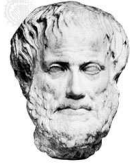


Logic Programming: Prolog

COMS W4115



Aristotle

Prof. Stephen A. Edwards

Fall 2004

Columbia University

Department of Computer Science

Logic

All Caltech graduates are nerds.

Stephen is a Caltech graduate.

Is Stephen a nerd?



Prolog

All Caltech graduates are nerds. `nerd(X) :- techer(X).`

Stephen is a Caltech graduate. `techer(stephen).`

Is Stephen a nerd? `?- nerd(stephen).`
yes

More Logic

"My Enemy's Enemy is My Friend."

```

friend(X,Z) :-
    enemy(X,Y), enemy(Y,Z).
    ?- friend(stephen,jordan).
    ?- friend(stephen,X).
    X = jordan
enemy(stephen, ryan).
enemy(ryan, jordan).
    ?- friend(X, Y).
    ?- friend(X, Y).
    X = stephen Y = jordan
enemy(jordan, jacob).
    X = ryan Y = jacob

```

The Basic Idea of Prolog

- AI programs often involve searching for the solution to a problem.
- Why not provide this search capability as the underlying idea of the language?
- Result: Prolog

Prolog

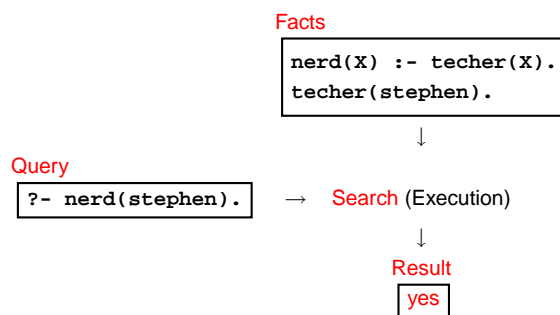
Mostly declarative.

Program looks like a declaration of facts plus rules for deducing things.

"Running" the program involves answering questions that refer to the facts **or can be deduced from them**.

More formally, you provide the axioms, and Prolog tries to prove theorems.

Prolog Execution



Simple Searching

Starts with the query:

```
?- nerd(stephen).
```

Can we convince ourselves that `nerd(stephen)` is true given the facts we have?

```
techer(stephen).
nerd(X) :- techer(X).
```

First says `techer(stephen)` is true. Not helpful.

Second says that we can conclude `nerd(X)` is true if we can conclude `techer(X)` is true. More promising.

Simple Searching

```
techer(stephen).
nerd(X) :- techer(X).
?- nerd(stephen).
```

Unifying `nerd(stephen)` with the head of the second rule, `nerd(X)`, we conclude that `X = stephen`.

We're not done: for the rule to be true, we must find that all its conditions are true. `X = stephen`, so we want `techer(stephen)` to hold.

This is exactly the first clause in the database; we're satisfied. The query is simply true.

More Clever Searching

```
techer(stephen).
techer(todd).
nerd(X) :- techer(X).
?- nerd(X).
```

"Tell me about everybody who's provably a nerd."

As before, start with query. Rule only interesting thing.

Unifying `nerd(X)` with `nerd(X)` is vacuously true, so we need to establish `techer(X)`.

More Clever Searching

```
techer(stephen).
techer(todd).
nerd(X) :- techer(X).
?- nerd(X).
```

Unifying `techer(X)` with `techer(stephen)` succeeds, setting `X = stephen`, but we're not done yet.

Unifying `techer(X)` with `techer(todd)` also succeeds, setting `X = todd`, but we're still not done.

Unifying `techer(X)` with `nerd(X) :-` fails, returning no.

More Clever Searching

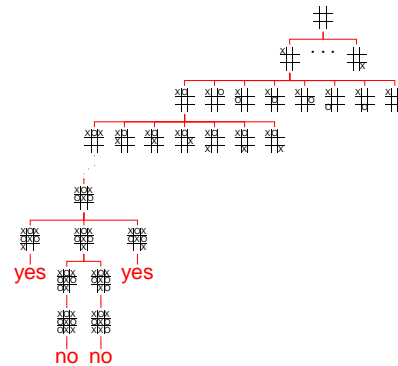
```
> ~/tmp/beta-prolog/bp
Beta-Prolog Version 1.2 (C) 1990-1994.
| ?- [user].
| :techer(stephen).
| :techer(todd).
| :nerd(X) :- techer(X).
| :^D
yes
| ?- nerd(X).
X = stephen?;
X = todd?;
no
| ?-
```

Order Matters

```
> ~/tmp/beta-prolog/bp
Beta-Prolog Version 1.2 (C) 1990-1994.
| ?- [user].
| :techer(todd).
| :techer(stephen).
| :nerd(X) :- techer(X).
| :^D
yes
| ?- nerd(X).
X = todd?;
X = stephen?;
no
| ?-
```

Todd returned first

Searching and Backtracking



The Prolog Environment

Database consists of **clauses**.

Each clause consists of **terms**, which may be **constants**, **variables**, or **structures**.

Constants: `foo my_Const + 1.43`

Variables: `X Y Everybody My_var`

Structures: `rainy(rochester)`
`teaches(edwards, cs4115)`

Structures and Functors

A structure consists of a **functor** followed by an open parenthesis, a list of comma-separated terms, and a close parenthesis:

```
bin_tree( foo, bin_tree(bar, glarch) )
```

"Functor" points to `bin_tree`.
"paren must follow immediately" points to the opening parenthesis.

What's a structure? Whatever you like.

A predicate `nerd(stephen)`

A relationship `teaches(edwards, cs4115)`

A data structure `bin(+, bin(-, 1, 3), 4)`

Unification

Part of the search procedure that matches patterns.

The search attempts to match a goal with a rule in the database by **unifying** them.

Recursive rules:

- A constant only unifies with itself
- Two structures unify if they have the same functor, the same number of arguments, and the corresponding arguments unify
- A variable unifies with anything but forces an equivalence

Unification Examples

The = operator checks whether two structures unify:

```
| ?- a = a.
yes
| ?- a = b.
no
| ?- 5.3 = a.
no
| ?- 5.3 = X.
X = 5.3?;
no
| ?- foo(a,X) = foo(X,b).
no
| ?- foo(a,X) = foo(X,a).
X = a?;
no
| ?- foo(X,b) = foo(a,Y).
X = a
Y = b?;
no
| ?- foo(X,a,X) = foo(b,a,c).
no
```

% Constant unifies with itself
% Mismatched constants
% Mismatched constants
% Variables unify
% X=a required, but inconsistent
% X=a is consistent
% X=a, then b=Y
% X=b required, but inconsistent

The Searching Algorithm

search(goal g , variables e)

for each clause $h :- t_1, \dots, t_n$ in the database

$e = \text{unify}(g, h, e)$

if successful,

for each term t_1, \dots, t_n ,

$e = \text{search}(t_k, e)$

if all successful, return e

return no



Order matters

search(goal g , variables e) **In the order they appear**

for each clause $h :- t_1, \dots, t_n$ in the database

$e = \text{unify}(g, h, e)$

if successful, **In the order they appear**

for each term t_1, \dots, t_n ,

$e = \text{search}(t_k, e)$

if all successful, return e

return no

Order Affects Efficiency

```
edge(a, b). edge(b, c).
edge(c, d). edge(d, e).
edge(b, e). edge(d, f).
path(X, X).
path(X, Y) :-
    edge(X, Z), path(Z, Y).
```

```
path(a,a)
|
path(a,a)=path(X,X)
|
X=a
|
yes
```

Consider the query

?- path(a, a).

Good programming practice: Put the easily-satisfied clauses first.

Order Affect Efficiency

```
edge(a, b). edge(b, c).
edge(c, d). edge(d, e).
edge(b, e). edge(d, f).
path(X, Y) :-
    edge(X, Z), path(Z, Y).
path(X, X).
```

```
path(a,a)
|
path(a,a)=path(X,Y)
|
X=a Y=a
|
edge(a,Z)
|
edge(a,Z)=edge(a,b)
|
Z=b
|
path(b,a)
|
...
```

Consider the query

?- path(a, a).

Will eventually produce the right answer, but will spend much more time doing so.

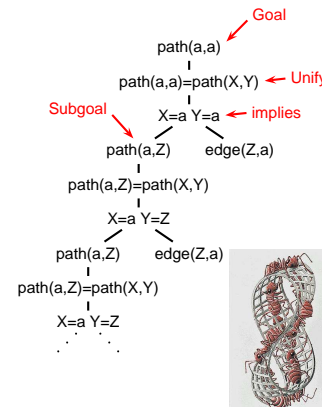
Order can cause Infinite Recursion

```
edge(a, b). edge(b, c).
edge(c, d). edge(d, e).
edge(b, e). edge(d, f).
path(X, Y) :-
    path(X, Z), edge(Z, Y).
path(X, X).
```

Consider the query

?- path(a, a).

Like LL(k) grammars.



Bill and Ted in Prolog

```
super_band(X) :- on_guitar(X, eddie_van_halen).
on_guitar(X, eddie_van_halen) :- triumphant_video(X).
triumphant_video(X) :- decent_instruments(X).
decent_instruments(X) :- know_how_to_play(X).
know_how_to_play(X) :- on_guitar(X, eddie_van_halen).
```

super_band(wyld_stallyns).

What will Bill and Ted do?



Prolog as an Imperative Language

A declarative statement such as

P if Q and R and S

can also be interpreted procedurally as

To solve P, solve Q, then R, then S.

This is the problem with the last path example.

```
path(X, Y) :- path(X, Z), edge(Z, Y).
```

"To solve P, solve P..."

Prolog as an Imperative Language

```
go :- print(hello_), print(world).
```

?- go.

hello_world

yes

Cuts

Ways to shape the behavior of the search:

- Modify clause and term order. Can affect efficiency, termination.
- "Cuts" Explicitly forbidding further backtracking.



Cuts

When the search reaches a cut (!), it does no more backtracking.

```
techer(stephen) :- !.  
techer(todd).  
nerd(X) :- techer(X).
```

```
?- nerd(X).  
X= stephen?  
no
```



Controlling Search Order

Prolog's ability to control search order is crude, yet often critical for both efficiency and termination.

- Clause order
- Term order
- Cuts

Often very difficult to force the search algorithm to do what you want.

Elegant Solution Often Less Efficient

Natural definition of sorting is inefficient:

```
sort(L1, L2) :- permute(L1, L2), sorted(L2).  
permute([], []).  
permute(L, [H|T]) :-  
    append(P, [H|S], L), append(P, S, W), permute(W, T).
```

Instead, need to make algorithm more explicit:

```
qsort([], []).  
qsort([A|L1, L2]):- part(A, L1, P1, S1),  
    qsort(P1, P2), qsort(S1, S2), append(P2, [A|S2], L2).  
part(A, [], [], []).  
part(A, [H|T], [H|P], S) :- A >= H, part(A, T, P S).  
part(A, [H|T], P, [H|S]) :- A < H, part(A, T, P S).
```

Prolog's Failings

Interesting experiment, and probably perfectly-suited if your problem happens to require an AI-style search.

Problem is that if your peg is round, Prolog's square hole is difficult to shape.

No known algorithm is sufficiently clever to do smart searches in all cases.

Devising clever search algorithms is hardly automated: people get PhDs for it.