

Abstract Machines

Turing, FSM, SECD, Semantics

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Lecture #5 out of 10

90 minutes

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Who Are Abstract Machines?

Turing Machine

Finite-State Machine

SECD Machine(s)

Semantic

Chapter #1:

Who Are Abstract Machines?

Definition

An abstract machine is a theoretical model of computation.

Similar to a function, a machine receives inputs and produces outputs based on predefined rules.

Abstract machines are “machines” because they allow step-by-step execution of programmes. (really?)

They are “abstract” because they ignore many aspects of actual (hardware) machines.

An abstract machine is an intermediate language with a small-step operational semantics.

Purpose

“The implementation of a programming language consists of two stages. The implementation of the compiler and the implementation of the abstract (virtual?) machine. This is a typical divide-and-conquer approach. From a pedagogical point of view, this simplifies the presentation and teaching of the principles of programming language implementations. From a software engineering point of view, the introduction of layers of abstraction increases maintainability and portability.” (1999)

Virtual Machines

An abstract machine implemented in software is termed a virtual machine, and one implemented in hardware is called simply a “machine.”

JVM (for Java) and CLR (for .NET) are among most notable examples of virtual machines.

IR (intermediate representation) is used internally by a compiler or virtual machine to represent source code. An intermediate language is the language of an abstract machine.

LLVM

LLVM (Low Level Virtual Machine) is a standard de-facto.

```
@.str = internal constant [14 x i8] c"hello, world\0A\00"

declare i32 @printf(ptr, ...)

define i32 @main(i32 %argc, ptr %argv) nounwind {
entry:
    %tmp1 = getelementptr [14 x i8], ptr @.str, i32 0, i32 0
    %tmp2 = call i32 (ptr, ...) @printf( ptr %tmp1 ) nounwind
    ret i32 0
}
```

Chapter #2:

Turing Machine

Turing Machine was the first (1936) ... but not the simplest.



For example, Emil Post's Machine is simpler.

Proof

The Church-Turing thesis: Anything that can be computed can be computed by some Turing machine.

There **has never been a proof**, but the evidence for its validity comes from the fact that every realistic model of computation, yet discovered, has been shown to be equivalent. — here.

Chapter #3:

Finite-State Machine

Chapter #4:

SECD Machine(s)

There are SECD (**s**tack, **e**nvironment, **c**ontrol, **d**ump), CESH, CEK, CS, and maybe other abstract machines.

I like the CRM (**c**ontrol, **r**esults, **m**emory) machine explained by [Michael Pradel](#) in [his YouTube course](#) about program analysis: $\langle c, r, m \rangle$.

$$\begin{aligned}\langle x := 2 \times 3, \text{nil}, \{\} \rangle &\longrightarrow \langle x \circ 2 \times 3 \circ :=, \text{nil}, \{\} \rangle \\ &\longrightarrow \langle 2 \times 3 \circ :=, x \circ \text{nil}, \{\} \rangle \\ &\longrightarrow \langle :=, x \circ 6 \circ \text{nil}, \{\} \rangle \\ &\longrightarrow \langle \text{nil}, \text{nil}, \{x \mapsto 6\} \rangle\end{aligned}$$

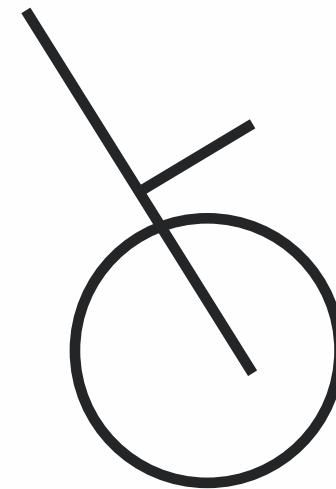
Chapter #5: Semantic

This is our programming language that helps us draw on a canvas:

```
L 10, 20, 15, 23;  
C 13, 13, 35;  
L 5, 28, 15, 12;
```

Its semantic may be explained by the abstract machine with the following instruction set, which semantic is **obvious** to a reader:

```
MOVE x, y; DRAW;  
LOOP; IF t THEN BREAK; IF t THEN CONTINUE; END LOOP;  
x > y;  
x := y; x + y; x / y;  
1600; 900.
```



This is what "L x1, y1, x2, y2" means:

```
dx := x2 - x1;  
dx := dx / 1600;  
dy := y2 - y1;  
dy := dy / 900;  
LOOP;  
DRAW x1, y1;  
IF x1 > x2 THEN BREAK;  
IF y1 > y2 THEN BREAK;  
x1 := x1 + dx;  
y1 := y1 + dy;  
END LOOP;
```

