

# Introduction to Theano

## A Fast Python Library for Modelling and Training

Pascal Lamblin, Frédéric Bastien  
Institut des algorithmes d'apprentissage de Montréal  
Montreal Institute for Learning Algorithms  
Université de Montréal

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# Objectives

Today: Introduction to Theano

- ▶ Theoretical part
- ▶ Small examples

Tomorrow, 16:30: Practical session

- ▶ Hands-on exercises on the basics of Theano
- ▶ Hands-on exercises on debugging in Theano
- ▶ Examples of basic deep models (ConvNets, RNNs)
- ▶ Bring a laptop with a browser (GPU instances on Amazon)

All the material is online at

<https://github.com/mila-udem/summerschool2016/>

## Overview

Motivation

Basic Usage

## Graph definition and Syntax

Graph structure

Strong typing

Differences from Python/NumPy

## Graph Transformations

Substitution and Cloning

Gradient

Shared variables

## Make it fast!

Optimizations

Code Generation

GPU

## Advanced Topics

Looping: the scan operation

Extending Theano

New features

# Theano vision

## Mathematical symbolic expression compiler

- ▶ Easy to define expressions
  - ▶ Expressions mimic NumPy's syntax and semantics
- ▶ Possible to manipulate those expressions
  - ▶ Substitutions
  - ▶ Gradient, R operator
  - ▶ Stability optimizations
- ▶ Fast to compute values for those expressions
  - ▶ Speed optimizations
  - ▶ Use fast back-ends (CUDA, BLAS, custom C code)
- ▶ Tools to inspect and check for correctness

## Current status

- ▶ Mature: Theano has been developed and used since January 2008 (8 years old)
- ▶ Driven hundreds of research papers
- ▶ Good user documentation
- ▶ Active mailing list with participants worldwide
- ▶ Core technology for Silicon Valley start-ups
- ▶ Many contributors from different places
- ▶ Used to teach university classes
- ▶ Has been used for research at large companies

Theano: [deeplearning.net/software/theano/](http://deeplearning.net/software/theano/)

Deep Learning Tutorials: [deeplearning.net/tutorial/](http://deeplearning.net/tutorial/)

## Related projects

Many libraries are built on top of Theano (mostly machine learning)

- ▶ Blocks
- ▶ Keras
- ▶ Lasagne
- ▶ PyMC 3
- ▶ sklearn-theano
- ▶ Platoon
- ▶ Theano-MPI
- ▶ ...

## Basic usage

Theano defines a **language**, a **compiler**, and a **library**.

- ▶ Define a symbolic expression
- ▶ Compile a function that can compute values
- ▶ Execute that function on numeric values

## Defining an expression

- Symbolic, strongly-typed inputs

```
import theano
from theano import tensor as T
x = T.vector('x')
W = T.matrix('W')
b = T.vector('b')
```

- NumPy-like syntax to build expressions

```
dot = T.dot(x, W)
out = T.nnet.sigmoid(dot + b)
```



## Graph visualization (1)

```
debugprint(dot)
dot [@A] ''
  |x [@B]
  |W [@C]

debugprint(out)
sigmoid [@A] ''
  |Elemwise{add,no_inplace} [@B] ''
    |dot [@C] ''
      | |x [@D]
      | |W [@E]
      |b [@F]
```

## Compiling a Theano function

Build a callable that compute outputs given inputs

```
f = theano.function(inputs=[x, W], outputs=dot)
g = theano.function([x, W, b], out)
h = theano.function([x, W, b], [dot, out])
i = theano.function([x, W, b], [dot + b, out])
```

## Graph visualization (2)

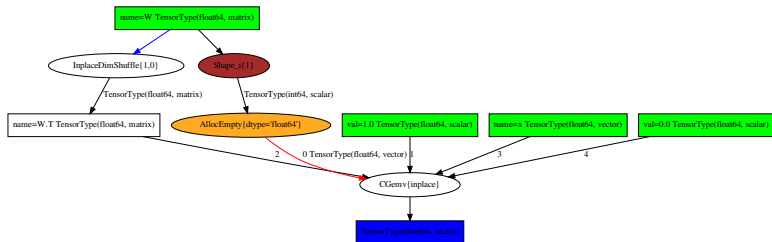
```
theano.printing.debugprint(f)
CGemv{inplace} [@A] '' 3
| AllocEmpty{dtype='float64'} [@B] '' 2
| | Shape_i{1} [@C] '' 1
| | | W [@D]
| | TensorConstant{1.0} [@E]
| | InplaceDimShuffle{1,0} [@F] 'W.T' 0
| | | W [@D]
| | x [@G]
| TensorConstant{0.0} [@H]
```

```
theano.printing.pydotprint(f)
```

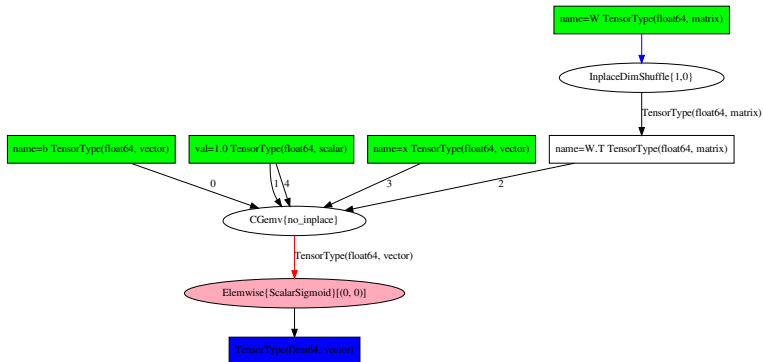
```
theano.printing.debugprint(g)
Elemwise{ScalarSigmoid}[(0, 0)] [@A] '' 2
| CGemv{no_inplace} [@B] '' 1
| | b [@C]
| | TensorConstant{1.0} [@D]
| | InplaceDimShuffle{1,0} [@E] 'W.T' 0
| | | W [@F]
| | x [@G]
| TensorConstant{1.0} [@D]
```

```
theano.printing.pydotprint(g)
```

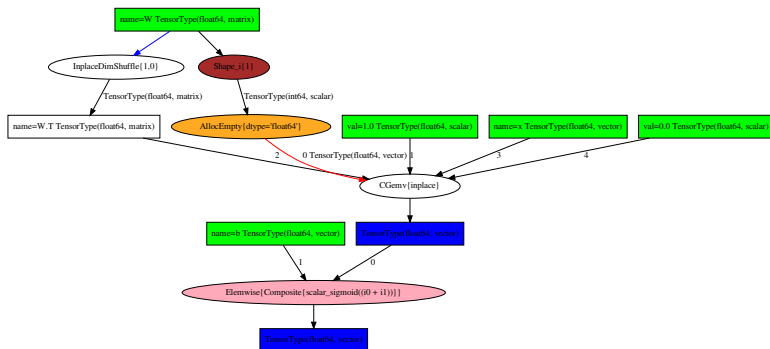
## pydotprint(f)



## pydotprint(g)



## pydotprint(h)



## d3viz

d3viz enables interactive visualization of graphs in a web browser

```
from theano.d3viz import d3viz
```

```
d3viz(f, './d3viz_f.html')
```

```
d3viz(g, './d3viz_g.html')
```

```
d3viz(h, './d3viz_h.html')
```

## Executing a Theano function

Call it with numeric values

```
import numpy as np
np.random.seed(42)
W_val = np.random.randn(4, 3)
x_val = np.random.rand(4)
b_val = np.ones(3)

f(x_val, W_val)
# -> array([ 1.79048354,  0.03158954, -0.26423186])

g(x_val, W_val, b_val)
# -> array([ 0.9421594 ,  0.73722395,  0.67606977])

h(x_val, W_val, b_val)
# -> [array([ 1.79048354,  0.03158954, -0.26423186]),
#      array([ 0.9421594 ,  0.73722395,  0.67606977])]

i(x_val, W_val, b_val)
# -> [array([ 2.79048354,  1.03158954,  0.73576814]),
#      array([ 0.9421594 ,  0.73722395,  0.67606977])]
```



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- Graph structure
- Strong typing
- Differences from Python/NumPy

## Graph Transformations

- Substitution and Cloning
- Gradient
- Shared variables

## Make it fast!

- Optimizations
- Code Generation
- GPU

## Advanced Topics

- Looping: the scan operation
- Extending Theano
- New features

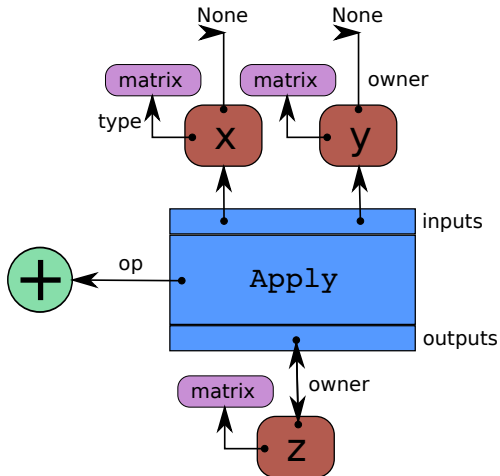
## Graph structure

The graph that represents mathematical operations is **bipartite**, and has two sorts of nodes:

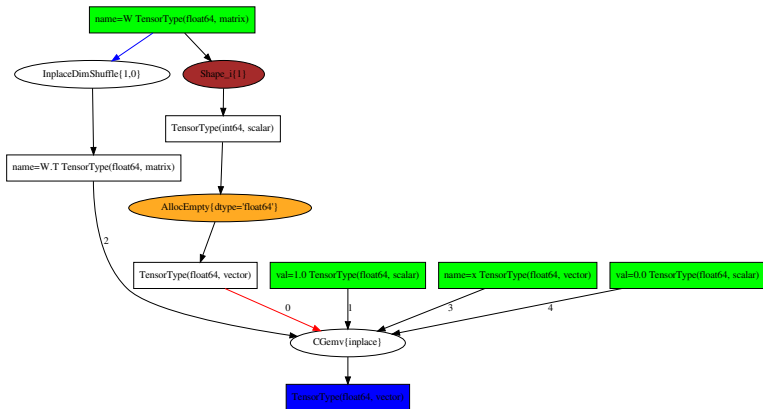
- ▶ Variable nodes, or variables, that represent *data*
- ▶ Apply nodes, that represent the application of *mathematical operations*

In practice:

- ▶ Variables are used for the graph inputs and outputs, and intermediate values
- ▶ Variables will hold data during the function execution phase
- ▶ An Apply node has inputs and outputs, which are variables
- ▶ An Apply node represents the specific application of an Op on these input variables
- ▶ The same variable can be used as inputs by several Apply nodes



pydotprint(f, compact=False)



## Strong typing

- ▶ All Theano variables have a type
- ▶ Different categories of types. Most used:
  - ▶ `TensorType` for NumPy ndarrays
  - ▶ `GpuArrayType` for CUDA arrays (`CudaNdarrayType` in the old back-end)
  - ▶ `Sparse` for `scipy.sparse` matrices
- ▶ `ndim`, `dtype`, broadcastable pattern are part of the type
- ▶ shape and memory layout (strides) are **not**

## Broadcasting tensors

- ▶ Implicit replication of arrays along broadcastable dimensions
- ▶ Broadcastable dimensions will **always** have length 1
- ▶ Such dimensions can be added to the left

```
r = T.row('r')
print(r.broadcastable)  # (True, False)
c = T.col('c')
print(c.broadcastable)  # (False, True)

f = theano.function([r, c], r + c)
print(f([[1, 2, 3]], [[.1], [.2]]))
```

## No side effects

Create new variables, cannot *change* them

- ▶ `a += 1` works, returns new variable and re-assign
- ▶ `a[:] += 1`, or `a[:] = 0` do **not** work (the `__setitem__` method cannot return a new object)
- ▶ `a = T.inc_subtensor(a[:], 1)` or `a = T.set_subtensor(a[:], 0)`
- ▶ This will create a new variable, and re-assign `a` to it
- ▶ Theano will figure out later if it can use an in-place version

Exceptions:

- ▶ The `Print()` Op
- ▶ The `Assert()` Op
- ▶ You have to re-assign (or use the returned value)
- ▶ These can disrupt some optimizations

## Python keywords

We cannot redefine Python's keywords: they affect the flow when building the graph, not when executing it.

- ▶ `if var:` will always evaluate to `True`. Use `theano.ifelse.ifelse(var, expr1, expr2)`
- ▶ `for i in var:` will not work if `var` is symbolic. If `var` is numeric: loop unrolling. You can use `theano.scan`.
- ▶ `len(var)` cannot return a symbolic shape, you can use `var.shape[0]`
- ▶ `print` will print an identifier for the symbolic variable, there is a `Print()` operation



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## The givens keyword

With the variables defined earlier:

```
x = T.vector('x')
W = T.matrix('W')
b = T.vector('b')
dot = T.dot(x, W)
out = T.nnet.sigmoid(dot + b)
```

Substitution at the last moment, when compiling a function

```
x_ = T.vector('x_')
x_n = (x_ - x_.mean()) / x_.std()
f_n = theano.function([x_, W], dot, givens={x: x_n})
f_n(x_val, W_val)
# -> array([ 1.90651511,  0.60431744, -0.64253361])
```

## Cloning with replacement

Useful when building the expression graph

```
dot_n, out_n = theano.clone(  
    [dot, out],  
    replace={x: (x - x.mean()) / x.std()})  
f_n = theano.function([x, W], dot_n)  
f_n(x_val, W_val)  
# -> array([ 1.90651511,  0.60431744, -0.64253361])
```

## The back-propagation algorithm

Application of the chain-rule for functions from  $\mathbb{R}^N$  to  $\mathbb{R}$ .

- ▶  $C : \mathbb{R}^N \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$
- ▶  $f : \mathbb{R}^M \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$
- ▶  $g : \mathbb{R}^N \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^M$
- ▶  $C(x) = f(g(x))$
- ▶  $\frac{\partial C}{\partial x} \Big|_x = \frac{\partial f}{\partial g} \Big|_{g(x)} \cdot \frac{\partial g}{\partial x} \Big|_x$

The whole  $M \times N$  Jacobian matrix  $\frac{\partial g}{\partial x} \Big|_x$  is not needed.

We only need  $\nabla g_x : \mathbb{R}^M \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^N, v \mapsto v \cdot \frac{\partial g}{\partial x} \Big|_x$

## Using theano.grad

```
y = T.vector('y')
C = ((out - y) ** 2).sum()
dC_dW = theano.grad(C, W)
dC_db = theano.grad(C, b)
# or dC_dW, dC_db = theano.grad(C, [W, b])
```

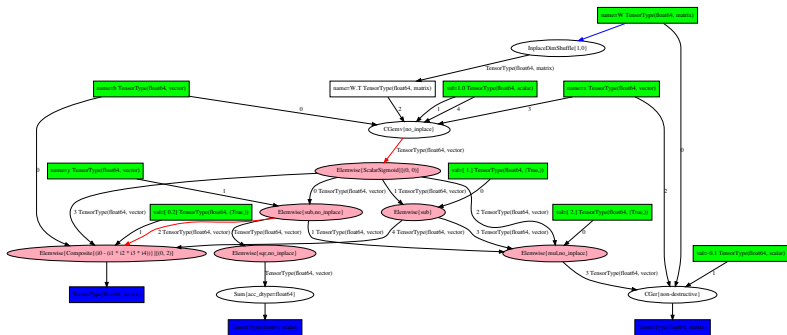
- ▶ `dC_dW` and `dC_db` are symbolic expressions, like `W` and `b`
- ▶ There are no numerical values at this point

## Using the gradients

- ▶ The symbolic gradients can be used to build a Theano function

```
cost_and_grads = theano.function([x, W, b, y], [C, dC_dW, dC_db])
y_val = np.random.uniform(size=3)
print(cost_and_grads(x_val, W_val, b_val, y_val))
```
- ▶ They can also be used to build new expressions

```
upd_W = W - 0.1 * dC_dW
upd_b = b - 0.1 * dC_db
cost_and_upd = theano.function([x, W, b, y], [C, upd_W, upd_b])
print cost_and_upd(x_val, W_val, b_val, y_val)
```



## Update values

Simple ways to update values

```
C_val, dC_dW_val, dC_db_val = cost_and_grads(x_val, W_val, b_val, y_val)
W_val -= 0.1 * dC_dW_val
b_val -= 0.1 * dC_db_val
```

```
C_val, W_val, b_val = cost_and_upd(x_val, W_val, b_val, y_val)
```

- ▶ Cumbersome
- ▶ Inefficient: memory, GPU transfers



## Shared variables

- ▶ Symbolic variables, with a **value** associated to them
- ▶ The value is **persistent** across function calls
- ▶ The value is **shared** among all functions
- ▶ The variable has to be an **input variable**
- ▶ The variable is an **implicit input** to all functions using it

## Using shared variables

```
x = T.vector('x')
y = T.vector('y')
W = theano.shared(W_val)
b = theano.shared(b_val)
dot = T.dot(x, W)
out = T.nnet.sigmoid(dot + b)
f = theano.function([x], dot)  # W is an implicit input
g = theano.function([x], out)  # W and b are implicit inputs
print(f(x_val))
# [ 1.79048354  0.03158954 -0.26423186]
print(g(x_val))
# [ 0.9421594  0.73722395  0.67606977]
```

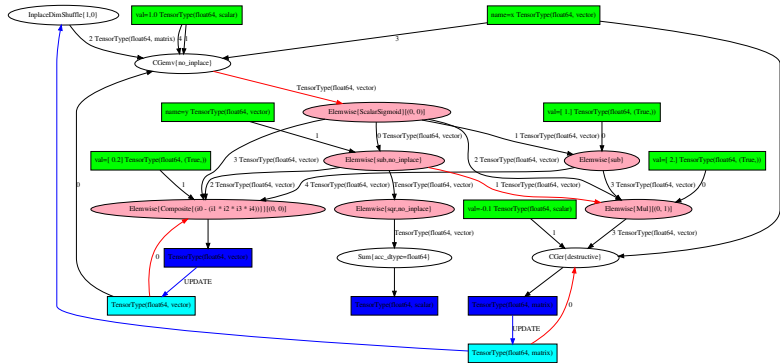
- Use `W.get_value()` and `W.set_value()` to access the value later

## Updating shared variables

```
C = ((out - y) ** 2).sum()
dC_dW, dC_db = theano.grad(C, [W, b])
upd_W = W - 0.1 * dC_dW
upd_b = b - 0.1 * dC_db
```

```
cost_and_perform_updates = theano.function(
    inputs=[x, y],
    outputs=C,
    updates=[(W, upd_W),
              (b, upd_b)])
```

- ▶ Variables  $W$  and  $b$  are **implicit inputs**
- ▶ Expressions  $upd\_W$  and  $upd\_b$  are **implicit outputs**
- ▶ All outputs, including the update expressions, are computed **before** the updates are performed



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## Graph optimizations

An optimization replaces a part of the graph with different nodes

- ▶ The types of the replaced nodes have to match

Different goals for optimizations:

- ▶ Merge equivalent computations
- ▶ Simplify expressions:  $x/x$  becomes 1
- ▶ Numerical stability: Gives the right answer for “ $\log(1 + x)$ ” even if  $x$  is really tiny.
- ▶ Insert in-place and destructive versions of operations
- ▶ Use specialized, high-performance versions (Elemwise loop fusion, GEMV, GEMM)
- ▶ Shape inference
- ▶ Constant folding
- ▶ Transfer to GPU

## Enabling/disabling optimizations

Trade-off between compilation speed, execution speed, error detection.  
Different pre-defined modes govern the runtime and how much optimizations are applied

- ▶ `mode='FAST_RUN'`: default, make the runtime as fast as possible, launching overhead. Includes moving computation to GPU if a GPU was selected
- ▶ `mode='FAST_COMPILE'`: minimize launching overhead, around NumPy speed
- ▶ `optimizer='fast_compile'`: enables code generation and GPU use, but limits graph optimizations
- ▶ `mode='DEBUG_MODE'`: checks and double-checks everything, extremely slow
- ▶ Enable and disable particular optimizations or sets of optimizations
- ▶ Can be done globally, or for each function

## C code for Ops

- ▶ Each operator can define C code computing the outputs given the inputs
- ▶ Otherwise, fall back to a Python implementation

How does this work?

- ▶ In Python, build a string representing the C code for a Python module
  - ▶ Stitching together code to extract data from Python structure,
  - ▶ Takes into account input and output types (ndim, dtype, ...)
  - ▶ String substitution for names of variables
- ▶ That module is compiled by g++
- ▶ The compiled module gets imported in Python
- ▶ Versioned cache of generated and compiled C code

For GPU code, same process, using CUDA and nvcc instead.



## The C virtual machine (CVM)

A runtime environment, or VM, that calls the functions performing computation of different parts of the function (from inputs to outputs)

- ▶ Avoids context switching between C and Python
- ▶ Data structure containing
  - ▶ Addresses of inputs and outputs of all nodes (intermediate values)
  - ▶ Ordering constraints
  - ▶ Pointer to functions performing the computations
  - ▶ Information on what has been computed, and needs to be computed
- ▶ Set in advance from Python when compiling a function
- ▶ At runtime, if all operations have C code, calling the pointers will be fast
- ▶ Also enables lazy evaluation (for ifelse for instance)

## Using the GPU

We want to make the use of GPUs as transparent as possible.

Theano features a new GPU back-end, with

- ▶ More dtypes, not only float32
- ▶ Easier interaction with GPU arrays from Python
- ▶ Multiple GPUs and multiple streams
- ▶ **In the development version only, not the 0.8.2 release**

Select GPU by setting the device flag to 'cuda' or 'cuda{0,1,2,...}'.

- ▶ All **shared** variables will be created in GPU memory
- ▶ Enables optimizations moving supported operations to GPU

You want to make sure to use float32 for speed

- ▶ 'floatX' is the default type of all tensors and sparse matrices.
- ▶ By default, aliased to 'float64' for double precision on CPU
- ▶ Can be set to 'float32' by a configuration flag
- ▶ You can always explicitly use `T.fmatrix()` or `T.matrix(dtype='float32')`
- ▶ Experimental support for 'float16' on some GPUs

## Configuration flags

Configuration flags can be set in a couple of ways:

- ▶ `THEANO_FLAGS=device=cuda0,floatX=float32` in the shell

- ▶ In Python:

```
theano.config.device = 'cuda0'  
theano.config.floatX = 'float32'
```

- ▶ In the `.theanorc` configuration file:

```
[global]  
device = cuda0  
floatX = float32
```

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### Symbolic looping

- ▶ Can perform map, reduce, reduce and accumulate, ...
- ▶ Can access outputs at previous time-step, or further back
- ▶ Symbolic number of steps
- ▶ Symbolic stopping condition (behaves as `do ... while`)
- ▶ Actually embeds a small Theano function
- ▶ Gradient through scan implements backprop through time
- ▶ Can be transferred to GPU

## Scan Examples: Loop with accumulation

```
k = T.iscalar("k")
A = T.vector("A")

# Symbolic description of the result
result, updates = theano.scan(fn=lambda prior_result, A: prior_result * A,
                              outputs_info=T.ones_like(A),
                              non_sequences=A,
                              n_steps=k)

# We only care about A**k, but scan has provided us with A**1 through A**k.
# Discard the values that we don't care about. Scan is smart enough to
# notice this and not waste memory saving them.
final_result = result[-1]

# compiled function that returns A**k
power = theano.function(inputs=[A, k], outputs=final_result, updates=updates)

print power(range(10), 2)
# [ 0.  1.  4.  9. 16. 25. 36. 49. 64. 81.]
print power(range(10), 4)
# [ 0.00000000e+00  1.00000000e+00  1.60000000e+01  8.10000000e+01
#    2.56000000e+02  6.25000000e+02  1.29600000e+03  2.40100000e+03
#    4.09600000e+03  6.56100000e+03]
```

## Visualization, debugging, and diagnostic tools

The *definition* of a Theano function is separate from its *execution*. To help with this, we provide:

- ▶ Information in error messages
- ▶ Diagnostic tools

## The easy way: Python

Easily wrap Python code, specialized library with Python bindings (PyCUDA, ...)

```
import theano
import numpy
from theano.compile.ops import as_op

def infer_shape_numpy_dot(node, input_shapes):
    ashp, bshp = input_shapes
    return [ashp[:-1] + bshp[-1:]]

@as_op(itypes=[theano.tensor.fmatrix, theano.tensor.fmatrix],
       otypes=[theano.tensor.fmatrix], infer_shape=infer_shape_numpy_dot)
def numpy_dot(a, b):
    return numpy.dot(a, b)
```

- ▶ Overhead of Python call could be slow
- ▶ To define the gradient, have to actually define a class deriving from Op, and define the grad method.

Has been used to implement 3D convolution using FFT on GPU



## The harder way: C code

- ▶ Understand the C-API of Python / NumPy / CudaNdarray
- ▶ Handle arbitrary strides (or use GpuContiguous)
- ▶ Manage refcounts for Python
- ▶ No overhead of Python function calls, or from the interpreter (if garbage collection is disabled)
- ▶ Now easier: C code in a separate file

New contributors wrote Caffe-style convolutions, using GEMM, on CPU and GPU that way.

## Features recently added to Theano

- ▶ New GPU back-end (dev branch), with:
  - ▶ Arrays of all dtypes, half-precision float (float16) for some operations
  - ▶ Support for multiple GPUs in the same function
  - ▶ Experimental support for OpenCL
- ▶ Performance improvements
  - ▶ Better interface and implementations for convolution and transposed convolution
  - ▶ Integration of CuDNN (now v5) for 2D/3D convolutions and pooling
  - ▶ CNMeM and a similar allocator
  - ▶ Data-parallelism with Platoon (<https://github.com/mila-udem/platoon/>)
- ▶ Faster compilation
  - ▶ Execution of un-optimized graph on GPU (quicker compile time)
  - ▶ Easier serialization/deserialization of optimized function graphs, GPU shared variables
  - ▶ Swapping/removing updates without recompiling
  - ▶ Partial evaluation of a compiled function
- ▶ Diagnostic tools
  - ▶ Interactive visualization (d3viz)
  - ▶ PdbBreakPoint
  - ▶ Creation stack trace (in progress)

## What to expect in the future

- ▶ Better support for int operations on GPU (indexing, argmax)
- ▶ More CuDNN operations (basic RNNs, batch normalization)
- ▶ Simpler, faster optimization mode
- ▶ Data-parallelism across nodes in Platoon

## Acknowledgements

- ▶ All people working or having worked at the MILA (previously LISA), especially Theano contributors
  - ▶ Frédéric Bastien, Yoshua Bengio, James Bergstra, Arnaud Bergeron, Olivier Breuleux, Pierre Luc Carrier, Ian Goodfellow, Razvan Pascanu, Joseph Turian, David Warde-Farley, and many more
- ▶ Compute Canada, Compute Québec, NSERC, the Canada Research Chairs, and CIFAR for providing funding or access to compute resources.
- ▶ The CRM and CIFAR for the organization.

Thanks for your attention

Questions, comments, requests?

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<http://github.com/mila-udem/summerschool2016/>

- ▶ Slides: [theano/course/intro\\_theano.pdf](#)
- ▶ Notebook with the code examples: [theano/course/intro\\_theano.ipynb](#)

## Thanks for your attention

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More resources

- ▶ Documentation: <http://deeplearning.net/software/theano/>
- ▶ Code: <http://github.com/Theano/Theano/>
- ▶ Article: The Theano Development Team, “Theano: A Python framework for fast computation of mathematical expressions”,  
<https://arxiv.org/abs/1605.02688>

## Exercises

Tutorial repository on GitHub:

[http://github.com/lamblin/ccw\\_tutorial/](http://github.com/lamblin/ccw_tutorial/)

- ▶ Install the dependencies
- ▶ Clone the repository  
`git clone https://github.com/lamblin/ccw_tutorial.git`
- ▶ Launch the notebook  
`ipython notebook ccw_tutorial`
- ▶ Navigate to Theano\_A2015, then exercises.ipynb