

CSE 291 – AI Agents

Simulated Environments and Reality

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Logistics

HW 0 due is 1/20 (accept late submissions by 1/22)

make sure to submit both code and PDF (pdf only for Part 2)

reminder: each student has **five** free “late days”

HW 1 will be released at 1/20

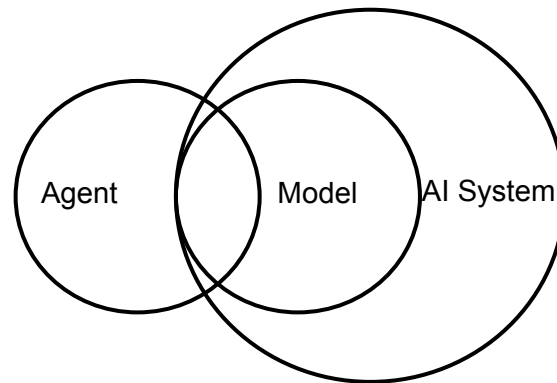
Recap: Components of an Agent

Required: Grounding,
Agency (ability to act),
Planning, Memory,
Learning

Additional:
Embodiment,
Communication, World
Modeling, Multimodality

Model vs AI System vs Agent: Rough Intuition

Model	AI System	Agent
GPT-4	ChatGPT	ChatGPT (computer use)
Forward passes of neural net	Mixing models together, model + scaffolding but no agency	Has agency + discussed components



Many software engineering abstractions and definitions exist.
All are roughly correct. Some are useful.

What is a simulation?



- Before you get all excited about simulating reality you need to understand verifiability and what makes a simulation useful
- Simulation : RL :: Dataset : Supervised Learning

Why do we need simulations?

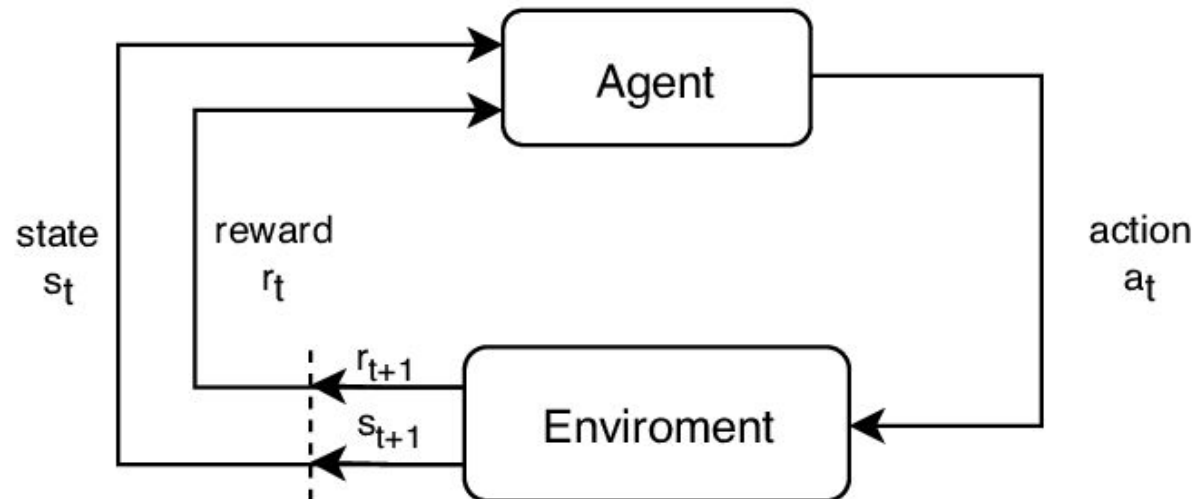
- Most tasks have many ways you can do them, e.g. “do the laundry” -> how many clothes, which machine, what detergent, etc.
- You usually do not know the “global” optimal solution ahead of time but usually know when you are done
- So you need to explore! Find many solutions and compare to see which is most efficient

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- Most tasks have many ways you can do them, e.g. “do the laundry” -> how many clothes, which machine, what detergent, etc.
- You usually do not know the “global” optimal solution ahead of time but usually know when you are done
- So you need to explore! Find many solutions and compare to see which is most efficient
- Exploration directly in the real world is expensive, wear and tear of robots, excessive compute, danger to humans, etc.

Basic components of a simulation

- From an MDP perspective, it contains at least $\langle S, A, T \rangle$
 - S = set of all states
 - A = set of all actions
 - T = transition matrix $T: (S, A) \rightarrow S$



Basic components of a simulation

- S = set of all states
 - propositions that are true: you are in a house, door is open, knife in drawer
- A = set of all actions
 - take knife from drawer, walk through door
- T = transition matrix $T: (S, A) \rightarrow S$
 - (you are in a house & door is open, walk through door) \rightarrow you are outside

There are pre-conditions that need to be met to perform a certain action, and post-conditions that are true after

Basic components of a simulation

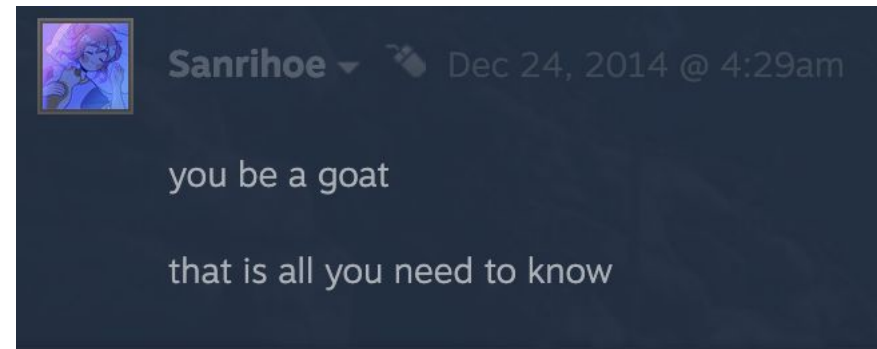
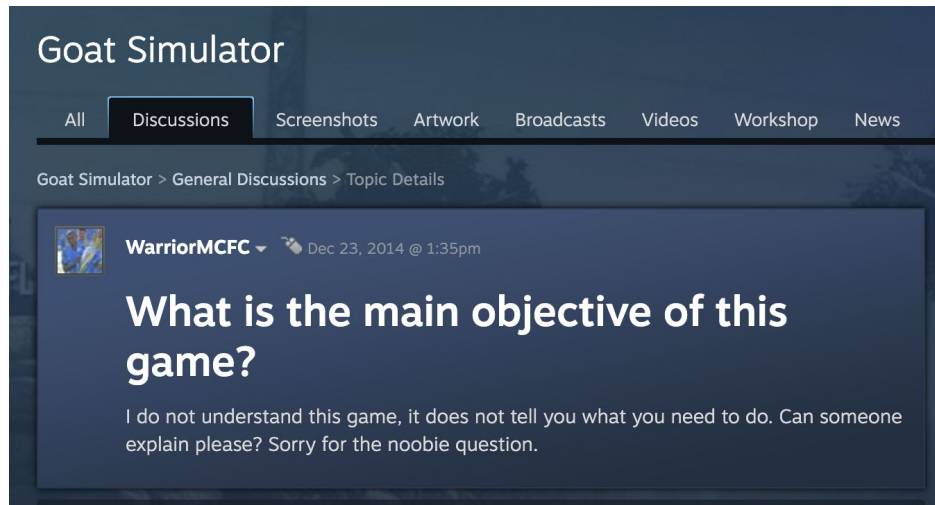
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(hint: this is exactly what you learned about in intro to software eng but framed differently)

Basic components of a simulation

- From an MDP perspective, it contains at least $\langle S, A, T \rangle$
 - S = set of all states
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 - T = transition matrix $T: (S, A) \rightarrow S$
- An explicit reward is technically not necessary (Goat Simulator)



Basic components of a simulation

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 - S = set of all states
 - A = set of all actions
 - T = transition matrix $T: (S, A) \rightarrow S$
- A useful sim usually has an R , even just a $+1$ for the final goal state

Sim2real Transfer

- Does an agent trained in simulation transfer to reality (environment it is deployed in)?
- This is the same question as “does your model extrapolate out of distribution”?
- Answer is ???

Sim2real Transfer

- Does an agent trained in simulation transfer to reality (environment it is deployed in)?
- This is the same question as “does your model extrapolate out of distribution”?
- Answer is not really (for now) so rule of thumb is to make the sim as close to reality as you can

Dimensions of Complexity

- How to measure closeness to reality?
- First thing to think about is the research question you want to answer and the task you need to do.
- Many dimensions, we'll focus on two

Cognitive Complexity

- Requires long chains of “reasoning”
- Think puzzles, math problems, moral dilemmas, etc

Perceptive Complexity

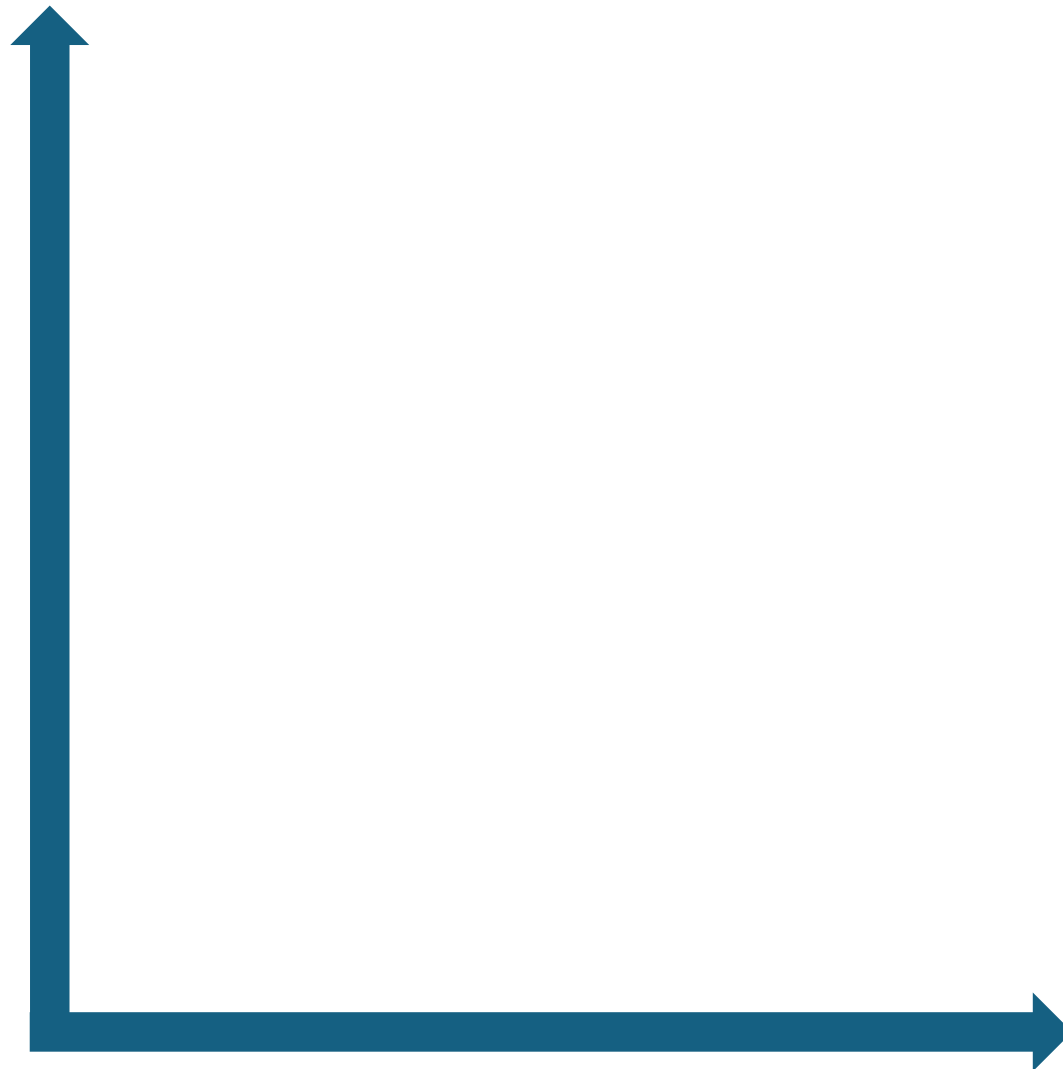
- Requires high levels of vision and/or precise motor skills
- Birdwatching, threading a needle, Where's Waldo

Reality

Matrix of Simulations

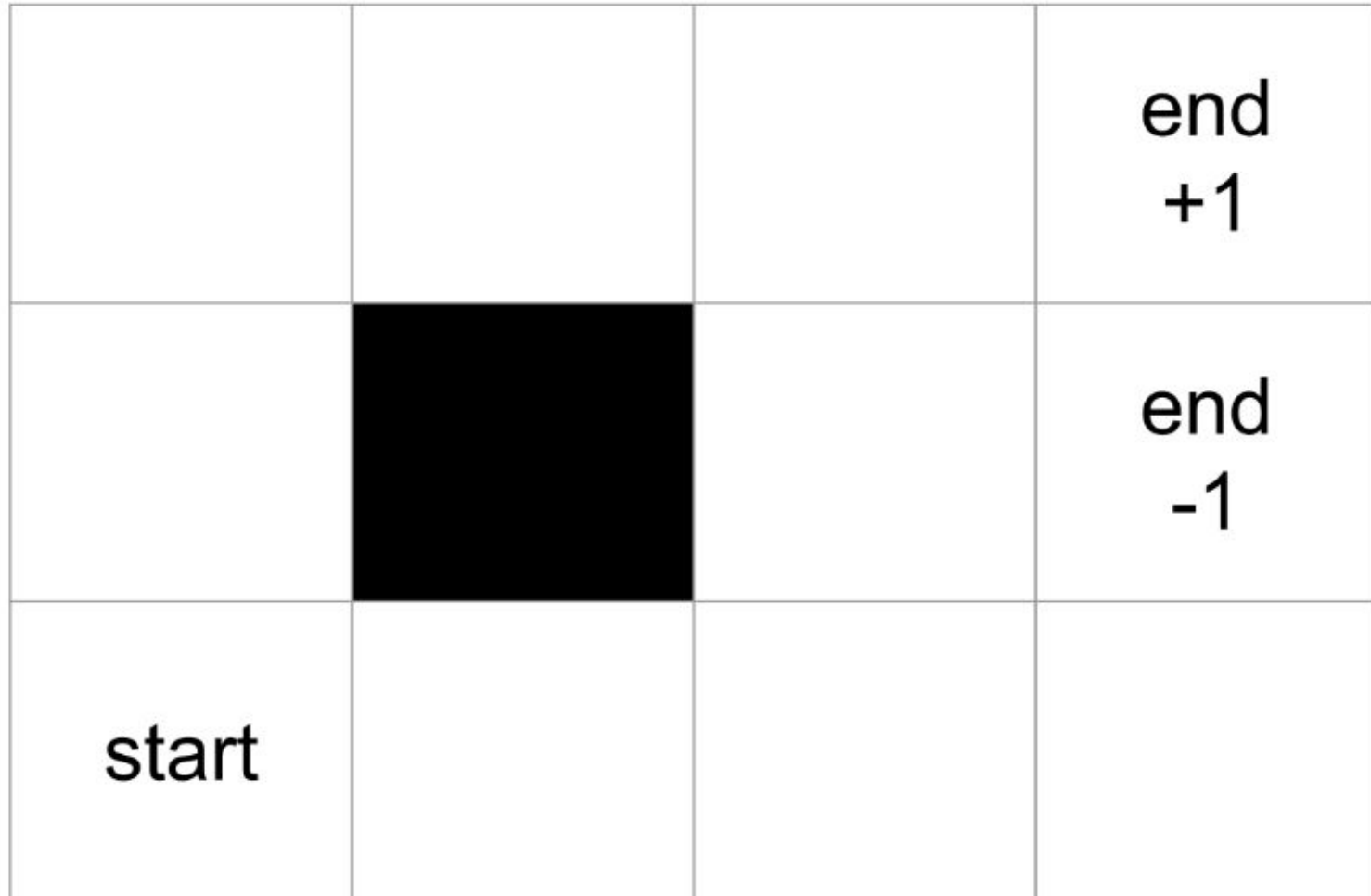
Perceptive

Cognitive



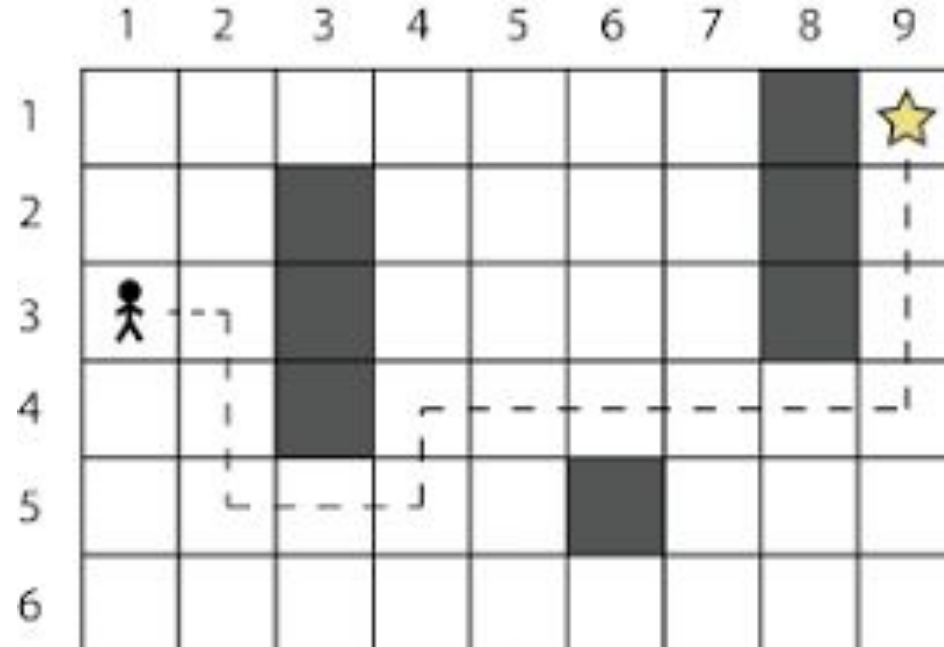
Low Perceptive, Low Cognitive

- Gridworld



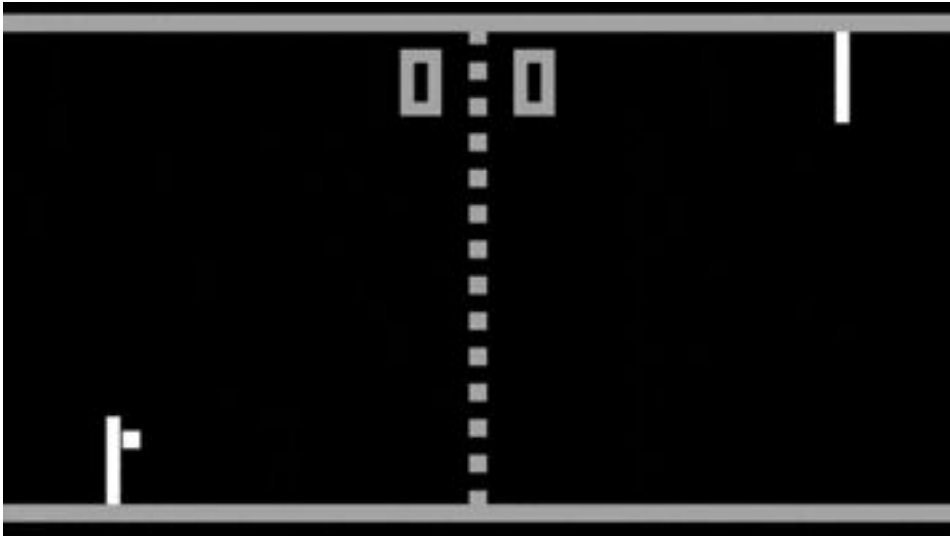
Low Perceptive, Low Cognitive

- Gridworld – seems simple but can arbitrarily scale. Can test algo generalization potential in controllable settings



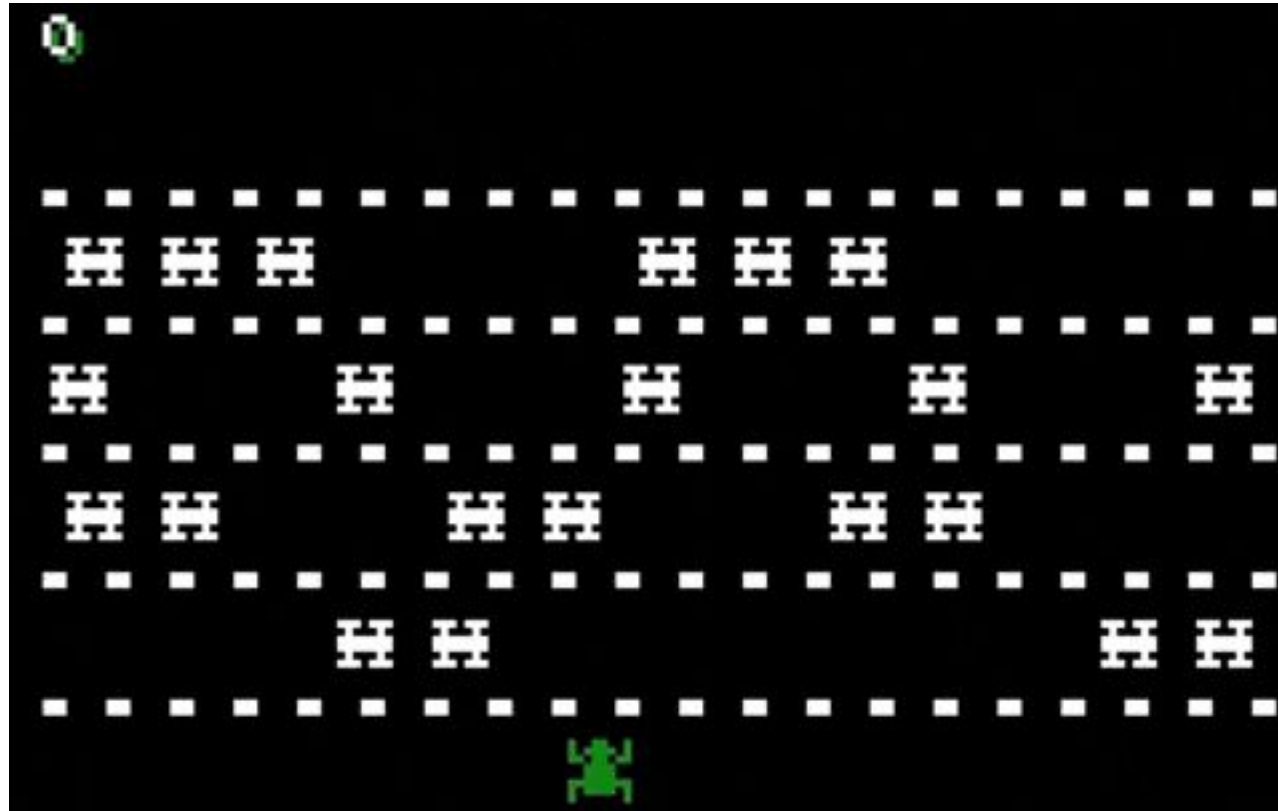
Low Perceptive, Medium Cognitive

- Atari



Low Perceptive, Medium Cognitive

- Atari



Low Perceptive, High Cognitive

- Zork, NetHack



You are standing in an open field west of a white house. There is a small mailbox here.

> *open mailbox*

Opening the small mailbox reveals a leaflet.

> *read leaflet*

Welcome to Zork!

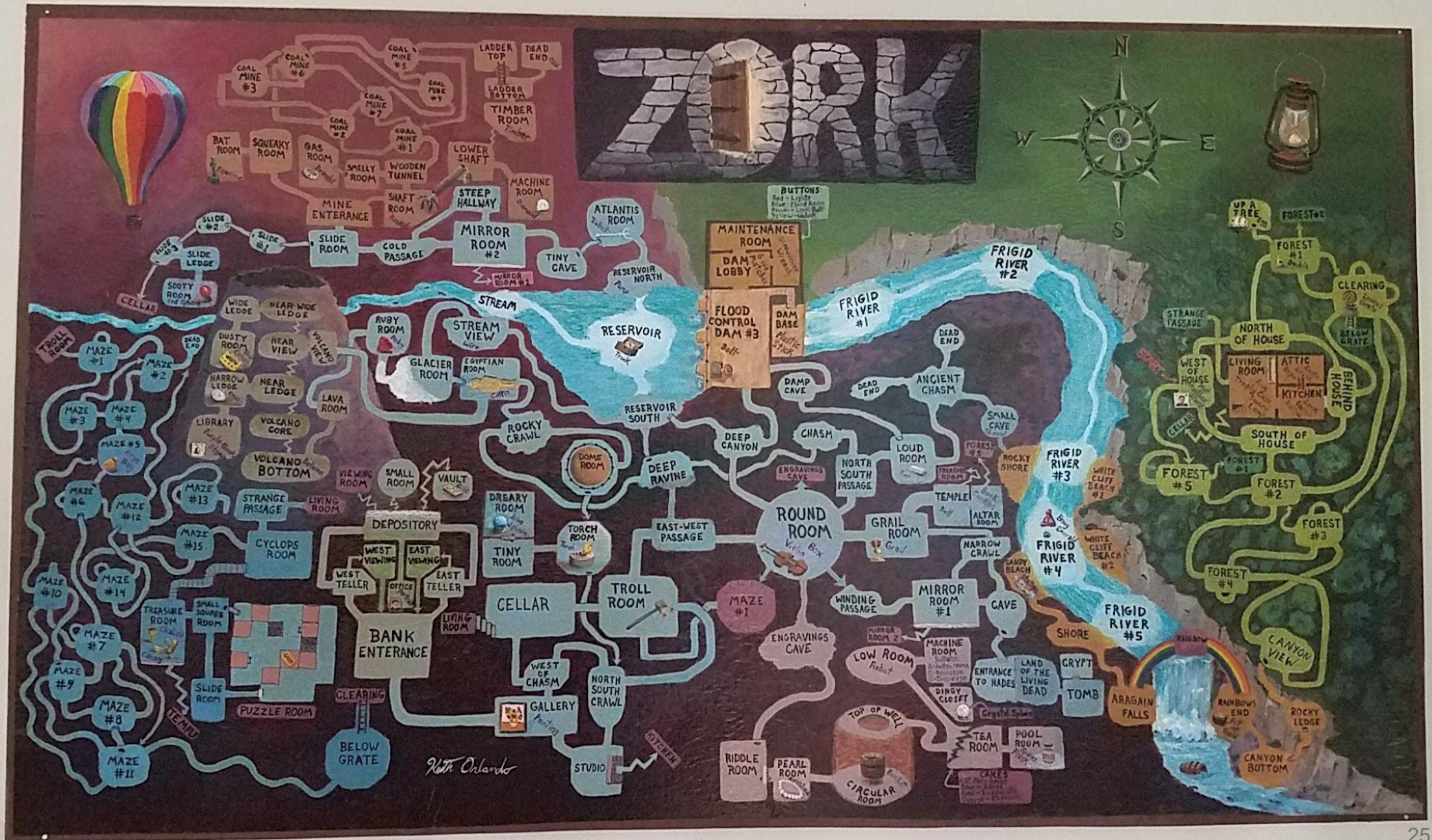
> *go north*

You are behind the white house. In one corner of the house there is a small window which is slightly ajar.

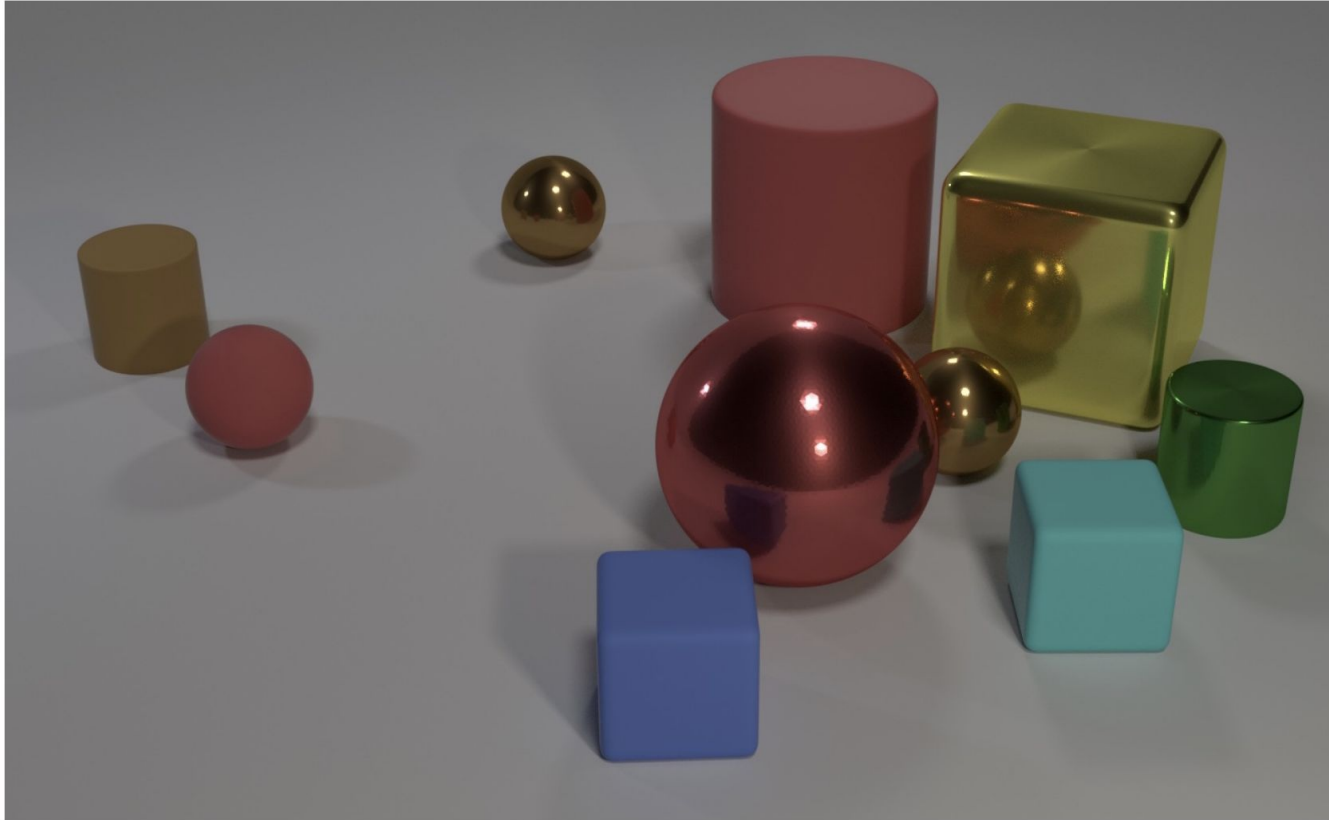
> *open window*

With effort you open the window far enough to allow entry.

> *enter house*



Medium Perceptive, Low Cognitive



Q: Are there an **equal number** of **large** things and **metal spheres**?

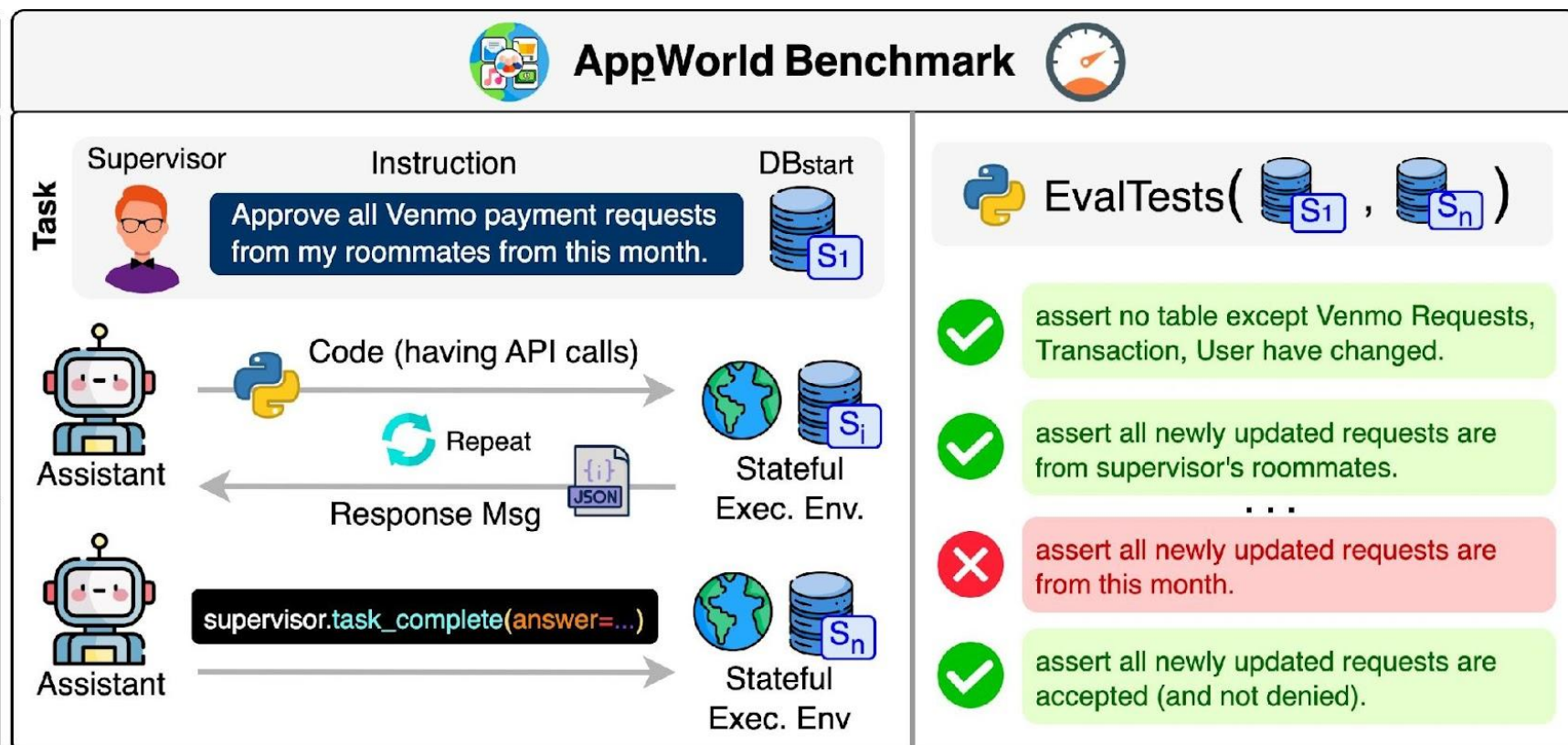
Medium Perceptive, Medium Cognitive

- Ai2 THOR



Medium Perceptive, Medium Cognitive

- AppWorld (Trivedi et al. 2024, ACL)



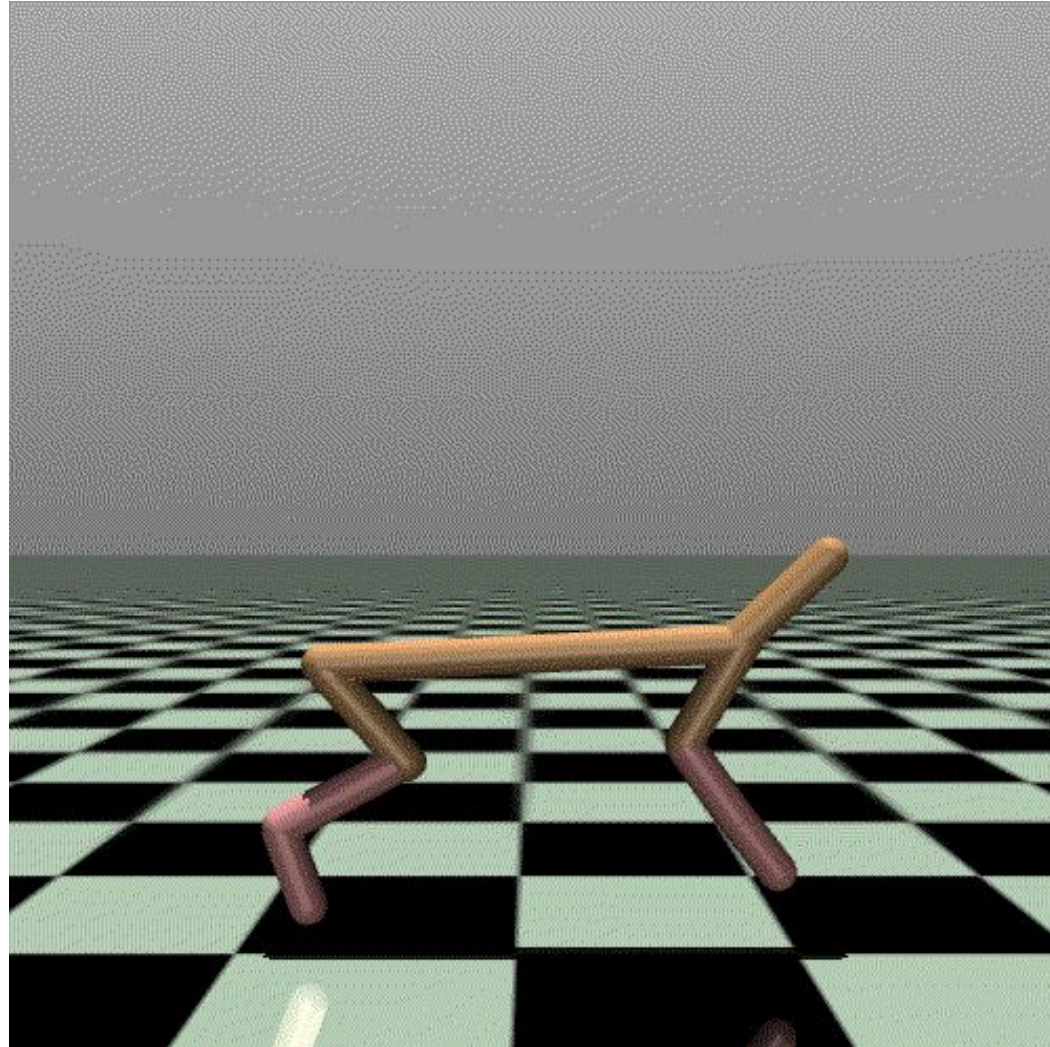
Medium Perceptive, High Cognitive

- Minecraft



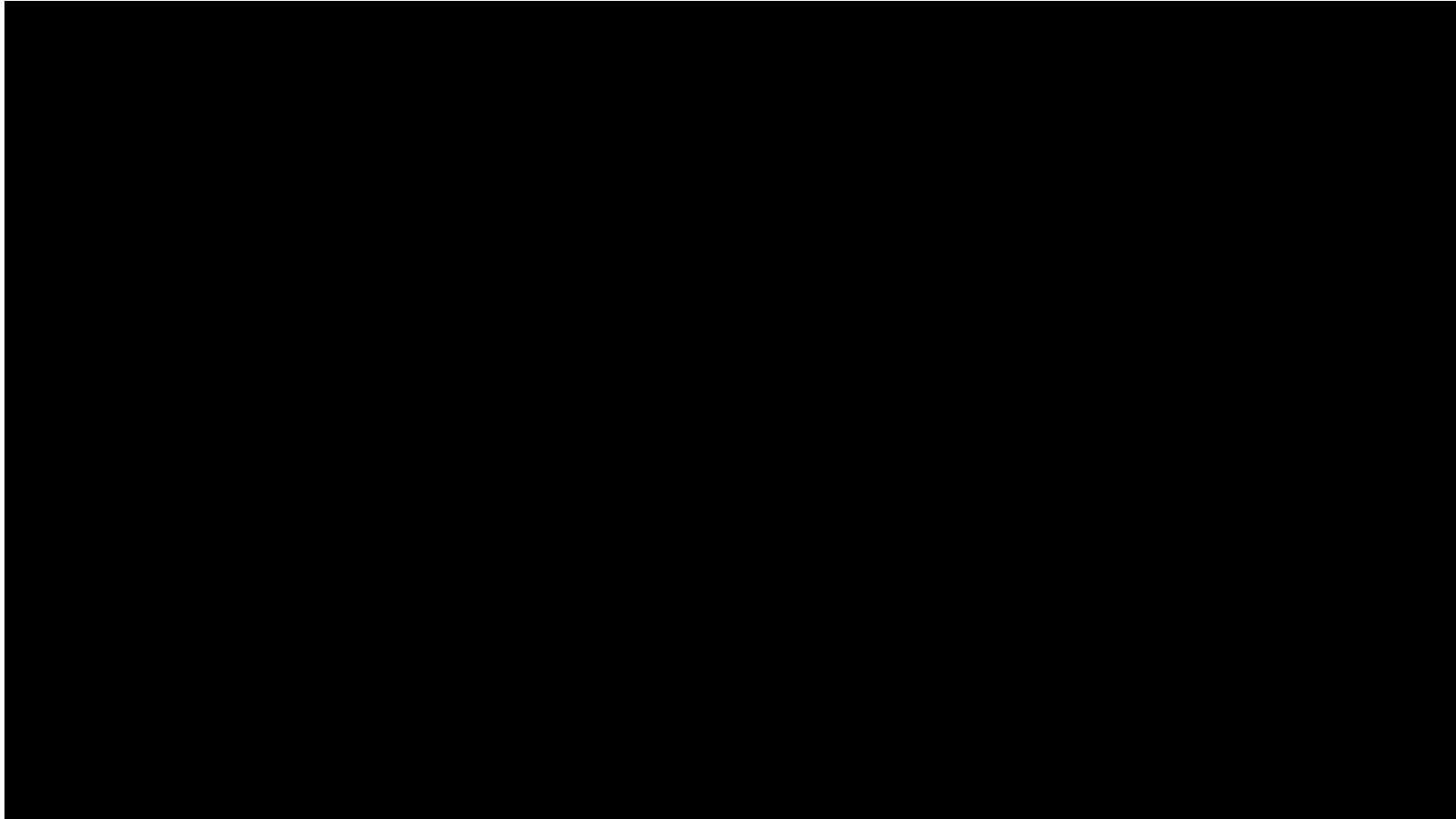
High Perceptive, Low Cognitive

- Mujoco



High Perceptive, Medium Cognitive

- Habitat (Meta, Savva et al. 2019)



High Perceptive, High Cognitive

- Real world, whoever gets this sim first cheaply wins

Questions to think about

- For all the sims how were the dimensions of complexity related to size of state/action space?
- How were they related to how many steps you'd have to take before getting a reward? (aka reward sparsity)

Sim2real Transfer

- Which dimensions of complexity transfer more easily?
- Can you train on lower complexity and switch to a higher complexity?
- (world model holy grail) sims are very costly to make, can you just learn one?

In Class Activity Time

- Socratic Mind assignment link: <https://rb.gy/94rywl> (<-- this is a lower case L)
- Login with your UCSD Google Accts
- It's ok to have wrong answers (initially) so don't overthink it – it is meant to be interactive and help you fix your mistakes
- Graded as pass/fail