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Entropy of a Jet

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Scattering processes often inevitably include the production of infrared states, which are highly correlated with the hard scattering event, and decohere the hard states. This can be described using the entropy of the hard reduced density matrix, which is obtained from tracing over infrared states. We determine this entropy for an asymptotically free gauge theory by separating the Hilbert space into hard and infrared states, and calculate it in a leading-logarithmic approximation for jets. We find that the entropy increases when the resolution scales defining the hard radiation are lowered, that this entropy is related to the subjet multiplicity, and explore connections to using jet images for machine learning, and the forward-scattering density matrix of partons in a nucleon probed in deep-inelastic scattering.

Introduction.—In scattering experiments, one studies the short-distance collision and initial state through the final-state remnants. The emission of arbitrarily soft quanta, as found in electrodynamics or gravity, limits how well one can constrain the final state (an issue that may have connections to the blackhole information paradox, see [1,2]). In a confining gauge theory, the mass gap curtails nonperturbative, seeking to capture the entropy produced in the partonic cascade before any nonperturbative splittings, and, within jet substructure, various studies have attempted to quantify this [7,8].

Interestingly, these examples are formally connected, as a conformal transformation relates the structure of soft emissions in the final state of a hard scattering process [9–11] to initial-state bremsstrahlung of soft radiation [12–11], as explored in [20–22]. Thus much of our discussion (since with LL accuracy we are dealing with collinear and soft limits) should have an analog within forward-scattering physics, where entropy production in soft initial-state radiation has been considered [23–27]. This literature has reached differing conclusions about the amount of entropy associated with a parton in a nucleon, which are compared to our results. Entropy production due to correlations in momentum space has been considered in [28,29], while [30] examined entropy due to tracing over unobserved products in a particle decay.

Hard reduced density matrix.—The hard reduced density matrix results from (roughly) tracing over all soft radiation

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below an energy scale \( E_c \) and all collinear radiation below an angular scale \( R_c \). It can be used to formulate a Monte Carlo parton shower tracking color and spin coherence effects \[31,32\]. We will calculate its entropy using all \( n \)-subject differential cross sections, where a jet is decomposed into subjets with opening angle \( R_c \) and minimum energy \( E_c \). (Analogously, jets produced in a hard scattering can be considered, instead of subjets in jets.) As we will discuss, these cross sections correspond to diagonal terms in the reduced density matrix, whose rows and columns are indexed by the number of subjets and their momenta. This involves dividing the phase space into resolved and unresolved regions (the subjets and their interiors), using for instance the jet algorithm in \[33,34\], or more formally with the stress-energy tensor \[35–37\].

We may think of a subjet to be a hard or resolved “state” that is dressed by further soft and collinear emissions. In the study of the factorization of amplitudes (see, e.g., \[38,39\]), the hard state is approximated by a specific on shell partonic state. The soft and collinear emissions below the scale \( E_c \) and \( R_c \) will decohere various quantum numbers of these hard states above the scale \( E_c \) and \( R_c \). For instance, superpositions of distinct momentum states would be destroyed, thus selecting a specific basis that diagonalizes the hard reduced density matrix, as argued in \[40–42\]. A medium can alter this decoherence process, which is important for jets propagating through a heavy-ion collision \[43\]. The diagonal terms in this basis represent the quasiclassical probability density to observe that basis state.

Although we focus on the terms that are diagonal in the number \( n \) of hard emissions (subjets), the reduced density matrix element, defined on hard states, has the general form:

\[
\rho_n(\{p_i\}_0^{n-1}, \{p_i'\}_0^{m-1}) = 
\sum_{\{a_i, \lambda_i, \alpha_i\}_0^{n-1}} \sum_{\{a_i', \lambda_i', \alpha_i'\}_0^{m-1}} 
C_H(p_1^{a_1\lambda_1\alpha_1}, \ldots, p_n^{a_n\lambda_n\alpha_n}) 
\times I(p_1^{a_1'\lambda_1'\alpha_1'}, \ldots, p_m^{a_m'\lambda_m'\alpha_m'}) 
\times C_H(p_1^{a_1\lambda_1\alpha_1'}, \ldots, p_m^{a_m\lambda_m\alpha_m'}) + \cdots. \tag{1}
\]

Here \( p_i' \) denotes the momentum, \( a_i' \) the color, \( \lambda_i' \) the spin, and \( f_i' \) the flavor of particle \( i \) in the hard amplitude \( C_H \), with the corresponding unprimed variables for the conjugate amplitude \( C_H^\dagger \). The function \( I \) is a combination of functions similar to the soft functions (matrix element of eikonal Wilson lines) and collinear functions found in factorization using soft-collinear effective theory \[44–46\] (see, e.g., \[47,48\] for examples of infrared functions for exclusive \( n \)-jet cross sections, and \[49\] for extensions to subjets) or in the Collins-Soper-Sterman (CSS) approach (see, e.g., \[50,51\]). It describes production of the soft and collinear emissions below the scale \( E_c \) and \( R_c \) that we used to define the hard radiation, and is related to the Feynman-Vernon influence functional in the decoherence literature \[52\]. We have

\[
I(p_1^{a_1\lambda_1\alpha_1}, \ldots, p_n^{a_n\lambda_n\alpha_n}; p_1^{a_1'\lambda_1'\alpha_1'}, \ldots, p_m^{a_m'\lambda_m'\alpha_m'}) = 0, \tag{2}
\]

unless \( n = m \) and \( p_i = p_i' \) and \( a_i = a_i' \) for all \( i \), because otherwise infrared divergences do not cancel. (For a discussion in the context of heavy nonrelativistic particles coupled to photons, see \[52\]. A calculation of the influence functional for distinct spacetime paths in the amplitude and conjugate amplitude reveals that, at late times, infrared divergences drive it to zero.)

Specifically, soft radiation forces the directions of the momenta and the gauge representations of the particles (representing the subjets) to be equal in the amplitude and conjugate amplitude, while collinear radiation forces the energies to be equal. Focusing on QCD, the SU(3) representation separates quarks from gluons. We will assume that quark flavors and spins are not observed, tracing over them.

Consequently, the diagonal reduced density matrix is given by the following sum over exclusive \( n \)-subject cross sections:

\[
\rho = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \int_H d\Pi_n(p_j) 
\times \frac{1}{\sigma} \frac{d\sigma}{d\Pi_n} |p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n\rangle \langle p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n|, \tag{3}
\]

Here \( d\Pi_n \) denotes the on shell phase space of \( n \)-hard emissions, \( p_j' \) the jet momentum, and the sum starts at \( n = 1 \) corresponding to one subjet. The integral is restricted to the hard region of phase space, denoted by the subscript \( H \). We have normalized the differential cross section, so that we may interpret the differential cross section as a probability density \( P \), i.e., \( \rho_n(\{p_i\}_{i=1}^n, \{p_i\}_{i=1}^n) = (1/\sigma) d\sigma/d\Pi_n = dP/d\Pi_n \).

**Entropy.**—We first consider the Renyi entropy of the reduced density matrix:

\[
S_{\alpha} = \frac{\ln \text{tr}[\rho^\alpha]}{1 - \alpha} = \frac{1}{1 - \alpha} \ln \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \text{tr}[\rho_n^\alpha].
\]

\[
\text{tr}[^\alpha] = \int_H d\Pi_n \rho_n(\{p_i\}_{i=1}^n; \{p_i\}_{i=1}^n)|^\alpha. \tag{4}
\]

We can now obtain the von Neumann entropy by taking the limit \( \alpha \to 1 \),

\[
S = -\text{tr}[\rho \ln \rho] = -\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \int_H d\Pi_n \frac{dP}{d\Pi_n} \ln \left( \frac{dP}{d\Pi_n} \right). \tag{5}
\]
This conforms to our expectation about the entropy of a decohered quantum system: it is simply the entropy of the quasiclassical probability distribution given by the diagonal matrix elements in the basis that diagonalizes the matrix.

**Leading logarithmic calculation.**—Our goal will be to calculate the entropy at LL accuracy, where the LL subjet distribution is defined as

$$\frac{dP}{d\Pi_n} = \frac{dP_{LL}}{d\Pi_n} \left( \alpha_s \ln \frac{R_c}{E} \frac{z}{E} \right)$$

$$\times \left[ 1 + \mathcal{O} \left( \alpha_s \ln \frac{R_c}{E} , \alpha_s \ln \frac{E}{E_c} \right) \right],$$

(6)

with $E$ the energy and $R$ the radius parameter of the (fat) parent jet. We use the angular-ordered factorization found in [53,54]: a hard parton, of flavor $i$ and energy $E$ produced in the short-distance scattering, undergoes a series of splittings, which have a much smaller angle than the previous one. Thus the initial parton $i$ splits at an angle $\theta$ into daughters with flavors $j$ and $k$ carrying a fraction $z$ and $1-z$ of the initial momentum, as described by

$$\frac{dP^j}{d\Pi_n}(E, R) = \frac{4\pi^2}{(1-z)\theta E^2} \sum_{j,k} \frac{\alpha_s}{\pi} \frac{P^i_{-j,k}(z)}{\theta'} e^{-\Delta_i(R, \theta)}$$

$$\times \frac{dP^j}{d\Pi_m}(z, \theta') \frac{dP^k}{d\Pi_{n-m}}((1-z), \theta),$$

$$\Delta_i(R, \theta) = \sum_{j,k} \int_{z_c}^{1-z_c} dz \int_0^\theta d\theta' \frac{\alpha_s}{\pi} \frac{P^i_{-j,k}(z)}{\theta'}. \quad (7)$$

Here $P^i_{-j,k}$ are splitting functions, $\Delta_i(R, \theta)$ is a Sudakov factor describing the no-splitting probability between the angle $\theta$ and $\theta'$, $z_c = E_c/E$, the indices $j$, $k$ denote all possible flavor combinations, and the strong coupling $\alpha_s$ is evaluated at the scale set by the transverse momentum of the splitting. The overall factor cancels a corresponding factor in the phase space in Eq. (8), but enters in the entropy because of the logarithm in Eq. (5). We assumed that one daughter will split into $m$ partons and the other daughter into $n-m$ partons, and it is crucial that the sum on $m$ is part of the phase space so it sits in front (rather than inside) the logarithm in Eq. (5). The reason is that a parton produced by daughter $j$, has an angle with $j$ much smaller than $\theta$ due to strong angular ordering, and can therefore never be produced by parton $k$. Not all contributions to the cross section satisfy strong angular ordering, but these are subleading in the expansion of Eq. (6).

Corresponding to the factorization of the probability densities, the phase space of the $n$-hard emissions factorizes as

$$\int_H d\Pi_n(p, R) = \sum_{m=1}^{n-1} \int_{z_c}^{1-z_c} dz \int_{R_c}^R d\theta z(1-z)\theta E^2$$

$$\times \int_H d\Pi_m(z p, q, \theta) \times \int_H d\Pi_{n-m}((1-z)p - q, \theta). \quad (8)$$

Here we integrate over the momentum fractions and splitting angles for the splitting of the initial parton, sum over all partitions $m$ of the daughters, and integrate over their phase space. The upper bound of subsequent splittings is $\theta$ rather than the jet radius $R$, as indicated by the second argument of the phase space. The transverse momentum $q$ of the daughters is related to the angle $\theta$ by $|q| = z(1-z)E\theta$.

Combining Eqs. (5), (7), and (8), and taking the soft limit $z \ll 1$ of the splitting functions, we get the following equation for the entropy:

$$S_i(E, R) = \mathcal{F}_i(E, R) + \int_{z_c}^{1-z_c} dz \int_{R_c}^R d\theta \frac{2\alpha_s(z E\theta) C_i}{\pi} e^{-\Delta_i(R, \theta)} \left[ S_j(z, E, \theta) + S_i(E, \theta) \right],$$

$$\mathcal{F}_i(E, R) = \Delta_i(R, R_c) e^{-\Delta_i(R, R_c)} + \int_{z_c}^{1-z_c} dz \int_{R_c}^R d\theta \frac{2\alpha_s(z E\theta) C_i}{\pi} e^{-\Delta_i(R, \theta)} \left[ \Delta_i(R, \theta) - \ln \left( \frac{8\pi C_i \alpha_s(z E\theta) \Lambda^2}{z^2 \theta^2 E^2} \right) \right]. \quad (9)$$

Here $C_q = \frac{4}{3}$ for (anti-)quarks and $C_g = 3$ for gluons. We are forced to introduce the energy scale $\Lambda$, to make the probability entering the logarithm in Eq. (5) dimensionless, converting the phase-space volume into a number of states. It is natural to take $\Lambda \propto E, R_c$, using the phase-space volume of the infrared states that are traced over as unit. Note that in the soft limit the $g \rightarrow q\bar{q}$ splitting is subleading, and that we can replace $1-z \rightarrow 1$.

Focusing on a gluon jet, we first multiply both sides of Eq. (9) by the inverse Sudakov factor $e^{\Delta_i(R, R_c)}$, and take the derivative with respect to $R$, to obtain

$$R \frac{\partial S_g}{\partial R}(E, R) = e^{-\Delta_i(R, R_c)} R \frac{\partial}{\partial R} \left( e^{\Delta_i(R, R_c)} \mathcal{F}_g(E, R) \right)$$

$$+ \int_{z_c}^{1-z_c} dz \frac{2\alpha_s(z E\theta) C_A}{\pi} S_g(z, E, R). \quad (10)$$

We can obtain an analytical solution by ignoring the running of the coupling, in which case the first term in Eq. (10) simplifies significantly, leading to
\( S_g(E, R) = \left( 1 + \ln \frac{E^2 R^2}{8\pi C_A x L^2} \right) (I_0(x) - 1) \)
\( + 2 \ln \frac{E R}{E_c R_c} \left( \frac{2}{x} I_1(x) - 1 \right) \)
\( - 2 \left( \frac{2\alpha_s C_A}{\pi} \ln \frac{E}{E_c} \ln \frac{R}{R_c} \right)^{1/2} \),
\( x \equiv 2 \left( \frac{2\alpha_s C_A}{\pi} \ln \frac{E}{E_c} \ln \frac{R}{R_c} \right)^{1/2} \),
\( \) (11)

where \( I_0 \) and \( I_1 \) are modified Bessel functions.

The evolution equations in Eq. (9) resemble those obeyed by multiplicity of (sub-)jets or hadrons [55–58]. At LL accuracy the multiplicity is described by \( I_0(x) \), and the first line of Eq. (11) can be identified as a driving term proportional to the number of branchings (equal to the multiplicity minus 1). We find asymptotically the same growth in entropy as in the average subjet multiplicity:

\[ S_g(E, R) \propto e^x. \]
\( \) (12)

Under the conformal mapping that relates partons showers to initial-state cascades used in forward-scattering descriptions of deep-inelastic scattering [20], we can compare to the entropy of a density matrix resulting from tracing over color-connected dipoles of too small transverse size in impact-parameter space. Under this mapping, the energy ordering \([\ln(E/E_c)]\) of the parton shower corresponds to the rapidity ordering \((Y)\) of the initial-state cascade, while angles correspond to the transverse size of the dipole in impact-parameter space. Though the initial conditions are radically different, based on the conformal mapping we conjecture that the entropy grows as \( e^{\beta \sqrt{Y}} \) with \( \beta \) a constant. Interestingly, this differs from [25], where the entropy was estimated to grow proportional to \( Y \), and [26], which found an exponential growth \( e^{\beta Y} \). However, it is not clear that the conformal mapping translates the decomposition of the Hilbert space used to define the reduced density matrix for jet physics into the same one used in forward scattering.

Numerical results.—The entropy can also be considered an example of a fractal jet observable. Those observables depend on the clustering tree of a jet algorithm [59]. For the entropy we use the Cambridge-Aachen algorithm [33], which combines the two particles closest in angle into a parent pseudoparticle (by summing their momenta), repeating until the list consists of a single pseudoparticle. This can be thought of as treating the two nearest particles as arising from a perturbative splitting, which is in accord with the angular-ordered approximation we employed in the leading logarithmic calculation of the entropy, i.e., the C/A clustering tree corresponds to the branching history.

This branching history yields a list of energy fractions \( Z = \{z_1, \ldots, z_n\} \) (taking the smaller of the energy fractions of the daughters being clustered, defined with respect to the jet energy), and a list of branching angles \( \Theta = \{\theta_1, \ldots, \theta_n\} \)(the relative angles between the daughters clustered in each step). These lists are reversely ordered compared to the C/A clustering, so \( \theta_1 > \theta_2 > \ldots > \theta_n \). They correspond to the branchings which generate hard subjets, so that \( \theta_n > R_c \), and \( z_i E > E_c \) for each \( z_i \in Z \). The multiplicity of hard subjets is therefore \( n + 1 \), where the +1 comes from the initiating parton. At LL accuracy, we can compute the entropy as

\[ s_g(Z, \Theta) = \Delta_g(R, R_c) + \sum_{j=1}^{n} \left[ \Delta_g(\theta_j, R_c; z_j, z_c) - \ln \left( \frac{8\pi C_A z_j^2 E \theta_j^2}{\Lambda^2} \right) \right] \],
\( \) (13)

which follows from Eq. (9). Here \( \Delta_g \) is the Sudakov factor (for simplicity, we consider only gluons), and the extra arguments \( z_j \) and \( z_c \) indicate the range of the \( z \) integral. The interpretation of Eq. (13) is that the entropy of the shower is the sum of the entropies generated at each step of the shower. If we average over many events, denoted by \( \langle \rangle \), this converges to Eq. (9).

\[ s_g = \langle s_g \rangle. \]
\( \) (14)

In Fig. 1 we show the entropy of a gluon jet in Eq. (11) as the angular cutoff \( R_c \) is lowered, comparing against a LL shower with both fixed and running coupling (this shower uses the collinear-soft approximation to the branching amplitudes, and ignores recoil effects). We take \( \Lambda^2 = E_i^2 R_i^2/(8\pi C_A \alpha_s) \), but other choices would simply add to our result a constant times the multiplicity minus one. At fixed coupling, we see exact agreement with our analytic

\[ \]
expressions. Using the shower we can gauge the effect of
the running coupling, with substantial deviations as the
Landau pole is approached on the right side of the plot.
With the appropriate generalization of the definitions in
Eqs. (13) and (14), the entropy generated in an arbitrary
parton shower or experiment can be measured.

Conclusions.—Fundamentally, the generation of the
final state in a scattering process in an asymptotically free
gauge theory (or in QED or gravity) is a stochastic process,
driven by the underlying quantum dynamics of the field
theory, decohering the produced hard states, such that
superpositions of momentum states are destroyed, quantum
interference effects are lost, and a quasiclassical
probability distribution dominates. This is characterized by a
density matrix with a nonzero entropy, which we calculated
at LL accuracy for jets. In the approximations used for
calculating scattering cross sections, the hard states are
always fully decohered, regardless of the resolution param-
eter: at any finite resolution of the states, the measurement
is formally integrated over an infinitely long time (see
[35]), allowing the production of ever softer and more
collinear radiation below the resolution scale. In the LL
picture, this stochastic process has a “time” associated to it,
evolving from the widest angles that the hard partons can
emit down to the smallest angles. We have shown that this
entropy satisfies a second law: entropy increases as we
examine the final state at smaller angles.

Further, the entropy obeys an evolution equation closely
related to the subjet multiplicity, approaching it asympto-
tically (up to a constant). This is perhaps not surprising,
given that contribution to the entropy at each splitting is
determined by the available phase space. Thus the entropy
of the process creating the jet should be connected to the
so-called $\lambda$ measure introduced in [60,61] as a proxy for the
multiplicity, as well as a means to investigate the fractal
nature of how the parton shower distributes the momentum
of the initial hard state into smaller phase-space cells
[62–64].

The growth in entropy has a practical consequence for jet
substructure and, in particular, machine learning. One can
train discriminators based on course-grained representa-
tions, truncating the energy flow to only a few momentum
regions (see, e.g., [8,65,66]), a much larger basis [67], or as
fine grained a representation as experimentally possible
(the “jet image” [68–71]). All approaches can provide
similar discrimination power, even though it may seem that
the latter contains more information. However, the same
amount of information has just been further stochastically
diluted, explaining why machine learning discriminators
can saturate with only a relatively small number of
momentum regions. There is of course a compensating
effect, as coarse graining can deteriorate the angular and
energy resolution. Additionally, there is something
to be learned from the scaling pattern of the entropy as
a fractal observable, and it would be fascinating to see how
such an observable is related to machine learning
discriminators.

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