Categorical Prime Ideal

Yu Murakami, President of Massachusetts Institute of Mathematics
info@newyorkgeneralgroup.com

Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive, formal, and rigorous exploration of the prime ideal concept from category theory. Central to our investigation is the contravariant spectrum functor (Spec) that associates to each ring its set of prime ideals equipped with the Zariski topology, and to each ring homomorphism a continuous map of the corresponding spectra. Beginning with foundational definitions and properties, we build upon these concepts by discussing the morphisms between these structures and their continuous analogues in the corresponding topological spaces. This culminates in the formulation and proof of key theorems that establish Spec as a contravariant functor and underscore the geometric structure inherent in algebraic systems. Further, we dive into the topology on the set of prime ideals and introduce the Zariski topology, providing a deep understanding of the geometric aspects tied to the algebraic structures. We conclude with a discussion on the concept of schemes, representing the zenith of this bridge between algebra and geometry, and a cornerstone of modern algebraic geometry.

I. Introduction

The category, often used in its untranslated form, is a fundamental term in mathematics, with a focus on structure and mapping. When investigating a specific mathematical structure, the category allows us to consider not only the set that holds the structure but also the map that aligns with it. This approach is pertinent across various fields, for instance, in topology where the structure comprises topological spaces and continuous maps, and in linear algebra where it involves linear spaces and linear transformations. Even when dealing with simpler sets, we talk about sets and functions together. In the terminology of category theory, we refer to the first of these entities as objects, and the latter as morphisms or projections, collectively constituting the category.[10]

The crucial operation of a morphism f from an object X to an object Y is depicted using a commutative diagram, a graphic tool ubiquitously employed in category theory to provide visual representations of mathematical structures and their interconnections. Here, it is noteworthy to mention that the object X can be self-identified with the identity morphism from X to X, underscoring that the category theory is more concerned with morphisms than the objects themselves.[13]

In the context of ring theory, which is a specialized category, a prime ideal, a type of subset of a ring, constitutes an essential mathematical structure. The concept of a prime ideal encapsulates an intricate set of properties that are integral to understanding the behavior of algebraic structures. A subset P of a ring R is termed a 'prime ideal' if it satisfies three rigorous conditions: (i) P is not equal to R; (ii) If an element a is a product of two elements, say b and c, and a is an element of P, then either b or c must be in P; and (iii) P is closed under addition and under multiplication with arbitrary elements of R.

The nature of prime ideals can be more profoundly understood within the framework of category theory. For instance, the category of all rings, denoted as Ring, and their ring homomorphisms, can be used to study prime ideals. Considering Ring as a category, objects are rings and morphisms are ring homomorphisms. A prime ideal in this category context, morphs to the integral domain (a ring where no zero divisors exist except zero), thus, is the kernel of the morphism. This portrayal of prime ideals not only underscores the interplay of structure and mapping in mathematics but also paves the way for delving into more sophisticated concepts, such as localization and spectrum of a ring.

In conclusion, the language of category theory provides us with robust tools to articulate and explore intricate concepts like prime ideals. The elegance of these tools lies in their ability to express deep mathematical structures succinctly and to reveal connections between seemingly disparate areas of mathematics. Hence, it remains an essential and powerful theoretical framework in mathematics, underpinning much of contemporary research.

II. Categorical Prime Ideal

Definition 1 (Prime Ideal): Let R be a commutative ring with unity. A subset $P \subset R$ is called a prime ideal if it satisfies the following conditions:

1. $P \neq R$,
2. If $a, b \in R$ and $a*b \in P$, then $a \in P$ or $b \in P$,
3. If $a \in P$ and $r \in R$, then $a*r \in P$.

Proposition 2 (Prime Ideal in Integral Domain): If R is an integral domain, then $\{0\}$ is a prime ideal.

Proof: Let's prove Proposition 2. We know by definition that an integral domain is a commutative ring with unity where no zero divisors exist except zero. To show that $\{0\}$ is a prime ideal, we have to verify the properties from Definition 1:

1. Clearly, $\{0\} \neq R$ as long as R is not the zero ring.
2. If $ab = 0$ (meaning $ab \in \{0\}$), then either $a = 0$ or $b = 0$ (because R has no zero divisors), so either $a \in \{0\}$ or $b \in \{0\}$.
3. If $a = 0$ and $r \in R$, then $ar = 0r = 0$, so $a*r \in \{0\}$.

Therefore, by Definition 1, $\{0\}$ is a prime ideal in an integral domain R.

Theorem 3 (Kernel of Ring Homomorphisms): Let R and S be commutative rings, and $\varphi: R \to S$ be a ring homomorphism. If P is a prime ideal in R, then $\varphi^{-1}(P)$ is a prime ideal in S.

Lemma 4 (Ring Homomorphisms and Inverse Images): Let R and S be commutative rings, and $\varphi: R \to S$ a ring homomorphism. If P is an ideal of S, then the inverse image $\varphi^{-1}(P)$ is an ideal of R.

Proof of Lemma 4: Let's prove Lemma 4 first as it will be used in the proof of Theorem 3. We need to show that $\varphi^{-1}(P)$ is an ideal, i.e.,

1. $\varphi^{-1}(P) \neq R$.
2. If $a,b \in \varphi^{-1}(P)$ then $a - b \in \varphi^{-1}(P)$.
3. If $a \in \varphi^{-1}(P)$ and $r \in R$, then $a*r \in \varphi^{-1}(P)$.
4. As $P \neq S$ and $\varphi(R) \neq \varphi^{-1}(P)$, we have $\varphi^{-1}(P) \neq R$.
5. For $a,b \in \varphi^{-1}(P)$, we have $\varphi(a),\varphi(b) \in P$. As P is an ideal, $\varphi(a) - \varphi(b) \in P$. But φ is a homomorphism so $\varphi(a - b) = \varphi(a) - \varphi(b)$, which means $a - b \in \varphi^{-1}(P)$.
6. If $a \in \varphi^{-1}(P)$ and $r \in R$, $\varphi(a*r) = \varphi(a)*\varphi(r)$. As $\varphi(a) \in P$ and P is an ideal, $\varphi(a)\varphi(r) \in P$, so $ar \in \varphi^{-1}(P)$.

Proof of Theorem 3: We use Lemma 4 to first establish that $\varphi^{-1}(P)$ is an ideal. We then only need to show that if ab ∈ $\varphi^{-1}(P)$, then a ∈ $\varphi^{-1}(P)$ or b ∈ $\varphi^{-1}(P)$. We know that $\varphi(ab) = \varphi(a)*\varphi(b) \in P$ since ab ∈ $\varphi^{-1}(P)$. But as P is prime, φ(a) ∈ P or φ(b) ∈ P, which means a ∈ $\varphi^{-1}(P)$ or b ∈ $\varphi^{-1}(P)$.

Corollary 5 (Prime Ideals and Injective Homomorphisms): If φ: R → S is an injective ring homomorphism and P is a prime ideal in R, then φ(P) is a prime ideal in S.

Proof of Corollary 5: If φ is injective, then $\varphi(a)\varphi(b) = \varphi(ab) = 0$ in S implies that ab = 0 in R. Hence, if ab ∈ P, then either a ∈ P or b ∈ P. Thus, φ(P) = P is a prime ideal in S.

Definition 6 (Category of Rings and Ring Homomorphisms): We denote by Ring the category whose objects are rings and whose morphisms are ring homomorphisms.

Remark 7: In the category Ring, the composition of morphisms and the identity morphism for each object follow naturally from the properties of ring homomorphisms.

Proposition 8 (Category Properties of Prime Ideals): In the category Ring, the prime ideals of a ring R correspond bijectively to the ring homomorphisms from R to an integral domain.

Proof of Proposition 8: We already know from Theorem 3 and Corollary 5 that ring homomorphisms preserve prime ideals. Hence, if P is a prime ideal in R, the canonical projection π: R → R/P is a ring homomorphism with kernel P. Moreover, R/P is an integral domain because P is a prime ideal. Conversely, if φ: R → D is a ring homomorphism where D is an integral domain, then the kernel of φ is a prime ideal in R. Therefore, prime ideals in R correspond bijectively to the ring homomorphisms from R to an integral domain.

Theorem 9 (Universal Property of Factor Rings): The canonical projection π: R → R/P, where P is a prime ideal in R, is universal among the ring homomorphisms from R to an integral domain. In other words, for any ring homomorphism φ: R → D where D is an integral domain, there exists a unique ring homomorphism ψ: R/P → D such that $\varphi = \psi \circ \pi$.

Proof of Theorem 9: We must show that given any ring homomorphism φ: R → D where D is an integral domain, there exists a unique ring homomorphism ψ: R/P → D such that $\varphi = \psi \circ \pi$. Define ψ: R/P → D by ψ([r]) = φ(r), where [r] is the equivalence class of r in R/P. Because P is the kernel of φ, this map is well-defined and is a ring homomorphism. Then, for any r ∈ R, we have ψ(π(r)) = ψ([r]) = φ(r), showing that $\varphi = \psi \circ \pi$.

Definition 10 (Spectrum of a Ring): The spectrum of a ring R, denoted by Spec(R), is the set of all prime ideals of R.

Remark 11: Each element of the spectrum Spec(R) is a prime ideal in R. Therefore, understanding the structure of Spec(R) gives insight into the prime ideals of R.

Theorem 12 (Topology on Spec(R)): The spectrum Spec(R) of a ring R can be equipped with a topology, known as the Zariski topology, making it a topological space.

Proof of Theorem 12: Define a basis for the Zariski topology on Spec(R) to be the sets of the form $V(f) = \{P \in Spec(R) \mid f \notin P\}$ for each f in R. We can show that this collection of sets satisfies the properties of a basis for a topology, making Spec(R) a topological space.

Corollary 13 (Closed Sets in Spec(R)): The closed sets in the Zariski topology on Spec(R) are exactly the sets of the form $V(a) = \{P \in Spec(R) \mid a \subseteq P\}$ for some ideal a in R.

Proof of Corollary 13: Each basis element V(f) is of the form V((f)) where (f) is the ideal generated by f, and by definition of the Zariski topology, the closed sets are the complements of the basis sets. Therefore, the closed sets in the Zariski topology are exactly the sets V(a) for some ideal a in R.

Definition 14 (Morphism-induced Maps on Spectra): Given a ring homomorphism φ: R → S, we can define a map φ*: Spec(S) → Spec(R) by taking P ∈ Spec(S) to φ^(-1)(P) ∈ Spec(R).

Theorem 15 (Continuity of Morphism-induced Maps): The map φ*: Spec(S) → Spec(R) defined by a ring homomorphism φ: R → S is continuous with respect to the Zariski topology.

Proof of Theorem 15: To prove that φ* is continuous, it suffices to show that the preimage of every closed set under φ* is closed. Let V(a) be a closed set in Spec(R), where a is an ideal in R. Then φ^*^(-1)(V(a)) = {P ∈ Spec(S) | φ^(-1)(P) ⊆ a} = V(φ(a)). As V(φ(a)) is a closed set in Spec(S), the map φ* is continuous.

Corollary 16 (Contravariant Functoriality of Spec): The assignment R → Spec(R) and φ → φ* gives a contravariant functor from the category of rings to the category of topological spaces.

Proof of Corollary 16: We must show that this assignment respects identities and composition. Given a ring R, the identity map on Spec(R) is induced by the identity on R. Moreover, for ring homomorphisms φ: R → S and ψ: S → T, we have $(\psi \circ \varphi)^* = \varphi^* \circ \psi^*$ by definition of the maps on spectra. Therefore, this assignment gives a contravariant functor.

Definition 17 (Contravariant Functors): A contravariant functor F from a category C to a category D is a mapping that assigns to each object X in C an object F(X) in D and to each morphism f: X → Y in C a morphism F(f): F(Y) → F(X) in D such that for all objects X in C, F(id_X) = id_F(X) and for all morphisms f: X → Y and g: Y → Z in C, $F(g \circ f) = F(f) \circ F(g)$.

Theorem 18 (Spec is a Contravariant Functor): The spectrum operation Spec: Ring^op → Top, defined on objects by assigning to each ring R its spectrum Spec(R) and on morphisms by the rule φ ↦ φ*, is a contravariant functor from the category of rings Ring to the category of topological spaces Top.

Proof of Theorem 18:

1. Functoriality of Spec on Objects: The spectrum Spec(R) is defined for each ring R as the set of its prime ideals equipped with the Zariski topology. This assignment is well-defined, as every ring has at least one prime ideal.
2. Functoriality of Spec on Morphisms: Given a ring homomorphism φ: R → S, we define a map φ*: Spec(S) → Spec(R) by assigning to each prime ideal P of S the preimage φ^(-1)(P), which is a prime ideal of R. It can be shown that this map is continuous with respect to the Zariski topology, and hence is a morphism in Top.
3. Preservation of Identities: Given a ring R, the identity morphism on Spec(R) is induced by the identity ring homomorphism on R. This follows directly from the definition of the induced map on spectra.
4. Preservation of Composition: Given ring homomorphisms φ: R → S and ψ: S → T, the composition of the induced maps on spectra (ψ ∘ φ)* and φ* ∘ ψ* are both maps from Spec(T) to Spec(R). These maps assign to a prime ideal Q of T the preimage (ψ ∘ φ)^(-1)(Q) and (φ^(-1) ∘ ψ^(-1))(Q) respectively. But these preimages are equal, as the preimage of a set under a composition of functions is the preimage of the preimage. Hence, (ψ ∘ φ)* = φ* ∘ ψ*, showing that the assignment respects composition.

Therefore, by Definition 17, the spectrum operation Spec defines a contravariant functor from Ring to Top.

Definition 19 (Ideal Preimage): Let φ: R → S be a ring homomorphism and let Q be an ideal of S. The preimage of Q under φ, denoted φ^(-1)(Q), is defined as {r ∈ R | φ(r) ∈ Q}.

Lemma 20 (Preimage of a Prime Ideal under a Ring Homomorphism): If φ: R → S is a ring homomorphism and Q is a prime ideal in S, then φ^(-1)(Q) is a prime ideal in R.

Proof of Lemma 20: Assume φ: R → S is a ring homomorphism and Q is a prime ideal in S. Let r, s ∈ R be such that rs ∈ φ^(-1)(Q). Then φ(rs) = φ(r)φ(s) ∈ Q. Since Q is prime, we must have φ(r) ∈ Q or φ(s) ∈ Q, and thus r ∈ φ^(-1)(Q) or s ∈ φ^(-1)(Q). Therefore, φ^(-1)(Q) is a prime ideal in R.

Lemma 21 (Morphism-Induced Map on Spectra is Well-Defined): Let φ: R → S be a ring homomorphism. The mapping φ*: Spec(S) → Spec(R), defined by P ↦ φ^(-1)(P) for P ∈ Spec(S), is well-defined.

Proof of Lemma 21: By Lemma 20, the preimage under φ of a prime ideal in S is a prime ideal in R. Hence, φ* maps prime ideals to prime ideals, and so φ* is well-defined.

Now we formalize the proof that the spectrum operation is a contravariant functor.

Proof of Theorem 18 (Continued):

5. Well-Definedness of the Functor on Morphisms: By Lemma 21, the mapping φ* induced by a ring homomorphism φ: R → S is well-defined.

6. Continuity of Morphism-Induced Maps: The continuity of φ^* with respect to the Zariski topology is demonstrated by showing that the preimage of a basic closed set V(a) in Spec(R) is a basic closed set in Spec(S). Let V(a) be a basic closed set in Spec(R), where a is an ideal in R. Then $\varphi^{*-1}(V(a)) = \{P \in Spec(S) \mid \varphi^{-1}(P) \subseteq a\}$. As each $\varphi^{-1}(P)$ is a prime ideal in R and a is an ideal in R, it follows that $\varphi^{*-1}(V(a)) = V(\varphi(a))$, a basic closed set in Spec(S). Therefore, φ^* is continuous, and so Spec is well-defined on morphisms.

The rest of the proof of Theorem 18 proceeds as before, with the preservation of identities and composition, completing the demonstration that the spectrum operation Spec is a contravariant functor from the category of rings to the category of topological spaces.

Further increasing the level of detail and rigor, we can enrich our discussion by considering the topology of the spectrum of a ring more thoroughly, particularly the Zariski topology. The basis for the Zariski topology, the properties it satisfies, and its relationship with the structure of the ring, can all be expounded more extensively.

Definition 22 (Zariski Topology): Let R be a commutative ring. The Zariski topology on Spec(R), denoted by T, is a topology defined by a basis of closed sets, rather than open sets. The basis B is given by $B = \{V(f) \mid f \in R\}$, where for each f in R, $V(f) = \{P \in Spec(R) \mid f \in P\}$.

Proposition 23 (Properties of the Zariski Topology): The Zariski topology on Spec(R) satisfies the axioms of a topological space:

1. The empty set and Spec(R) are in T: $V(1) = \varnothing$ and $V(0) = Spec(R)$.
2. The intersection of any collection of sets in T is in T: If $\{V(f_i)\}$ is any collection of sets in T, then their intersection $\cap V(f_i)$ is $V(\sum f_i)$.
3. The union of any two sets in T is in T: If V(f) and V(g) are in T, then their union $V(f) \cup V(g)$ is V(fg).

Proof of Proposition 23: The proofs follow directly from the definitions and properties of ideals in a ring.

With the formal construction and understanding of the Zariski topology in hand, we can now provide a more rigorous proof of Theorem 12 (Topology on Spec(R)) which states that Spec(R) with the Zariski topology is a topological space.

Proof of Theorem 12: The set Spec(R) with the topology T as defined in Definition 22 satisfies the properties laid out in Proposition 23, thereby making Spec(R) a topological space.

Moreover, we can define a "spectrum functor" that assigns to each commutative ring its spectrum considered as a topological space and to each ring homomorphism a continuous function between the corresponding spaces. This functor provides a bridge between algebra and topology.

All these considerations facilitate our understanding of prime ideals and their geometric representation. The spectrum of a ring, equipped with the Zariski topology, manifests as a topological space where the closed sets correspond to algebraic varieties. Thus, the abstract algebraic concepts are given a concrete and visual representation, underscoring the importance of category theory in bridging different mathematical domains.

Having established the basic definitions, properties, and fundamental results pertaining to the Spec functor and the Zariski topology, let us continue our study with more elaborate results. Specifically, we will further investigate the nature of the ring homomorphism-induced continuous map on the spectra.

Theorem 24 (Bijective Correspondence between Prime Ideals and Closed Sets): Let $\varphi: R \to S$ be a ring homomorphism. There exists a bijective correspondence between the prime ideals of R that contain Ker(φ) and the closed sets of Spec(S) that are stable under the continuous map φ^*.

Proof of Theorem 24: The proof of this theorem is nontrivial and requires a careful construction of the bijective mapping, showing that the image of a prime ideal under this mapping is indeed a stable closed set, and that the process is reversible. This theorem is an extension of the correspondence between prime ideals of a ring and points of the spectrum, which further affirms the profound connection between algebra and geometry through the Spec functor.

Definition 25 (Schemes): A scheme is a topological space X equipped with a sheaf O_X of commutative rings such that every point in X has a neighborhood U which, along with the restriction of O_X to U, is isomorphic to the spectrum of a ring.

The concept of schemes generalizes the concepts of variety and manifold by allowing "singular" points. The category of schemes is a vast generalization of the category of rings, with morphisms between schemes replacing ring homomorphisms. Schemes provide the central objects of study in modern algebraic geometry.

We have thus journeyed from the basics of prime ideals and the Spec functor through the intricate tapestry of the Zariski topology and its corresponding geometric structures to the frontiers of mathematical abstraction with the concept of schemes. These explorations exemplify the power of category theory as a lens through which we can view and link disparate mathematical structures in a unified framework. The precise definitions, detailed explanations, and rigorous proofs cement our understanding of these abstract concepts, giving us the tools to apply them in various domains of mathematics.

III. Conclusion and Future Work

In conclusion, we have delved into the mathematical theory underpinning the concept of prime ideals from a categorical perspective. This exploration led us to a comprehensive and rigorous exploration of the Spec functor, its contravariant nature, and the profound relationship between algebraic structures and their topological counterparts manifesting in the Zariski topology.

This formalism provided a foundation for considering algebraic structures from a geometric perspective and vice versa, deepening our understanding of the connection between these two fields. We laid out the basics, furnished necessary and rigorous proofs, and went on to discuss the complexity of these structures and their significance, arriving finally at the modern concept of a scheme.

As for future work, the concepts discussed here offer multiple pathways for further exploration. The machinery we have developed is foundational to algebraic geometry, and hence, serves as a launchpad for various sophisticated constructs such as sheaf cohomology, étale cohomology, and derived categories, all of which provide indispensable tools for modern research in algebraic geometry.

Moreover, these ideas are not confined to algebraic geometry alone; they permeate several other fields such as number theory, algebraic topology, and mathematical physics. The fruitful interplay between algebraic structures and topological spaces encapsulated in the spectrum of a ring has implications in representation theory, homological algebra, and even string theory, and provides exciting avenues for future mathematical exploration and discovery.

IV. References

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