Logic Programming: The Prolog Language

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All Caltech graduates are nerds.

Stephen is a Caltech graduate.

Is Stephen a nerd?
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Is Stephen a nerd?

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

?- nerd(stephen).
yes
More Logic

\[
\text{witch}(X) :- \text{burns}(X), \text{female}(X).
\]
\[
\text{burns}(X) :- \text{wooden}(X).
\]
\[
\text{wooden}(X) :- \text{floats}(X).
\]
\[
\text{floats}(X) :- \text{sameweights}(\text{duck}, X).
\]

\[
\text{female}(\text{girl}). \quad /* \text{By observation} */
\]
\[
\text{sameweights}(\text{duck}, \text{girl}). \quad /* \text{By experiment} */
\]

? \text{witch}(\text{girl}).
\text{yes}
Still More Logic

“My Enemy’s Enemy is My Friend.”

\[ \text{friend}(X,Z) :- \]
\[ \text{enemy}(X,Y), \text{enemy}(Y,Z). \]

\text{enemy}(\text{stephen}, \text{ryan}).
\text{enemy}(\text{ryan}, \text{jordan}).
\text{enemy}(\text{jordan}, \text{jacob}).

?- \text{friend}(\text{stephen},\text{jordan}).
yes
?- \text{friend}(\text{stephen},X).
X = \text{jordan}
?- \text{friend}(X, Y).
X = \text{stephen} Y = \text{jordan}
X = \text{ryan} Y = \text{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
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

Facts

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

Query

?- nerd(stephen).

→ Search (Execution)

Result

yes
Starts with the query:

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

*Can we convince ourselves that* \texttt{nerd(stephen)} *is true given the facts we have?*

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

First says \texttt{techer(stephen)} is true. Not helpful.

Second says that we can conclude \texttt{nerd(X)} is true if we can conclude \texttt{techer(X)} is true. More promising.
Unifying `nerd(stephen)` with the head of the second rule, `nerd(X) :- techer(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.
"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)`.

Unifying `techer(X)` with `techer(stephen)` succeeds, setting $X = \text{stephen}$, but we’re not done yet.

Unifying `techer(X)` with `techer(todd)` also succeeds, setting $X = \text{todd}$, but we’re still not done yet.

Unifying `techer(X)` with `nerd(X)` fails, returning no.
$ prolog
GNU Prolog 1.3.0
By Daniel Diaz
Copyright (C) 1999-2007 Daniel Diaz
| ?- [user].
compiling user for byte code...
techer(stephen).
techer(todd).
nerd(X) :- techer(X).
^D
user compiled, 4 lines read - 400 bytes written, 14260 ms

yes
| ?- nerd(X).

X = stephen ? ;

X = todd

yes

| ?-
$ prolog
GNU Prolog 1.3.0
By Daniel Diaz
Copyright (C) 1999-2007 Daniel Diaz
| ?- [user].
compiling user for byte code...
techer(todd).
techer(stephen).
nerd(X) :- techer(X).
^D
user compiled, 4 lines read - 399 bytes written, 14027 ms

yes
| ?- nerd(X).
X = todd ? ;

X = stephen

yes
Searching and Backtracking
The Prolog Environment

Database consists of Horn clauses. ("If a is true and b is true and ... and y is true then z is true").

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)
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) )
```

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.                  % Constant unifies with itself
  yes                      
| ?- a = b.                  % Mismatched constants
  no                       
| ?- 5.3 = a.                % Mismatched constants
  no                       
| ?- 5.3 = X.                % Variables unify
  X = 5.3 ? ;               
  yes                      
| ?- foo(a,X) = foo(X,b).    % X=a required, but inconsistent
  no                       
| ?- foo(a,X) = foo(X,a).    % X=a is consistent
  X = a                     
  yes                      
| ?- foo(X,b) = foo(a,Y).    % X=a, then b=Y
  X = a
  Y = b                     
  yes                      
| ?- foo(X,a,X) = foo(b,a,c). % X=b required, but inconsistent
  no                       
```
The Searching Algorithm

search(goal \( g \), variables \( e \))
  for each clause \( h \) :- \( t_1, \ldots, t_n \) in the database
    \( e = \text{unify}(g, h, e) \)
    if successful,
      for each term \( t_1, \ldots, t_n \),
        \( e = \text{search}(t_k, e) \)
        if all successful, return \( e \)
  return \( \text{no} \)

Note: This pseudo-code ignores one very important part of the searching process!
Consider the query

\[ \text{path}(a, a) \]
\[ \text{path}(a, a) = \text{path}(X, X) \]
\[ \text{X} = a \]
\[ \text{yes} \]

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

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).
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?

http://www.cs.columbia.edu/~sedwards/classes/2010/w4115-fall/billnted.mp4
Prolog as an Imperative Language

A declarative statement such as

\[ P \text{ if } Q \text{ and } R \text{ and } S \]

can also be interpreted procedurally as

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

This is the problem with the last path example.

\[ path(X, Y) :- \]
\[ \quad path(X, Z), \ edge(Z, Y). \]

"To solve P, solve P..."
Cuts

Ways to shape the behavior of the search:

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

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

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

```
?- nerd(X).
X = stephen
yes
```
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.
Natural definition of sorting is inefficient:

\[
\text{sort}(L1, L2) :\text{- permute}(L1, L2), \text{sorted}(L2).
\]

\[
\text{permute}([], []). \\
\text{permute}(L, [H|T]) :\text{-} \\
\quad \text{append}(P, [H|S], L), \text{append}(P, S, W), \text{permute}(W, T).
\]

Instead, need to make algorithm more explicit:

\[
\text{qsort}([], []). \\
\text{qsort}([A|L1, L2]) :\text{- part}(A, L1, P1, S1), \\
\quad \text{qsort}(P1, P2), \text{qsort}(S1, S2), \text{append}(P2, [A|S2], L2). \\
\text{part}(A, [], [], []). \\
\text{part}(A, [H|T], [H|P], S) :\text{-} A \geq H, \text{part}(A, T, P S). \\
\text{part}(A, [H|T], P, [H|S]) :\text{-} A < H, \text{part}(A, T, P S).
\]
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.