

# Introduction to logic programming

Dr. Giuseppe Maggiore

Hogeschool Rotterdam  
Rotterdam, Netherlands

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# Introduction

## Opening

- Consider many primitive and “obvious” concepts
- Who in their right mind would feel the need to “explain” natural numbers, addition, etc.?
- Similarly variables, `if`, `while`, functions, etc. are often given for granted

## Opening

- In this course we challenge the assumption of *primitive concepts*
- We will start with some bare-bones logical operators
- We will use an implementation of these operators, so everything we do *can actually be run on a computer*)
- We will use this language to define, from scratch, multiple basic concepts

## Opening

- The result is that we will rediscover how basic concepts are actually not basic
- We will be able to recompose them in new forms
- For example in terms of new programming languages

## During this course we will:

- introduce informal logical reasoning
- introduce our logic programming language and its internal mechanisms;
- give a first example of logic in action to define basic boolean expressions
- use logic to define *apparently atomic* and unrelated concepts such as natural numbers
- construct complex data structures such as lists, binary search trees, and even balanced binary search trees
- build a small programming language
- conclude with a short and woefully incomplete presentation of fragments of computability

## Lecture agenda

- Introduce logical reasoning
- Introduce an intuition of logical processes
- Show a first example of using logic to define computations

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# Informal introduction



## What is logic?

- The basic rules of logic are very simple
- Logic is just a way to transform and manipulate symbols
- These symbols are *usually* common signs such as numbers, letter, Greek letters, etc.<sup>a</sup>

---

<sup>a</sup>it is not forbidden to use any symbol we find useful or interesting

## What is logic?

- In the following we will use smileys and other icons as *symbols*
- We will then define a series of *rules* which *transform* series of symbols

## What is logic?

- After defining symbols and rules we can actually use a logical system to process information
- We start with a given proposition, input to the whole process
- A *proposition* is just a series of symbols, such as for example:  $3 + 2 = 5$  or 😊 😊 🦋 🦋
- We keep applying rules to proposition until we reach the final answer

## What is logic?

- Let us consider a full example. Consider the symbols of our language to be:
  - A smiley 😊
  - A candle 🕯️
  - A tree 🌳
  - A coffee cup ☕


## What is logic?

- We consider a proposition to be true if and only if we can process it until we reach a ☕. <sup>a</sup>
- Our rules are
  - **(G0)** A ☕ means we are done
  - **(R1)** Two 😊 followed by a 🌳, and then further followed by  $r$ , means that we will have to process  $r$  to find the answer
  - **(R2)** Two 🗺 followed by a 🌳, and then further followed by  $r$ , means that we will have to process  $r$  to find the answer

---

<sup>a</sup>Given the extreme importance of coffee in the diet of mathematicians and computer scientists, equating coffee with truth does not really seem that illogical a step

## What is logic?

- Consider now the input proposition of ☺ ☺ 🌳 🕯 🕯 🌳 ☺ ☺ 🌳  


## What is logic?

- Consider now the input proposition of ☺ ☺ 🌳 🕯️ 🕯️ 🌳 ☺ ☺ 🌳 ☺  
☕
- We begin by using **R2**, therefore obtaining: 🕯️ 🕯️ 🌳 ☺ ☺ 🌳 ☺ ☕

## What is logic?

- Consider now the input proposition of ☺ ☺ 🌳 🕯 🕯 🌳 ☺ ☺ 🌳 ☕
- We begin by using **R2**, therefore obtaining: 🕯 🕯 🌳 ☺ ☺ 🌳 ☕
- We then use rule **R1**, therefore obtaining: ☺ ☺ 🌳 ☕



# What is logic?

- Consider now the input proposition of ☺☺🌳🕯️🕯️🌳☺☺🌳  
☕
- We begin by using **R2**, therefore obtaining: 🕯️🕯️🌳☺☺🌳☕
- We then use rule **R1**, therefore obtaining: ☺☺🌳☕
- We then use rule **R2**, therefore obtaining: ☕

## What is logic?

- Consider now the input proposition of ☺ ☺ 🌳 🕯 🕯 🌳 ☺ ☺ 🌳 ☕
- We begin by using **R2**, therefore obtaining: 🕯 🕯 🌳 ☺ ☺ 🌳 ☕
- We then use rule **R1**, therefore obtaining: ☺ ☺ 🌳 ☕
- We then use rule **R2**, therefore obtaining: ☕
- Now according to **G0** we are done: **the proposition was true** within our logical system

## What is logic?

- Consider now the new input proposition of 😊😊🌳😊😊🌳



## What is logic?

- Consider now the new input proposition of 😊😊🌳😊😊🌳  
🕯️🌳☕
- We begin by using **R2**, therefore obtaining: 😊😊🌳🕯️🌳☕

## What is logic?

- Consider now the new input proposition of ☺☺🌳☺☺🌳  
🕯️🌳☕
- We begin by using **R2**, therefore obtaining: ☺☺🌳🕯️🌳☕
- We then use rule **R1**, therefore obtaining: 🕯️🌳☕

## What is logic?

- Consider now the new input proposition of 😊😊🌳😊😊🌳  
🕯️🌳☕
- We begin by using **R2**, therefore obtaining: 😊😊🌳🕯️🌳☕
- We then use rule **R1**, therefore obtaining: 🕯️🌳☕
- Unfortunately now we cannot apply:
  - rule **R1**, because we have no 😊 at the beginning
  - rule **R2**, because we have no 🕯️ at the beginning
  - rule **G0** because there is no lonely ☕

## What is logic?

- Consider now the new input proposition of 😊😊🌳😊😊🌳  
🕯️🌳☕
- We begin by using **R2**, therefore obtaining: 😊😊🌳🕯️🌳☕
- We then use rule **R1**, therefore obtaining: 🕯️🌳☕
- Unfortunately now we cannot apply:
  - rule **R1**, because we have no 😊 at the beginning
  - rule **R2**, because we have no 🕯️ at the beginning
  - rule **G0** because there is no lonely ☕
- the process is *stuck*: **the proposition was not true** within our logical system

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# Inference systems



## Introduction

- In this section we present a more formal treatment of inference systems
- Moreover, we give a clearer syntax and semantics of symbols and rules
- We use a formalism which is also a programming language, *Meta-Casanova*
- <https://github.com/vs-team/metacompiler>

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## Syntax for symbol definitions

- Two sorts of symbols in Meta-Casanova
- Data symbols are used to store and structure information
- Function symbols are used to transform information

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## Data symbols

- Data symbols are used to assemble **propositions** (or *expressions*)
- Propositions are **nested** sequences of symbols
- **Nesting** is defined by priority or parentheses

```
Data "NAME" : TYPE
```

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## Basic definition of data

- NAME is a sequence of alphanumeric characters and arithmetic operators
- The new symbol will be useable whenever an expression categorized as TYPE is expected

```
Data "TRUE" : Expr  
Data "FALSE" : Expr
```

## Example: boolean truth-values

- Some data symbols can be used to assemble complex expressions
- The syntax for such a definition then becomes:
- Data  $P_1 \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow P_{N-1} \rightarrow \text{"NAME"} \rightarrow P_N \rightarrow \dots P_{N+M} \rightarrow :$  TYPE
- NAME is the name of the symbol
- TYPE indicates in what contexts this symbol can be used
- $P_1$  through  $P_{N-1}$  are the parameters expected left of the symbol
- $P_N$  through  $P_{N+M}$  are the parameters expected right of the symbol

```
Data Expr -> "|" -> Expr : Expr
```



## Example: boolean disjunction

- $\text{TRUE} \mid \text{TRUE}$  is a valid proposition
- $\text{TRUE} \mid \text{FALSE}$  is a valid proposition
- $\text{FALSE} \mid \text{TRUE}$  is a valid proposition
- $\text{FALSE} \mid \text{FALSE}$  is a valid proposition
- $\text{TRUE} \mid (\text{FALSE} \mid \text{FALSE})$  is a valid proposition
- ...

## Example: boolean disjunction

- Associativity is by default to the right
- `TRUE | TRUE | TRUE` is equivalent to `TRUE | (TRUE | TRUE)`
- We can modify associativity with `Associativity Left` in the symbol definition, for example with:
- `Data Expr -> "|" -> Expr : Expr Associativity Left`

## Example: boolean disjunction

- Suppose we define boolean conjunction (the so-called *and* operator):
- Data Expr  $\rightarrow$  "&"  $\rightarrow$  Expr : Expr
- There is ambiguity with composite expressions such as TRUE & FALSE | TRUE:
  - TRUE & (FALSE | TRUE) or
  - (TRUE & FALSE) | TRUE?
- Quite dangerous: the two expressions mean different things!

## Example: boolean disjunction

- We can specify a Priority of the symbols, for example with
- `Data Expr -> "|" -> Expr : Expr Priority 10`
- `Data Expr -> "&" -> Expr : Expr Priority 20`

## Example: boolean disjunction

- So far we have defined TRUE and FALSE as Expr
- This is a bit imprecise, because an expression is usually composite
- We often call TRUE and FALSE *values*
- With the caveat that they can also be used wherever expressions are expected

## Example: boolean disjunction

- We would like to `TRUE` with type `Value`
- But then also making it so that propositions of type `Value` can be used whenever proposition of type `Expr` are expected
- This is a form of *subtyping* (related to inheritance and polymorphism)

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```
Data "TRUE" : Value  
Data "FALSE" : Value
```

## Example: boolean disjunction

- Now `TRUE | FALSE` is not an acceptable composition
- `|` now expects `Expr`'s but we are giving it `Value`'s
- To fix this, we say that any `Value` is also an `Expr`



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Value is Expr

## Example: boolean disjunction

- Any proposition of type `Value`...
- ...will be allowed whenever a proposition of type `Expr` is expected

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## Function symbols

- Function symbols are used to define transformations
- From one or more input propositions into one resulting proposition

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## Function symbols

- Functions are defined in two steps
- First we **declare** the function: name, parameters, and type
- Then we **define** the function: behaviour as a series of recursive definitions

## Function declaration syntax

- $\text{Func } P_1 \rightarrow \dots P_{N-1} \rightarrow \text{"NAME"} \rightarrow P_N \rightarrow \dots$   
 $P_{N+M} \rightarrow : \text{TYPE} \Rightarrow \text{RETURN}$
- Function named NAME
- Parameters  $P_1$  through  $P_{N-1}$  to the left of the function
- Parameters  $P_N$  through  $P_{N+M}$
- Evaluation of the function will yield a result of type  
 $\text{RETURN}^a$

---

<sup>a</sup>The function with its parameters applied is a proposition of type TYPE

## Function declaration syntax

- For example, we could define an `eval` function
- It takes as input a boolean expression of type `Expr`
- It returns as input a boolean value of type `Value`
- `Func "eval" -> Expr : Expr => Value`

## Function declaration syntax

- Valid uses of the function are:
- `eval TRUE`
- `eval FALSE`
- `eval (TRUE | TRUE)`
- ...

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## Rules and function evaluation

- We have only specified the acceptable *shape* of propositions and function calls
- We have not yet said anything about how computations happen



## Syntax of rules

- Function evaluation is based on *rules*
- The rules of our language are syntactically quite simple
- The simplicity comes from the fact that a rule syntax is only made up of two operators:
  - the **horizontal bar** -----, of varying length bigger than --
  - the **arrow** =>

## Syntax of rules

- Both horizontal bar and implication arrow can be read out loud as “therefore”
- They both capture implication, as in “if A is true, then B is also true”
- The arrow specifies implication at a smaller scale
- The bar specifies implication at a larger scale

# Structure of a rule

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```
PREMISE 1
PREMISE 2
...
PREMISE N
-----
MAIN PROPOSITION
```

## Syntax of rules

- Both premises and the main proposition are defined in terms of the arrow
- On the left of the arrow we have the input proposition
- On the right we have the output proposition
- INPUT SYMBOLS  $\Rightarrow$  OUTPUT SYMBOLS

# Structure of a rule (more concrete)

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$$I_1 \Rightarrow O_1$$
$$I_2 \Rightarrow O_2$$
$$\vdots$$
$$I_N \Rightarrow O_N$$

-----

$$\text{INPUT} \Rightarrow \text{OUTPUT}$$

## Syntax of rules

- INPUT is the overall input of the rule
- It is always a function with parameters
- The rule works as follows:

A certain proposition is found to match the input  
The premises are evaluated from top to bottom (first we evaluate  $I_1$  to obtain  $O_1$ , then we move on to  $I_2$  and  $O_2$ , etc.)  
OUTPUT is returned as the result

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## Syntax of rules

- The simplest rules feature no premises
- They directly specify how output is directly returned for a certain shape of input

# Simplest rules example: evaluation of constants

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```
-----  
eval TRUE => TRUE
```



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## Syntax of rules

- The rule above looks for an input of shape `eval TRUE`
- When such an input is found, then we directly return `TRUE`

# Another example

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```
-----  
eval FALSE => FALSE
```

## Syntax of rules

- Sometimes a rule is more complex
- We cannot always determine the results directly from the input
- In this cases we need some further computation
- For this we use the rule premises

# Evaluation of complex rules: boolean or

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```
eval a => TRUE
```

```
-----
```

```
eval (a|b) => TRUE
```

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## Syntax of rules

- The rule above processes an or-expression
- Consider an or of two boolean expressions  $a$  and  $b$
- We cannot directly determine if the whole or is true or false

## Syntax of rules

- The first premise thus evaluates the first sub-expression with `eval a`
- We also say that we expect an output of `TRUE` from `eval a`
- We stop if `eval a` returns something else than `TRUE`
- Otherwise we return `TRUE` as the output of the rule itself

## Syntax of rules

- What happens if `eval a` evaluates to `FALSE`
- The rule above cannot provide us with the answer we are looking for
- We simply look for another rule that can

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## Syntax of rules

- Complex behaviours
- Multiple rules
- `eval` is such an example



# Evaluation of complex rules: boolean or

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```
eval a => FALSE
eval b => y
-----
eval (a|b) => y
```

## Syntax of rules

- The first premise evaluates the first sub-expression with `eval a`
- This time we expect `FALSE` as a result, thus this rule succeeds where the previous fails
- Should `eval a` return something else than `FALSE`, then we would stop
- If the output of the first premise is `FALSE`, then we proceed to the second premise
- Whatever result comes from `eval b` is returned as the output of the rule itself

## Program evaluation

- An aspect that is still unclear is how rules are selected
- Rules specify a sort of library of possible evaluations
- We still miss an important ingredient: the initial input
- This input will (recursively) determine selection of rules
- The process either finds an output, or gets stuck with no answer

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## Program evaluation

- We now see the whole process in action
- We start from complete definitions for symbols and rules
- We then evaluate an input fully

# Boolean expressions full example

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```
Func "eval" -> Expr : Expr => Value  
Data Expr -> "|" -> Expr : Expr
```

```
Data "TRUE" : Value  
Data "FALSE" : Value
```

```
Value is Expr
```

---

```
eval TRUE => TRUE
```

---

```
eval FALSE => FALSE
```

---

```
eval a => TRUE
```

---

```
eval (a|b) => TRUE
```

```
eval a => FALSE  
eval b => y
```

---

```
eval (a|b) => y
```

## Program evaluation

- Suppose an initial input of `eval` (`FALSE` | `TRUE`)
- This becomes our *current proposition*
- The first step is to find **matching rules**, those rules that “could be used” to evaluate the current proposition

## Program evaluation

- Matching only looks at the input of rules
- It looks for rules which input can be mapped to our current proposition
- The candidate rule inputs are, in order of declaration:
  - `eval TRUE`
  - `eval FALSE`
  - `eval (a|b)`
  - `eval (a|b)`

## Program evaluation

- We set the current proposition and the input of each rule side-by-side
- When we find a rule input that could be transformed into the current proposition, we are done
- *Could be transformed* through an assignment of the variables, and no more



# First input vs current proposition

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We try the first rule:

```
eval      TRUE
eval (FALSE | TRUE)
```

# First input vs current proposition

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We try the first rule:

```
eval      TRUE
eval (FALSE | TRUE)
```

`eval` matches, but the parameters are clearly different and unrelated

The first rule cannot be used in this case.

# Second input vs current proposition

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We try the second rule:

```
eval      FALSE
eval (FALSE | TRUE)
```

# Second input vs current proposition

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We try the second rule:

```
eval      FALSE
eval (FALSE | TRUE)
```

`eval` matches, but the parameters are clearly different and unrelated

The second rule cannot be used in this case.

# Third input vs current proposition

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We try the second rule:

```
eval ( a | b )  
eval ( FALSE | TRUE )
```

# Third input vs current proposition

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We try the second rule:

```
eval ( a | b )  
eval ( FALSE | TRUE )
```

We have a match!

The current proposition matches the third rule, **provided that**  
**a=FALSE and b=TRUE**

## Program evaluation

- $a=\text{FALSE}$  and  $b=\text{TRUE}$  is called a **binding** of the rule variables
- It binds the variables of the rule input, which so far were unspecified, to parts of the current proposition

We represent this process graphically by putting the current proposition underneath the rule:

```
eval a => TRUE
-----
eval ( a | b ) => TRUE
eval (FALSE | TRUE)
```



We know that  $a=\text{FALSE}$  and  $b=\text{TRUE}$ , so we replace the variables with their values:

```
eval FALSE => TRUE
```

```
-----
```

```
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

## Program evaluation

- Now we need to make sure that all premises are valid
- We start with the first premise, `eval FALSE => TRUE`
- We take its input `eval FALSE`, and consider it to be the new current proposition

We can represent this graphically by re-writing the current proposition above the premise we are evaluating:

```
eval FALSE
eval FALSE => TRUE
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

## With the new *current proposition*

- We repeat the matching process
- When the matching process is completed, we evaluate the matched rule recursively
- When evaluation of the rule is completed, we match the resulting output with the expected output
- After this last match is completed, we proceed with the evaluation of the original rule

We will represent this graphically by writing the rule we are considering above the current proposition to see if it matches.

We start with the first rule:

```
-----  
eval TRUE  => TRUE  
eval FALSE  
eval FALSE => TRUE  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

We will represent this graphically by writing the rule we are considering above the current proposition to see if it matches.

We start with the first rule:

```
-----  
eval TRUE  => TRUE  
eval FALSE  
eval FALSE => TRUE  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

Clearly no match

We move on to the second rule:

```
-----  
eval FALSE => FALSE  
eval FALSE  
eval FALSE => TRUE  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

We move on to the second rule:

```
-----  
eval FALSE => FALSE  
eval FALSE  
eval FALSE => TRUE  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

We have a clear match!

The matched rule immediately tells us that the result was (FALSE), so we need no further processing above.



We take the result of `FALSE` and write it next to the current proposition.

We can also delete the uppermost rule, because its evaluation is completed and we do not need it any more.

We also try to match the actual output of the premise to the expected output:

```
eval FALSE => FALSE
eval FALSE => TRUE
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

We take the result of FALSE and write it next to the current proposition.

We can also delete the uppermost rule, because its evaluation is completed and we do not need it any more.

We also try to match the actual output of the premise to the expected output:

```
eval FALSE => FALSE
eval FALSE => TRUE
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

No match!

We abort evaluation of the whole rule, and go back almost to the beginning.

## With the new *current proposition*

- We go back to the original current proposition of eval (FALSE | TRUE)
- We do not go entirely to the beginning, because we still know that:
  - the first rule does not match
  - the second rule does not match
  - the third rule matches, but gets stuck at the first premise
- so we proceed with the fourth rule

We write the fourth rule above the current preposition:

```
eval a => FALSE
eval b => y
-----
eval ( a | b ) => TRUE
eval (FALSE | TRUE)
```

We write the fourth rule above the current preposition:

```
eval a => FALSE
eval b => y
-----
eval ( a | b ) => TRUE
eval (FALSE | TRUE)
```

We have a match, with the same binding as for the third rule:  
 $a = \text{FALSE}$  and  $b = \text{TRUE}$ .

We replace  $a$  and  $b$  in the rule with the bound values:

```
eval FALSE => FALSE
eval TRUE  => y
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

We evaluate the first premise, so we duplicate its input to signal that we now have a new current proposition:

```
eval FALSE
eval FALSE => FALSE
eval TRUE => y
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

We try to match the first rule to the (new) current proposition:

```
-----  
eval TRUE => TRUE  
eval FALSE  
eval FALSE => FALSE  
eval TRUE => y  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```



We try to match the first rule to the (new) current proposition:

```
-----  
eval TRUE => TRUE  
eval FALSE  
eval FALSE => FALSE  
eval TRUE => y  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

No success! Moving on to the next rule.

We try to match the second rule to the (new) current proposition:

```
-----  
eval FALSE => FALSE  
eval FALSE  
eval FALSE => FALSE  
eval TRUE => y  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

We try to match the second rule to the (new) current proposition:

```
-----  
eval FALSE => FALSE  
eval FALSE  
eval FALSE => FALSE  
eval TRUE => y  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

Success! The current proposition results in FALSE, so we delete the upper rule (it is done evaluating and we do not need it anymore) and propagate its result down.

We now try to match the actual result of the premise with the actual result of the premise:

```
eval FALSE => FALSE
eval FALSE => FALSE
eval TRUE  => y
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

We now try to match the actual result of the premise with the actual result of the premise:

```
eval FALSE => FALSE
eval FALSE => FALSE
eval TRUE  => y
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

Both are FALSE, so matching is trivial.

We delete the upper lines because they are done evaluating,  
and have no further use:

```
eval TRUE => y
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

We must now evaluate the last premise, `eval TRUE => y`.

The new *current proposition* is `eval TRUE`:

```
-----  
eval TRUE  
eval TRUE => y  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

We try matching the first rule:

```
-----  
eval TRUE => TRUE  
eval TRUE  
eval TRUE => y  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```



We try matching the first rule:

```
-----  
eval TRUE => TRUE  
eval TRUE  
eval TRUE => y  
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

The first rule succesfully matches and immediately returns TRUE.

We propagate the result down next to the premise input:

```
eval TRUE => TRUE
eval TRUE =>  y
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => y
```

Now we propagate the result (TRUE) down to the premise (y) with another matching:

```
eval TRUE => TRUE
eval TRUE => TRUE
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

Now we propagate the result (TRUE) down to the premise (y) with another matching:

```
eval TRUE => TRUE
eval TRUE => TRUE
-----
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

This matching also succeeds, with binding  $y=\text{TRUE}$ .

Now that we have a value for y, we can replace all its occurrences with its value TRUE.

We delete the premises above, since they have no further use,  
and voilà:

```
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

We delete the premises above, since they have no further use,  
and voilà:

```
-----  
eval (FALSE | TRUE) => TRUE
```

We now know the result of the evaluation of the initial  
proposition. This result is also what we expected, to our  
satisfaction.

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## Demo-time!

- Visual Studio 2015
- Standalone GUI

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## In small groups

- One rule per post-it
- Start with a proposition
- Try to put the rule above the proposition and see if it matches
- Success -> go forward with rule propositions
- Failure -> try another rule
- Do it with boolean expressions

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## In small groups

- Add the XOR operator to the boolean expressions sample
- Define and add a custom operator to the boolean expressions sample

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## Wrapping-up

- We have introduced logical reasoning
- We have seen a first intuition of logic, symbols, and computation
- We have seen a first example of using logic to define boolean expressions and associated computations