

Introduction to Deep RL, Part 2

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2.1: What is RL currently achieving?

What RL Can Currently Do: RL in Simulation

If you have infinite simulator data and well-defined rewards, you can make substantial progress on extremely hard problems!

- Atari
- Simulated robotics
- Go (Deepmind's AlphaZero)
- Dota (OpenAI Five)
- Starcraft (Deepmind's AlphaStar)



What RL Can Currently Do: RL in the Real World

RL is beginning to see profitable real-world applications!

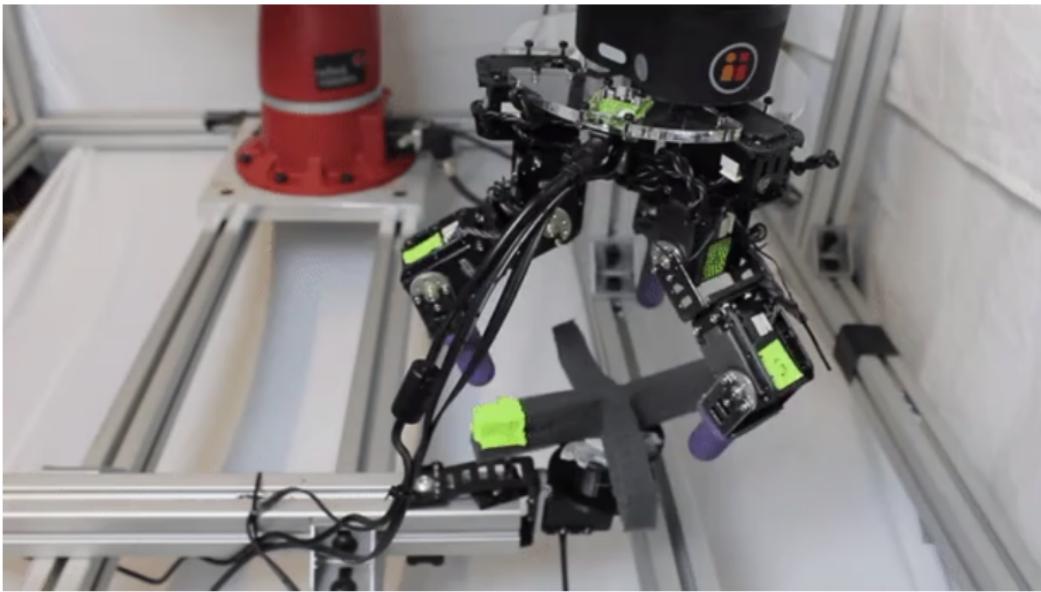
- Facebook uses RL (DQN) for push notifications (Horizon)
- DeepMind integrated RL into data center cooling
- Several promising early efforts at applying RL for robotics



2.1.1: Spotlight on RL for Real-World Robotics

Tasks that can't easily be simulated

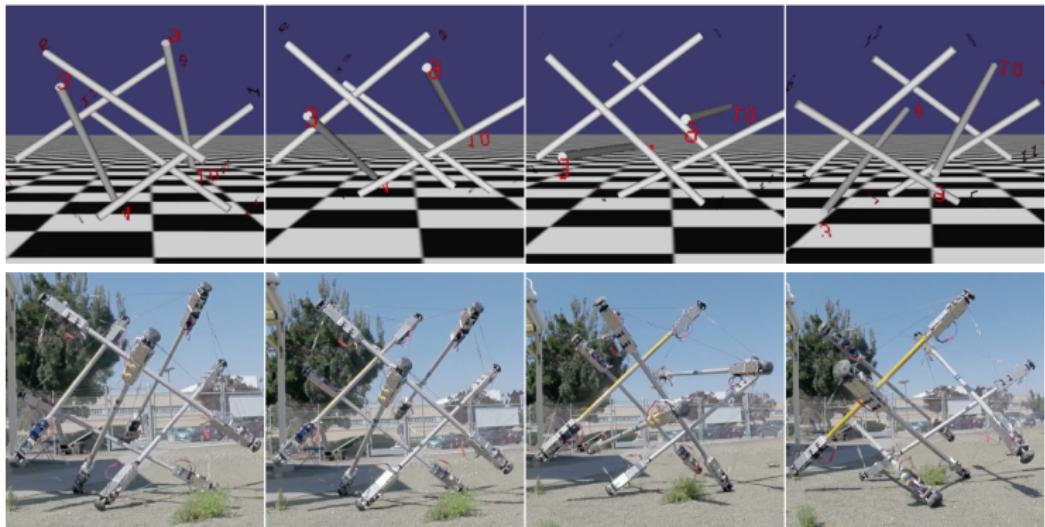
Zhu et al. trained low-cost robots from scratch in the real world on hard-to-simulate tasks using natural policy gradient. (Note: observation space here is hand state and valve state)



¹Zhu et al, 2018: “Dexterous Manipulation with Deep Reinforcement Learning: Efficient, General, and Low-Cost”

Robots that are hard to control conventionally

Zhang et al. trained a tensegrity robot with deep RL in simulation and demonstrated transfer to the real world



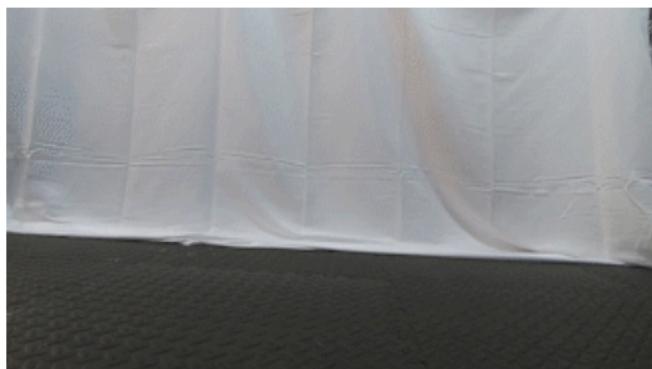
¹Zhang et al, 2016: "Deep Reinforcement Learning for Tensegrity Robot Locomotion"

Soft Actor-Critic

Haarnoja et al. trained robots in the real world with Soft Actor-Critic, and demonstrated efficient and robust control on hard domains



Manipulation from visual input, agent sees lower-right (took 20 hours to learn)



Robust control of a legged robot (took 2 hours to learn)

¹Haarnoja et al, 2018: "Soft Actor-Critic Algorithms and Applications"

Hwangbo et al. used real data to learn a better simulator, and then used lots of simulator data to train complex locomotion and recovery policies for the Anymal robot:



ANYmal runs faster than ever before.

¹Hwangbo et al, 2018: “Learning agile and dynamic motor skills for legged robots”

2.2: What are the challenges in modern RL?