{D} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}$ is said to be a local right

adjoint if for each object $d \in \mathcal{D}$, $R_d: \mathcal{D}/d \rightarrow \mathcal{E}/R_d$ given by

$\begin{pmatrix} d' \\ \downarrow f \\ d \end{pmatrix} \mapsto \begin{pmatrix} R_d' \\ \downarrow R(f) \\ R_d \end{pmatrix}$ admits a left adjoint $L_d: \mathcal{E}/R_d \rightarrow \mathcal{D}/d$.

Lemma: (BMW '12, Lemma 2.7) Assume $\mathcal{D}$ has a terminal object 1 . A functor $R: \mathcal{D} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}$ is a local right adjoint if and only if the induced functor $R_1: \mathcal{D} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}/R_1$ has a left adjoint $L_1: \mathcal{E}/R_1 \rightarrow \mathcal{D}$.

Definition: Let T be a monad on a category $\mathcal{E}$ with pullbacks. If T preserves pullbacks and if all naturality squares of η and μ of T are pullbacks, we say that T is cartesian. A cartesian monad is called strongly cartesian if T is a local right adjoint.

Theorem: (BMW '12, Theorem 2.9) Let T be a strongly cartesian monad on a finitely complete category $\mathcal{E}$.

Any dense generator $\mathcal{A}$ of $\mathcal{E}$ embeds in a dense generator $\mathcal{A}_T$ such that T has arities $\mathcal{A}_T$.

→ Construction: $\mathcal{A}_T = \left\{ L_1 \left(\begin{array}{c} \mathcal{A} \\ \downarrow \\ T1 \end{array} \right) \middle| \begin{array}{c} \mathcal{A} \\ \downarrow \\ T1 \end{array}, A \in \mathcal{A} \right\}$

↖ Left adjoint of $T_1: \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}_{T1}$

Example: $\mathcal{D} = \left(\bullet \begin{array}{c} \curvearrowright \\ \bullet \end{array} \right), \text{DirGra} = \widehat{\mathcal{D}}$

Representables $\mathcal{A} = \mathcal{D}$ is a dense generator but NOT

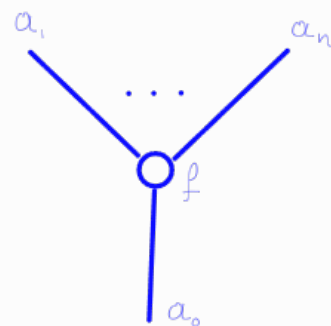
arities for T , the free category monad $\xrightarrow{\text{Construction}} \mathcal{A}_T = \Delta_{\text{inert}}$.

Definition: A multicategory $\mathcal{M}$ consists of the following data:

→ A set of colors $\text{Col}(\mathcal{M})$, and

→ $\forall n \geq 0$ and colors $a_0, \dots, a_n \in \text{Col}(\mathcal{M})$, a set

$\mathcal{M}(a_1, \dots, a_n; a_0)$ of n -ary operations equipped with



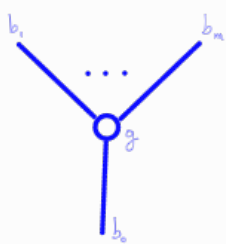
↳ identities: $\forall a \in \text{Col}(\mathcal{M}), \text{id}_a \in \mathcal{M}(a; a)$



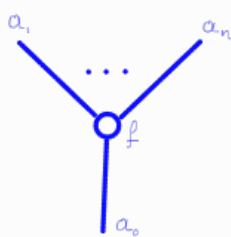
↳ composition: $\forall n, m \geq 0$ and colors $a_0, \dots, a_n, b_0, \dots, b_m \in \text{Col}(\mathcal{M})$

if $a_0 = b_i$ for some $1 \leq i \leq m$, a function

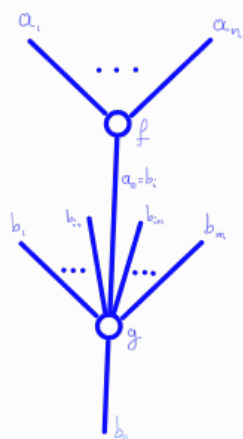
$$\circ_i: \mathcal{M}(b_1, \dots, b_m; b_0) \times \mathcal{M}(a_1, \dots, a_n; a_0) \rightarrow \mathcal{M}(b_1, \dots, b_{i-1}, a_1, \dots, a_n, b_{i+1}, \dots, b_m; b_0)$$



$\circ_i$



=



satisfying associativity and unit axioms.

Cheng, Gurski, Richl - Cyclic multicategories, multivariable adjunctions and matris

Definition: (CGR '14, Definition 3.3) A multicategory $\mathcal{M}$ is

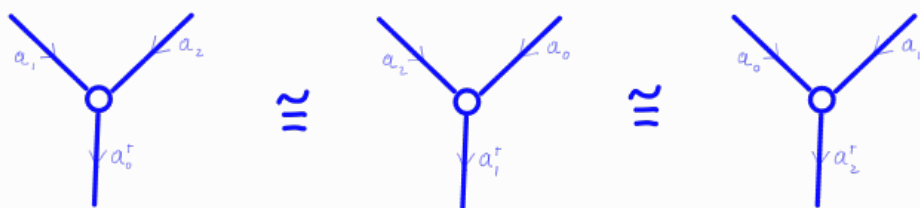
cyclic if it is equipped with

↳ An involution on colors $a \mapsto a^*$, and



↳ $\forall n \geq 1$ and colors $a_0, \dots, a_n$ an isomorphism

$$\sigma = \sigma_{n+1}: \mathcal{M}(a_1, \dots, a_n; a_0^*) \xrightarrow{\cong} \mathcal{M}(a_2, \dots, a_n, a_0; a_1^*)$$



satisfying the following :

↳ Each isomorphism σ_n is so that $\sigma_n^n = 1$.

↳ Identities are preserved by σ_2 , i.e. $\sigma_2 \text{id}_a = \text{id}_{a^r}$.

↳ Interaction between σ and composition, namely

for all compatible n -ary operation f and m -ary operation g ,

$$\sigma(g \circ_i f) = \begin{cases} \sigma f \circ_n \sigma g, & i = 1 \\ \sigma g \circ_{i-1} f, & 2 \leq i \leq m \end{cases}$$

planar (unrooted) trees
+ CMC maps between them

"cyclic dendroidal sets"

Theorem: (D.) Let $\nu: \text{CMC} \rightarrow \widehat{\text{Tree}}$ be the nerve

functor associated to the full inclusion $\text{Tree} \hookrightarrow \text{CMC}$.

Then the following holds:

↳ The nerve functor ν is fully faithful.

$\hookrightarrow$ If $X \in \widehat{\text{Tree}}$, then X is the nerve of some cyclic multicategory $\mathcal{M} \in \text{CMC}$ if and only if for every tree $P \in \text{Tree}$, $X_P \cong \lim_E X_E$ where E consists of the internal edges of P , $/$, and stars, $\begin{array}{c} \dots \\ \diagup \quad \diagdown \\ \circ \end{array}$, for each vertex.

$$P = \begin{array}{c} \diagup \quad \diagdown \\ \circ \end{array} \xrightarrow{a} \begin{array}{c} | \\ \circ \end{array} \xrightarrow{b} \begin{array}{c} \circ \end{array} \rightsquigarrow E = \{a, b, \begin{array}{c} \diagup \quad \diagdown \\ \circ \end{array}, \begin{array}{c} | \\ \circ \end{array}, \begin{array}{c} \circ \end{array}\}$$

$$X_P \cong X_{\begin{array}{c} \diagup \quad \diagdown \\ \circ \end{array}} \times_{X_a} X_{\begin{array}{c} | \\ \circ \end{array}} \times_{X_b} X_{\begin{array}{c} \circ \end{array}}$$

Proof (outline):

$\hookrightarrow$ Consider the diagram category:

$$\mathcal{D} = \left(\begin{array}{c} \downarrow C \\ \begin{array}{c} \begin{array}{c} \diagup \quad \diagdown \\ \circ \end{array} \\ \vdots \end{array} \end{array} \right)$$

↳ Define $i\text{-MG} := \widehat{\mathcal{D}}$ with dense generator the representables $\mathcal{A} = \mathcal{D}$.

↳ Construct an adjunction $L : i\text{-MG} \rightleftarrows \text{CMC} : R$
Free cyclic multicategory $\nearrow$ Underlying involutive multigraph $\nwarrow$
↳ colors: G_c
↳ identities: $\widehat{\mathcal{E}} \rightarrow G$
↳ operations: $\widehat{\mathcal{P}} \rightarrow G$

$\leadsto$ to get a monoid T on $i\text{-MG}$.

↳ **Show T is strongly cartesian** and since $i\text{-MG} := \widehat{\mathcal{D}}$,
we **apply the arities construction** which yields $\mathcal{A}_T = \text{Tree}_{\text{inert}}$
 $i\text{-MG}$ is finitely complete
Tree with only subtree inclusions

$\leadsto$ free T -algebras $\Theta_T = \text{Tree}$.

↳ Apply BMW theorem and **contextualize meaning**.

Remark: Have analogous result for multigraphs/multicategories
with arities planar rooted trees.
not cyclic

Future work:

↳ Augmented cyclic multicategories: allow 0-ary operations with no output

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{---} \circ & \circ_1 \text{---} & = \text{---} \circ \text{---} \circ \\ g \in \mathcal{M}(; a^+) \cong \mathcal{M}(a;) & f \in \mathcal{M}(; a^+) \cong \mathcal{M}(a;) & g \circ_1 f \in \mathcal{M}(;) \end{array}$$

↳ Cyclic operads: give a new proof for the nerve theorem (first appearing in Patrick Elliott's thesis).

Thank You!