

# SciencesPo Computational Economics

## Spring 2019

Florian Oswald

April 15, 2019

## 1 Computational Economics: Optimization I

Florian Oswald Sciences Po, 2019

- This lecture reminds you of some optimization theory.
- The focus here is to illustrate use cases with julia.
- We barely scratch the surface of optimization, and I refer you to Nocedal and Wright for a more thorough exposition in terms of theory.
- This 2-part lecture is heavily based on [Algorithms for Optimization](#) by Kochenderfer and Wheeler.

This is a 2 part lecture.

### 1.0.1 Optimization I: Basics

1. Intro
2. Conditions for Optima
3. Derivatives and Gradients
4. Numerical Differentiation
5. JuliaOpt

### 1.0.2 Optimization II: Algorithms

1. Bracketing
2. Local Descent
3. First/Second Order and Direct Methods
4. Constraints

## 1.1 The Optimization Process

1. Problem Specification
2. Initial Design
3. Optimization Procedure:
  - a) Evaluate Performance
  - b) Good?
    - i. yes: final design

- ii. no:
  - \* Change design
  - \* go back to a)

We want to automate step 3.

## 1.2 Optimization Algorithms

- All of the algorithms we are going to see employ some kind of *iterative* procedure.
- They try to improve the value of the objective function over successive steps.
- The way the algorithm goes about generating the next step is what distinguishes algorithms from one another.
  - Some algos only use the objective function
  - Some use both objective and gradients
  - Some add the Hessian
  - and many variants more

## 1.3 Desirable Features of any Algorithm

- Robustness: We want good performance on a wide variety of problems in their class, and starting from *all* reasonable starting points.
- Efficiency: They should be fast and not use an excessive amount of memory.
- Accuracy: They should identify the solution with high precision.

## 1.4 A Word of Caution

- You should **not** normally attempt to write a numerical optimizer for yourself.
- Entire generations of Applied Mathematicians and other numerical pro's have worked on those topics before you, so you should use their work.
  - Any optimizer you could come up with is probably going to perform below par, and be highly likely to contain mistakes.
  - Don't reinvent the wheel.
- That said, it's very important that we understand some basics about the main algorithms, because your task is **to choose from the wide array of available ones**.

## 1.5 Optimisation Basics

- Recall our generic definition of an optimization problem:

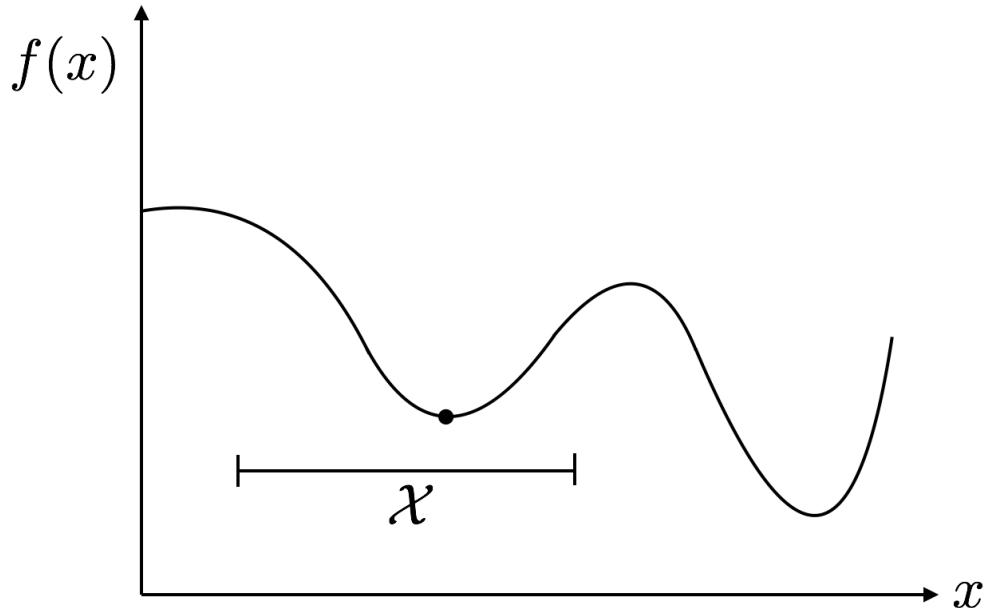
$$\min_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n} f(x) \text{ s.t. } x \in \mathcal{X}$$

- $x$  is our *choice variable* or a *design point*.
- $\mathcal{X}$  is the feasible set.
- $f$  is the *objective function*
- A vector  $x^*$  is a *solution* or a *minimizer* to this problem if  $x^*$  is *feasible* and  $x^*$  minimizes  $f$ .
- Maximization is just minimizing  $(-1)f$ :

$$\min_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n} f(x) \text{ s.t. } x \in \mathcal{X} \equiv \max_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n} -f(x) \text{ s.t. } x \in \mathcal{X}$$

## 1.6 Local Solutions

- Keep in mind that there may be other (better!) solutions outside of your interval of attention.



## 1.7 Constraints

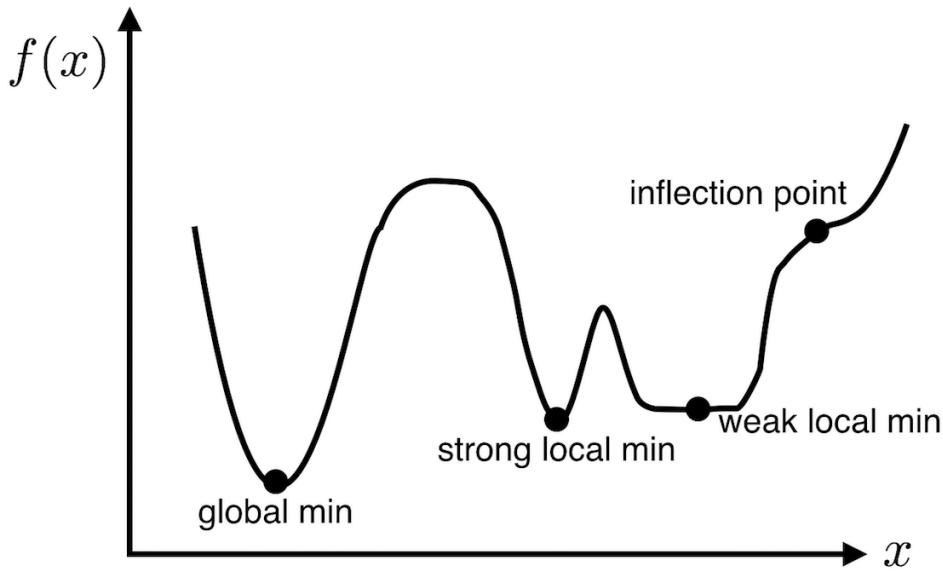
- We often have constraints on problems in economics.

$$\max_{x_1, x_2} u(x_1, x_2) \text{ s.t. } p_1 x_1 + p_2 x_2 \leq y$$

- Constraints define the feasible set  $\mathcal{X}$ .
- It's better to write *weak inequalities* (i.e.  $\leq$ ) rather than strict ones ( $<$ ).

## 1.8 Critical Points

- A given univariate function can exhibit several *critical points* i.e. points where the derivative is zero (as we'll see).
- Ideally we would like to find a *global minimum*. However, that's not always straightforward to do.
- Most of the times, the best we can do is check for a *local minimum*



## 1.9 Conditions for Local Minima

We can define *first and second order necessary conditions*, FONC and SONC. This definition is to point out that those conditions are not sufficient for optimality (only necessary).

### 1.9.1 Univariate $f$

1. **FONC:**  $f'(x^*) = 0$
2. **SONC**  $f''(x^*) \geq 0$  (and  $f''(x^*) \leq 0$  for local maxima)
3. **(SOSC)**  $f''(x^*) > 0$  (and  $f''(x^*) < 0$  for local maxima))

### 1.9.2 Multivariate $f$

1. **FONC:**  $\nabla f(x^*) = 0$
2. **SONC**  $\nabla^2 f(x^*)$  is positive semidefinite (negative semidefinite for local maxima)
3. **(SOSC)**  $\nabla^2 f(x^*)$  is positive definite (negative definite for local maxima))

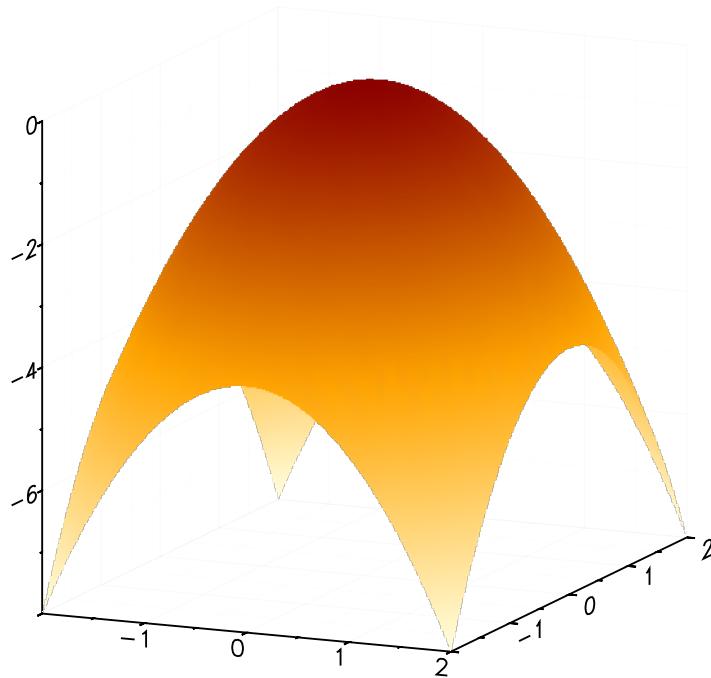
In [1]: `using Plots`

```
gr() # used to choose plotlyjs backend, but does not survive html export...
v=collect(range(-2,stop = 2, length = 30)) #values
mini = [x^2 + y^2 for x in v, y in v]
maxi = -mini # max is just negative min
saddle = [x^2 + y^3 for x in v, y in v];
```

In [3]: `surface(v,v,maxi,title="local max",fillalpha=0.5,leg=false,fillcolor=:heat)`

Out[3]:

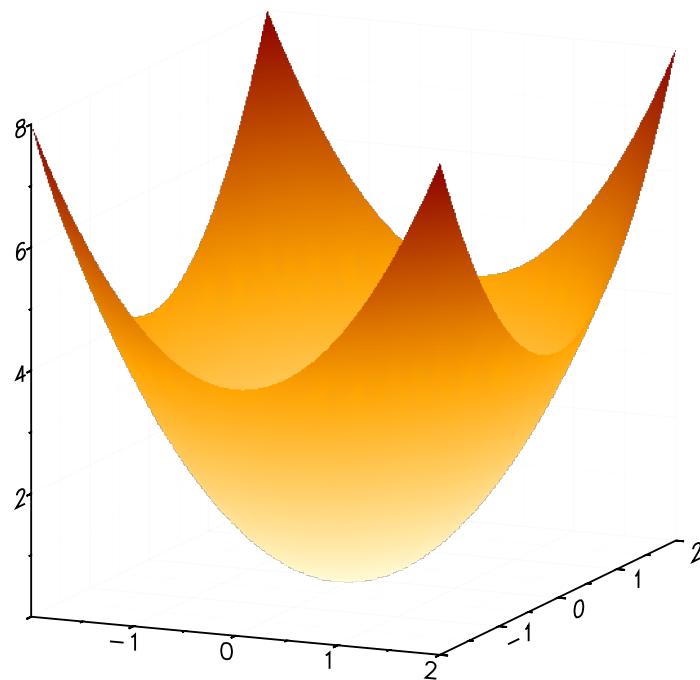
local max



In [4]: `surface(v,v,mini,title="local min",fillalpha=0.5,leg=false,fillcolor=:heat)`

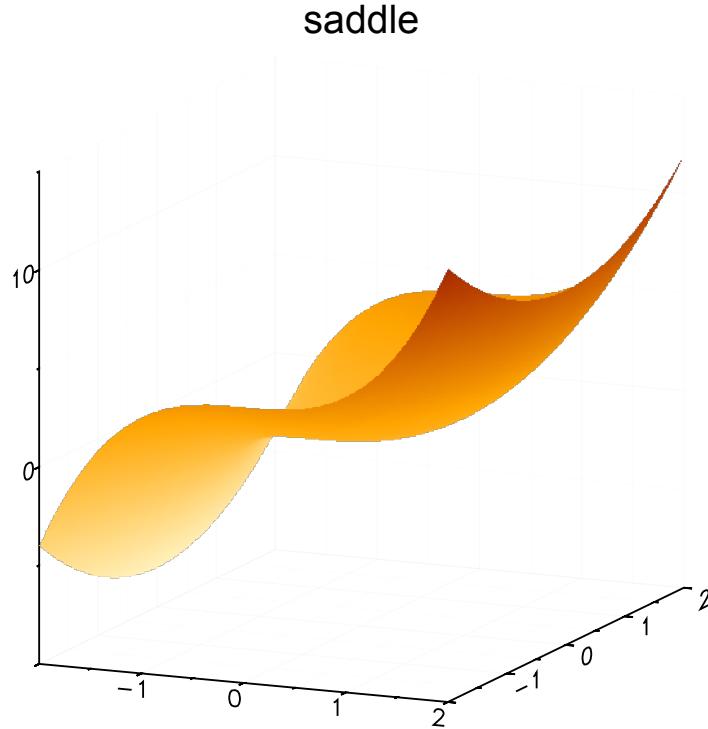
Out[4] :

local min



```
In [5]: surface(v,v,saddle,title="saddle",fillalpha=0.7,leg=false,fillcolor=:heat)
```

```
Out[5]:
```



## 1.10 Example Time: Rosenbrock's Banana Function

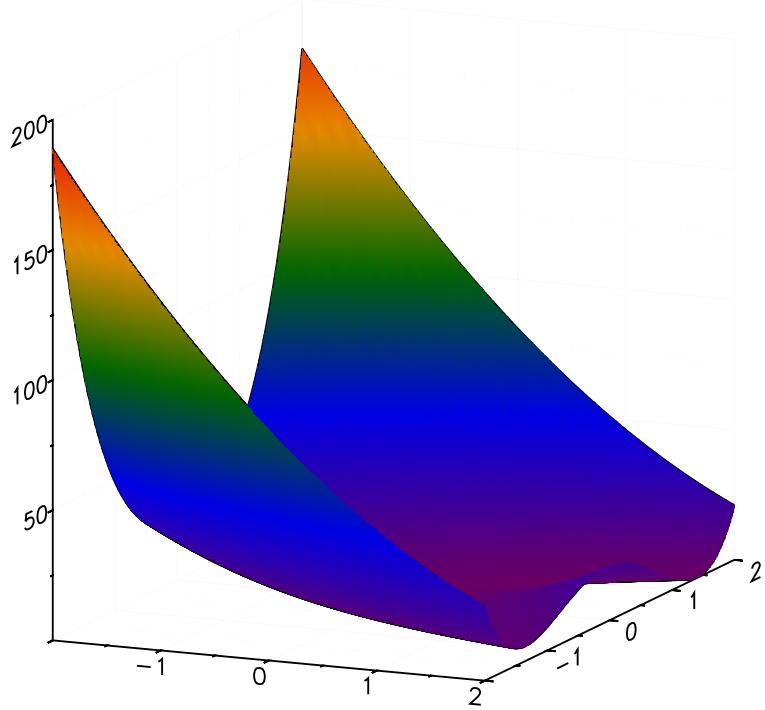
A well-known test function for numerical optimization algorithms is the Rosenbrock banana function developed by Rosenbrock in 1960. it is defined by

$$f(\mathbf{x}) = (1 - x_1)^2 + 5(x_2 - x_1^2)^2$$

```
In [6]: # let's get a picture of this
rosenbrock(x; a=1, b=5) = (a-x[1])^2 + b*(x[2] - x[1]^2)^2
x=y=collect(range(-2,stop = 2, length = 100)) # x and y axis
f = [rosenbrock([ix,iy]) for ix in x, iy in y] # af evaluations

# plotting
wireframe(x,y,f,linecolor=:grey)
surface!(x,y,f,fillcolor=:darkrainbow,colorbar=false)
```

```
Out[6]:
```



### 1.10.1 Analysing the Rosenbrock function

$$f(\mathbf{x}) = (1 - x_1)^2 + 5(x_2 - x_1^2)^2$$

- Is the point  $(1, 1)$  satisfying FONC and SONC?
- Let's write down gradient and hessian to find out!

## 1.11 Derivatives and Gradients

- The derivative of a univariate function  $f$  at point  $x$ ,  $f'(x)$  gives the rate at which  $f$  changes at  $x$ .
- Think of a tangent line to a curve.
- There are three different ways to present  $f'$ : forward difference, central difference, and backward difference:

$$f'(x) \equiv \underbrace{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(x+h) - f(x)}{h}}_{\text{forward diff}} = \underbrace{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(x+h/2) - f(x-h/2)}{h}}_{\text{central diff}} = \underbrace{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(x) - f(x-h)}{h}}_{\text{backward diff}}$$

## 1.12 Symbolic Differentiation on a Computer

- If you can write down an analytic form of  $f$ , there are ways to *symbolically* differentiate it on a computer.
- This is as if you would do the derivation on paper.

- Mathematica, python, and julia all have packages for that.
- While this works well, most of the times we don't have an analytic  $f$ .

```
In [6]: using SymEngine
x = symbols("x");
f = x^2 + x/2 - sin(x)/x; diff(f, x)
```

```
Out[6]: 1/2 + 2*x + sin(x)/x^2 - cos(x)/x
```

## 1.13 Multiple Dimensions: Gradients

- Unless otherwise noted, we have  $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$  as an  $n$  element vector.
- The **gradient** of a function  $f : \mathbb{R}^n \mapsto \mathbb{R}$  is denoted  $\nabla f : \mathbb{R}^n \mapsto \mathbb{R}^n$  and it returns a vector

$$\nabla f(x) = \left( \frac{\partial f}{\partial x_1}(x), \frac{\partial f}{\partial x_2}(x), \dots, \frac{\partial f}{\partial x_n}(x) \right)$$

- It's **hessian** is a function denoted  $\nabla^2 f(x)$  or  $H_f : \mathbb{R}^n \mapsto \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$  and returns an  $(n, n)$  matrix given by

$$H_f(x) = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x_1 \partial x_1}(x) & \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x_2 \partial x_1}(x) & \dots & \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x_n \partial x_1}(x) \\ \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x_1 \partial x_2}(x) & \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x_2 \partial x_2}(x) & \dots & \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x_n \partial x_2}(x) \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x_1 \partial x_n}(x) & \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x_2 \partial x_n}(x) & \dots & \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x_n \partial x_n}(x) \end{pmatrix}$$

- The **directional derivative**  $\nabla_s f(\mathbf{x})$  is an important concept that we will re-encounter when talking about *gradient descent*.
- $\nabla_s f(\mathbf{x})$  tells us the rate of change in  $f$  as we move through  $\mathbf{x}$  at *velocity*  $\mathbf{s}$
- It has similar definition

$$\nabla_s f(\mathbf{x}) \equiv \underbrace{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(\mathbf{x} + h\mathbf{s}) - f(\mathbf{x})}{h}}_{\text{forward diff}} = \underbrace{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(\mathbf{x} + h/2\mathbf{s}) - f(\mathbf{x} - h/2\mathbf{s})}{h}}_{\text{central diff}} = \underbrace{\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(\mathbf{x}) - f(\mathbf{x} - h\mathbf{s})}{h}}_{\text{backward diff}}$$

- We can use the gradient  $\nabla f(\mathbf{x})$  to compute it:

$$\nabla_s f(\mathbf{x}) = \nabla f(\mathbf{x})^\top \mathbf{s}$$

- For example, let's compute it for  $f(\mathbf{x}) = x_1 x_2$  at  $\mathbf{x} = [2, 0]$  in direction  $\mathbf{s} = [-1, -1]$

$$\begin{aligned} \nabla f(\mathbf{x}) &= \left[ \frac{\partial f(\mathbf{x})}{\partial x_1}, \frac{\partial f(\mathbf{x})}{\partial x_2} \right] = [x_2, x_1] \\ \nabla_s f(\mathbf{x}) &= \nabla f(\mathbf{x})^\top \mathbf{s} = [0 \ 2] \begin{bmatrix} -1 \\ -1 \end{bmatrix} = -2 \end{aligned}$$

## 1.14 Numerical Differentiation

- In most cases we have to compute the derivative numerically. There are 2 strategies:
  1. Finite Differences
  2. Automatic Differentiation

### 1.14.1 Finite Differences

The idea here is to literally take our definition for a derivative from above, and compute it for small  $h$ :

$$f'(x) \approx \underbrace{\frac{f(x+h) - f(x)}{h}}_{\text{forward diff}} = \underbrace{\frac{f(x+h/2) - f(x-h/2)}{h}}_{\text{central diff}} = \underbrace{\frac{f(x) - f(x-h)}{h}}_{\text{backward diff}}$$

- The central difference has a quadratic error, as opposed to the forward difference method, hence it's often preferable
- There is however the problem of numerical instability due to a *too small  $h$* .
- The *complex step method* takes a step in an imaginary direction to bypass this:

$$f'(x) = \frac{\text{Im}(f(x+ih))}{h} + O(h^2) \text{ as } h \rightarrow \infty$$

### 1.14.2 Finite Differences: what's the right step size $h$ ?

- Theoretically, we would like to have  $h$  as small as possible, since we want to approximate the limit at zero.
- In practice, on a computer, there is a limit to this. There is a smallest representable number, as we know.
- `eps()`.
- One can show that the optimal step size is  $h = \sqrt{\text{eps}()}$

In [7]: # the Calculus.jl package implements finite differences  
using Calculus

```
derivative(x->x^2,1.0) # standard signature of function
println("forward = $(Calculus.finite_difference(x->x^2,1.0,:forward))")
println("central = $(Calculus.finite_difference(x->x^2,1.0,:central))")
println("complex = $(Calculus.finite_difference(x->x^2,1.0,:complex))")
println("")
println("forward = $(Calculus.finite_difference( x->sin(x^2) ,/2,:forward))")
println("central = $(Calculus.finite_difference( x->sin(x^2) ,/2,:central))")
println("complex = $(Calculus.finite_difference( x->sin(x^2) ,/2,:complex))")

forward = 2.000000014901161
central = 1.9999999999829379
complex = 2.0

forward = -2.45424963163794
central = -2.4542495409833656
complex = -2.4542495411512917
```

```
In [8]: # also can compute gradients for multidim functions
Calculus.gradient(x->x[1]^2 * exp(3x[2]),ones(2))
Calculus.hessian(x->x[1]^2 * exp(3x[2]),ones(2))
```

Out [8]: 2×2 Array{Float64,2}:

40.171	120.513
120.513	180.77

In [9]: # there is another problem apart from numerical issues with small h:

```
f1 = function(x)
    println("evaluation of f1")
    x[1]^2 * exp(3x[2])
end
Calculus.gradient(f1,ones(2))
```

# for an f that is expensive to compute, this method quickly becomes infeasible.

```
evaluation of f1
evaluation of f1
evaluation of f1
evaluation of f1
```

Out [9]: 2-element Array{Float64,1}:

40.17107384604091
60.25661077199484

## ## Automatic Differentiation (AD)

- Breaks down the actual code that defines a function and performs elementary differentiation rules, after dissecting expressions via the chain rule:

$$\frac{d}{dx}f(g(x)) = \frac{df}{dg} \frac{dg}{dx}$$

- This produces **analytic** derivatives, i.e. there is **no** approximation error.
- Very accurate, very fast.
- The idea is to be able to *unpick expressions* in your code.
- Let's look at an example

Consider the function  $f(x, y) = \ln(xy + \max(x, 2))$ . Let's get the partial derivative wrt  $x$ :

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\partial f}{\partial x} &= \frac{1}{xy + \max(x, 2)} \frac{\partial}{\partial x}(xy + \max(x, 2)) \\ &= \frac{1}{xy + \max(x, 2)} \left[ \frac{\partial(xy)}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial \max(x, 2)}{\partial x} \right] \\ &= \frac{1}{xy + \max(x, 2)} \left[ \left( y \frac{\partial(x)}{\partial x} + x \frac{\partial(y)}{\partial x} \right) + \left( \mathbf{1}(2 > x) \frac{\partial 2}{\partial x} + \mathbf{1}(2 < x) \frac{\partial x}{\partial x} \right) \right] \\ &= \frac{1}{xy + \max(x, 2)} [y + \mathbf{1}(2 < x)]\end{aligned}$$

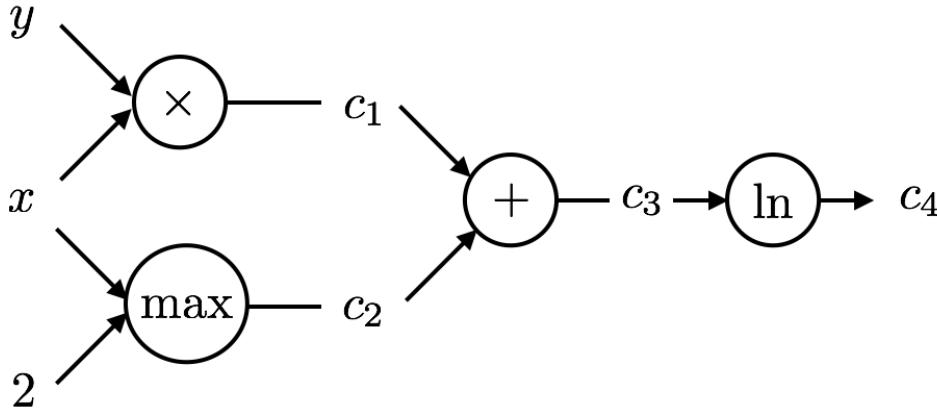
where the indicator function  $\mathbf{1}(r) = 1$  if  $r$  evaluates to *true*, 0 otherwise.

- What we just did here, i.e. unpacking the mathematical operation  $\frac{\partial f}{\partial x}$  can be achieved by a computer using a *computational graph*.
- Automatic Differentiation traverses the computational graph of an *expression* either forwards (in *forward accumulation mode*), or backwards (in *reverse accumulation mode*).

This can be illustrated in a **call graph** as below: \* circles denote operators \* arrows are input/output \* We want to unpack the expression by successively applying the chain rule:

$$\frac{df}{dx} = \frac{df}{dc_4} \frac{dc_4}{dx} = \frac{df}{dc_4} \left( \frac{dc_4}{dc_3} \frac{dc_3}{dx} \right) = \frac{df}{dc_4} \left( \frac{dc_4}{dc_3} \left( \frac{dc_3}{dc_2} \frac{dc_2}{dx} \right) \right) = \dots$$

\* Here is our operation  $f(x, y)$  described as a call graph:



### 1.14.3 Accumulating *forwards* along the call graph

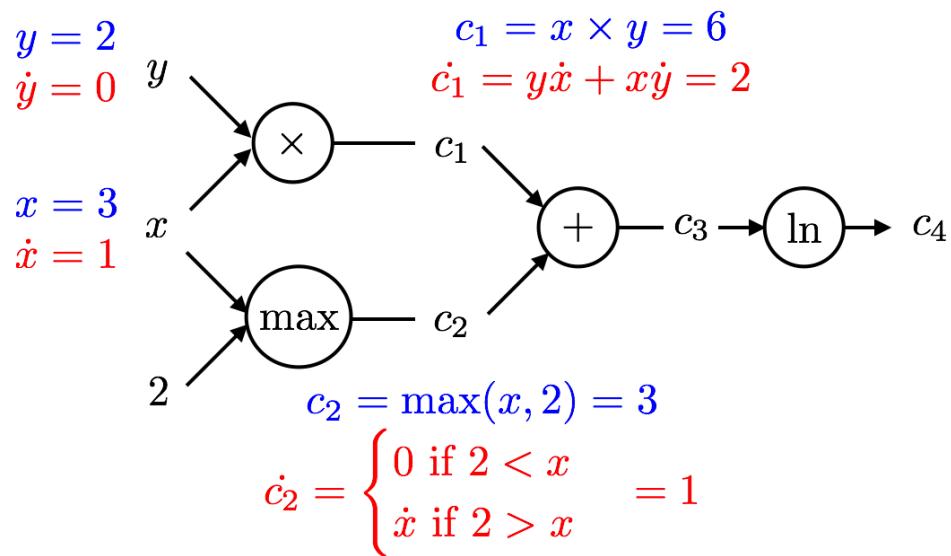
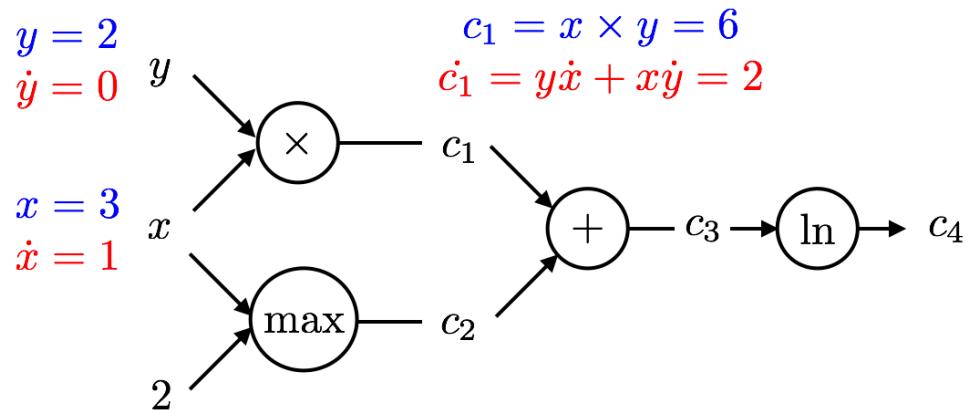
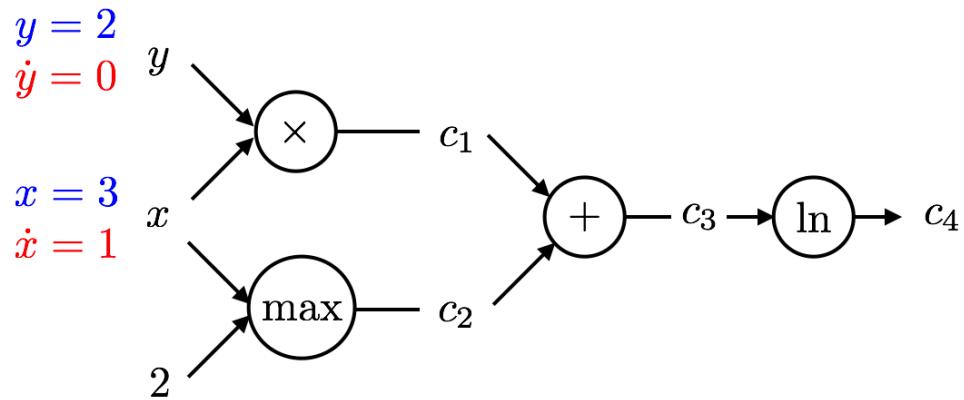
- Let's illustrate how AD in forward mode works for  $x = 3, y = 2$  and the example at hand. Remember that

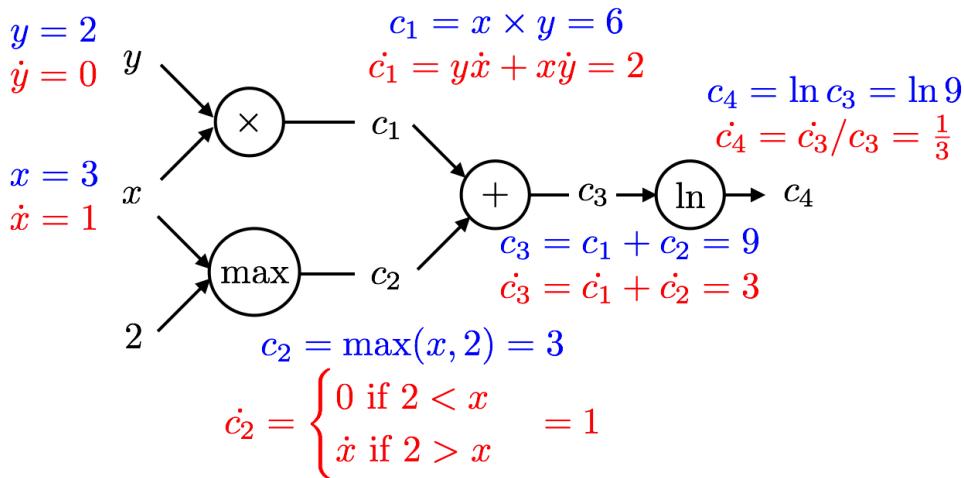
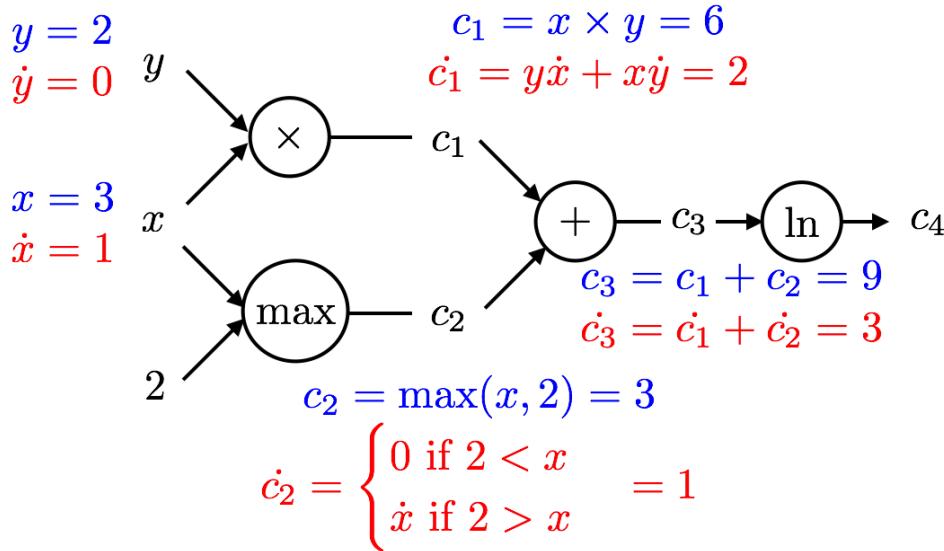
$$f(x, y) = \ln(xy + \max(x, 2))$$

and, hence

$$f(3, 2) = \ln(6 + 3) = \ln 9 \text{ and } \frac{\partial f}{\partial x} = \frac{1}{6+3}(2+1) = \frac{1}{3}$$

- We start at the left side of this graph with the inputs.
- The key is for each quantity to compute both the value **and** its partial derivative wrt  $x$  in this case.





- Reverse mode works very similarly.
- So, we saw that AD yields both a function value ( $c_4$ ) as well as a derivative ( $\dot{c}_4$ )
- They have the correct values.
- This procedure required a *single* pass forward over the computational graph.
- Notice that the **exact same amount of computation** needs to be performed by any program trying to evaluate merely the *function value*  $f(3, 2)$ :

1. multiply 2 numbers
2. max of 2 numbers
3. add 2 numbers
4. natural logarithm of a number

QUESTION: WHY HAVE WE NOT BEEN DOING THIS FOR EVER?! ANSWER: Because it was tedious.

#### 1.14.4 Implementing AD

- What do you need to implement AD?

1. We need what is called *dual numbers*. This is similar to complex numbers, in that each number has 2 components: a standard *value*, and a *derivative*

- In other words, if  $x$  is a dual number,  $x = a + b\epsilon$  with  $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$ .
- For our example, we need to know how to do *addition*, *multiplication*, *log* and *max* for such a number type:

$$(a + b\epsilon) + (c + d\epsilon) = (a + c) + (b + d\epsilon)$$

$$(a + b\epsilon) \times (c + d\epsilon) = (ac) + (ad + bd\epsilon)$$

2. You need a programming language where *analyzing expressions* is not too difficult to do. you need a language that can do *introspection*.

#### 1.14.5 Implementing Dual Numbers in Julia

This is what it takes to define a Dual number type in julia:

```
struct Dual
    v
end

Base.:+(a::Dual, b::Dual) = Dual(a.v + b.v, a. + b.)
Base.:(*)(a::Dual, b::Dual) = Dual(a.v * b.v, a.v*b. + b.v*a.)
Base.log(a::Dual) = Dual(log(a.v), a./a.v)
function Base.max(a::Dual, b::Dual)
    v = max(a.v, b.v)
    = a.v > b.v ? a. : a.v < b.v ? b. : NaN
    return Dual(v, )
end
function Base.max(a::Dual, b::Int)
    v = max(a.v, b)
    = a.v > b ? a. : a.v < b ? 1 : NaN
    return Dual(v, )
end
```

In [14]: # ForwardDiff.jl is a julia package for ... Forward AD!

```
using ForwardDiff
x = ForwardDiff.Dual(3,1);
y = ForwardDiff.Dual(2,0);
log(x*y + max(x,2))
```

Out[14]: Dual{Nothing}(2.1972245773362196,0.3333333333333333)

#### 1.14.6 Analyzing Expressions

- Everything you type into julia is an Expression:

```
mutable struct Expr <: Any
```

Fields:

```
head :: Symbol
args :: Array{Any,1}
typ :: Any

In [11]: println("create an explicit expression by `quoting` it with `:`")
expr = :(x + y)
println("typeof(expr)=$typeof(expr)")

println("\ncan evaluate an expression")
x = 2;y=3
println(eval(expr))

println("\nand we can pick it apart:")
println("expr.head=$expr.head")
println("expr.args=$expr.args")

create an explicit expression by `quoting` it with `:`
typeof(expr)=Expr

can evaluate an expression
5

and we can pick it apart:
expr.head=call
expr.args=Any[:+, :x, :y]

In [12]: # our example was
ex = :(log(x*y + max(x,2)))
#we can access every piece of the call graph, e.g.
println("the first elemnt of args is ${ex.args[1]}")

println("let's dump the entire callgraph")
dump(ex)

the first elemnt of args is log
let's dump the entire callgraph
Expr
  head: Symbol call
  args: Array{Any}((2,))
    1: Symbol log
    2: Expr
      head: Symbol call
      args: Array{Any}((3,))
        1: Symbol +
        2: Expr
          head: Symbol call
```

```

args: Array{Any}((3,))
  1: Symbol *
  2: Symbol x
  3: Symbol y
3: Expr
  head: Symbol call
  args: Array{Any}((3,))
    1: Symbol max
    2: Symbol x
    3: Int64 2

```

## 1.15 (Unconstrained) Optimization in Julia

- Umbrella Organisation: <http://www.juliaopt.org>
  - We will make ample use of this when we talk about constrained optimisation.
  - The Julia Interface to the very well established C-Library **NLOpt** is called **NLOpt.jl**. One could use NLOpt without constraints in an unconstrained problem.
- **Roots.jl**: Simple algorithms that find the zeros of a univariate function.
- Baseline Collection of unconstrained optimization algorithms: **Optim.jl**

## 1.16 Introducing Optim.jl

- Multipurpose unconstrained optimization package
  - provides 8 different algorithms with/without derivatives
  - univariate optimization without derivatives
  - It comes with the workhorse function `optimize`

In [1]: # let's optimize rosenbrock's function without any gradient/hessian info:

```

using Optim
rosenbrock(x) = (1.0 - x[1])^2 + 100.0 * (x[2] - x[1]^2)^2
result = optimize(rosenbrock, zeros(2), BFGS())

```

Out [1]: Results of Optimization Algorithm

```

* Algorithm: BFGS
* Starting Point: [0.0,0.0]
* Minimizer: [0.999999926033423,0.999999852005353]
* Minimum: 5.471433e-17
* Iterations: 16
* Convergence: true
  * |x - x'|  0.0e+00: false
    |x - x'| = 3.47e-07
  * |f(x) - f(x')|  0.0e+00 |f(x)|: false
    |f(x) - f(x')| = 1.20e+03 |f(x)|
  * |g(x)|  1.0e-08: true
    |g(x)| = 2.33e-09
  * Stopped by an increasing objective: false

```

```

    * Reached Maximum Number of Iterations: false
    * Objective Calls: 53
    * Gradient Calls: 53

```

### now let's supply both hessian and gradient

- What are gradient and hessian of this function?
- Write them down on a piece of paper!

```

In [5]: function g!(G, x)
            G[1] = -2.0 * (1.0 - x[1]) - 400.0 * (x[2] - x[1]^2) * x[1]
            G[2] = 200.0 * (x[2] - x[1]^2)

        end
        function h!(H, x)
            H[1, 1] = 2.0 - 400.0 * x[2] + 1200.0 * x[1]^2
            H[1, 2] = -400.0 * x[1]
            H[2, 1] = -400.0 * x[1]
            H[2, 2] = 200.0
        end
    optimize(rosenbrock, g!, h!, zeros(2), Newton())

```

Out[5]: Results of Optimization Algorithm

```

    * Algorithm: Newton's Method
    * Starting Point: [0.0,0.0]
    * Minimizer: [0.999999999999994,0.9999999999999989]
    * Minimum: 3.081488e-31
    * Iterations: 14
    * Convergence: true
        * |x - x'|  0.0e+00: false
        |x - x'| = 3.06e-09
        * |f(x) - f(x')|  0.0e+00 |f(x)|: false
        |f(x) - f(x')| = 3.03e+13 |f(x)|
        * |g(x)|  1.0e-08: true
        |g(x)| = 1.11e-15
        * Stopped by an increasing objective: false
        * Reached Maximum Number of Iterations: false
    * Objective Calls: 44
    * Gradient Calls: 44
    * Hessian Calls: 14

```

In [ ]: