## **Deep Reinforcement Learning**

Spring 2019 RL!

# Story so far

- Typical problem in life:
  - Agent is in some state
  - Agent takes an action
    - Chosen according to some policy
  - Agent gets a reward
  - Environment changes state in response to action
- Objective: Choose policy to maximize longterm return
  - Discounted sum of rewards from start to end



## **Approach: Define values**

• Typical sequence

$$S_1, A_1, \mathbf{R_2}, S_2, A_2, \mathbf{R_3}, S_3, A_3, \mathbf{R_4}, \dots$$

• Value of being any state (expected return) is the *expected* future return if you are at that state

$$v_{\pi}(s) = E[G_t | S_t = s]$$
  
=  $E[R_{t+1} + \gamma R_{t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T-t-1} R_T | S_t = s]$ 

• Value of taking an action at any state

$$q_{\pi}(s, a) = E[G_t | S_t = s, A_t = a]$$
  
=  $E[R_{t+1} + \gamma R_{t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T-t-1} R_T | S_t = s, A_t = a]$ 

- These are functions of the policy
- Objective: Choose policy to maximize the return
  - The value of every state under the policy

#### **Different settings**

action of the second se			
	Given policy, find the values of all states (or state- action pairs): PREDICTION	Find the optimal policy: CONTROL	
Have model of how the environment will respond to an action at any state	MODEL BASE	D PLANNING	
Do not know how the environment will respond to an action at any state	MODEL FREE RE LEARNING	INFORCEMENT	

#### **Different settings**



#### **Bellman** *Expectation* Equations

$$v_{\pi}(s) = \sum_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \pi(a|s) \left( R_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s'} P_{s,s'}^a v_{\pi}(s') \right)$$

$$q_{\pi}(s,a) = R_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s'} P_{s,s'}^a \sum_{a' \in \mathcal{A}} \pi(a|s') q_{\pi}(s',a')$$

- *For given policy* how to compute
  - The value of being in any state
  - The value of being in any state and taking a particular action

#### **Bellman Optimality Equations**

$$v_*(s) = \max_a R_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s'} P_{s,s'}^a v_*(s')$$

$$q_*(s, a) = R_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s'} P_{s,s'}^a \max_{a'} q_*(s', a')$$

- How to compute
  - The value of being in any state

 The value of being in any state and taking a particular action under the *optimal* policy

## Solving an MDP

- Prediction: *Given a policy find value functions* 
  - Using Bellman expectation equations
- Control: *Find the optimal policy* 
  - Using policy iteration
    - Directly find optimal policy
  - Using value iteration
    - Find optimal values
      - Bellman optimality equation
    - Find policy from optimal values

#### **Different settings**

	Given policy, find the values of all states (or state- action pairs): PREDICTION	Find the optimal policy: CONTROL	
Have model of how the environment will respond to an action at any state	MODEL BASE	D PLANNING	
Do not know how the environment will respond to an action at any state	MODEL FREE RE LEARNING	INFORCEMENT	

## **Reinforcement Learning**

$$v_{\pi}(s) = \sum_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \pi(a|s) \left( R_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s'} P_{s,s'}^a v_{\pi}(s') \right)$$
$$q_{\pi}(s,a) = R_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s'} P_{s,s'}^a \sum_{a' \in \mathcal{A}} \pi(a|s') q_{\pi}(s',a')$$



- In real-life problems the transition probabilities wont be known
  - No prior knowledge of how the environment will respond to an action
- Must still find optimal policy

## **Recap: Model-Free Methods**

- AKA model-free **reinforcement learning**
- How do you find the value of a policy, without knowing the underlying MDP?

– Model-free *prediction* 

- How do you find the optimal policy, without knowing the underlying MDP?
  - Model-free *control*

# Solution: Actually run through the system

• Record many episodes of the kind

— ...

- $-episode(1) = S_{11}, A_{11}, R_{12}, S_{12}, A_{12}, R_{13}, \dots, S_{1T_1}$
- $-episode(2) = S_{21}, A_{21}, R_{22}, S_{22}, A_{22}, R_{23}, \dots, S_{2T_2}$
- Use these to estimate values  $v_{\pi}(s)$  or action values  $q_{\pi}(s, a)$  of states

## **Recap: Methods**

- *Monte-Carlo* Learning
- *Temporal-Difference* Learning
  - TD(1)
  - -TD(K)
  - $-TD(\lambda)$

## **Recap: Methods**



- *Temporal-Difference* Learning
  - TD(1)
  - -TD(K)
  - $-TD(\lambda)$

#### **Recap: Monte Carlo**

• To estimate the value of any state, identify the instances of that state in the episodes:

Compute the average return from those instances

 $G_2$ 

 $S_1, A_1, R_2, S_2, A_2, R_3, S_3, A_3, R_4, \dots$  $s_b$   $s_a$   $\dots$ 

 $G_1$ 

$$v_{\pi}(\mathbf{s}_{a}) = avg(G_{1}, G_{3}, \dots)$$

G₃

## Monte Carlo: Estimating the Action Value function

 To estimate the value of any state-action pair, identify the instances of that state-action pair in the episodes:

$$- (S_{1}, A_{1}) R_{2}, S_{2}, A_{2}, R_{3}, S_{3}, A_{3}, R_{4}, \dots$$

$$s_{a} a_{x} \qquad s_{b} a_{y} \qquad s_{a} a_{y} \dots$$

$$g_{1} \qquad g_{2} \qquad g_{3}$$

• Compute the average return from those instances  $q_{\pi}(s_{a_1}a_{\chi}) = avg(G_1,...)$ 

## **Recap: Methods**

• Monte-Carlo Learning



 $v_{\pi}(s) = E_{\pi}[r_s^a + \gamma E_{s'}[v_{\pi}(s')|a] |s]$ 

 $q_{\pi}(s,a) = E_{s'}[r_s^a + \gamma E_{s',a'}[q_{\pi}(s',a')] | s,a]$ 

- If we had the true value or action value functions, the above equations would be valid
- We can even write

 $v_{\pi}(s) = v_{\pi}(s) + (E_{\pi}[r_s^a + \gamma E_{s'}[v_{\pi}(s')|a] |s] - v_{\pi}(s))$ 

 $q_{\pi}(s,a) = q_{\pi}(s,a) + (E_{s'}[r_s^a + \gamma E_{s',a'}[q_{\pi}(s',a')] | s,a] - q_{\pi}(s,a))$ 

 If we had the true value or action value functions, the above equations would be valid

 $v_{\pi}(s) = v_{\pi}(s) + (E_{\pi}[r_s^a + \gamma E_{s'}[v_{\pi}(s')|a] |s] - v_{\pi}(s))$ 

 $q_{\pi}(s,a) = q_{\pi}(s,a) + (E_{s'}[r_s^a + \gamma E_{s',a'}[q_{\pi}(s',a')] | s,a] - q_{\pi}(s,a))$ 

- In practice we wont have the true value functions
- So we use the iterative update

 $v_{\pi}^{k+1}(s) = v_{\pi}^{k}(s) + \alpha(E_{\pi}[r_{s}^{a} + \gamma E_{s'}[v_{\pi}(s')|a] |s] - v_{\pi}^{k}(s))$ 

 $q_{\pi}^{k+1}(s,a) = q_{\pi}^{k}(s,a) + \alpha(E_{s'}[r_{s}^{a} + \gamma E_{s',a'}[q_{\pi}(s',a')] | s,a] - q_{\pi}^{k}(s,a))$ 

• It will converge to the true value for  $\alpha \leq 1$ 

• Problem with this estimator:

 $v_{\pi}^{k+1}(s) = v_{\pi}^{k}(s) + \alpha(E_{\pi}[r_{s}^{a} + \gamma E_{s'}[v_{\pi}(s')|a] |s] - v_{\pi}^{k}(s))$ 

 $q_{\pi}^{k+1}(s,a) = q_{\pi}^{k}(s,a) + \alpha(E_{s'}[r_{s}^{a} + \gamma E_{s',a'}[q_{\pi}(s',a')] | s,a] - q_{\pi}^{k}(s,a))$ 

- true values  $v_{\pi}(s')$  and  $q_{\pi}(s', a')$  are unknown
- Transition probabilities are unknown, so expectations cannot be computed
- Instead we *bootstrap* with the empirical updates

 $v_{\pi}^{k+1}(s) = v_{\pi}^{k}(s) + \alpha(r_{s}^{a} + \gamma v_{\pi}^{k}(s') - v_{\pi}^{k}(s))$ 

 $q_{\pi}^{k+1}(s,a) = q_{\pi}^{k}(s,a) + \alpha(r_{s}^{a} + \gamma q_{\pi}^{k}(s',a') - q_{\pi}^{k}(s,a))$ 

• TD Estimator:

 $v_{\pi}^{k+1}(s) = v_{\pi}^{k}(s) + \alpha(r_{s}^{a} + \gamma v_{\pi}^{k}(s') - v_{\pi}^{k}(s))$ 

 $q_{\pi}^{k+1}(s,a) = q_{\pi}^{k}(s,a) + \alpha(r_{s}^{a} + \gamma q_{\pi}^{k}(s',a') - q_{\pi}^{k}(s,a))$ 

Generally written as (only shown for action value estimator)

$$\delta = r_s^a + \gamma q_\pi^k(s', a') - q_\pi^k(s, a)$$
$$q_\pi^{k+1}(s, a) = q_\pi^k(s, a) + \alpha \delta$$

-  $\delta$  is generally referred to as the TD error

# Recap: TD(1)

- An "episode" is a run:
   S<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>2</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, R<sub>3</sub>, S<sub>3</sub>, A<sub>3</sub>, R<sub>4</sub>, ...
- For all *s* Initialize:  $v_{\pi}(s) = 0$
- For every episode *e*

– For every time  $t = 1 \dots T_e$ 

•  $v_{\pi}(S_t) = v_{\pi}(S_t) + \alpha (R_{t+1} + \gamma v_{\pi}(S_{t+1}) - v_{\pi}(S_t))$ 

- There's a "lookahead" of one state, to know which state the process arrives at at the next time
- But is otherwise online, with continuous updates

# TD(1) with action-values

• For all *s*, *a*, initialize:

$$q_{\pi}(s,a)=0$$

• For every episode *e* 

- For every time 
$$t = 1 \dots T_e$$
  
 $\hat{A}_{t+1} \sim \pi(S_{t+1})$   
 $\delta_t = R_{t+1} + \gamma q_{\pi}(S_{t+1}, \hat{A}_{t+1}) - q_{\pi}(S_t, A_t)$   
 $q_{\pi}(S_t, A_t) = q_{\pi}(S_t, A_t) + \alpha \delta_t$ 

## Recap: TD(N) with lookahead

$$v_{\pi}(S_t) = v_{\pi}(S_t) + \alpha \delta_t(N)$$

• Where

$$\delta_t(N) = R_{t+1} + \sum_{i=1}^N \gamma^i R_{t+1+i} + \gamma^{N+1} \nu_{\pi}(S_{t+N}) - \nu_{\pi}(S_t)$$

•  $\delta_t(N)$  is the TD *error* with N step lookahead

# Recap: $TD(\lambda)$

$$G_t^{\lambda} = (1 - \lambda) \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \lambda^{n-1} G_t(n)$$

 Combine the predictions from all lookaheads with an exponentially falling weight

– Weights sum to 1.0

$$V(S_t) \leftarrow V(S_t) + \alpha \left( G_t^{\lambda} - V(S_t) \right)$$

# Recap: $TD(\lambda)$

• Maintain an eligibility trace for *every* state

$$E_0(s) = 0$$
$$E_t(s) = \lambda \gamma E_{t-1}(s) + 1(S_t = s)$$

 Computes total weight for the state until the present time

# Recap: $TD(\lambda)$

• At every time, update the value of *every state* according to its eligibility trace

$$\delta_t = R_{t+1} + \gamma V(S_{t+1}) - V(S_t)$$

$$V(s) \leftarrow V(s) + \alpha \delta_t E_t(s)$$

- Any state that was visited will be updated
  - Those that were not will not be, though

## **Model-Free Methods**

- AKA model-free **reinforcement learning**
- How do you find the value of a policy, without knowing the underlying MDP?
  - Model-free *prediction*
- How do you find the optimal policy, without knowing the underlying MDP?
  - Model-free *control*

## Value vs. Action Value

- Simply knowing the value function is insufficient to find the optimal policy
- We must compute the optimal *action value* functions to find the optimal policy
  - Optimal policy in any state : Choose the action that has the largest *optimal* action value

#### Value vs. Action Value

• Given only value functions, the optimal policy must be estimated as:

$$\pi'(s) = \underset{a \in \mathcal{A}}{\operatorname{argmax}} \ \mathcal{R}_{s}^{a} + \mathcal{P}_{ss'}^{a} V(s')$$

Needs knowledge of transition probabilities

• Given action value functions, we can find it as:

$$\pi'(s) = \operatorname*{argmax}_{a \in \mathcal{A}} Q(s, a)$$

This is *model free* (no need for knowledge of model parameters)

# TD(1) with action-values

• For all *s*, *a*, initialize:

$$q_{\pi}(s,a)=0$$

• For every episode *e* 

- For every time 
$$t = 1 \dots T_e$$
  
 $\hat{A}_{t+1} \sim \pi(S_{t+1})$   
 $\delta_t = R_{t+1} + \gamma q_{\pi}(S_{t+1}, \hat{A}_{t+1}) - q_{\pi}(S_t, A_t)$   
 $q_{\pi}(S_t, A_t) = q_{\pi}(S_t, A_t) + \alpha \delta_t$ 

# TD( $\lambda$ ) with action-values

For all *s*, *a*, initialize:

$$q_{\pi}(s,a) = 0$$
$$E_t(s,a) = 0$$

• For every episode *e* 

- For every time 
$$t = 1 \dots T_e$$
  
 $E_t(s, a) = \lambda \gamma E_{t-1}(s, a) + 1(S_t = s \land A_t = a)$   
 $\hat{A}_{t+1} \sim \pi(S_{t+1})$   
 $\delta_t = R_{t+1} + \gamma q_{\pi}(S_{t+1}, \hat{A}_{t+1}) - q_{\pi}(S_t, A_t)$   
 $q(s, a) \leftarrow q(s, a) + \alpha \delta_t E_t(s, a)$ 

# **Optimal Policy: Control**

- We learned how to estimate the state value functions for an MDP whose transition probabilities are unknown *for a given policy*
- How do we find the optimal policy?

## **Problem of optimal control**

• From a series of episodes of the kind:

 $S_1, A_1, R_2, S_2, A_2, R_3, S_3, A_3, R_4, \dots, S_T$ 

## **Problem of optimal control**

From a series of episodes of the kind:

G<sub>2</sub> - Can also find *empirical returns ate each time* for the episode

 $S_1, A_1, R_2, S_2, A_2, R_3, S_3, A_3, R_4, \dots, S_T$ 

- Find the optimal action value function  $q_*(s, a)$ 
  - The optimal policy can be found from it

 $\mathsf{G}_1$ 

- Ideally do this online  $\bullet$ 
  - So that we can continuously improve our policy from *ongoing* experience

## **Control: Greedy Policy**

- Recall the steps in policy iteration:
  - Start with any policy  $\pi^{(0)}$
  - Iterate (k = 0 ... convergence)
    - Find the value function  $v_{\pi^{(k)}}(s)$  using DP
    - Find the greedy policy

$$\pi^{(k+1)}(s) = \operatorname{argmax}_{a}\left(R_{s}^{a} + \gamma \sum_{s'} P_{s,s'}^{a} v_{\pi^{(k)}}(s')\right)$$

• Can we adapt this for model-free control?
## **Control: Greedy Policy**

- Our proposed algorithm:
  - Start with any policy  $\pi^{(0)}$
  - Iterate (k = 0 ... convergence)
    - Estimate the action-value function  $q_{\pi^{(k)}}(s, a)$  using TD-learning

• Find the greedy policy  

$$\pi^{(k+1)}(s) = \operatorname{argmax}_{a}(q_{\pi^{(k)}}(s,a))$$

• Let's see if this works...

## **Gridworld Example**

- States: Location on a 5x5 grid of cells
- Actions: Move up, down, left or right
- The game starts on the top right corner and ends on the lower left corner. State transitions are deterministic.



### **Gridworld: Iteration 1**

• Initialize with a uniform random policy and collect sample episodes. Use TD-learning to estimate action-values.









• Find the greedy policy

True optimal route:





Ignore state-action pairs that haven't been visited when performing argmax.

We're getting close. Nice!

### **Gridworld: Iteration 2**

• Use the previous policy and collect sample episodes. Use TDlearning to estimate action-values.









• Find the greedy policy

True optimal route:





Err... what just happened?

## **Exploration vs. Exploitation**

- The original policy iteration algorithm can update the values of *all states* because all the rewards and transition probabilities are known.
- Our model-free control algorithm gathers sample data by following a policy.
  - Can't learn about state-action pairs that weren't encountered
  - Will never learn about alternate policies that may turn out to be better
- Solution: Follow our current policy  $1 \epsilon$  of the time
  - But choose a random action  $\epsilon$  of the time
  - The "epsilon-greedy" policy

#### **GLIE Monte Carlo**

- Greedy in the limit with infinite exploration
- Start with some random initial policy  $\pi$
- Produce the episode

$$S_1, A_1, \mathbf{R_2}, S_2, A_2, \mathbf{R_3}, S_3, A_3, \mathbf{R_4}, \dots, S_T$$

• Process the episode using the following online update rules:

$$N(S_t, A_t) \leftarrow N(S_t, A_t) + 1$$
$$Q(S_t, A_t) \leftarrow Q(S_t, A_t) + \frac{1}{N(S_t, A_t)} (G_t - Q(S_t, A_t))$$

• Compute the  $\epsilon$ -greedy policy for each state

$$\pi(a|s) = \begin{cases} 1 - \epsilon & for \ a = \arg\max_{a'} Q(s, a') \\ \frac{\epsilon}{N_a - 1} & otherwise \end{cases}$$

• Repeat

#### **GLIE Monte Carlo**

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$$S_1, A_1, \mathbf{R_2}, S_2, A_2, \mathbf{R_3}, S_3, A_3, \mathbf{R_4}, \dots, S_T$$

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$$N(S_t, A_t) \leftarrow N(S_t, A_t) + 1$$
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• Compute the  $\epsilon$ -greedy policy for each state

$$\pi(a|s) = \begin{cases} 1 - \epsilon & \text{for } a = \arg\max_{a'} Q(s, a') \\ \frac{\epsilon}{N_a - 1} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

• Repeat

## **On-line version of GLIE: SARSA**

- **Bootstrap:** Replace  $G_t$  with an estimate
- TD(1) or TD( $\lambda$ )
  - Just as in the prediction problem
- TD(1)  $\rightarrow$  SARSA

R S' A'

 $Q(S,A) \leftarrow Q(S,A) + \alpha(R + \gamma Q(S',A') - Q(S,A))$ 

#### **SARSA**

- Initialize Q(s, a) for all s, a
- Start at initial state S<sub>1</sub>
- Select an initial action A<sub>1</sub>
- For t = 1.. Terminate
  - Get reward  $R_t$
  - Let system transition to new state  $S_{t+1}$
  - Draw  $A_{t+1}$  according to  $\epsilon$  -greedy policy

$$P(\pi(s) = a) = \begin{cases} 1 - \epsilon & for \ a = \arg\max_{a'} Q(s, a') \\ & \frac{\epsilon}{N_a - 1} & otherwise \end{cases}$$

Update

$$Q(S_t, A_t) = Q(S_t, A_t) + \alpha (R_t + \gamma Q(S_{t+1}, A_{t+1}) - Q(S_t, A_t))$$

#### SARSA

- Initialize Q(s, a) for all s, a
- Start at initial state S<sub>1</sub>
- Select an initial action A<sub>1</sub>
- For t = 1.. Terminate
  - Get reward  $R_t$
  - Let system transition to new state  $S_{t+1}$
  - Draw  $A_{t+1}$  according to  $\epsilon$  -greedy policy

 $P(\pi(s) = \begin{cases} \textbf{Similar to our proposed algorithm!} \\ Though here, we're making the greedy \\ update to our policy after each action. \end{cases} (s, a')$   $- \text{ Update} \\ Q(S_t, A_t) = Q \end{cases}$ This means we no longer need to explicitly store  $\pi(a|s)$ ; we can infer it using the Q-values.  $-Q(S_t, A_t))$ 

## SARSA( $\lambda$ )

- Again, the TD(1) estimate can be replaced by a TD( $\lambda$ ) estimate
- Maintain an eligibility trace for every state-action pair:

$$E_0(s,a) = 0$$
  
$$E_t(s,a) = \lambda \gamma E_{t-1}(s,a) + 1(S_t = s, A_t = a)$$

• Update every state-action pair visited so far

$$\delta_t = R_{t+1} + \gamma Q(S_{t+1}, A_{t+1}) - Q(S_t, A_t)$$
$$Q(s, a) \leftarrow Q(s, a) + \alpha \delta_t E_t(s, a)$$

# SARSA( $\lambda$ )

- For all s, a initialize Q(s, a)
- For each episode *e* 
  - For all s, a initialize E(s, a) = 0
  - Initialize  $S_1, A_1$
  - For t = 1 ... Termination
    - Observe  $R_{t+1}$ ,  $S_{t+1}$
    - Choose action  $A_{t+1}$  using policy obtained from Q
    - $\delta = R_{t+1} + \gamma Q(S_{t+1}, A_{t+1}) Q(S_t, A_t)$
    - $E(S_t, A_t) += 1$
    - For all *s*, *a* 
      - $Q(s,a) = Q(s,a) + \alpha \delta E(s,a)$
      - $E(s,a) = \lambda \gamma E(s,a)$

#### **Closer look at SARSA**

- SARSA: From any state-action (S, A), accept reward (R), transition to next state (S'), choose next action (A')
- Use TD rules to update:  $\delta = R + \gamma Q(S', A') - Q(S, A)$
- Problem: what's the best policy to use to choose A'?

## **Closer look at SARSA**

- SARSA: From any state-action (S, A), accept reward (R), transition to next state (S'), choose next action (A')
- Problem: which policy do we use to choose A'
- If we choose the *current judgment of the best action* at S' we will become too greedy
  - Fail to explore the space of possibilities
- If we choose a *sub-optimal* policy to follow, we will never find the best policy
  - E.g. We don't want to be  $\epsilon$ -greedy at test-time!

## **Generalization of SARSA**

- Pick a random initial policy  $\pi$ .
- Repeatedly create episodes.
  - For each time step t in the current episode:
    - Start at state  $S_t$  (S)
    - Carry out action  $A_t = \pi(S_t)$  (A)
    - Get reward  $R_{t+1}$  (R)
    - Reach state  $S_{t+1}$  (S)

**(A)** 

- Estimate optimal future action  $\hat{a}^*_{S_{t+1}}$
- Estimate optimal future return  $Q(S_{t+1}, \hat{a}^*_{S_{t+1}})$
- Update Q(S, a) using  $R_{t+1}$  and  $Q(S_{t+1}, \hat{a}_{S_{t+1}}^*)$
- Update the current policy

### **Generalization of SARSA**

- Pick a random initial policy  $\pi$ .
- Repeatedly create episodes.
  - For each time step t in the current episode:
    - Start at state S<sub>t</sub>
    - Carry out action  $A_t = \pi(S_t)$
    - Get reward  $R_{t+1}$
    - Reach state  $S_{t+1}$

 $\leftarrow$ **Used to explore the environment** Are there any reasons to choose  $A_t$ to be the optimal action?

(A)

**(S)** 

the same as  $A_{t+1}$ ? • Update the current policy

Used to estimate optimal return  $\rightarrow$  future action  $\hat{a}_{S_{t+1}}^*$ 

Are there any reasons to make  $\hat{a}^*_{S_{t+1}}$  future return  $Q(S_{t+1}, \hat{a}^*_{S_{t+1}})$ 

# **On-policy vs. Off-policy**

- It's possible learn to what the best actions should be, even if we don't always follow those actions.
  - E.g. learning by observation
- We learn by following a more exploratory policy
- In the process, we look for a hypothetical optimal policy...the one that we'd want to follow at test-time.

$$S_1, A_1, R_2, S_2, A_2, R_3, S_3, A_3, R_4, \dots, S_T$$
  
 $\hat{a}_{S_2}^*$ ?  $\hat{a}_{S_3}^*$ ?

- The actions we actually follow to get samples (e.g.  $A_t$ ) are not the same as our best estimates of the optimal actions (e.g.  $\hat{a}_{S_t}^*$ )
  - Hence this is an "off-policy" method

## **Solution: Off-policy learning**

• Use data to improve your choice of actions, but follow different ("off-policy") actions to collect data.

$$S_1, A_1, \mathbf{R}_2, S_2, A_2, \mathbf{R}_3, S_3, A_3, \mathbf{R}_4, \dots, S_T$$
  
 $\hat{a}_{S_2}^*$ ?  $\hat{a}_{S_3}^*$ ?

- E.g. Use  $\hat{a}_{S_{t+1}}^* = \operatorname{argmax}_a(Q(S_{t+1}, a))$
- But, actually follow the *epsilon-greedy* policy
  - The hypothetical action is better than the one you actually took, but you still explore (non-greedy)
- This is the basis for the most popular RL algorithm, Q-Learning

# Q-Learning (TD-1)

- Pick initial values for Q.
- Repeatedly create episodes.
  - For each time step t in the current episode:
    - Start at state S<sub>t</sub>
    - Carry out action  $A_t = \pi_{\epsilon-\text{greedy}}(S_t)$
    - Get reward  $R_{t+1}$
    - Reach state  $S_{t+1}$
    - Estimate optimal future action  $\hat{a}_{S_{t+1}}^* = \operatorname{argmax}_a(Q(S_{t+1}, a))$
    - Estimate optimal future return  $Q(S_{t+1}, \hat{a}^*_{S_{t+1}})$
    - Update  $Q(S_t, A_t) =$  $Q(S_t, A_t) + \alpha \left( R_{t+1} + \gamma Q(S_{t+1}, \hat{a}^*_{S_{t+1}}) - Q(S_t, A_t) \right)$

The Q-learning algorithm generalizes to  $TD(\lambda)$  too

#### **Off-policy vs. On-policy**

• Optimal greedy policy:

$$\pi(a|s) = \begin{cases} 1 & for \ a = \arg\max_{a'} Q(s, a') \\ 0 & otherwise \end{cases}$$

• Exploration policy

$$\pi(a|s) = \begin{cases} 1 - \epsilon & for \ a = \arg\max_{a'} Q(s, a') \\ & \frac{\epsilon}{N_a - 1} & otherwise \end{cases}$$

• Ideally  $\epsilon$  should decrease with time

# Scaling up the problem..

- We've assumed a discrete set of states
- And a discrete set of actions
- Value functions can be stored as a table
  - One entry per state
- Action value functions can be stored as a table
  - One entry per state-action combination
- Policy can be stored as a table
  - One probability entry per state-action combination
- None of this is feasible if
  - The state space grows too large (e.g. chess)
  - Or the states are continuous valued

#### **Continuous State Space**

- Tabular methods won't work if our state space is infinite or huge
- E.g. position on a [0, 5] x [0, 5] square, instead of a 5x5 grid.



- Instead of using a table of Q-values, we use a parametrized function  $Q(s,a) = f(s,a|\theta)$
- Instead of writing values to the table, we fit the parameters to minimize the prediction error of the "Q function"

$$\theta_{k+1} \leftarrow \theta_k - \eta \nabla_\theta \left( Div(f(s, a | \theta_k), Q_{s,a}^{\text{target}}) \right)$$

- Instead of using a table of Q-values, we use a parametrized function  $Q(s, a) = f(s, a | \theta)$
- This can be a simple linear function...  $f(\mathbf{s}, \mathbf{a} | \mathbf{\theta}) = \mathbf{\theta}^T[\mathbf{s}; \mathbf{a}]$

• Or a massive convolutional network...





#### Target Q

 $\theta_{k+1} \leftarrow \theta_k - \eta \nabla_{\theta} \left( Div(f(s, a | \theta_k), Q_{s,a}^{\text{target}}) \right)$  $\rightarrow \text{What is } Q_{s,a}^{\text{target}} ?$ 

As in TD, use bootstrapping for the target :  $Q_{s,a}^{target} = \mathcal{R}_s^a + \gamma \operatorname{argmax}_{a' \in \mathcal{A}} f(s', a' | \theta_k)$   $a' \in \mathcal{A}$ And *Div* can be L2 distance

# **DQN (v0)**

- Initialize  $\theta_0$
- For each episode *e* 
  - Initialize  $S_1$ ,  $A_1$
  - For  $t = 1 \dots Termination$ 
    - Choose action  $A_t$  using  $\varepsilon$  –greedy policy obtained from  $\theta_t$
    - Observe  $R_{t+1}$ ,  $S_{t+1}$
    - Choose action  $A_{tar} = argmax_a f(S_{t+1}, a | \theta_t)$
    - $Q_{target} = R_{t+1} + \gamma Q(S_{t+1}, A_{tar})$
    - $\theta_{t+1} = \theta_t \eta \nabla_{\theta} \| Q_{target} f(S_t, A_t | \theta_t) \|_2^2$

#### **Deep Q Network**

- Note :  $\nabla_{\theta} \| Q_{target} f(S_t, A_t | \theta_t) \|_2^2$  does **not** consider  $Q_{target}$  as depending of  $\theta_t$  (although it does). Therefore this is **semi-gradient descent**.
- If your function is a neural network, and the action set is finite of size |A|, then you can use a |A|-labels classification network that associates the probabilities of each action to an input

- Fundamental issue: limited capacity
  - A table of Q values will never forget any values that you write into it
  - But, modifying the parameters of a Q-function will affect its *overall* behavior
    - Fitting the parameters to match one (s, a) pair can change the function's output at (s', a').
    - If we don't visit (s', a') for a long time, the function's output can diverge considerably from the values previously stored there.

### **Tables have full capacity**

- Q-learning works well with Q-tables
  - The sample data is going to be heavily biased toward optimal actions  $(s, \pi^*(s))$ , or close approximations thereof.
  - But still, 
     *e*-greedy policy will ensure that we will visit all state-action pairs arbitrarily many times if we explore long enough.
  - The action-value for uncommon inputs will still converge, just more slowly.

# **Limited Capacity of** $f(s, a | \theta)$

- The Q-function will fit more closely to more common inputs, even at the expense of lower accuracy for less common inputs.
- Just exploring the whole stateaction space isn't enough. We also need to visit those states often enough so the function computes accurate Q-values before they are "forgotten".



## **Action-replay**

- The raw data obtained from Q-learning is:
  - Highly correlated: current data can look very different from data from several episodes ago if the policy changed significantly.
  - Very unevenly distributed: only  $\epsilon$  probability of choosing suboptimal actions.
- Instead, create a *replay buffer* holding past experiences, so we can train the Q-function using this data.

## **Action-replay**

 Pseudocode: for B steps: (R<sub>t+1</sub>, S<sub>t+1</sub>) = make\_action(A<sub>t</sub>) replay\_buffer.add(S<sub>t</sub>, A<sub>t</sub>, R<sub>t+1</sub>, S<sub>t+1</sub>)
 TD\_update(replay\_buffer.sample(B),

q function)

- We have control over how the experiences are added, sampled and deleted.
  - Can make the samples look independent
  - Can emphasize old experiences more
  - Can change frequency depending on accuracy

## **Action-replay**

- What is the best way to sample?
  - On the one hand, our function has limited capacity, so we should let it optimize more strongly for the common case
  - On the other hand, our function needs explore uncommon examples just enough to compute accurate action-values, so it can avoid missing out on better policies
- A trade-off!

# **DQN (with Action-replay)**

- Initialize  $\theta_0$
- Initialize buffer with some random episodes
- For each episode *e* 
  - Initialize  $S_1, A_1$
  - For  $t = 1 \dots Termination$ 
    - Choose action  $A_t$  using  $\varepsilon$  –greedy policy obtained from  $\theta_t$
    - Observe  $R_{t+1}$ ,  $S_{t+1}$
    - Add  $S_t$ ,  $A_t$ ,  $R_{t+1}$ ,  $S_{t+1}$  to the buffer
    - Sample from the buffer a batch of tuples  $S, A, R, S_{new}$
    - Choose  $A_{target} = argmax_a f(S_{new}, a|\theta_t)$
    - $Q_{target} = R + \gamma Q(S_{new}, A_{targe})$
    - $\theta_{t+1} = \theta_t \eta \nabla_{\theta} \| Q_{target} f(S, A | \theta_t) \|_2^2$

## Moving target

- We already have moving targets in online SARSA and Q-learning, since we're using the action-values to compute the updates to the action-values.
- The problem is much worse with Q-functions though.
   Optimizing the function at one state-action pair affects all other state-action pairs.
  - The target value is fluctuating at all inputs in the function's domain, and all updates will shift the target value across the entire domain.
## **Frozen target function**

- Solution : Create two copies of the Q-function.
  - The "target copy" is frozen and used to compute the target Q-values.
  - The "learner copy" will be trained on the targets.  $Q_{\text{learner}}(S_t, A_t) \leftarrow_{\text{fit}} R_{t+1} + \gamma \max_a \left( Q_{\text{target}}(S_{t+1}, a) \right)$
- Just need to periodically update the target copy to match the learner copy.

# **Fixed target DQN**

- Initialize  $\theta_0, \theta^* = \theta_0$
- Initialize buffer with some random episodes
- For each episode *e* 
  - Initialize  $S_1, A_1$ 
    - For  $t = 1 \dots Termination$
    - If t% k = 0 then update  $\theta^* = \theta_t$
    - Choose action  $A_t$  using  $\varepsilon$  –greedy policy obtained from  $\theta_t$
    - Observe  $R_{t+1}$ ,  $S_{t+1}$
    - Add  $S_t$ ,  $A_t$ ,  $R_{t+1}$ ,  $S_{t+1}$  to the buffer
    - Sample from the buffer a batch of tuples  $S, A, R, S_{new}$
    - Choose  $A_{ta} = argmax_a f(S_{new}, a|\theta^*)$
    - $Q_{target} = R + \gamma f(S_{new}, A_{target} | \theta^*)$
    - $\theta_{t+1} = \theta_t \eta \nabla_{\theta} \| Q_{target} f(S, A | \theta_t) \|_2^2$

## Performance

	Breakout	R. Raid	Enduro	Sequest	S. Invaders
DQN	316.8	7446.6	1006.3	2894.4	1088.9
Naive DQN	3.2	1453.0	29.1	275.8	302.0
Linear	3.0	2346.9	62.0	656.9	301.3

Replay	$\bigcirc$	0	×	×
Target	$\bigcirc$	×	0	×
Breakout	316.8	240.7	10.2	3.2
River Raid	7446.6	4102.8	2867.7	1453.0
Seaquest	2894.4	822.6	1003.0	275.8
Space Invaders	1088.9	826.3	373.2	302.0

## **Overestimation of Q-values**

- Choose  $A_{target} = argmax_a f(S_{new}, a | \theta^*)$
- $Q_{target} = R + \gamma f(S_{new}, A_{target} | \theta^*)$
- But what if this action is not optimal ?
- If, in DQN (fixed target or not) in early training non-optimal actions are attributed higher Q-values than the optimal action...
  - Learning is difficult, due to bias on chosen actions

# **Double Q networks**

- Solution : Create two Q-functions.
  - The "DQN network" compute the target action
  - The "target network" is used to compute the Q-value of the target action.
  - The "DQN network" is trained on the targets.  $Q_{\text{DQN}}(S_t, A_t) \leftarrow_{\text{fit}} R_{t+1}$  $+ \gamma \left( Q_{\text{target}} \left( S_{t+1}, argmax_a Q_{\text{DQN}}(S_{t+1}, a) \right) \right)$
- Each network can play the role of the DQN or target network : chosen randomly at each step
- Action selections are epsilon-greedy with respect to the sum of both networks

# **Double DQN**

- Initialize  $\theta_0^1, \theta_0^2$
- Initialize buffer with some random episodes
- For each episode *e* 
  - Initialize  $S_1, A_1$ 
    - For  $t = 1 \dots Termination$
    - Choose action  $A_t$  using  $\varepsilon$  –greedy policy obtained from  $\theta_t^1$  and  $\theta_t^2$ , Observe  $R_{t+1}$ ,  $S_{t+1}$
    - Add  $S_t$ ,  $A_t$ ,  $R_{t+1}$ ,  $S_{t+1}$  to the buffer
    - Sample from the buffer a batch of tuples *S*, *A*, *R*, *S*<sub>new</sub>
    - Assign randomly  $\theta_0^1$ ,  $\theta_0^2 \rightarrow \theta_0^{DQN}$ ,  $\theta_0^{target}$
    - Choose  $A_{target} = argmax_a f(S_{ne}, a | \theta_t^{DQN})$
    - $Q_{targ} = R + \gamma f(S_{ne}, A_{targe} | \theta_t^{target})$
    - $\theta_{t+1}^{DQN} = \theta_t^{DQN} \eta^{DQN} \nabla_{\theta^{DQN}} \left\| Q_{target} f(S, A | \theta_t^{DQN}) \right\|_2^2$

# **Other Q-learning optimizations**

• Dualing DQN:

- Decompose Q(s, a) = f(V(s), A(s, a))

- V is the value function, and A is known as the advantage function.
- Easier to learn since you can get good estimates with A(s, a) = some constant A(a) and f(x, y) = x + y



# **Direct Policy Estimation**

- It's also possible to make a deep neural network that directly produces a distribution over actions given a state
  - Also known as a policy network, or the policy gradient method
  - Useful when the action space is also large or continuous

# **Policy Network**

• Train a neural network to prescribe actions at each state:

#### $f(A|S;\theta)$

- Input is S, output is probability distribution over A
- Could be deterministic
- **Problem** : how to train such a network ?
- No golden truth
  - Unlike value functions, where there is a target value for the value at each state
    - Against which we can compute a loss

## **Maximizing return**

• Learn policy to maximize expected return!



- **Problem:** For discrete action space, the return is not differentiable with respect to policy function parameters
  - Selection is not a differentiable operation

# **Solution**

- Recast differentiation as an *expectation* operation
  - Can now be approximated by sampling
  - Policy gradient method
- Compute expected returns using an actionvalue function approximator

Actor-critic methods

## Solution

Recast differentiation as an *expectation* operation

Can now be approximated by sampling

Policy gradient method

• Compute expected returns using an actionvalue function approximator

Actor-critic methods

#### How to choose policy

• In any run starting at a state S we get

 $-(S_1 = S_1) A_1 R_2 S_2 A_2 R_3 S_3 A_3 R_4 \dots$ 

• The trajectory T associated with the run is

 $-T = S A_1 S_2 A_2 S_3 A_3 \dots$ 

The total return over the run (at t=1) is

 $-\mathbf{G} = \mathbf{R}_2 + \gamma \mathbf{R}_3 + \gamma^2 \mathbf{R}_4 \dots$ 

The choice of θ in f (A|S; θ) will modify the trajectory and thereby the return

# The objective

- The probability of a trajectory T is a function of  $f(A|S; \theta)$  and hence of  $\theta$ 
  - $-T \sim P(T;\theta)$
- The probability of a return *G* is a function of the trajectory *T*

-G(T)

• Objective: to maximize expected return

$$\operatorname{argmax}_{\theta} J(\theta) = \operatorname{argmax}_{\theta} \sum_{T} P(T; \theta) G(T)$$

#### **Gradient of the objective**

$$J(\theta) = \sum_{T} P(T; \theta) G(T)$$
$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = \sum_{T} \nabla_{\theta} P(T; \theta) G(T)$$

• A simple trick:

$$\nabla_{\theta} P(T;\theta) = P(T;\theta) \frac{\nabla_{\theta} P(T;\theta)}{P(T;\theta)} = P(T;\theta) \nabla_{\theta} \log P(T;\theta)$$
$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = \sum_{T} P(T;\theta) \nabla_{\theta} \log P(T;\theta) G(T)$$
$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = E_{T \sim P(T;\theta)} \nabla_{\theta} \log P(T;\theta) G(T)$$

#### **Gradient of the objective**

$$J(\theta) = \sum_{T} P(T; \theta) G(T)$$
$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = \sum_{T} \nabla_{\theta} P(T; \theta) G(T)$$

• A simple trick:

$$\begin{aligned}
\nabla_{\theta} P(T;\theta) &= P(T;\theta) \frac{\nabla_{\theta} P(T;\theta)}{P(T;\theta)} = P(T;\theta) \nabla_{\theta} \log P(T;\theta) \\
\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) &= \sum_{T} P(T;\theta) \nabla_{\theta} \log P(T;\theta) G(T) \\
\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) &= E_{T \sim P(T;\theta)} \nabla_{\theta} \log P(T;\theta) G(T)
\end{aligned}$$

# The trajectory

• The trajectory *T* is

$$T = S_1 A_1 S_2 A_2 S_3 A_3 \dots$$

- The probability of *T*, under the policy function  $f(A|S;\theta)$  is  $P(T;\theta) = P(S_1) f(A_1|S_1;\theta)P(S_2|S_1,A_1)f(A_2|S_2;\theta) \dots$
- Taking logs

$$\log P(T;\theta) = \log P(S_1) + \sum_t \log P(S_{t+1}|S_t, A_t) + \sum_t \log f(A_t|S_t;\theta)$$

• Giving us the deriviative

$$\nabla_{\theta} \log P(T; \theta) = \sum_{t} \nabla_{\theta} \log f(A_t | S_t; \theta)$$

# **Gradient of the objective**

 $\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta)$ 

$$= E_{T \sim P(T;\theta)} \left( \sum_{t} \nabla_{\theta} \log f(A_t | S_t; \theta) \right) G(T)$$

• This is a simple expectation that can be approximated by sampling!

#### A simple extension

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = E_{T \sim P(T;\theta)} \left( \sum_{t} \nabla_{\theta} \log f(A_t | S_t; \theta) \right) G(T)$$

• Better to compute the above instead as follows

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = E_{T \sim P(T;\theta)} \sum_{t} \nabla_{\theta} \log f(A_t | S_t; \theta) G(t)$$

This too can be estimated by sampling

• Record an episode (or episodes)  $S_1 A_1 R_2 S_2 A_2 R_3 S_3 A_3 R_4 \dots$ 

• Episode G(1) $S_1 A_1 R_2 S_2 A_2 R_3 S_3 A_3 R_4 ...$ 

• Compute returns at each time

• Episode G(1) G(2) G(2) G(3) G(2)  $S_1 A_1 R_2 S_2 A_2 R_3 S_3 A_3 R_4 ...$  $\log f(A_1|S_1;\theta) \log f(A_2|S_2;\theta) \log f(A_3|S_3;\theta)$ 

- Compute returns at each time
- Compute log policy at each time

• Episode G(1)  $S_1 A_1 R_2 S_2 A_2 R_3 S_3 A_3 R_4 ...$  $\log f(A_1|S_1;\theta) \log f(A_2|S_2;\theta) \log f(A_3|S_3;\theta)$ 

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) \approx \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t} \nabla_{\theta} \log f(A_{t} | S_{t}; \theta) G(t)$$

- Compute returns at each time
- Compute log policy at each time
- Compute gradient

• Episode G(1) G(2) G(2)  $S_1 A_1 R_2 S_2 A_2 R_3 S_3 A_3 R_4 ...$  $\log f(A_1|S_1;\theta) \log f(A_2|S_2;\theta) \log f(A_3|S_3;\theta)$ 

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) \approx \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t} \nabla_{\theta} \log f(A_{t} | S_{t}; \theta) G(t)$$

 $\theta = \theta + \eta v_{\theta} I(\theta)$ 

• Compute returns at each time

- Compute log policy at each time
- Compute gradient
- Update network parameters
  - Ideally  $\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta)$  is averaged over many episodes

# Its like Maximum Likelihood

 The gradient actually looks like the derivative of a log likelihood function

 $\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = E_{T \sim P(T;\theta)} \nabla_{\theta} \log P(T;\theta) G(T)$ 

• Can be written as

 $\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = E_{T \sim P(T;\theta)} \nabla_{\theta} \log P(T;\theta)^{G(T)}$ 

 Maximization increases the probability of trajectories with greater return

- If you see a trajectory you increase its probability

# Its like Maximum Likelihood

• The gradient actually looks like the derivative of a log likelihood function

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) \approx \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t} \nabla_{\theta} \log f(A_t | S_t; \theta)^{G(t)}$$

- Maximization increases the probability of all seen actions
  - At the cost of the probability of unseen actions
  - Usual ML estimator

#### Merely seeing a trajectory isn't good

- We want to emphasize trajectories with high return and *reduce* the probability of lowreturn trajectories
- If an action results in more returns than the current average return for the state, we must improve its probability

- If it results in less, we must decrease it

## Its like Maximum Likelihood

• Subtract the *expected* return for the current state

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) \approx \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t} \nabla_{\theta} \log f(A_t | S_t; \theta)^{G(t) - \nu(S_t)}$$

- $a_t = G(t) v(S_t)$  is the advantage function
  - How much advantage the current action has over the average
- Train  $f(A_t|S_t; \theta)$  to maximize advantage

- Typically approximate 
$$v(S_t)$$
 by  $\frac{1}{\tau}\sum_{t'} G(S_{t'})$ 

## Reinforce

- Initialize  $\theta$
- For each episode *e* 
  - Initialize  $S_1, A_1$
  - For  $t = 1 \dots Termination$ 
    - Choose action  $A_t$  using  $\varepsilon$  –greedy policy obtained from  $\theta$
    - Observe  $R_{t+1}$ ,  $S_{t+1}$
  - Compute the returns  $G(S_t)$ , then the advantages  $a_t$

- Compute 
$$J(\theta) = \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t} \log(\pi_{\theta}(A_t|S_t)) a_t$$

 $- \ \theta \leftarrow \theta + \eta \nabla_{\theta} J(\theta)$ 

# **Solution**

- Recast differentiation as an *expectation* operation
  - Can now be approximated by sampling
  - Policy gradient method
- Compute expected returns using an actionvalue function approximator
  - Actor-critic methods

# Instability

 In Reinforce, the estimator for the expected return has high variance : rewards on one episode act as estimates for state value functions.

$$G(S_t) = \sum_{t' \ge t} \gamma^{t'-t} R_{t'+1}$$

• It also requires entire runs of episodes

Not online

• It can be made more stable through function approximation of the value function

#### **Actor-Critic**

- In actor-critic methods, two networks are used :
- The **actor** is the policy network :  $f(S, A|\theta_a) = \pi_{\theta_a}(A|S)$  and is used to predict the next action
- The **critic** is a state value network :  $g(S|\theta_c) = V_{\theta_c}(S)$  and is used to guide the optimization direction of the actor
- To estimate the expected return based on an episode, we use Nstep lookahead :

$$G(S_t) = \sum_{0 \le k \le N-1} \gamma^k R_{t+k+1} + \gamma^N V_{\theta_c}(S_{t+N})$$

# Advantage Actor Critic (A2C)

#### **Rethink the advantages**

The critic can also be used as the "baseline" when computing the advantages :

$$a_t = G(S_t) - V_{\theta_c}(S_t)$$

The trajectory's probability is improved if it is better than the trajectories previously followed.

The critic is trained on how well it predicted the return.

#### A2C

- Initialize  $\theta_a$ ,  $\theta_c$
- For each episode *e* 
  - Initialize  $S_1$ ,  $A_1$
  - For  $t = 1 \dots Termination$ 
    - Choose action  $A_t$  using  $\varepsilon$  –greedy policy obtained from  $\theta_a$
    - Observe  $R_{t+1}$ ,  $S_{t+1}$
  - Compute the returns  $G(S_t) = \sum_{0 \le k \le N-1} \gamma^k R_{t+k+1} + \gamma^N V_{\theta_c}(S_{t+N})$  if t + N < T, else  $\sum_{0 \le k \le T-t-1} \gamma^k R_{t+k+1}$
  - Compute the advantages  $a_t = G(S_t) V_{\theta_c}(S_t)$
  - Compute  $f_a(\theta_a) = \frac{1}{T} \sum_t \log(\pi_\theta(A_t|S_t)) a_t$ ,  $L_c(\theta_c) = \frac{1}{T} \sum_t (G(S_t) V_{\theta_c}(S_t))^2$
  - $\quad \theta_{a} \leftarrow \theta_{a} + \eta_{a} \nabla_{\theta_{a}} L_{a} \left( \theta_{a} \right), \theta_{c} \leftarrow \theta_{c} \eta_{c} \nabla_{\theta_{c}} L_{c} \left( \theta_{c} \right),$

## Extensions

- A2C can be applied in a multi-thread environment on several episodes simultaneously, with a final mini-batch update
- Asynchronous Advantage Actor-Critic (A3C) (Deepmind, 2016): Each thread performs its updates without waiting for the others to end → each thread keeps its own version of the parameters. They upload their gradients asynchronously to a master server that performs batch updates
- Experience Replay can be adapted to A2C → ACER algorithm (Deepmind 2017)

## **Continuous action space**

- We need to access action probabilities  $\pi_{\theta}(A_t|S_t)$  for Reinforce and A2C.
- We have seen the discrete action space case (n labels + softmax) → Very large or continuous space ?
- You can use a network that **predict the parameters of a distribution** and sample an action from it. Ex :  $A_t \sim N(\mu, \sigma)$ with  $\mu, \sigma = f(S_t | \theta)$  (similar to the encoder of a VAE)  $\rightarrow$ Reinforce/A2C can be used (with the reparametrization trick).
- Most general case :  $f(S_t|\theta) = A_t$ . What algorithm can I use ?
## Deep Deterministic policy gradients (DDPG)

- Hybrid between Q-learning and policy methods.
  Makes use of many tricks seen so far.
- An **actor** predicts the action :  $f(S|\theta_a) = A$ .
- A critic predicts the action value :  $g(S, A | \theta_c) = Q_{\theta_c}(S, A)$ .
- Actor objective : maximize the Q-value  $\rightarrow$ Gradient ascent with  $\nabla_{\theta_a} g(S, f(S|\theta_a)|\theta_c)$

## Deep Deterministic policy gradients (DDPG)

- Critic objective : predict accurately the Q-value. Could be done with bootstrapping but like Double DQN, DDPG makes use of decoupled targets instead
- $\rightarrow$  Separate set of target actor and critic with parameters  $\theta'_a, \theta'_c$
- Minimize  $(g(S_t, A_t | \theta_c) R_{t+1} \gamma g(S_{t+1}, f(S_{t+1} | \theta'_a) | \theta'_c))^2$  wrt  $\theta_c$
- $\theta'_a$ ,  $\theta'_c$  are **slowly updated** as a moving average of  $\theta_a$ ,  $\theta_c$
- DDPG also uses experience replay, and in training adds a noise to  $f(S|\theta_a)$  for exploration.

## **Summary**

- Parameterized Functions
- Action-replay
- Target functions
- Deep Q Networks
- Decoupled targets, Double DQN
- Policy gradients
- Reinforce
- Actor-Critic
- DDPG