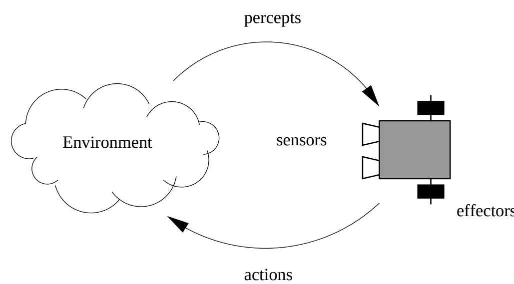
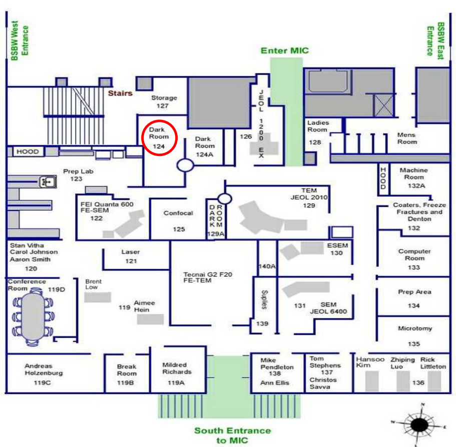
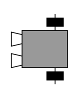
CLASSICAL PLANNING

- We have talked about an agent's interaction with its environment:



- But what about when it has a more complex task to solve?





Texas A & M

- Could we use search techniques for this?

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- We could, but we'd need a lot of domain specific heuristics.
  - Hard to develop
- Prefer a more general solution.

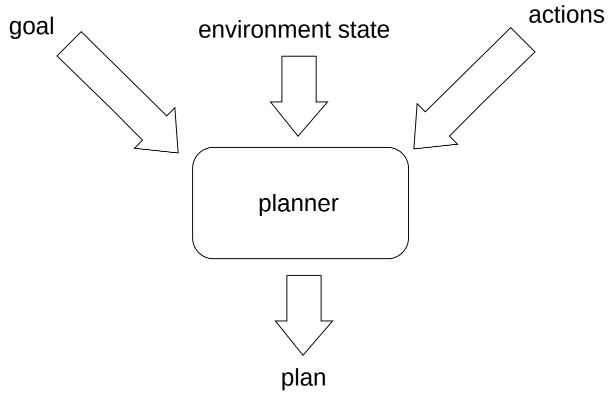
- Could we use Wumpus-world logic for this?

- Could we use Wumpus-world logic for this?
- We could, but we'd need a lot of computation.
  - Lots of reasoning to consider all the possible moves from each position.
- Prefer a faster solution

AI Planning

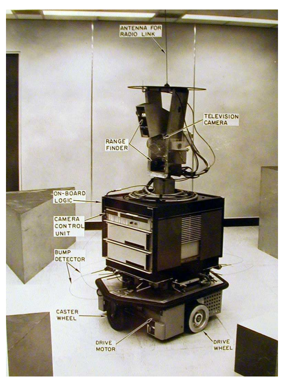
- Planning is the design of a course of action that will achieve some desired goal.
- Basic idea is to give a planning system:
  - (representation of) goal/intention to achieve;
  - (representation of) actions it can perform; and
  - (representation of) the environment;

  and have it generate a *plan* to achieve the goal.
- This is *automatic programming*.



- Given the problems with search and the use of simple logic, researchers turned to a more *factored* representation.
- An early successful approach to planning was STRIPS:
  - Stanford Research Institute Problem Solver.
- The textbook talks about PDDL rather than STRIPS, but the representations are very similar
  - PDDL can use negative literals in preconditions and goals.

- STRIPS was used in Shakey the robot:



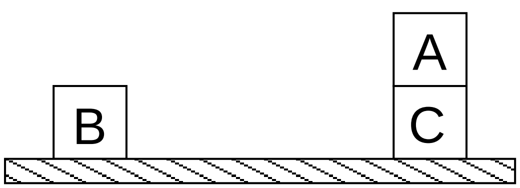
Representations

- Question: How do we *represent*...
  - goal to be achieved;
  - state of environment;
  - actions available to agent;
  - plan itself.
- Answer: We use logic, or something that looks a lot like logic.

- We'll illustrate the techniques with reference to the *blocks world*.
- A simple (toy) world, in this case one where we consider toys:

- The blocks world contains a robot arm, 3 blocks (A, B and C) of equal size, and a table-top.

- The aim is to generate a plan for the robot arm to build towers out of blocks.
- For a formal description, we'll clean it up a bit:



- To represent this environment, need an *ontology*.

$On(x, y)$	obj x on top of obj y
$OnTable(x)$	obj x is on the table
$Clear(x)$	nothing is on top of obj x
$Holding(x)$	arm is holding x

- Here is a representation of the blocks world described above:

$$\begin{array}{l} Clear(A) \\ On(A, B) \\ OnTable(B) \\ Clear(C) \\ OnTable(C) \end{array}$$

- Use the *closed world assumption*
  - Anything not stated is assumed to be *false*.

- A *goal* is represented as a set of formulae.
- Here is a goal:

$$\{OnTable(A), \quad OnTable(B), \quad OnTable(C)\}$$

- *Actions* are represented as follows.

  Each action has:
  - a *name*
    which may have arguments;
  - a *pre-condition list*
    list of facts which must be true for action to be executed;
  - a *delete list*
    list of facts that are no longer true after action is performed;
  - an *add list*
    list of facts made true by executing the action.

  Each of these may contain *variables*.

- The *stack* action occurs when the robot arm places the object x it is holding is placed on top of object y.

$$\begin{array}{ll} & Stack(x, y) \\ \text{pre} & Clear(y) \wedge Holding(x) \\ \text{del} & Clear(y) \wedge Holding(x) \\ \text{add} & ArmEmpty \wedge On(x, y) \end{array}$$

- We can think of variables as being universally quantified.
- ArmEmpty is an abbreviation for saying the arm is not holding any of the objects.

- The *unstack* action occurs when the robot arm picks an object x up from on top of another object y.

$$\begin{array}{ll} & UnStack(x, y) \\ \text{pre} & On(x, y) \wedge Clear(x) \wedge ArmEmpty \\ \text{del} & On(x, y) \wedge ArmEmpty \\ \text{add} & Holding(x) \wedge Clear(y) \end{array}$$

Stack and UnStack are *inverses* of one-another.

- The *pickup* action occurs when the arm picks up an object x from the table.

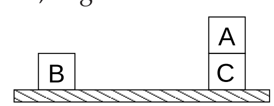
$$\begin{array}{ll} & Pickup(x) \\ \text{pre} & Clear(x) \wedge OnTable(x) \wedge ArmEmpty \\ \text{del} & OnTable(x) \wedge ArmEmpty \\ \text{add} & Holding(x) \end{array}$$

- The *putdown* action occurs when the arm places the object x onto the table.

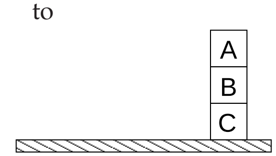
$$\begin{array}{ll} & PutDown(x) \\ \text{pre} & Holding(x) \\ \text{del} & Holding(x) \\ \text{add} & Clear(x) \wedge OnTable(x) \wedge ArmEmpty \end{array}$$

- What is a plan?

  A sequence (list) of actions, with variables replaced by constants.
- So, to get from:



to



- What plan do we need?

- We need the plan:

$$\begin{array}{c} Unstack(A) \\ Putdown(A) \\ Pickup(B) \\ Stack(B, C) \\ Pickup(A) \\ Stack(A, B) \end{array}$$

Naive Planner

- In "real life", plans contain conditionals (`IF .. THEN...`) and loops (`WHILE... DO...`), but most simple planners cannot handle such constructs — they construct *linear plans*.
- Simplest approach to planning:

  means-ends analysis.
- Start from where you want to get to (ends) and apply actions (means) that will achieve this state.

- Involves backward chaining from goal to original state.
- Start by finding an action that is consistent with having the *goal* as post-condition.

  Assume this is the *last* action in plan.
- Then figure out what the previous state would have been.

  Try to find action that has *this* state as post-condition.
- *Recurse* until we end up (hopefully!) in original state.
- We say that an action a can be executed in state s if s entails the precondition $pre(a)$ of a.

$$s \models pre(a)$$

- This is true iff every positive literal in $pre(a)$ is in s, and every negative literal in $pre(a)$ is not.

Here's an algorithm for finding a plan:

```
function plan(
      d : WorldDesc,          // environment state
      g : Goal,               // current goal
      p : Plan,               // plan so far
      A : set of actions      // actions available)
1.    if d ⊨ g then
2.          return p
3.    else
4.          choose some a in A with g ⊨ add(a)
5.          set g = (g − add(a)) ∪ pre(a)
6.          append a to p
7.          return plan(d, g, p, A)
```

- Note that we *ignore* the delete list.

- How does this work on the previous example?

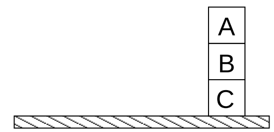
- We start with the goal state:

$$On(A, B)$$
$$On(B, C)$$
$$OnTable(C)$$
$$ArmEmpty$$

- Then pick an action which has an add list that is satisfied by this state:

$$Stack(A, B)$$

- To get the state before this action, delete the add list and add the preconditions.

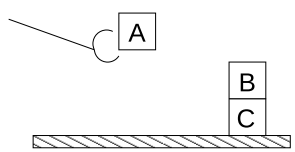


- This gives us:

$$Clear(B)$$
$$On(B, C)$$
$$OnTable(C)$$
$$Holding(A)$$

- Pick the previous action in the plan, now it is an action whose add list is satisfied by the above state.

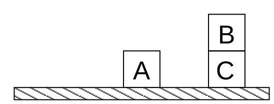
$$Pickup(A)$$



- Now we are here:

$$Clear(B)$$
$$On(B, C)$$
$$OnTable(C)$$
$$OnTable(A)$$
$$ArmEmpty$$

- And so we go, working backwards until we get to the initial state.



- This algorithm is *not* guaranteed to find a plan to satisfy the goal.
  - Why is that?
- However, this algorithm is *sound*: If it finds the plan is correct.

- Some problems:
  - negative goals;
  - maintenance goals;
  - conditionals & loops;
  - exponential search space;
  - logical consequence tests;

- Negative goals are a problem because?

- Negative goals are a problem because…
- How would you write down:

  Build any tower of blocks where block B is *not* on the table.

  without enumerating all the towers that you could build?

- Maintenance goals are a problem because?

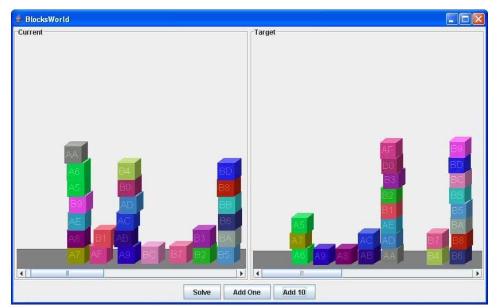
- Maintenance goals are a problem because…
- How would you write down:

  Keep moving the bricks around so that there are always at least two bricks on the table.

  without enumerating all the towers that you could build?
- Maintenance goal:

- Exponential search space is a problem because?

- Exponential search space is a problem because:



- Many planning problems have $\sim 10^{100}$*states*.

- Logical consequence tests are a problem because?

- Logical consequence tests are a problem because, to quote Wikipedia:

  > Depending on the underlying logic, the problem of deciding the validity of a formula varies from trivial to *impossible*.
  >
  > For propositional logic, the problem is *decidable* but Co-NP-complete, and hence only *exponential-time* algorithms are believed to exist for general proof tasks.
  >
  > For a first order predicate calculus identifying valid formulas is recursively enumerable: given unbounded resources, any valid formula can *eventually* be proven.
  >
  > However, invalid formulas *cannot* always be recognized.

  (this was heavily cut down, emphasis is mine)

Search space issues

- Another problem with the search space is:
  - how do we pick an action?
- We are just assuming that you can pick a good one.
  - In general, not a good tactic.
- Apply heuristics and use A^*
  - This is just a form of search problem after all

Didn't you say before that we shouldn't think of this as search?

Well, yes...

- The difference is that with the factored search operators we can look for *domain independent* heuristics.
  - Ones that will work for planning problems in general.
- Ignore preconditions
  - Just as in search we can establish heuristics that relax the constraints on the problem ensuring that they are *admissable*.
- Ignore selected preconditions.
- Ignore delete lists
  - No action undoes the effect of another action.

- While this gives us a set of heuristics, the state space is still big
  - $\sim 10^{100}$ remember
- State abstraction.
  - plan in a space that groups states together
- The textbook talks about planning for 10 airports with 50 planes and 200 pieces of luggage.
  - Every plane can be at any airport and each package can be on any plane or unloaded at an airport.
  - $50^{10} \times 200^{50+10} \approx 10^{155}$ states

- If all the packages are constrained to be at only 5 of the airports, and all packages at one airport have the same destination, we can reduce the problem to have just 5 airports and and one plane and package at the same airport.
  - $5^{10} \times 5^{50+10} \approx 10^{17}$ states
- Find solution and then expand back to the larger problem, maybe by composing solutions.
- Not optimal but easier.

The Frame Problem

- A general problem with representing properties of actions:

  How do we know exactly what changes as the result of performing an action?

  If I pick up a block, does my hair colour stay the same?
- One solution is to write *frame axioms*.

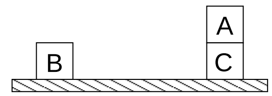
  Here is a frame axiom, which states that my hair colour is the same in all the situations s' that result from performing $Pickup(x)$ in situation s as it is in s.

$$\forall s, s'. Result(SP, Pickup(x), s) = s' \Rightarrow HCol(SP, s) = HCol(SP, s')$$

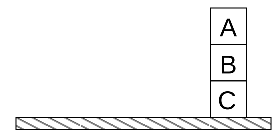
- Stating frame axioms in this way is infeasible for real problems.
- (Think of all the things that we would have to state in order to cover all the possible frame axioms).
- STRIPS solves this problem by assuming that everything not explicitly stated to have changed remains unchanged.
- The price we pay for this is that we lose one of the advantages of using logic:
  - Semantics goes out of the window
- However, more recent work has effectively solved the frame problem (using clever second-order approaches).

Sussman's Anomaly

- Consider again the following initial state and goal state:

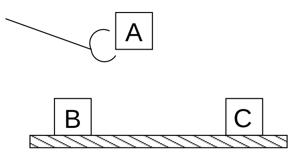


to



- Clearly the first operation is to unstack A from C.

- which gets us to here:

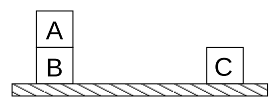


- But what next.
- If the planner considers that the final state is to have:

$$On(A, B)$$
$$On(B, C)$$

then making the next move $Stack(A, B)$ might seem to be close to the goal.

- We then get to:



which is no closer to our real goal.

- In fact it just means a longer path to the goal which involves going back through the previous state.
- This is a big problem with linear planners
- How could we modify our planning algorithm?

- Modify the middle of the algorithm to be:

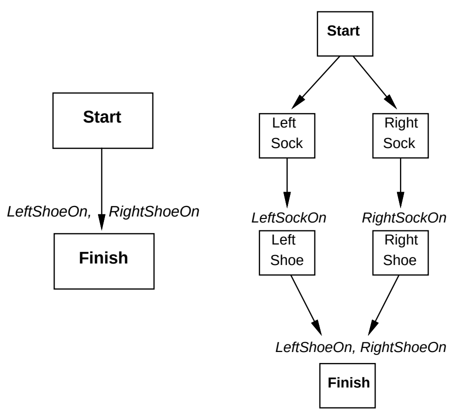
```
1.   if d ⊨ g then
2.       return p
3.   else
4.       choose some a in A
4a.      if no_clobber(a, rest_of_plan)
5.           set g = (g − add(a)) ∪ pre(a)
6.           append a to p
7.       return plan(d, g, p, A)
```

- But how can we do this?

Partial Order Planning

- The answer to the problem on the previous slide is to use *partial order planning*.
- Basically this gives us a way of checking before adding an action to the plan that it doesn't mess up the rest of the plan.
- The problem is that in the recursive process used by STRIPS, we don't know what the "rest of the plan" is.
- Need a new representation *partially ordered plans*.
- This means remembering what a "partial order" is.

Representation



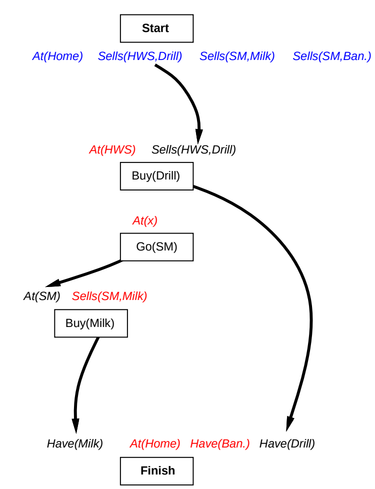
Partially ordered plans

- *Partially ordered* collection of steps with
  - *Start* step has the initial state description as its effect
  - *Finish* step has the goal description as its precondition
  - *causal links* from outcome of one step to precondition of another
  - *temporal ordering* between pairs of steps
- *Open condition* = precondition of a step not yet causally linked
- A plan is *complete* iff every precondition is achieved
- A precondition is *achieved* iff it is the effect of an earlier step and no *possibly intervening* step undoes it

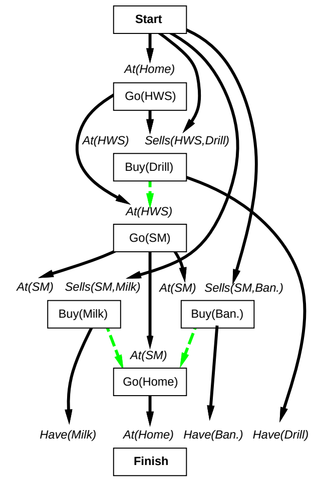
Plan construction

- We start with just the start and end states.

- Then we add in actions, as they seem appropriate.
- We introduce actions that achieve:
  - either the pre-conditions of the final state; or
  - the pre-conditions of actions that were already added.
- Matching pre- and post-conditions are linked.



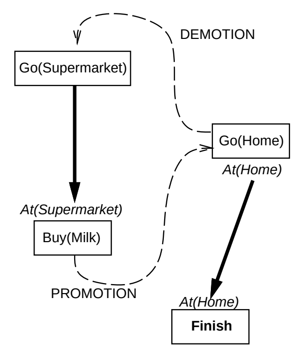
- Some actions will introduce ordering constraints on other actions by having post-conditions that make the pre-conditions of those other actions false.
- These force us to order some actions with respect to each other.
- Thus we don't care what order we buy the milk and bananas in, but we have to do both before we go home.



- The causal links between actions give us a way to detect the "clobbering" mentioned in the previous algorithm.
- This tells us how the steps must be ordered
  - If they need ordering.

Clobbering

- A *clobberer* is a potentially intervening step that destroys the condition achieved by a causal link. E.g., *Go*(*Home*) clobbers *At*(*Supermarket*):



Demotion: put before *Go*(*Supermarket*)

Promotion: put after *Buy*(*Milk*)

Planning process

- Operators on partial plans:
  - *add a link* from an existing action to an open condition
  - *add a step* to fulfill an open condition
  - *order* one step wrt another to remove possible conflicts
- Gradually move from incomplete/vague plans to complete, correct plans
- Backtrack if an open condition is unachievable or if a conflict is unresolvable

function POP(*initial, goal, operators*) **returns** *plan*
  plan ← MAKE-MINIMAL-PLAN(*initial, goal*)
  loop do
    if SOLUTION?(*plan*) **then return** *plan*
    S_{need}, c ← SELECT-SUBGOAL(*plan*)
    CHOOSE-OPERATOR(*plan, operators*, S_{need}, c)
    RESOLVE-THREATS(*plan*)
  end

---

function SELECT-SUBGOAL(*plan*) **returns** S_{need}, c
  pick a plan step S_{need} from STEPS(*plan*)
    with a precondition c that has not been achieved
  return S_{need}, c

procedure CHOOSE-OPERATOR(*plan, operators*, S_{need}, c)
  choose a step S_{add} from *operators* or STEPS(*plan*) that has c as an effect
  if there is no such step **then fail**
  add the causal link $S_{add} \xrightarrow{c} S_{need}$ to LINKS(*plan*)
  add the ordering constraint $S_{add} \prec S_{need}$ to ORDERINGS(*plan*)
  if S_{add} is a newly added step from *operators* **then**
    add S_{add} to STEPS(*plan*)
    add $Start \prec S_{add} \prec Finish$ to ORDERINGS(*plan*)

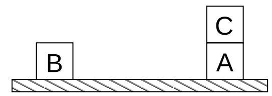
procedure RESOLVE-THREATS(*plan*)
  for each S_{threat} that threatens a link $S_i \xrightarrow{c} S_j$ in LINKS(*plan*) **do**
    choose either
      Demotion: Add $S_{threat} \prec S_i$ to ORDERINGS(*plan*)
      Promotion: Add $S_j \prec S_{threat}$ to ORDERINGS(*plan*)
    if not CONSISTENT(*plan*) **then fail**
  end

Properties of POP

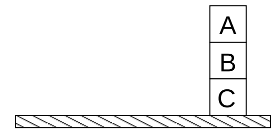
- Nondeterministic algorithm: backtracks at *choice* points on failure:
  - choice of S_{add} to achieve S_{need}
  - choice of demotion or promotion for clobberer
  - selection of S_{need} is irrevocable
- POP is sound, complete, and systematic (no repetition)
- Extensions for disjunction, universals, negation, conditionals
- Can be made efficient with good heuristics derived from problem description
- Particularly good for problems with many loosely related subgoals

Sussman's Anomaly Revisited

- Another version of Sussman's anomaly appears here:

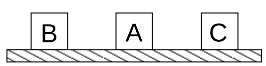


to

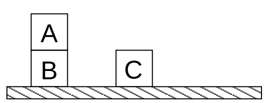


- In this case the problem appears once we have placed all the blocks on the table.

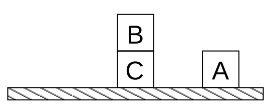
- From here:



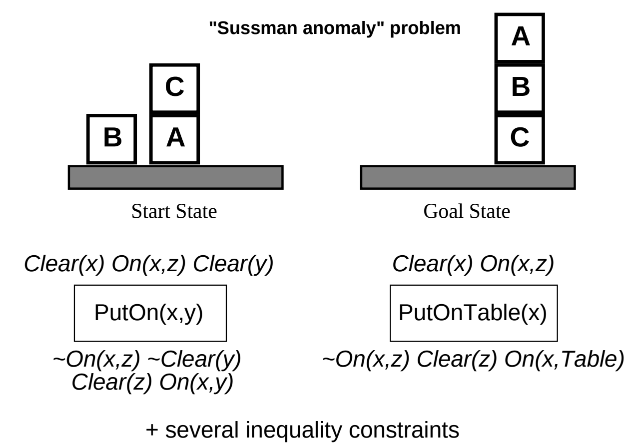
this:

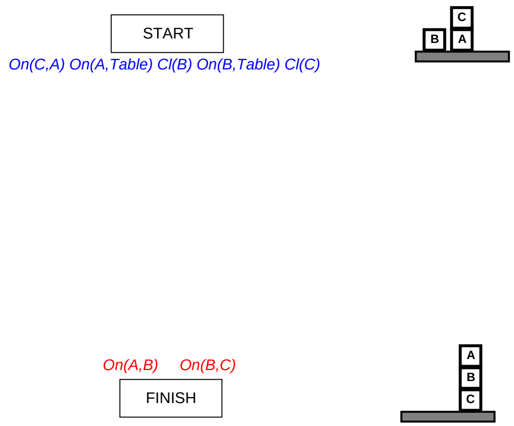


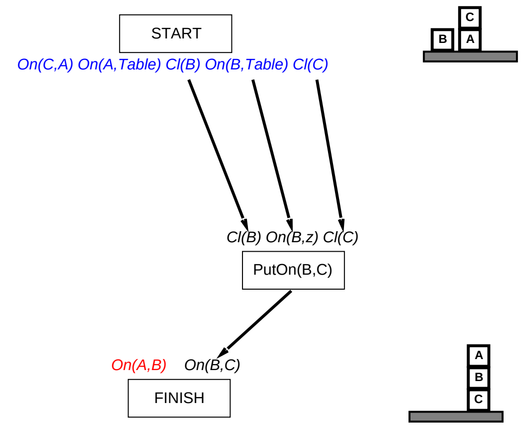
seems as good a move as this:

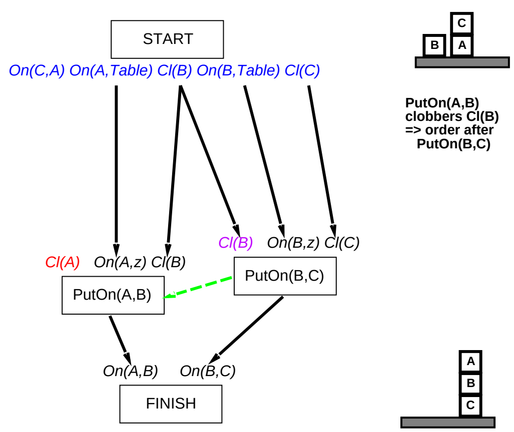


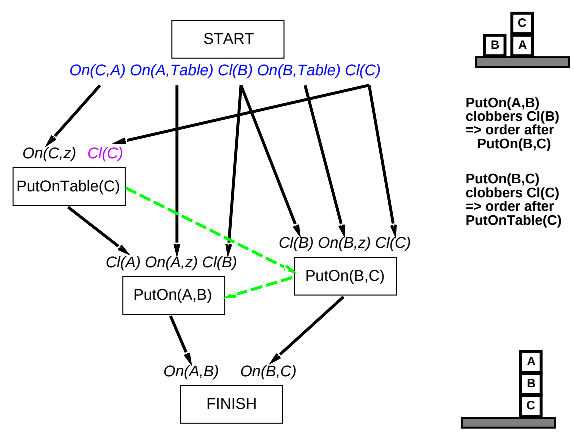
without some special purpose heuristic.




START
On(C,A) On(A,Table) Cl(B) On(B,Table) Cl(C)
C
B A
On(A,B) On(B,C)
FINISH
A
B
C


START
On(C,A) On(A,Table) Cl(B) On(B,Table) Cl(C)
C
B A
Cl(B) On(B,z) Cl(C)
PutOn(B,C)
On(A,B) On(B,C)
FINISH
A
B
C


START
On(C,A) On(A,Table) Cl(B) On(B,Table) Cl(C)
C
B A
PutOn(A,B)
clobbers Cl(B)
=> order after
PutOn(B,C)
Cl(B) On(B,z) Cl(C)
Cl(A) On(A,z) Cl(B)
PutOn(B,C)
PutOn(A,B)
On(A,B) On(B,C)
FINISH
A
B
C


START
On(C,A) On(A,Table) Cl(B) On(B,Table) Cl(C)
C
B A
PutOn(A,B)
clobbers Cl(B)
=> order after
PutOn(B,C)
PutOn(B,C)
clobbers Cl(C)
=> order after
PutOnTable(C)
On(C,z) Cl(C)
PutOnTable(C)
Cl(B) On(B,z) Cl(C)
Cl(A) On(A,z) Cl(B)
PutOn(B,C)
PutOn(A,B)
On(A,B) On(B,C)
FINISH
A
B
C

State of the art

- Though POP is quite intuitive, it isn't the best planner out there any more.
- Currently the hottest planning approaches are the following.
- SATPlan
  - Specify the problem in logic, including all possible transitions.
  - See if there is a satisfying model

  This shifts the computational burden to the creation of all possible sequences, which can then be checked fast for specific goals.
- Search with clever general purpose heuristics.
- GraphPlan
  - Build a graph which approximates the state space.

Summary

- This lecture has looked at planning.
- We started with a logical view of planning, using STRIPS operators.
- We also discussed the frame problem, and Sussman's anomaly.
- Sussman's anomaly motivated some thoughts about partial-order planning.
- We looked at partial order planning in some detail, and then talked about the POP algorithm.