Conjunctive Normal Form

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Conjunctive normal form (CNF) is the standard notation for formulas in predicate and propositional logic. A formula in CNF consists of a series of conjunctions containing subformulas which are only disjunctions of atomic propositions or their negations. We use 'and' and 'or' as list operators. Thus a formula whose main connective is 'and' or 'or' is a pair, the operator and a list of conjuncts or disjuncts. For this reason, a formula in CNF contains (at most) one 'and' operator. Besides being standard notation, CNF is advantageous because it can speed up the evaluation of long formulas. Disjunctive normal form (DNF) is the 'or' analog to CNF. A formula in DNF is a single 'or' list of subformulas made up of 'and' lists of atomic formulas and their negations.

1 The Syntactic Algorithm

```
# Helper function for cnf().
def cnf_do(f):
    if atom(f) or f[0] == 'not':
        return f
    if f[0] == 'and':
        return ('and', [cnf_do(g) for g in f[1]])
    if f[0] == 'or':
        if len(f[1]) == 0:
            return f
        if len(f[1]) == 1:
            return cnf_do(f[1][0])
        return cnf_distribute(cnf_do(f[1][0]), cnf_do(('or', f[1][1:])))
    raise ValueError('unknown operator:', f[0])
```

```
# Helper function for cnf(): distribute disjunction over conjunction.
def cnf_distribute(f1, f2):
    if f1[0] == 'and':
        if len(f1[1]) == 0:
            return f1
        if len(f1[1]) == 1:
            return cnf_distribute(f1[1][0], f2)
        return ('and', [cnf_distribute(f1[1][0], f2)] +
            [cnf_distribute(g, f2) for g in f1[1][1:]])
    if f2[0] == 'and':
        if len(f2[1]) == 0:
            return f2
        if len(f2[1]) == 1:
            return cnf_distribute(f1, f2[1][0])
        return ('and', [cnf_distribute(f1, f2[1][0])] +
```

```
            [cnf_distribute(f1, g) for g in f2[1][1:]])
    return ('or', [f1, f2])
```

2 The Semantic Algorithm

Rather than converting f to CNF directly, the *cnf_tt* algorithm constructs a truth table and uses it to produce a formula in CNF that is logically equivalent to f (i.e. it is true at exactly the rows where f is true). It is more intuitive to use this strategy to produce a formula in DNF.

p	q	r	$(p \vee q) \to r$
0	0	0	1
0	0	1	1
0	1	0	0
0	1	1	1
1	0	0	0
1	0	1	1
1	1	0	0
1	1	1	1

To write a formula that is true at exactly one row in a truth table (i.e. it is true there and nowhere else), one takes the conjunction of all the literals or their negations depending on their truth or falsity at that row. For example, the formula $\wedge[\neg p, q, r]$ is true at exactly row 4 in the truth table above. Reading a DNF formula from a truth table is an extension of this idea: just take the disjunction of such formulas for each row where f is true. The resulting formula is in DNF and is true at exactly the lines where f is true (i.e. it is logically equivalent). Thus we have:

$$\vee[p, q] \to r \equiv \vee[\wedge[\neg p, \neg q, \neg r], \wedge[\neg p, \neg q, r], \wedge[\neg p, q, r], \wedge[p, \neg q, r], \wedge[p, q, r]]$$

```
# Uses the truth table method to compute disjunctive normal form
def dnf_tt(f):
    # filter the truth table to only rows where f is True
    f_true_tt = [row for row in gen_tt(get_atoms(f))
                 if evaluate(f, row) == True]
    # return an 'or' list of 'and' lists (one for each row in
    # f_true_tt) such that each 'and' list contains p when
    # p is True in the row and ('not', p) when it is False.
    return tuple(['or', [tuple(['and',
        [p if row[p] else tuple(['not', p]) for p in row.keys() ]])
        for row in f_true_tt] ])
```

To read the CNF from the truth table, we take the opposite (but obviously logically equivalent) approach: the goal is to write a formula that is false at exactly the lines where f is false. Say we wanted to write a formula that is false at exactly line 3. The formula $\wedge[\neg p, q, \neg r]$ is true at exactly line 3, so its negation is false exactly there. Applying the De Morgan's rule gives $\vee[p, \neg q, r]$. Naturally, taking the conjunction of such formulas, we can pick out more rows. Thus we have:

$$\vee[p, q] \to r \equiv \wedge[\vee[p, \neg q, r], \vee[\neg p, q, r], \vee[\neg p, \neg q, r],]$$

```
# Uses the truth table method to compute conjunctive normal form
def cnf_tt(f):
    # filter the truth table to only rows where f is False
    f_false_tt = [row for row in gen_tt(get_atoms(f))
                  if evaluate(f, row) == False]
    # return an 'and' list of 'or' lists (one for each row in
```

```
    # f_false_tt) such that each 'or' list contains ('not', p) when
    # p is True in the row and p when it is False.
    return tuple(['and', [tuple(['or',
        [p if not row[p] else tuple(['not', p]) for p in row.keys()] ])
        for row in f_false_tt]])
```

3 Analysis

The *cnf_tt* algorithm has a higher up-front cost than *cnf*. The cost of generating the empty truth table is relatively small; It is a list of the 2^n possible valuations (where n is the number of atomic propositions):

```
# Generates all possible valuations for a given set of atoms.
def gen_tt(atoms):
    from itertools import product
    return [{p:val for (p, val) in zip(atoms, vals)} for vals in
         product([False, True], repeat=len(atoms))]
```

Filtering the truth table to only the rows where f is $False$ is rather intensive since the formula must be evaluated at each of the 2^n rows and the evaluation function may be called up to once for each subformula of f. Nevertheless, *cnf_tt* performs better on longer random formulas. It is faster beginning at formulas with 14 atomic propositions and *cnf* reaches Python's default maximum recursion depth of 1000 beginning at around 35 atomics. When the formulas start in DNF, *cnf_tt* is faster beginning at formulas with 2 atomic sentences, and *cnf* reaches the recursion limit beginning at 3 atomics.