



SC395:

Image Generative Models in Computer Vision

Viraj Shah

Lecture 1

Jan 5th, 2026

sc395.virajshah.com





Viraj Shah

Research Scientist,
Google



Mountain View, CA



Ahmedabad, India



Computer Vision



Image Generative Models



Computational Photography



UIUC



Iowa State University



IIT Roorkee



Siemens



Amazon



Adobe



Google



Introduction



What GenAI hype is all about?

Is GenAI relevant to your area of study?

Will this course be useful to you?

.....

No Language restrictions!



What is your AI / Computer Vision WOW moment?

- Image Classification / ImageNet, 2014
-
-
-

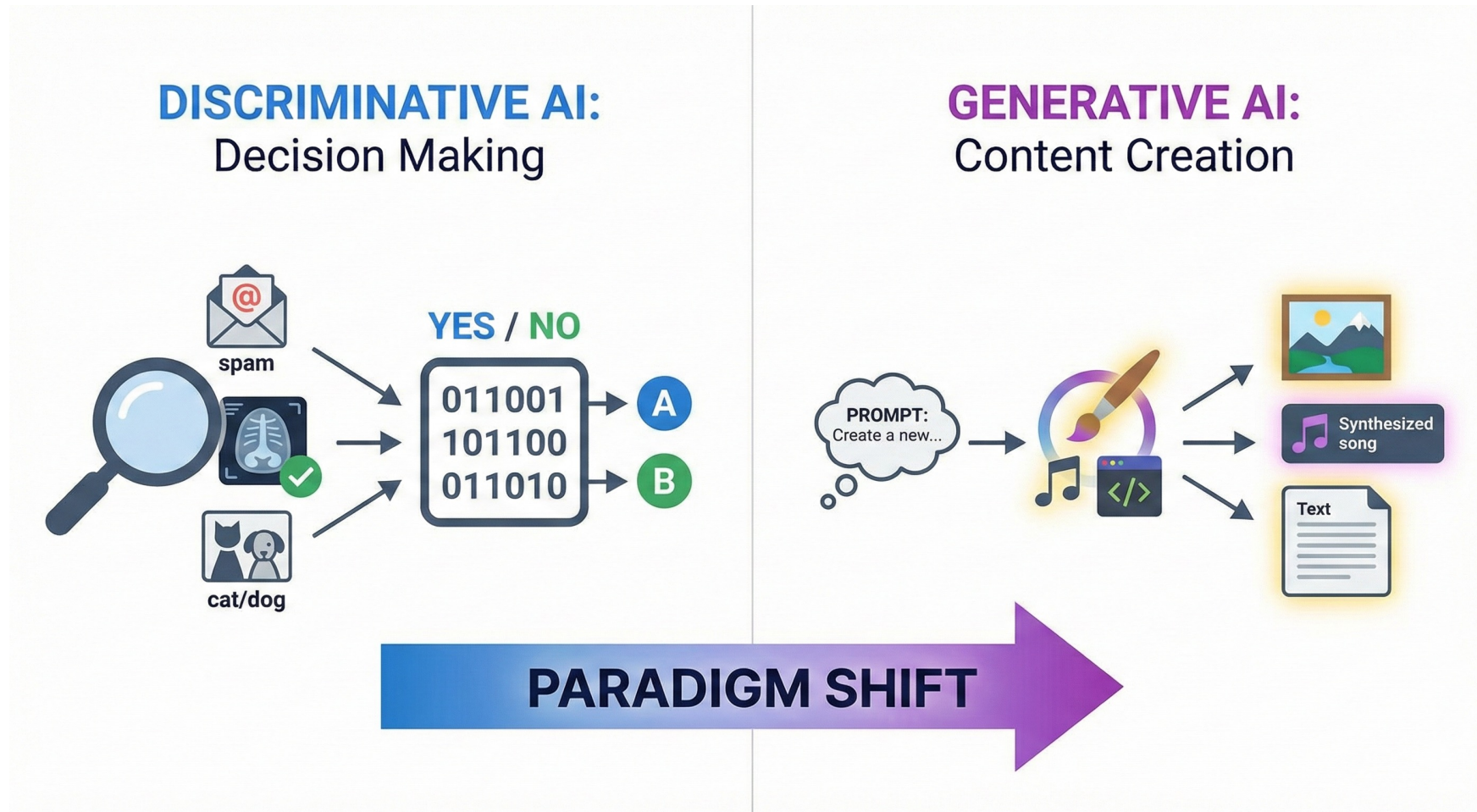
Is this X or Y? → “Decision Making”

The Era of Discrimination

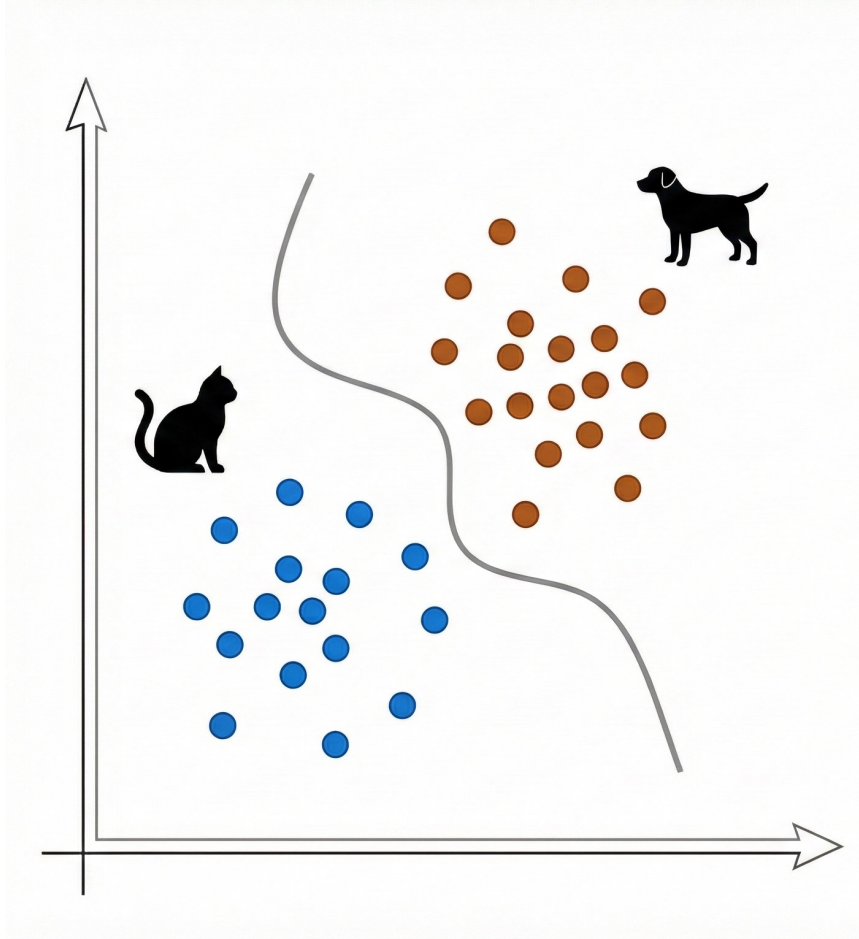
Create an instance of X → “Content Creation”

The Era of Generation

Paradigm Shift: Discriminative Models → Generative Models

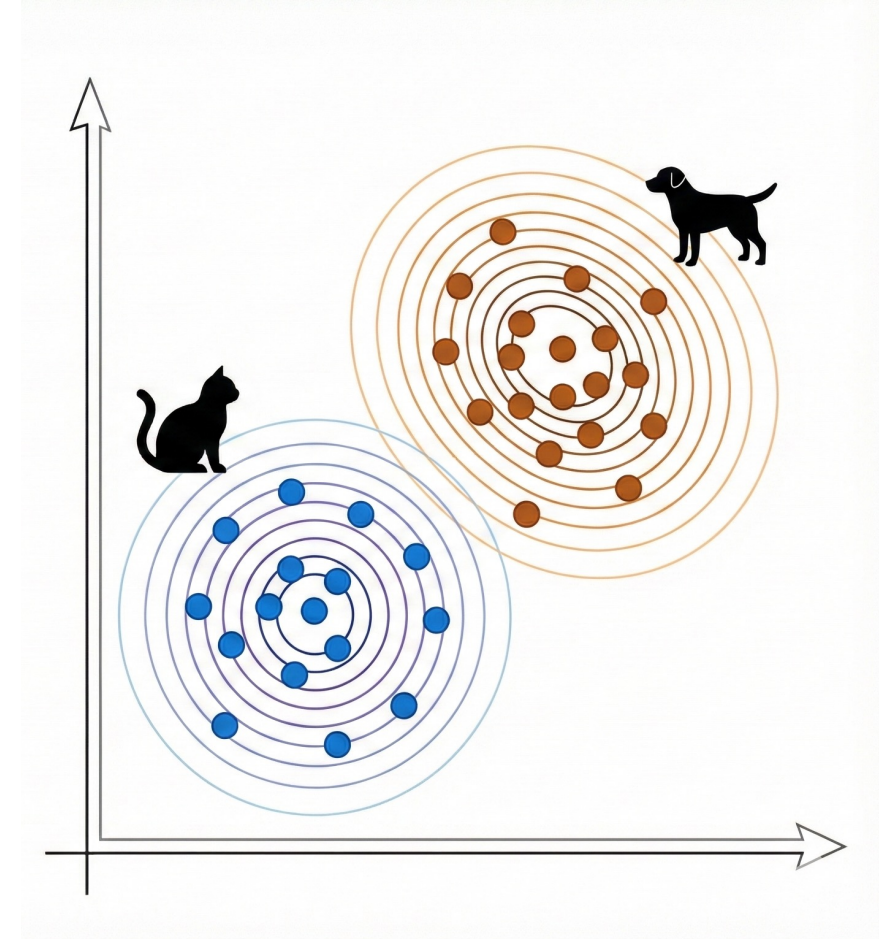


Discriminative Models vs. Generative Models



Predict the label given the Input

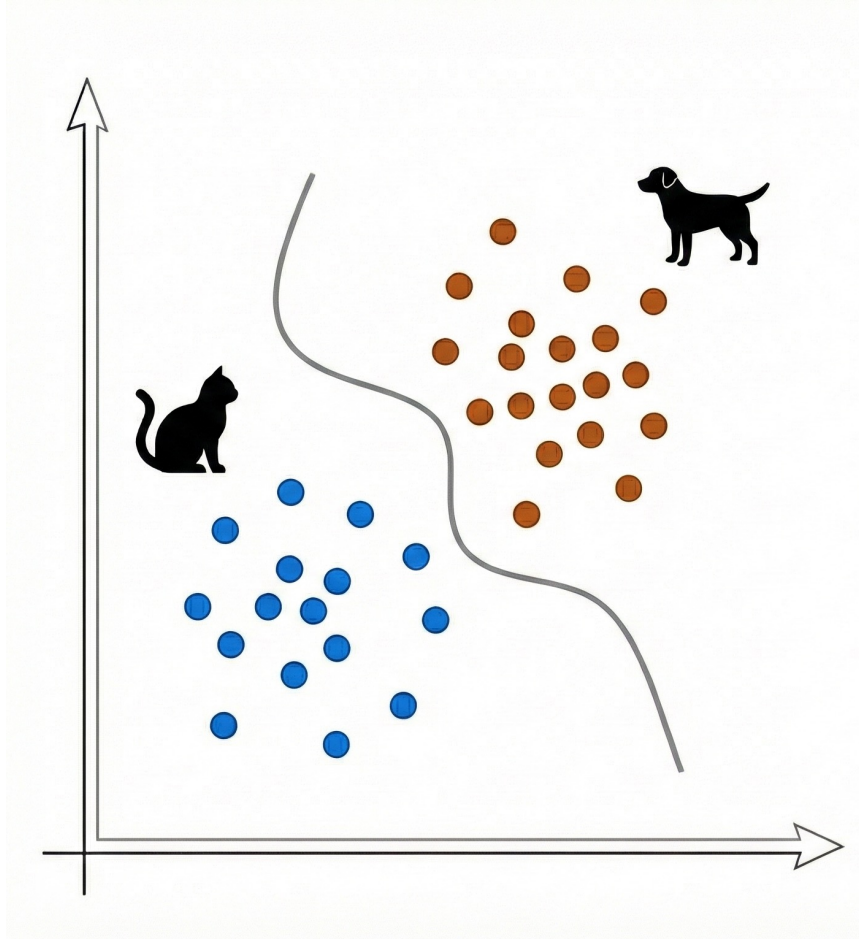
Learns $P(Y/X)$



Generate new content

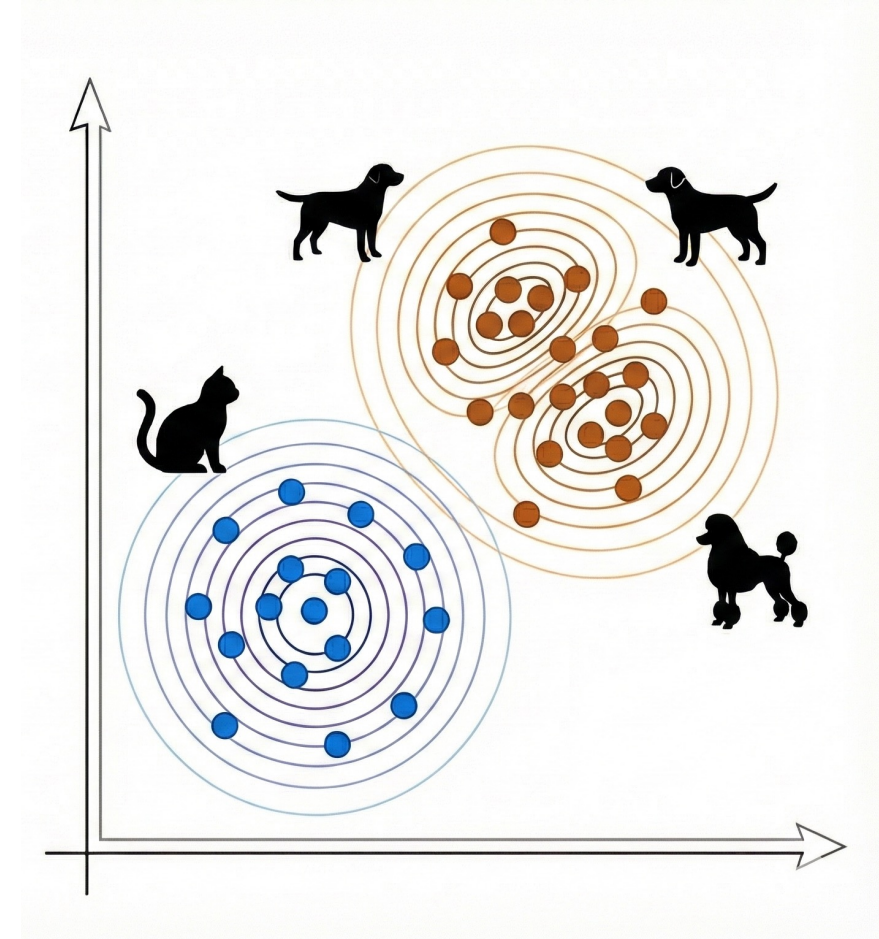
Learns $P(X, Y)$

Discriminative Models vs. Generative Models



Predict the label given the Input

Learns $P(Y/X)$



Generate new content by understanding **the abstract patterns of the data**

Learns $P(X, Y)$

Decision Making vs. Content Creation

The Hierarchy of Understanding

To Critique: Requires recognizing patterns. (Passive)



Passive Recognition

To Create: Requires understanding the entire structure. (Active)



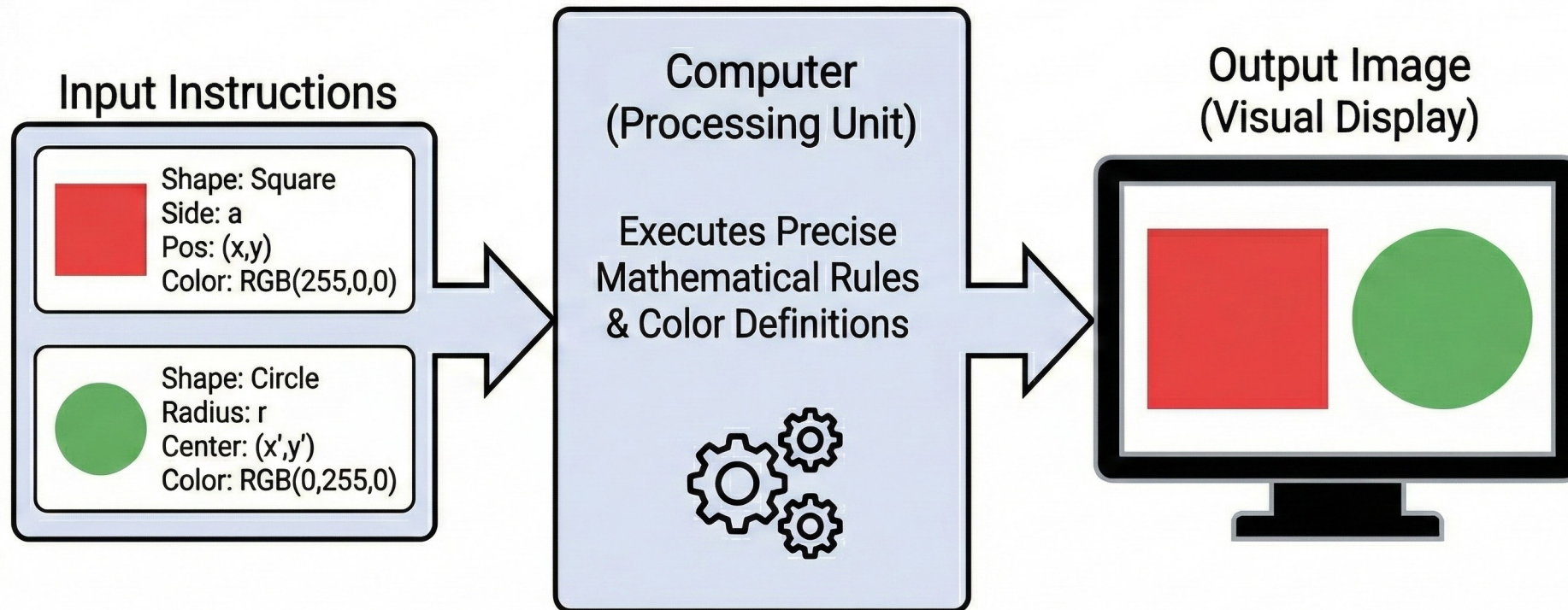
Active Construction

INCREASING DIFFICULTY & UNDERSTANDING

It is easier to critique than to create.

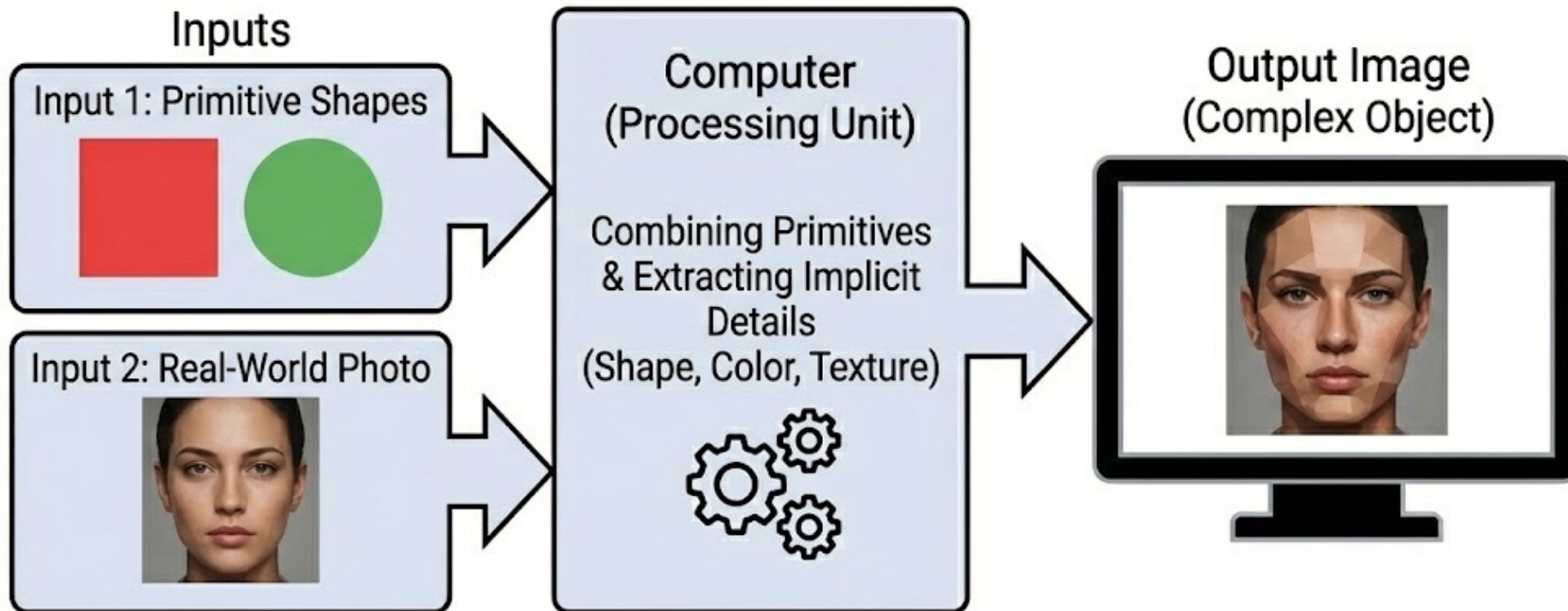
How to Create Content?

Level 1: Creation via Precise Rules (Simple Shapes)

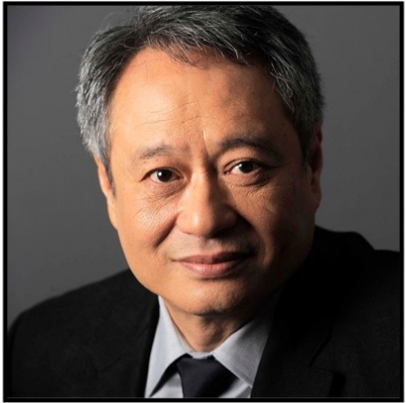


How to Create Content?

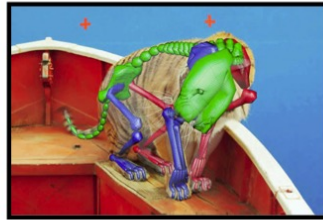
Level 2: Creation of Complex Objects (Combining & Borrowing)



How to Create Content?



Ang Lee



Skeleton



Geometry



Texture



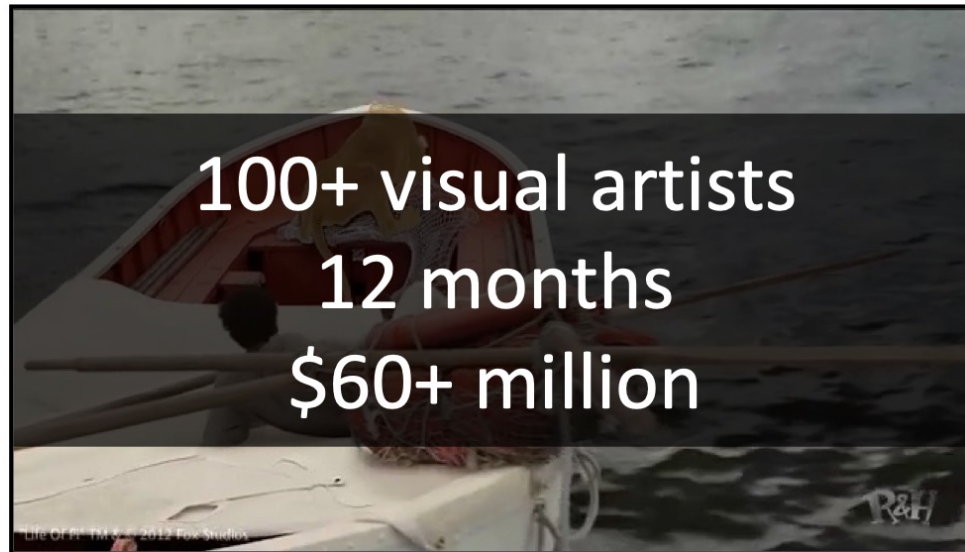
Details



Image



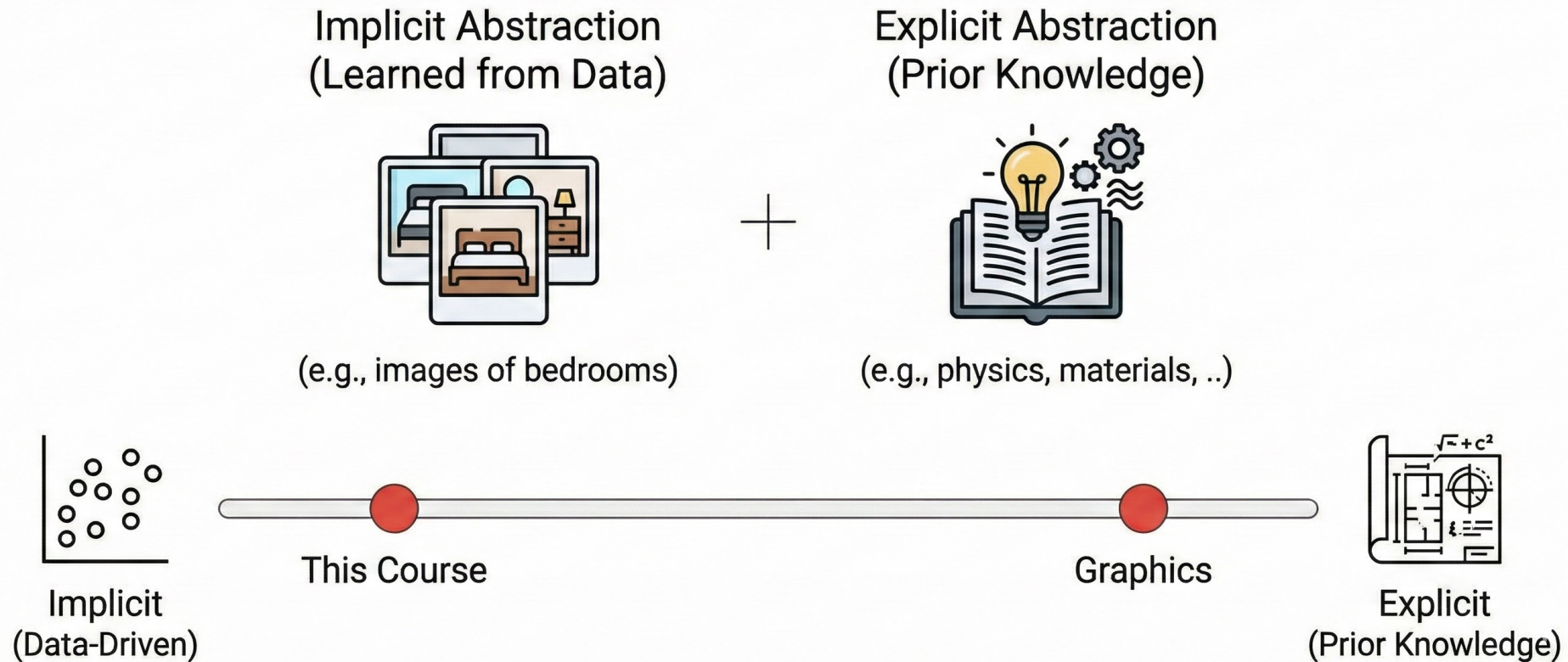
Idea



Visual Content

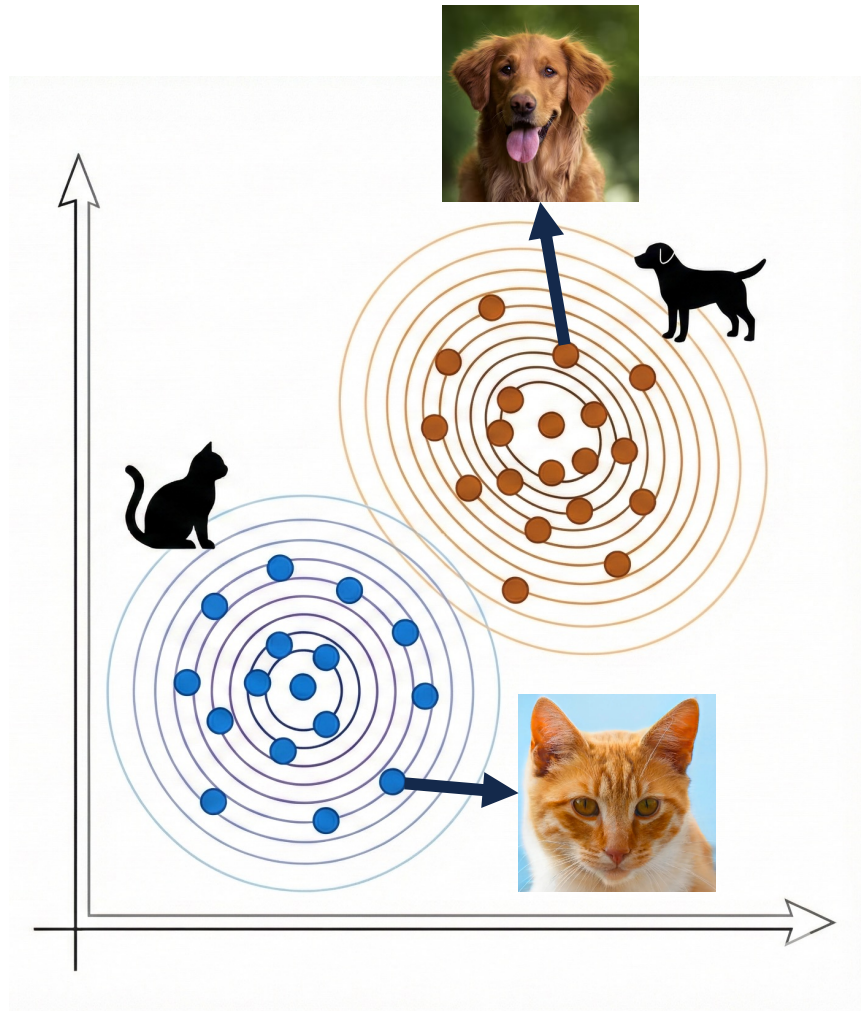
How to Create Content?

Implicit vs. Explicit Abstraction in Image Generation



This Course: Teach Machines How to Create (Visual) Content

Why Generative Models are Useful?

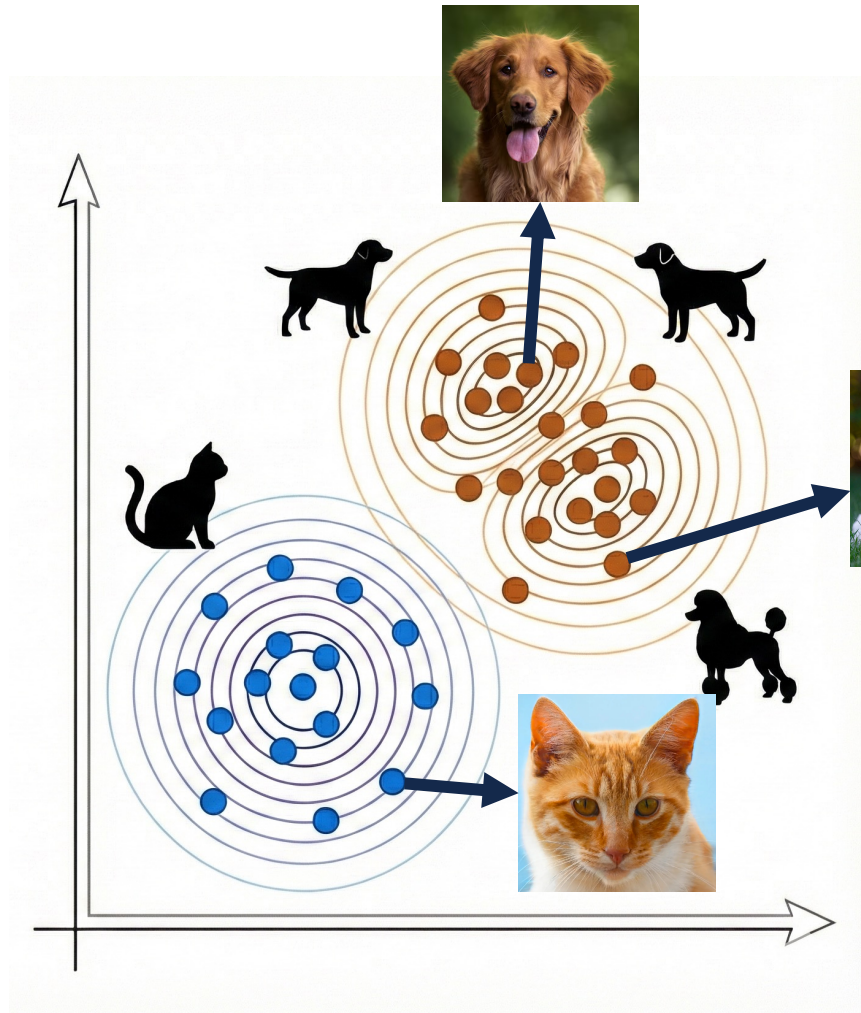


1. Generate new content!

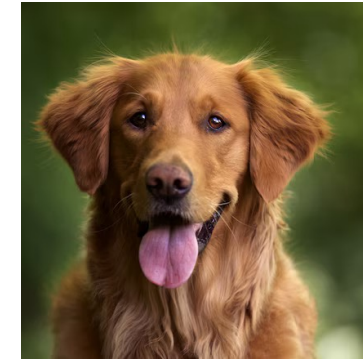


Random Sampling from
Learned Data Distribution

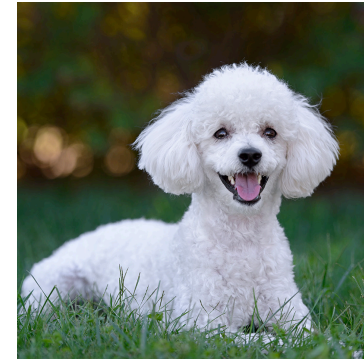
Why Generative Models are Useful?



2. Controllably Generate New Content!



"Breed 1"



"Breed 2"

*Conditional Sampling from
Learned Data Distribution*

Why Generative Models are Useful?

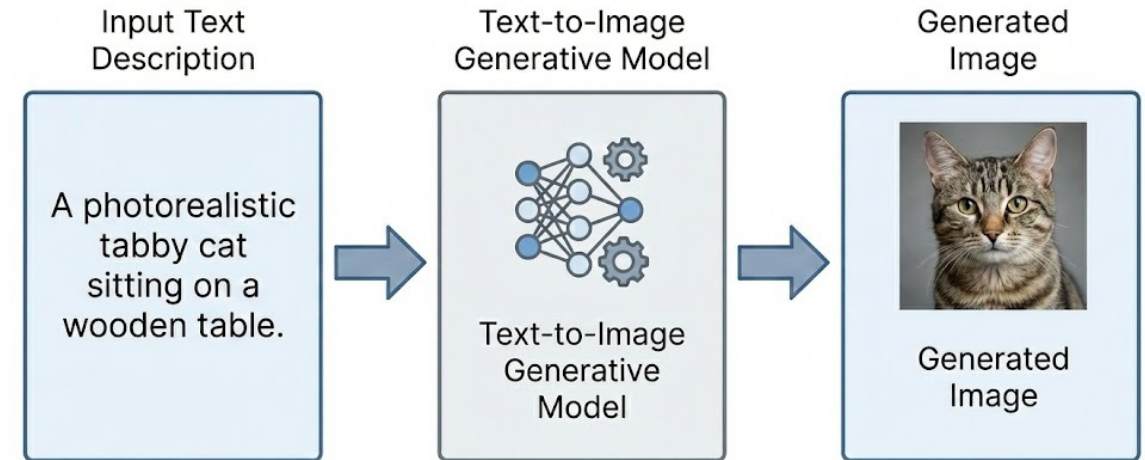
“A full frame mirrorless camera sitting on a heavy oak table. A very big expensive 35mm prime lens is attached. The lens faces towards the viewer but at a slight angle to the left.”



“Present a clear, 45° top-down isometric miniature 3D cartoon scene of Freiburg, Germany, featuring its most iconic landmarks and architectural elements. Integrate the current weather conditions directly into the city environment to create an immersive atmospheric mood.”



2a. Text Conditioned Generation



The input text description provides conditioning information, **guiding** the **model** to generate a new, related output image.

Text-Conditional Sampling from Learned Data Distribution

Why Generative Models are Useful?

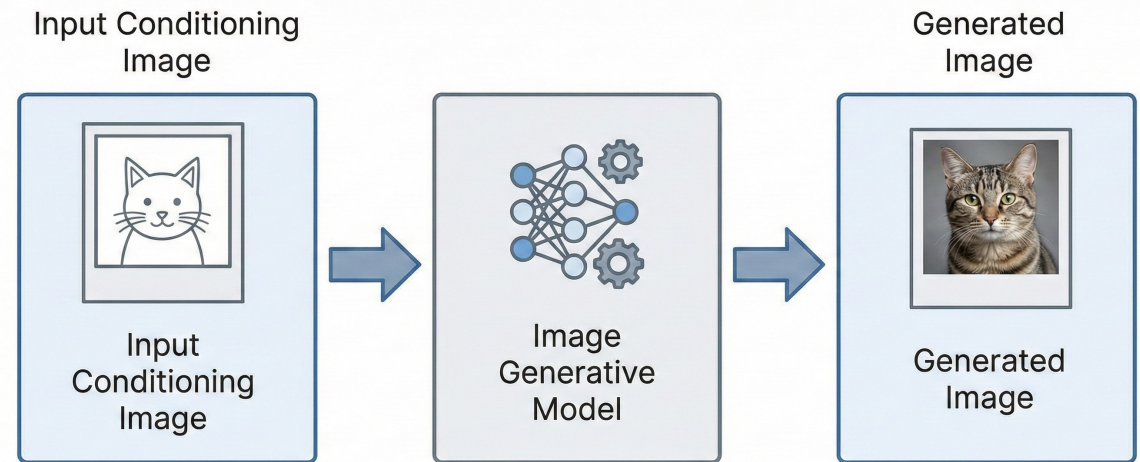
Image
Restoration



Image
Super-resolution



2b. Image Conditioned Generation



The input image provides conditioning information, **guiding** the **model** to generate a new, related output image.

*Image-Conditional Sampling from
Learned Data Distribution*

Why Generative Models are Useful?

“Selfie of person 1 with person 2 on a busy New York street.”



2c. Image + Text Conditioned Generation

“Futuristic car made out of cactus plant”

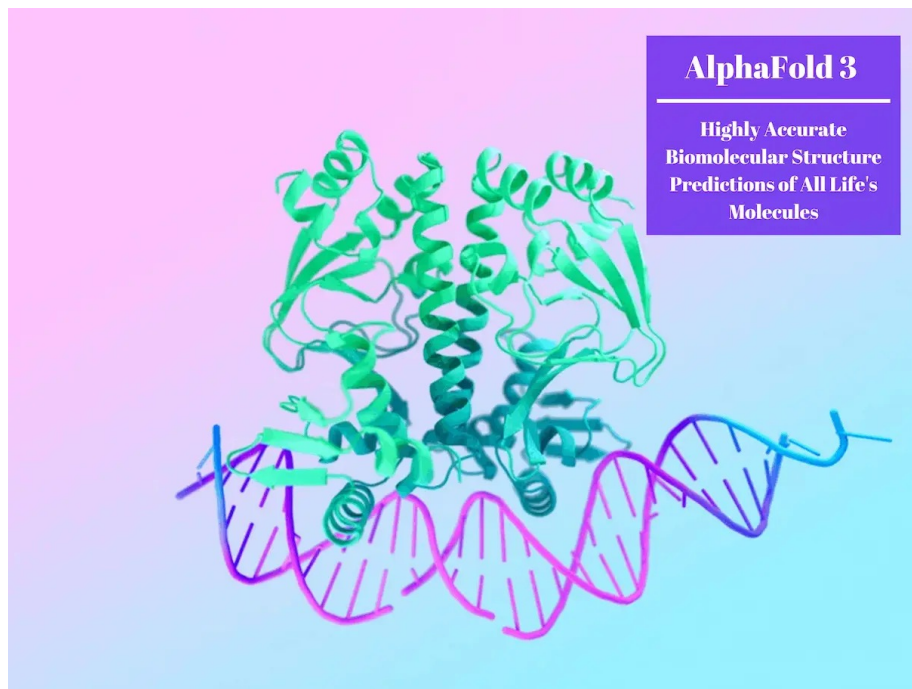


“Create a 1/7 scale commercialised figurine of the characters in the picture, in a realistic style, in a real environment. The figurine is placed on a computer desk. The figurine has a round transparent acrylic base, with no text on the base.”

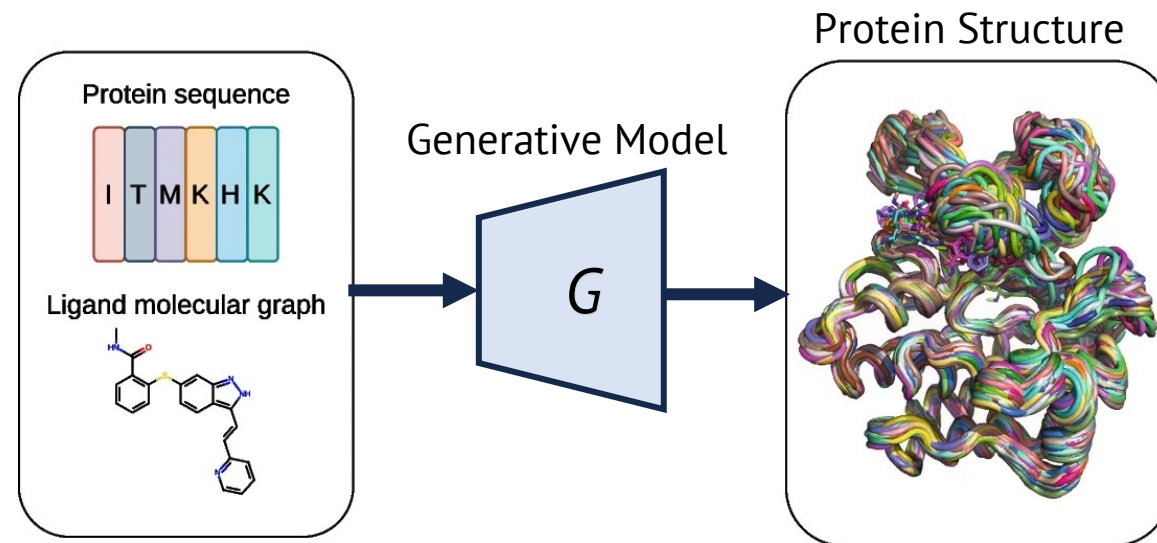


(Image + Text)-Conditional Sampling from Learned Data Distribution

Why Generative Models are Useful?



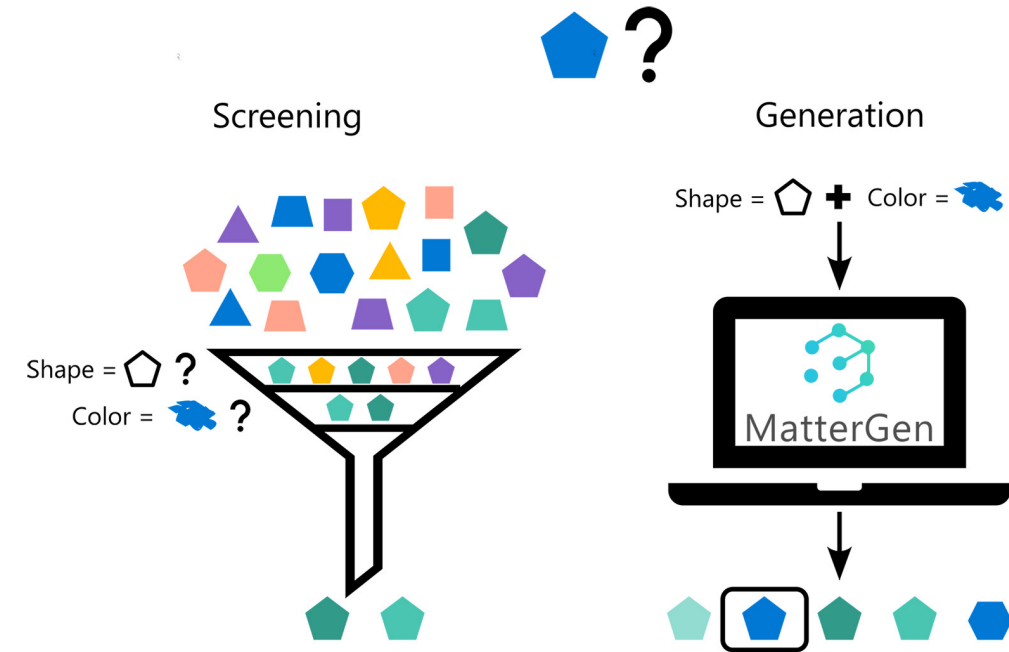
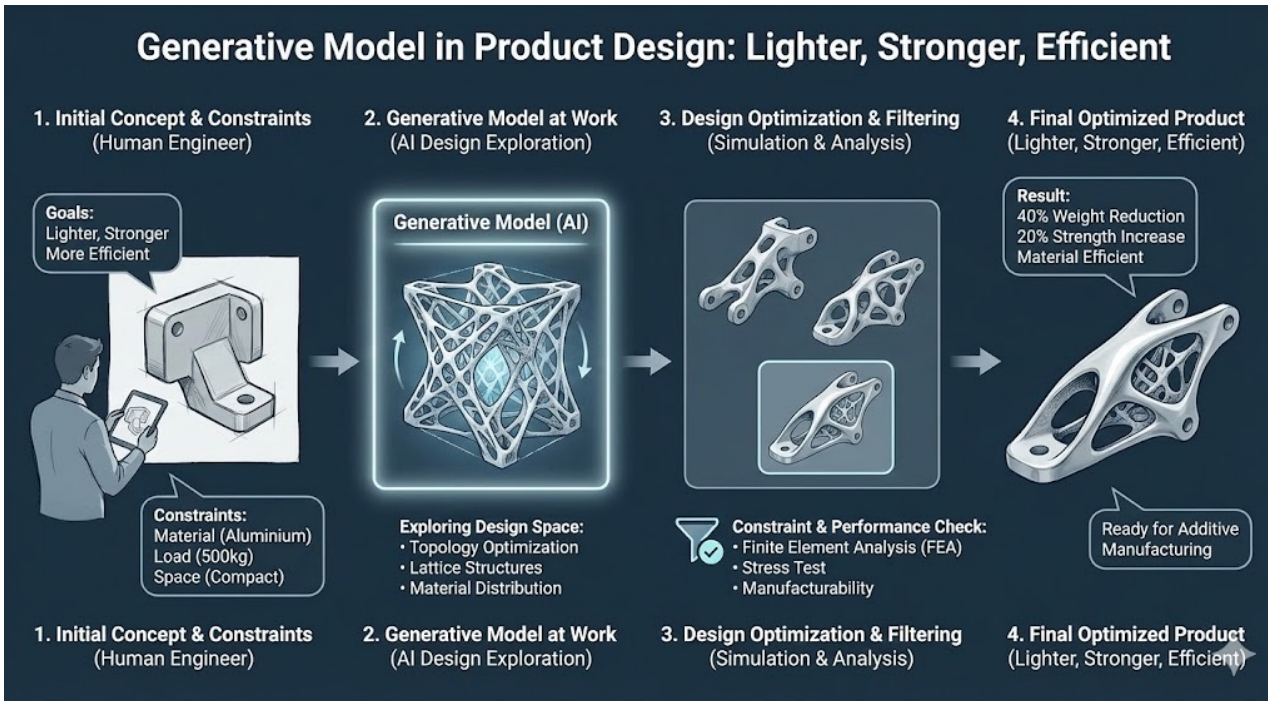
2d. Structure-Conditioned Generation



(Structure)-Conditional Sampling from
Learned Data Distribution

Why Generative Models are Useful?

2d. Structure-Conditioned Generation

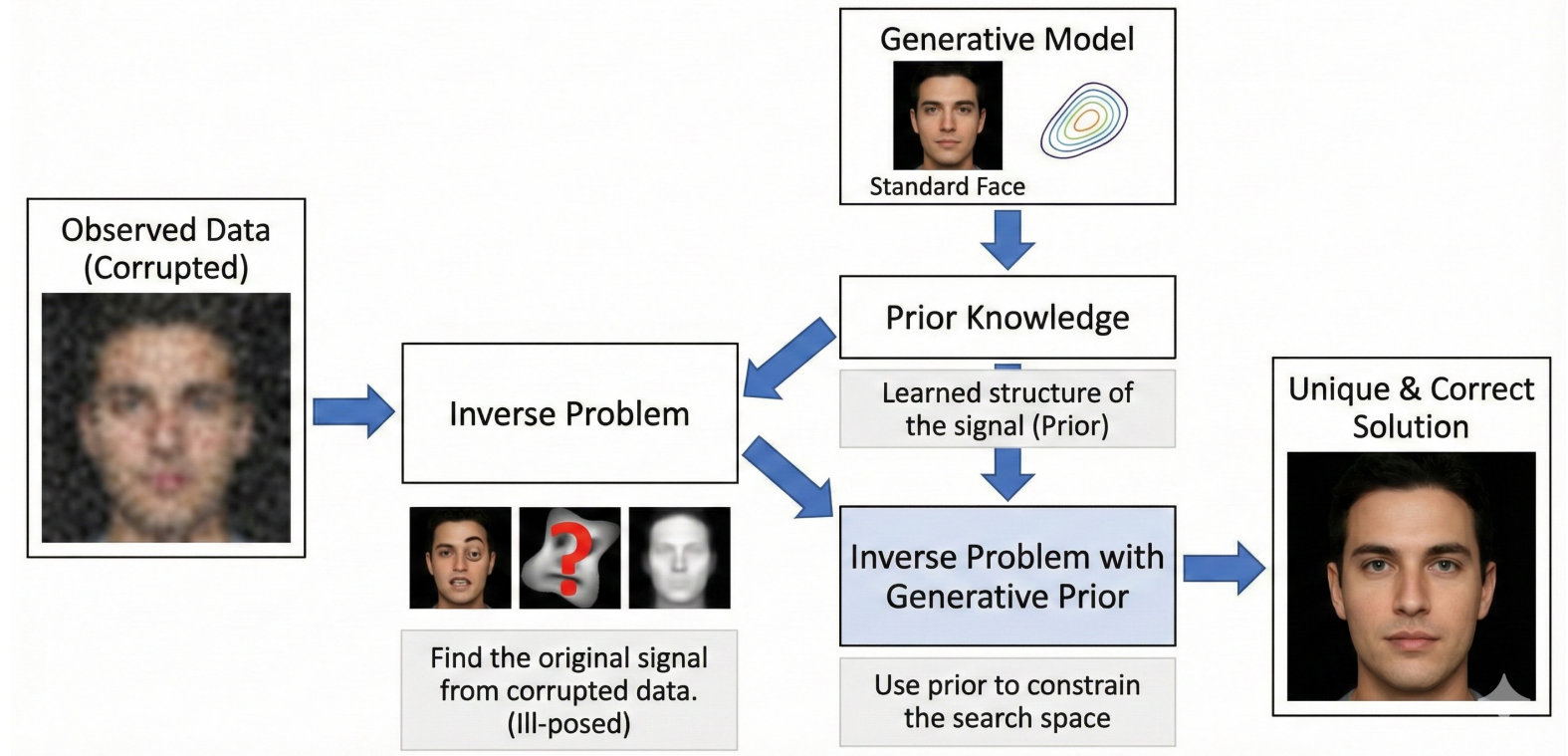


(Structure)-Conditional Sampling from Learned Data Distribution

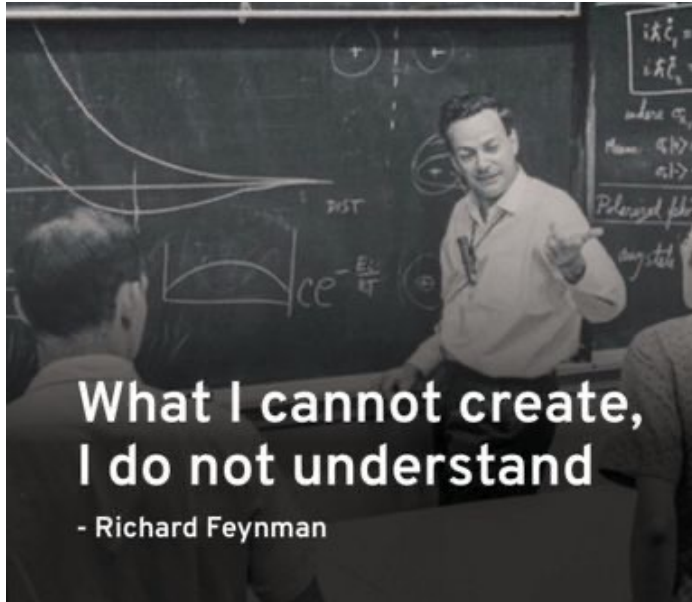
Why Generative Models are Useful?

3. Leverage the Rich Understanding for various tasks

Generative Model as a Prior for Inverse Problems



(measurements)-Conditional Sampling from Learned Data Distribution



What I can create,
I understand !

Inverse Problems of Image Restoration and Editing

Image Restoration

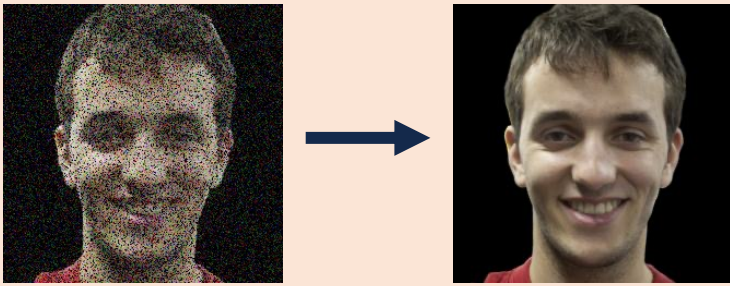


Image Manipulation

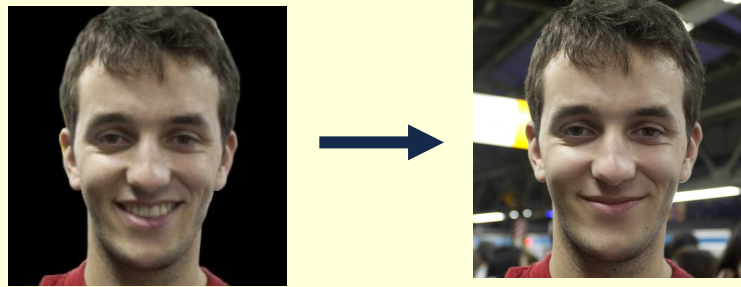
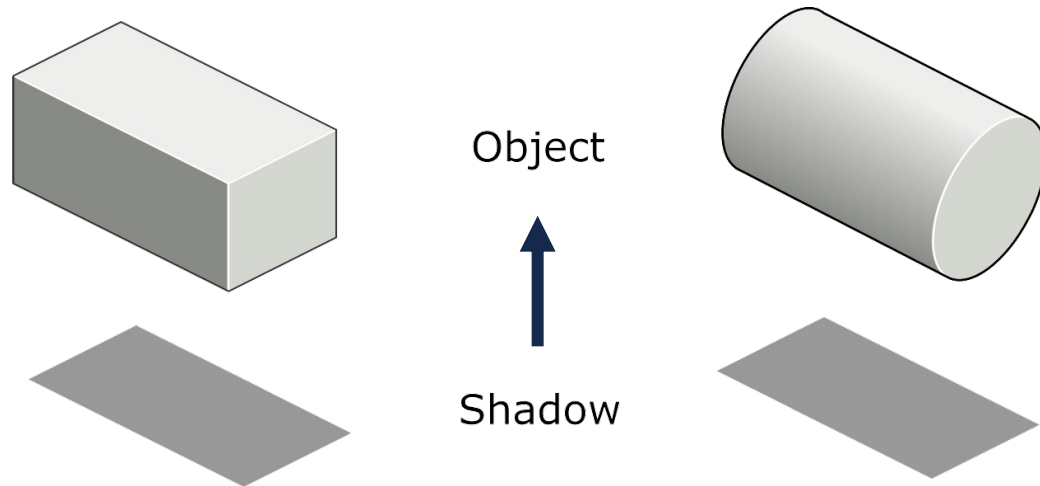


Image Stylization



Highly ill-posed: infinite many solutions!

Additional Information about the target image is required → **can use Generative Models!**

Image Restoration using Generative Models

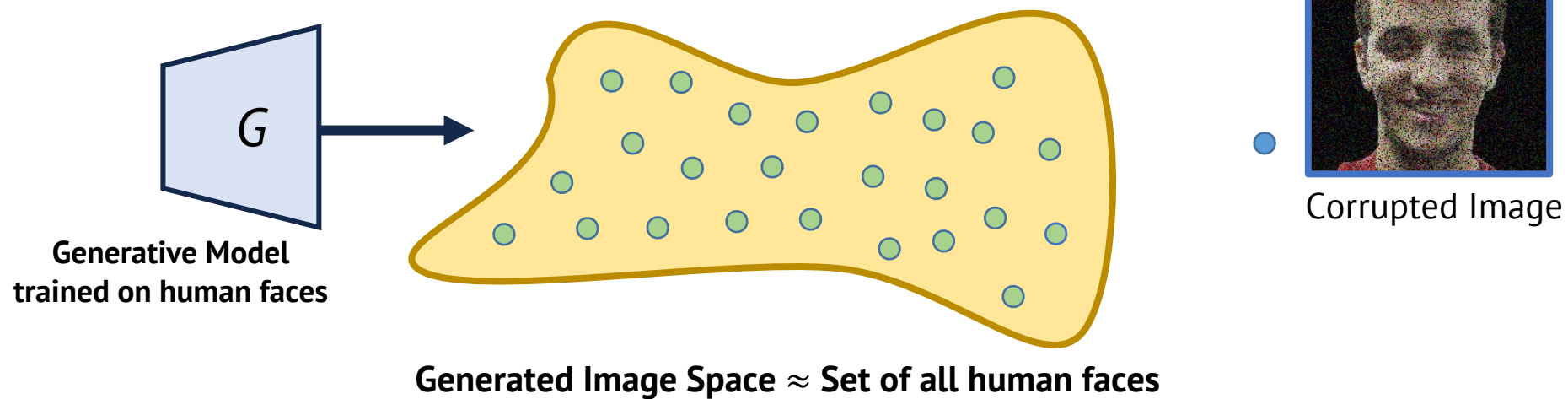


Image Restoration using Generative Models

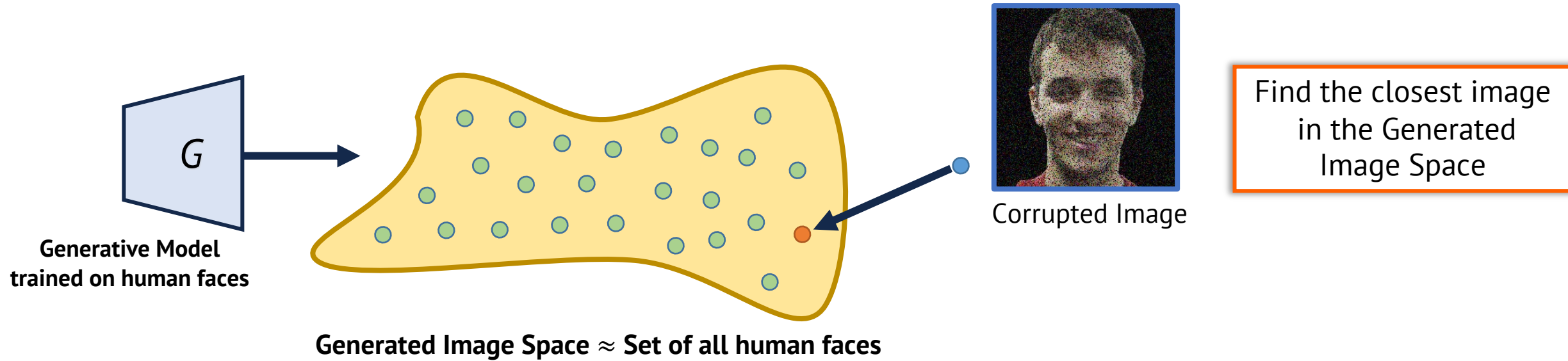
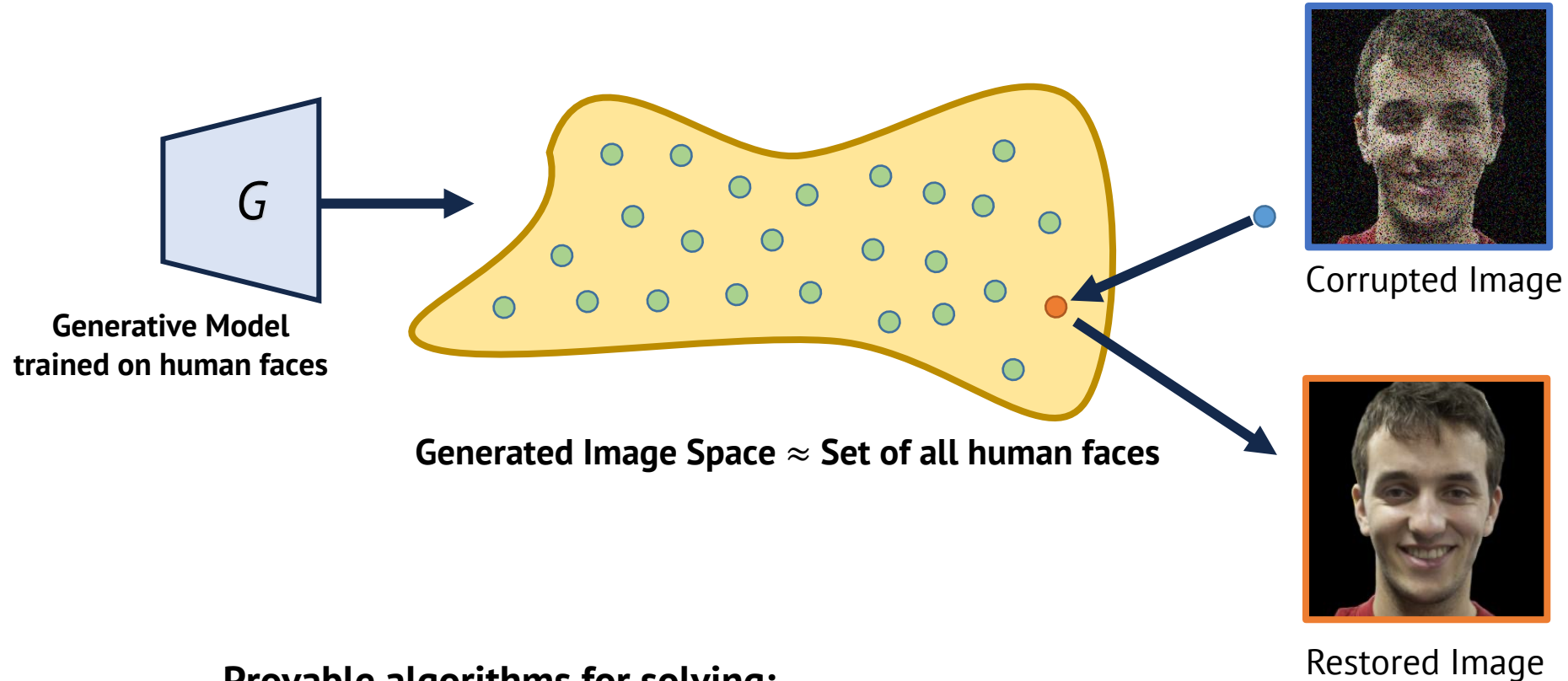


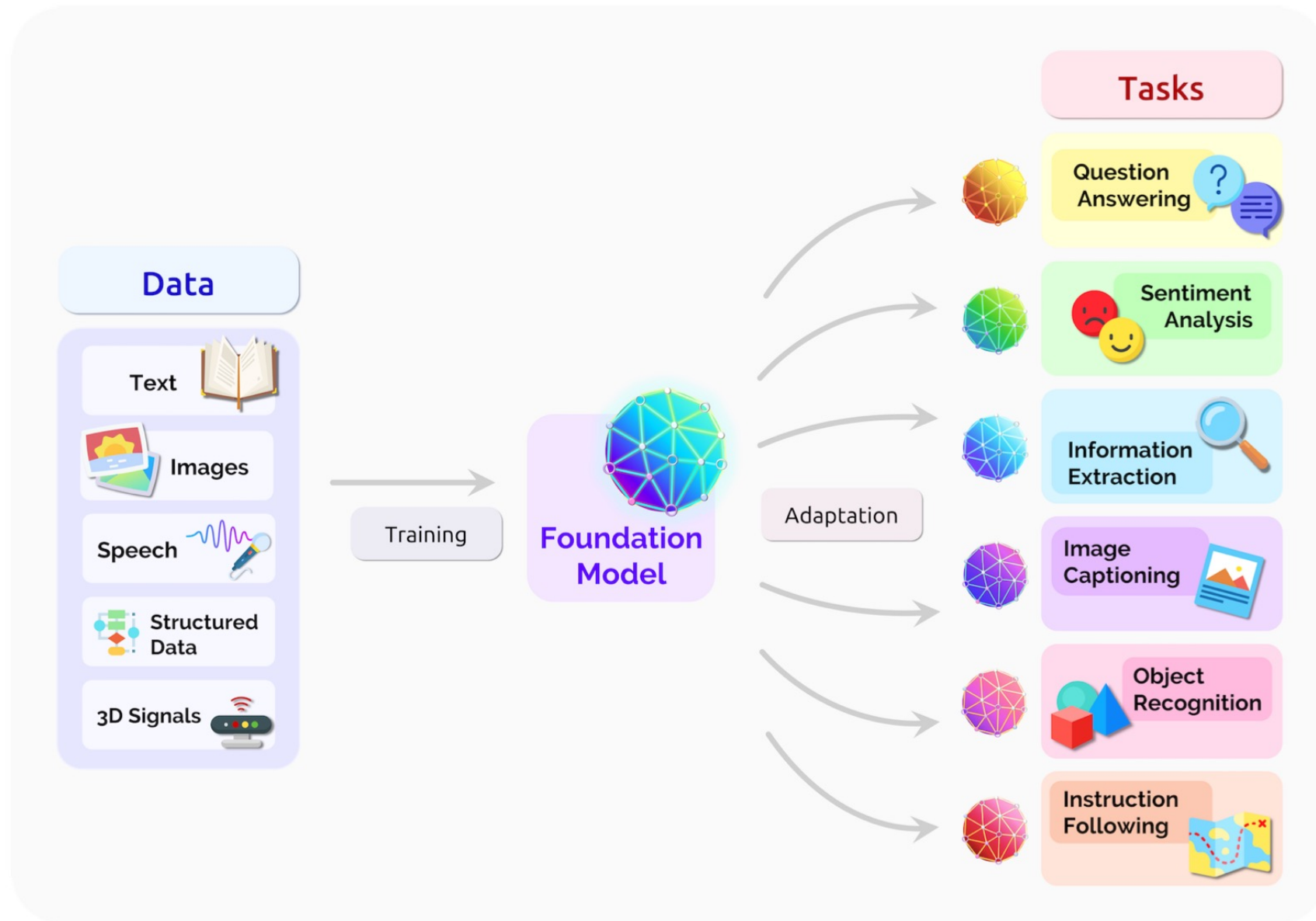
Image Restoration using Generative Models



Provable algorithms for solving:

- Image Restoration
- Image Denoising, Inpainting etc.

Why Generative Models are Useful?





In This Course...

- *Foundational Math* behind Generative Model
- How to *train* a Generative Model ?
- How to *leverage* a pre-trained Generative Model for a specific application?
- Overview of the *literature* in this (ever-growing) research area
- *Implementation*
- *Key challenges, cultural and ethical concerns, future directions ...*



Course Guidelines ...

- 1) It is a *short* course!
- 2) Detailed course structure is available on: sc395.virajshah.com
- 3) Readings for each lecture will be posted on the website
 - a) Highly recommended; remember point 1!
 - b) Notes might be redundant; can share additional materials on request
- 4) Office hours on request;
 - a) please write to vjshah3@Illinois.edu with 3-4 available slots.
- 5) Attendance is mandatory (remember point 1)!
- 6) (anon.) Feedback form will be shared in each class. (highly appreciated!)
- 7) It is my first time teaching a course!



Prerequisites: Does this ring a bell?

Probability

- Probability Distributions
- Conditional Probability
- Gaussian Distribution
- Divergence / KL divergence

Neural Networks

- Backpropagation
- CNNs
- Transformers
- Matrix Multiplication

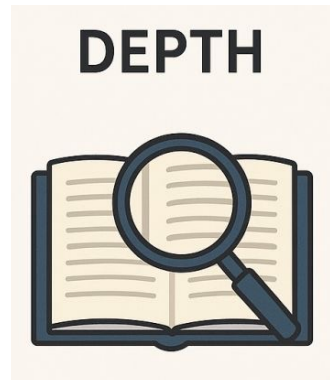
Implementation

- Python
- PyTorch

Refreshers available on course website



Introduction



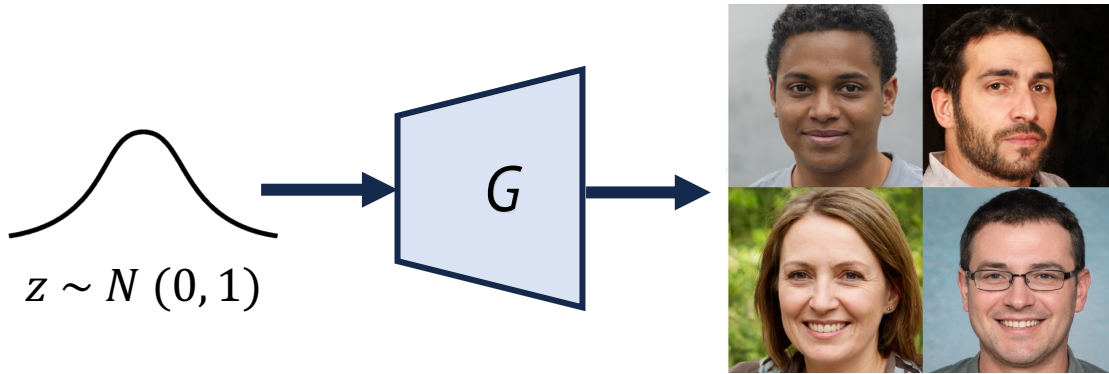
Various approaches to Generative Modeling

GANs: Training and Theory

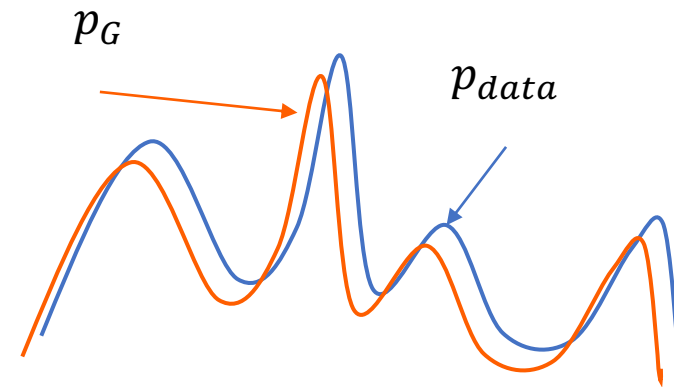
GANs: Applications

.....

Generative Models as Distribution Learners



Mimicking the Data Distribution



Generative Models \approx 'Distribution Learners'



Refresh: Probability Distribution

- Generative modeling = modeling the distribution of data p_{data}
- **Continuous** distribution: the data can take an infinite number values
 - Integral of the probability **density** function is 1: $\int_x p(x)dx = 1$
 - Image, Audio
- Multivariate Distribution: $p(\mathbf{x}) = p(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_D)$

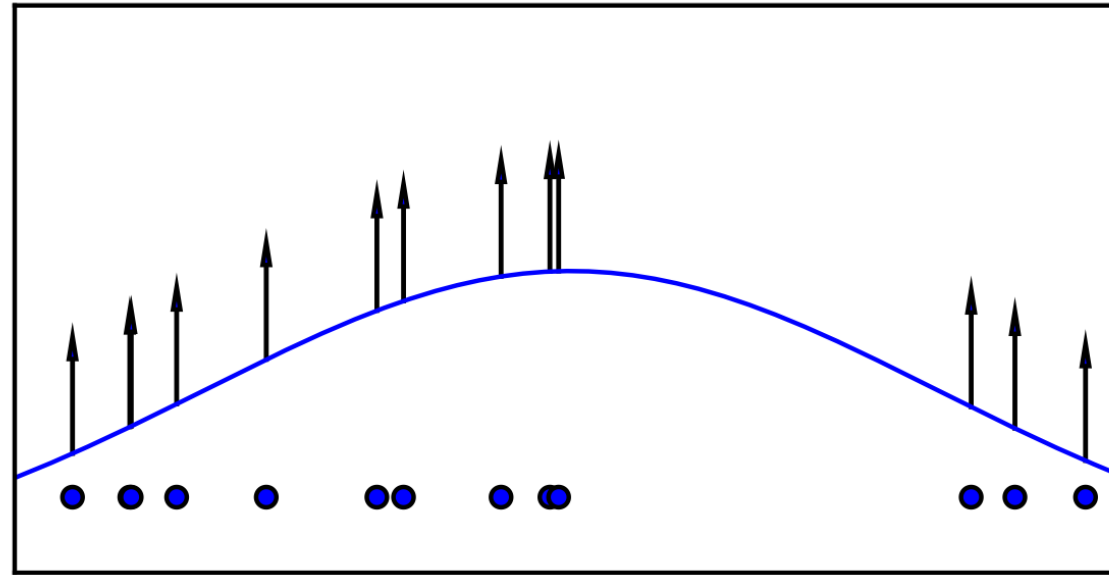


Naïve Attempt: Maximum Likelihood Estimation

- Our data distribution is $p_{data}(\mathbf{x})$: we have m samples: $(x^{(1)}, x^{(2)}, \dots, x^{(m)})$
- Our generative model is parameterized by θ ,
 - Likelihood of each sample is given by: $p_{model}(x^{(i)}; \theta)$
- MLE: choose the parameters for the model that maximize the likelihood of the training data:

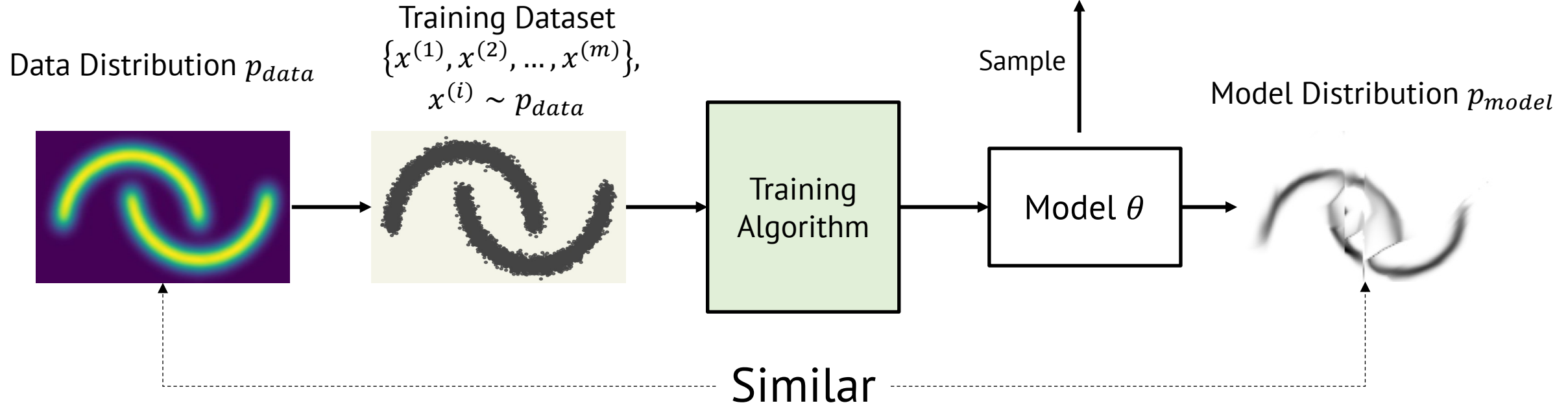
$$\theta^* = \arg \max_{\theta} \prod_{i=1}^m p_{model}(x^{(i)}; \theta)$$

Maximum Likelihood Estimation



$$\theta^* = \arg \max_{\theta} \mathbb{E}_{x \sim p_{\text{data}}} \log p_{\text{model}}(\mathbf{x} \mid \theta)$$

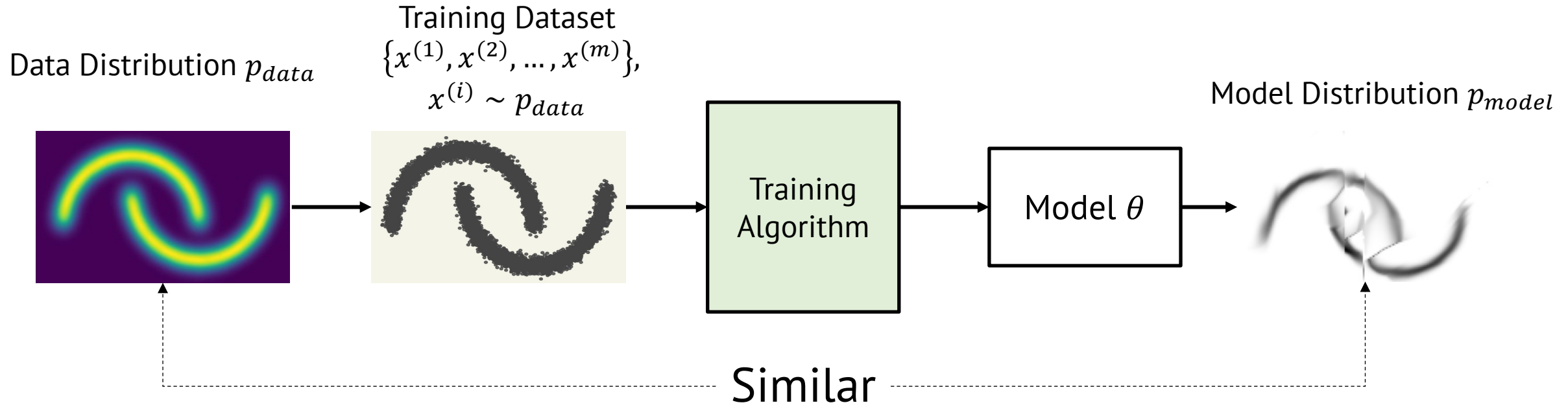
Setup: Generative modeling



Estimating $p_{model}(x)$ and sample from $p_{\theta}(x)$ are often different processes:

- **Density estimation:** Input x , output $p_{model}(x)$
- **Generation/sampling:** No input, output a sample $x' \sim p_{\theta}$

Setup: Generative modeling

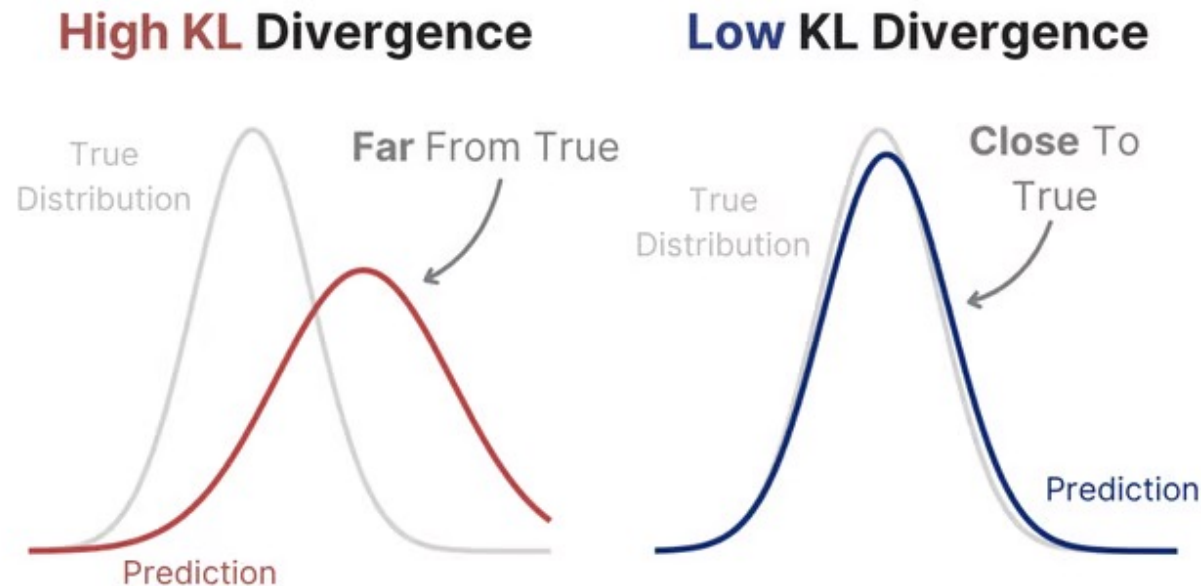


How to measure distance between distributions?

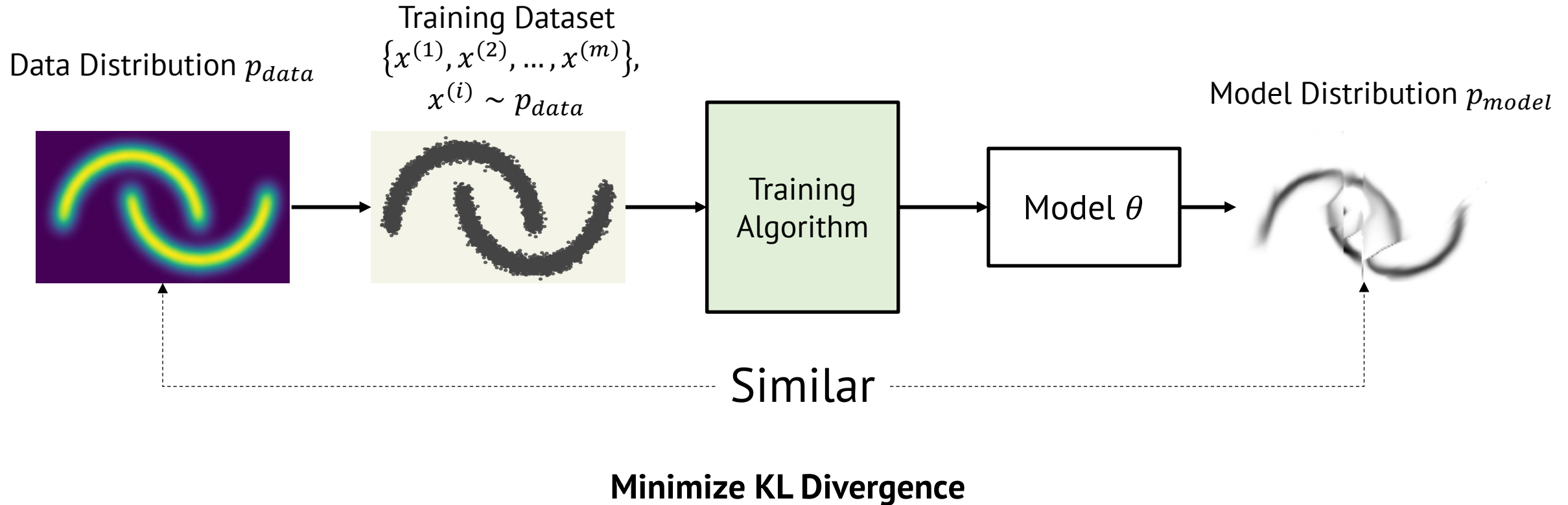
Kullback–Leibler (KL) divergence

- Assume p is the true distribution, and q is the approximate one:

$$KL(p \parallel q) = \sum_i p(x_i) \log \frac{p(x_i)}{q(x_i)}$$



Setup: Generative modeling

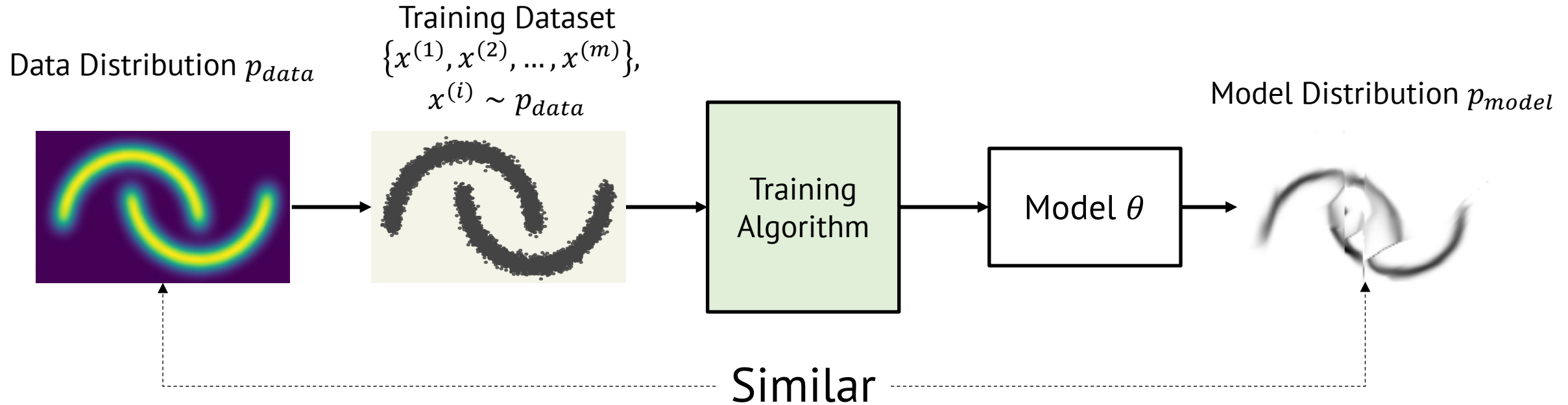




Minimize KL Divergence

$$KL(p \parallel q) = \sum_i p(x_i) \log \frac{p(x_i)}{q(x_i)}$$

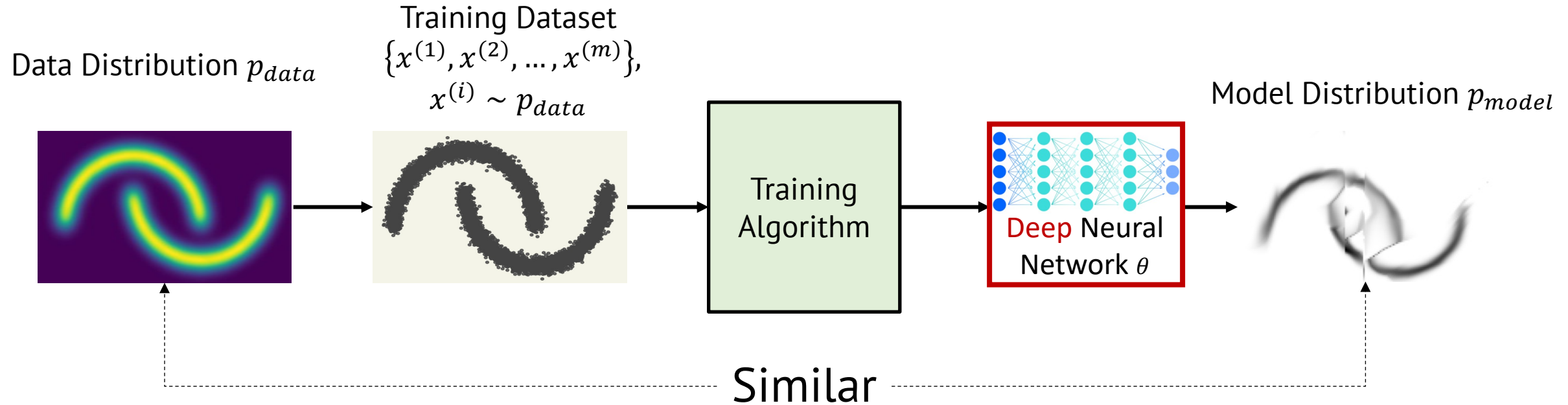
Setup: Generative modeling



Minimize KL Divergence

\approx Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE)

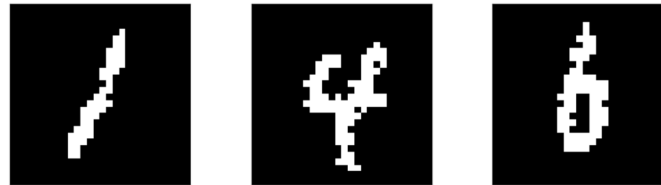
Setup: **Deep** Generative Modeling





Challenges of Deep Generative Modeling

- How to model the **joint** distribution of **high-dimensional** data?
 - Suppose each pixel is either black or white (Bernoulli distribution) and there are $28 \times 28 = 784$ pixels.
 - $2^{784} = 10^{236}$ possible outcomes! Dataset is too small !

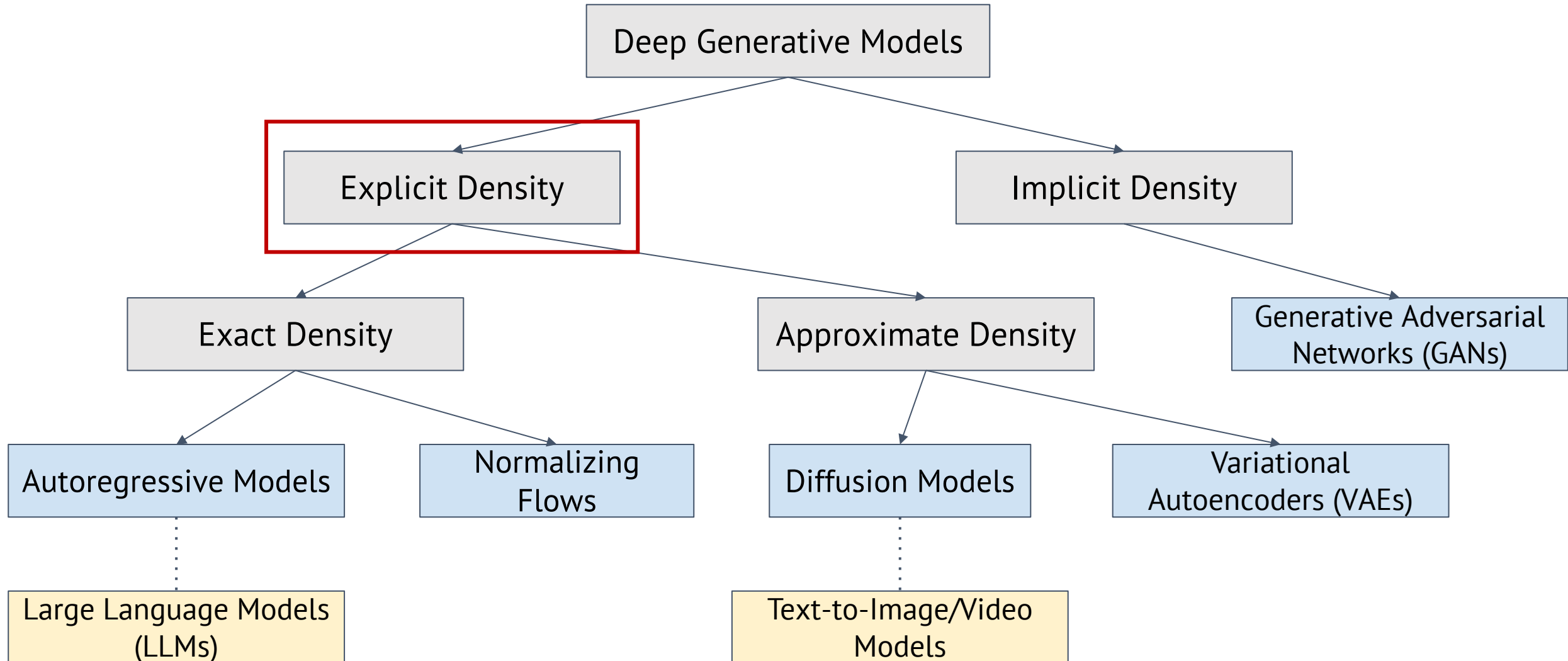


MNIST Dataset (60k samples)

- In general, we do not know p_{data} !
- Do we need to **estimate** the Density?

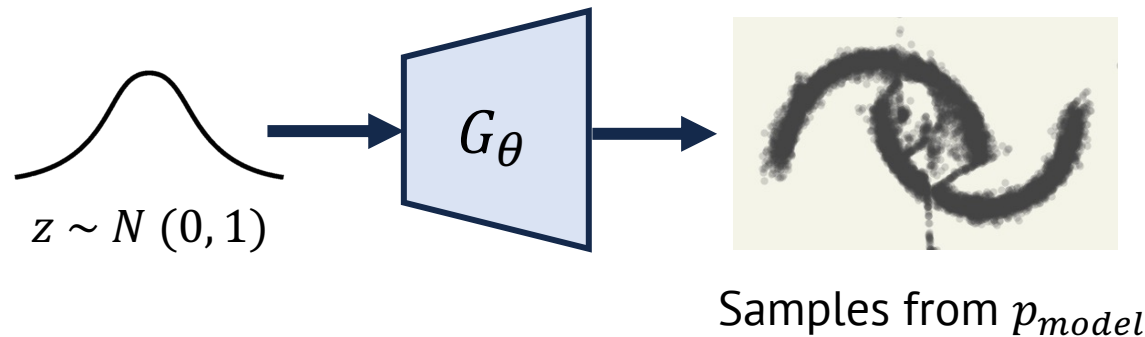


Deep Generative Models



Implicit Generative Models

- No explicit definition of the density function p_{model}
- Interact only indirectly with p_{model} :
 - via **sampling** from it
 - No need to parameterize p_{model}
 - Instead, use **latent variable** z and generator G_θ such that $G_\theta(z) \sim p_{model}$





Please fill in the Feedback Form at:

<https://virajshah.com/sc395-feedback1>

Thank You!