Functional Programming

Lambda Calculus

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The Lambda Calculus

What Wikipedia says

Lambda calculus (also written as λ-calculus) is a formal system in mathematical logic for expressing computation based on function abstraction and application [. . .]. It is a universal model of computation that can be used to simulate any Turing machine and was first introduced by mathematician Alonzo Church in the 1930s as part of his research [on] the foundations of mathematics.

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Further down it says

- ✓ Lambda calculus has applications in many different areas in mathematics, philosophy, linguistics, and computer science.
- ✓ Lambda calculus has played an important role in the development of the theory of programming languages.
- ✗ Functional programming languages implement the lambda calculus.

Syntax of the λ-calculus

λ terms

$$
\begin{aligned}
M, N ::= {} & x && \text{variable} \\
\mid {} & (\lambda x.M) && \text{(lambda) abstraction} \\
\mid {} & (M\ N) && \text{application}
\end{aligned}
$$

- Variables are drawn from infinite denumerable set
- $(\lambda x.M)$ **binds** x in M

Syntax of the λ-calculus

λ terms

$$\begin{array}{lll} M, N ::= x & & \text{variable} \\ \quad\quad \mid (\lambda x.M) & & \text{(lambda) abstraction} \\ \quad\quad \mid (M\,N) & & \text{application} \end{array}$$

- Variables are drawn from infinite denumerable set
- $(\lambda x.M)$ **binds** x in M

Conventions for omitting parentheses

- abstractions extend as far to the right as possible
- application is left associative

Working with lambda terms

Free and bound variables

$$
\begin{aligned}
\mathrm{free}(x) &= \{x\} \\
\mathrm{free}(M\ N) &= \mathrm{free}(M) \cup \mathrm{free}(N) \\
\mathrm{free}(\lambda x.M) &= \mathrm{free}(M) \setminus \{x\}
\end{aligned}
$$

$$
\begin{aligned}
\mathrm{bound}(x) &= \varnothing \\
\mathrm{bound}(M\ N) &= \mathrm{bound}(M) \cup \mathrm{bound}(N) \\
\mathrm{bound}(\lambda x.M) &= \mathrm{bound}(M) \cup \{x\}
\end{aligned}
$$

$$
\mathrm{var}(M) = \mathrm{free}(M) \cup \mathrm{bound}(M)
$$

A lambda term M is **closed** (M is a **combinator**) iff $\mathrm{free}(M) = \varnothing$.
Otherwise the term is **open**.

Working with lambda terms

Substitution $M[x \mapsto N]$

$$
\begin{aligned}
x[x \mapsto N] &= N \\
y[x \mapsto N] &= y && x \neq y \\
(\lambda x.M)[x \mapsto N] &:= \lambda x.M \\
(\lambda y.M)[x \mapsto N] &:= \lambda y.(M[x \mapsto N]) && x \neq y, y \notin \mathsf{free}(N) \\
(\lambda y.M)[x \mapsto N] &:= \lambda y'.(M[y \mapsto y'][x \to N]) && x \neq y, y \in \mathsf{free}(N), y' \notin \mathsf{free}(M) \cup \mathsf{free}(N) \\
(M\,M')[x \mapsto N] &:= (M[x \mapsto N])(M'[x \mapsto N])
\end{aligned}
$$

Guiding principle: **capture freedom**

In every $(\lambda x.M)$ the bound variable x is "connected" to each free occurrence of x in M. These connections must not be broken by substitution.

Computing with lambda terms

Reduction rules

$(\lambda x.M) \rightarrow_\alpha (\lambda y.M[x \mapsto y])$	$y \notin \mathrm{free}(M)$	Alpha reduction
$((\lambda x.M)\, N) \rightarrow_\beta M[x \mapsto N]$		Beta reduction (function application)
$(\lambda x.(M\, N)) \rightarrow_\eta M$	$x \notin \mathrm{free}(M)$	Eta reduction

Computing with lambda terms

Reduction rules

$$
\begin{array}{lll}
(\lambda x.M) \rightarrow_{\alpha} (\lambda y.M[x \mapsto y]) & y \notin \mathrm{free}(M) & \text{Alpha reduction} \\
((\lambda x.M)\, N) \rightarrow_{\beta} M[x \mapsto N] & & \text{Beta reduction (function application)} \\
(\lambda x.(M\, N)) \rightarrow_{\eta} M & x \notin \mathrm{free}(M) & \text{Eta reduction}
\end{array}
$$

Reductions may be applied everywhere in a term

$$
\frac{M \rightarrow_x M'}{(\lambda y.M) \rightarrow_x (\lambda y.M')}
\qquad
\frac{M \rightarrow_x M'}{(M\ N) \rightarrow_x (M'\ N)}
\qquad
\frac{N \rightarrow_x N'}{(M\ N) \rightarrow_x (M\ N')}
$$

The theory of the lambda calculus

Computation and equivalence

For $x \subseteq \{\alpha, \beta, \gamma\}$ and reduction relation $\rightarrow_x$,

- $\xrightarrow{*}_x$ is the reflexive-transitive closure,
- $\leftrightarrow_x$ is its symmetric closure,
- $\overset{*}{\leftrightarrow}_x$ is its reflexive-transitive-symmetric closure.

The theory of the lambda calculus

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Equality in lambda calculus

- Alpha equivalence: $M =_\alpha N$ iff $M \stackrel{*}{\leftrightarrow}_\alpha N$.
- Standard: $M =_\beta N$ iff $M \stackrel{*}{\leftrightarrow}_{\alpha,\beta} N$.
- Extensional: $M =_{\beta\eta} N$ iff $M \stackrel{*}{\leftrightarrow}_{\alpha,\beta,\eta} N$.

Computing with lambda terms

Definition: Normal form

Let M be a lambda term.
A lambda term N is a **normal form** of M iff $M \xrightarrow{*}_\beta N$ and there is no N' with $N \rightarrow_\beta N'$.

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A lambda term without normal form

$$(\lambda x.x\ x)(\lambda x.x\ x) \rightarrow_\beta (\lambda x.x\ x)(\lambda x.x\ x)$$

Computing with lambda terms makes sense

The Church-Rosser theorem

Beta reduction has the **Church-Rosser property**:

$$\begin{tikzcd}
M_1 \arrow[rr, leftrightarrow, "\beta*"] \arrow[dr, "\beta*"'] & & M_2 \arrow[dl, "\beta*"] \\
& N &
\end{tikzcd}$$

That is: For all M_1, M_2 with $M_1 \overset{*}{\leftrightarrow}_\beta M_2$, there is some N with $M_1 \overset{*}{\rightarrow}_\beta N$ and $M_2 \overset{*}{\rightarrow}_\beta N$.

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That is: For all M_1, M_2 with $M_1 \overset{*}{\leftrightarrow}_\beta M_2$, there is some N with $M_1 \overset{*}{\rightarrow}_\beta N$ and $M_2 \overset{*}{\rightarrow}_\beta N$.

Corollary

A lambda term M has at most one normal form modulo α reduction.

Programming in the pure lambda calculus

From functions to arbitrary datatypes

Any computation may be encoded in the lambda calculus

- Booleans and conditionals
- Numbers
- Recursion
- Products (pairs)
- Variants

Booleans and conditional

Requirements / Specification

Wanted: Lambda terms *IF*, *TRUE*, *FALSE* such that

- $\mathit{IF}\ \mathit{TRUE}\ M\ N \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} M$
- $\mathit{IF}\ \mathit{FALSE}\ M\ N \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} N$

Booleans and conditional

Requirements / Specification

Wanted: Lambda terms *IF*, *TRUE*, *FALSE* such that

- $IF\ TRUE\ M\ N \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} M$
- $IF\ FALSE\ M\ N \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} N$

Idea

TRUE and *FALSE* are functions that select the first or second argument, respectively

Booleans and conditional

Booleans

$$TRUE = \lambda x.\lambda y.x \qquad FALSE = \lambda x.\lambda y.y$$

Booleans and conditional

Booleans

$$TRUE = \lambda x.\lambda y.x \qquad FALSE = \lambda x.\lambda y.y$$

Conditional

$$IF = \lambda b.\lambda t.\lambda f.b\, t\, f$$

Booleans and conditional

Booleans

$$TRUE = \lambda x.\lambda y.x \qquad FALSE = \lambda x.\lambda y.y$$

Conditional

$$IF = \lambda b.\lambda t.\lambda f.b\ t\ f$$

Check the spec!

...

Natural numbers

Requirements / Specification

Wanted: A family of lambda terms $\lceil n \rceil$, for each $n \in \mathbf{N}$, such that the arithmetic operations are *lambda definable*.

That is, there are lambda terms *ADD*, *SUB*, *MULT*, *DIV* such that

- $\mathit{ADD}\ \lceil m \rceil\ \lceil n \rceil \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} \lceil m + n \rceil$
- $\mathit{SUB}\ \lceil m \rceil\ \lceil n \rceil \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} \lceil m - n \rceil$
- $\mathit{MULT}\ \lceil m \rceil\ \lceil n \rceil \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} \lceil mn \rceil$
- $\mathit{DIV}\ \lceil m \rceil\ \lceil n \rceil \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} \lceil m/n \rceil$

Church numerals

One approach

The **Church numeral** $\lceil n \rceil$ of some natural number n is a function that takes two parameters, a function f and some x, and applies f n-times to x.

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Zero

$$\lceil 0 \rceil = \lambda f.\lambda x.x$$

Church numerals

One approach

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Zero

$$\lceil 0 \rceil = \lambda f.\lambda x.x$$

Successor

$$SUCC = \lambda n.\lambda f.\lambda x.f(n\,f\,x)$$

Church numerals — addition and multiplication

Addition

$$ADD = \lambda m.\lambda n.\lambda f.\lambda x.m\, f\, (n\, f\, x)$$

Church numerals — addition and multiplication

Addition

$$ADD = \lambda m.\lambda n.\lambda f.\lambda x.m\,f\,(n\,f\,x)$$

Multiplication

$$MULT = \lambda.\lambda n.\lambda f.\lambda x.m\,(n\,f)\,x$$

Church numerals — conditional

Wanted

IF0 such that

- $\mathit{IF0}\ \lceil 0 \rceil\ M\ N \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} M$
- $\mathit{IF0}\ \lceil n \rceil\ M\ N \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} M$ if $n \neq 0$

Church numerals — conditional

Wanted

IF0 such that

- $\mathit{IF0}\ \lceil 0 \rceil\ M\ N \xrightarrow{*}_\beta M$
- $\mathit{IF0}\ \lceil n \rceil\ M\ N \xrightarrow{*}_\beta M$ if $n \neq 0$

Testing for zero

$$\mathit{IF0} = \lambda n.\lambda z.\lambda s.n\,(\lambda x.s)\,z$$

Church numerals — conditional

Wanted

IF0 such that

- $\mathit{IF0}\ \lceil 0 \rceil\ M\ N \xrightarrow{*}_\beta M$
- $\mathit{IF0}\ \lceil n \rceil\ M\ N \xrightarrow{*}_\beta M$ if $n \neq 0$

Testing for zero

$$\mathit{IF0} = \lambda n.\lambda z.\lambda s.n\,(\lambda x.s)\,z$$

Check the spec!

...

Pairs

Specification

Wanted: lambda terms *PAIR*, *FST*, *SND* such that

- $FST(PAIR\ M\ N) \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} M$
- $SND(PAIR\ M\ N) \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} N$

Pairs

Specification

Wanted: lambda terms *PAIR*, *FST*, *SND* such that

- $FST(PAIR\ M\ N) \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} M$
- $SND(PAIR\ M\ N) \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} N$

Implementation

$$PAIR = \lambda x.\lambda y.\lambda v.v\,x\,y$$
$$FST = \lambda p.p(\lambda x.\lambda y.x)$$
$$SND = \lambda p.p(\lambda x.\lambda y.y)$$

Variants (Either)

Specification

Wanted: lambda terms $LEFT$, $RIGHT$, $CASE$ such that

- $CASE (LEFT\ M) N_l\ N_r \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} N_l\ M$
- $CASE (RIGHT\ M) N_l\ N_r \xrightarrow{*}_{\beta} N_r\ M$

Variants (Either)

Specification

Wanted: lambda terms *LEFT*, *RIGHT*, *CASE* such that

- $CASE(LEFT\ M) N_l\ N_r \xrightarrow{*}_\beta N_l\ M$
- $CASE(RIGHT\ M) N_l\ N_r \xrightarrow{*}_\beta N_r\ M$

Implementation

$$CASE =$$

$$LEFT =$$

$$RIGHT =$$

Recursion

Fixpoint theorem

Every lambda term has a fixpoint:
For every M there is some N such that $M\,N \overset{*}{\leftrightarrow}_\beta N$.

Remark

Y is Curry's **fixpoint combinator**. There are infinitely many more fixpoint combinators with various properties.

Recursion

Fixpoint theorem

Every lambda term has a fixpoint:
For every M there is some N such that $M\,N \overset{*}{\leftrightarrow}_\beta N$.

Proof

Let $N = Y\ M$ where

$$Y := \lambda f.(\lambda x.f\ (x\ x))\ (\lambda x.f\ (x\ x)).$$

Remark

Y is Curry's **fixpoint combinator**. There are infinitely many more fixpoint combinators with various properties.

Wrapup

- Lambda calculus contains the primitives of the theory of recursive functions
- The theory of recursive functions is Turing complete
- Hence is the (untyped) lambda calculus