cis32-ai — lecture # 21 — mon-24-apr-2006

today's topics:

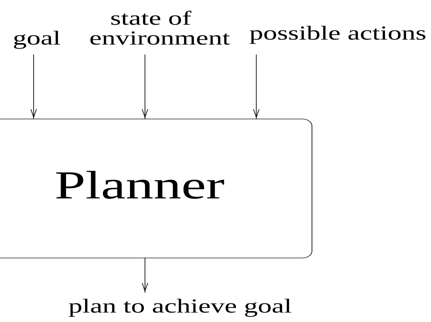
- logic-based agents (see notes from last time)
- planning

What is Planning?

- Key problem facing *agent* is *deciding what to do*.
- We want agents to be *taskable*: give them *goals* to achieve, have them decide for themselves how to achieve them.
- Basic idea is to give an agent:
  - representation of goal to achieve;
  - knowledge about what actions it can perform; and
  - knowledge about state of the world;

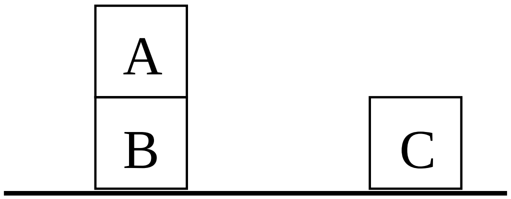
  and to have it generate a *plan* to achieve the goal.
- Essentially, this is

  automatic programming.



- Question: How do we *represent*...
  - goal to be achieved;
  - state of environment;
  - actions available to agent;
  - plan itself.
- We show how all this can be done in first-order logic...

- We'll illustrate the techniques with reference to the *blocks world*.
- Contains a robot arm, 3 blocks (A, B and C) of equal size, and a table-top.
- Initial state:



- 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 first-order logic representation of the blocks world described above:

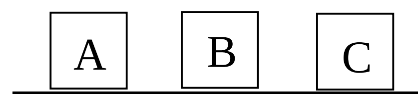
$$\begin{array}{l} Clear(A) \\ On(A, B) \\ OnTable(B) \\ OnTable(C) \\ Clear(C) \end{array}$$

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

- A *goal* is represented as a first-order logic formula.
- Here is a goal:

$$OnTable(A) \wedge OnTable(B) \wedge OnTable(C)$$

- Which corresponds to the state:



- *Actions* are represented using a technique that was developed in the STRIPS planner.

- 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*.

- Example 1:
  The *stack* action occurs when the robot arm places the object x it is holding is placed on top of object y.

	$Stack(x, y)$
pre	$Clear(y) \wedge Holding(x)$
del	$Clear(y) \wedge Holding(x)$
add	$ArmEmpty \wedge On(x, y)$

- Example 2:
  The *unstack* action occurs when the robot arm picks an object x up from on top of another object y.

	$UnStack(x, y)$
pre	$On(x, y) \wedge Clear(x) \wedge ArmEmpty$
del	$On(x, y) \wedge ArmEmpty$
add	$Holding(x) \wedge Clear(y)$

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

- Example 3:
  The *pickup* action occurs when the arm picks up an object x from the table.

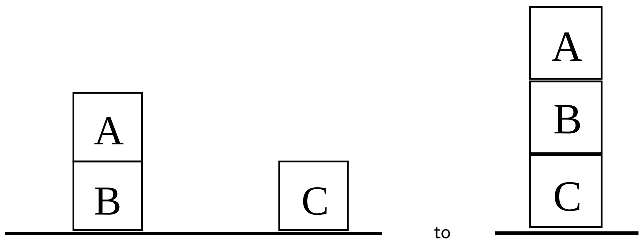
	$Pickup(x)$
pre	$Clear(x) \wedge OnTable(x) \wedge ArmEmpty$
del	$OnTable(x) \wedge ArmEmpty$
add	$Holding(x)$

- Example 4:
  The *putdown* action occurs when the arm places the object x onto the table.

	$PutDown(x)$
pre	$Holding(x)$
del	$Holding(x)$
add	$Holding(x) \wedge ArmEmpty$

- What is a plan?

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



- We need the set of actions:

$$Unstack(A)$$
$$Putdown(A)$$
$$Pickup(B)$$
$$Stack(B, C)$$
$$Pickup(A)$$
$$Stack(A, B)$$

- 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*.
- Involves backward chaining from goal to original state.
- Start by finding an action that has 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.


```
function plan(
    d : WorldDesc,        // initial env state
    g : Goal,             // goal to be achieved
    p : Plan,             // plan so far
    A : set of actions    // actions available)
if d ⊨ g then
    return p
else
    choose a in A such that
        add(a) ⊨ g and
        del(a) ⊭ g
    set g = pre(a)
    append a to p
    return plan(d, g, p, A)
```

- How does this work on the previous example?

- This algorithm not guaranteed to find the plan…
- … but it is *sound*: If it finds the plan is correct.
- Some problems:
  - negative goals;
  - maintenance goals;
  - conditionals & loops;
  - exponential search space;
  - logical consequence tests;

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*.

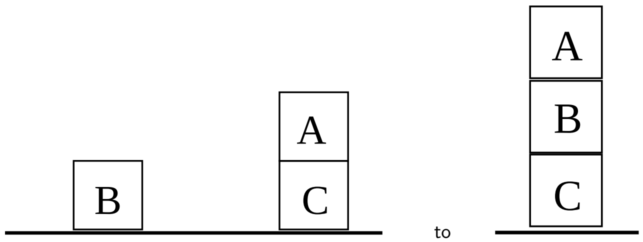
  Here is a frame axiom, which states that SP's hair colour is the same in all the situations s' that result from performing $Pickup(x)$ in situation s as it is in s.

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

- Stating frame axioms in this way is unfeasible 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 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 we have the following initial state and goal state:



- What operations will be in the plan?

- Clearly we need to $Stack$ B on C at some point, and we also need to $Unstack$ A from C and $Stack$ it on B.
- Which operation goes first?
- Obviously we need to do the $UnStack$ first, and the $Stack\ B$ on C, but the planner has no way of knowing this.
- It also has no way of "undoing" a partial plan if it leads into a dead end.
- So if it chooses to $Stack(A, C)$ after the $Unstack$, it is sunk.
- This is a big problem with linear planners
- How could we modify our planning algorithm?

- Modify the middle of the algorithm to be:

if $d \models g$ then
    return p
else
    choose a in A such that
        $add(a) \models g$ and
        $del(a) \not\models g$
        $no\_clobber(add(a), del(a), rest\_of\_plan)$
    set $g = pre(a)$
    append a to p
    return $plan(d, g, p, A)$

- But how can we do this?
- We will give an answer in the next lecture.

Summary

- This lecture has looked at planning.
- We looked mainly at 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 will cover partial order planning in more detail in the next lecture.