Representational Dimensions

CPSC 322 – Intro 2

Textbook §1

Lecture Overview

1. Recap from Last Lecture
2. What is an Agent?
3. Representation
4. Dimensions of Representational Complexity

Essentials

- Course web site: `http://www.ugrad.cs.ubc.ca/~cs322`
  - This is where you'll find course policies, and where slides will be distributed
- Textbook: *Artificial Intelligence: Foundations of Computational Agents*, by Poole and Mackworth. Still under development; electronic version only.
- WebCT: used for textbook, discussion board, solutions to assignments
  - Use the discussion board for questions about assignments, material covered in lecture, etc, rather than email
  - Use email for private questions (e.g., health problems)
- You get 4 late days for assignments
- Assignment 0 is due on Wednesday
  - get it on WebCT
  - submit it using handin

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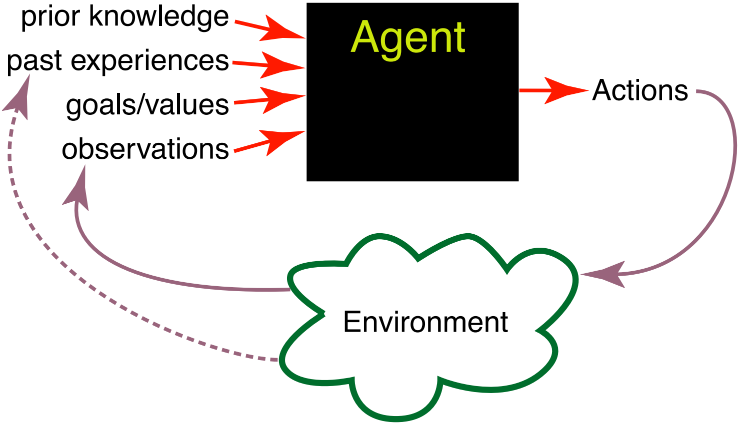
What is an agent?

It has the following characteristics:

- It is situated in some environment
    - does not have to be the real world—can be an abstracted electronic environment
- It can make observations
    - perhaps imperfectly
- It is able to act
    - perhaps within constraints
- It has goals or preferences
- It may have prior knowledge or beliefs, and some way of updating beliefs based on new experiences

Agents acting in an environment



Examples

Which of these things is an agent, and why or why not?

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- What different configurations can the world be in, and how do we denote them in a computer?
- What sorts of beliefs can we have about what configuration the world is in, and are these beliefs certain?
- How would the world be changed if we were to take some given action: what are the system dynamics?

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- able to trade off accuracy and computation time.

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This course will explore alternatives that fall between these extremes.

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Overview of this course

This course will emphasize two main themes:

Reasoning

How should an agent act given the current state of its environment and its goals?

Representation

How should the environment be represented in order to help an agent to reason effectively?

Representations considered this course

Furthermore, the course will consider two main representational dimensions:

1. Deterministic vs. stochastic domains
2. Static vs. sequential domains

1. Deterministic vs. Stochastic Domains

Historically, AI has been divided into two camps: those who prefer representations based on logic and those who prefer probability.

- Is the environment deterministic or stochastic?
- Is the agent's knowledge certain or uncertain?

Some of the most exciting current research in AI is actually building bridges between these camps.

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- Important caveat:
  - in deterministic domains, the distinction between static and sequential settings may seem somewhat artificial
    - we can redefine actions (e.g., fill in individual numbers in the Sudoku vs. solving the whole thing)
    - indeed, some of the same techniques work in both settings
  - the same cannot be said about stochastic domains

Dimensions of Representational Complexity

Some other important dimensions of complexity:

- Propositions or relations
- Flat or hierarchical
- Knowledge given versus knowledge learned from experience
- Goals versus complex preferences
- Perfect rationality versus bounded rationality

Explicit State or propositions or relations

How do we model the world?

- You can enumerate the states of the world, described as assignments of values to one or more variables (features).
  - 30 binary features can represent $2^{30} = 1,073,741,824$ states.

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- Features can be described in terms of objects and relationships.
  - There is a feature for each relationship on each tuple of individuals.
  - One binary relation and 10 individuals can represents $10^2 = 100$ propositions and 2^{100} states.

Flat or hierarchical

Is it useful to model the whole world at the same level of abstraction?

- You can model the system at one level of abstraction: flat
- You can model the system at multiple levels of abstraction: hierarchical
- Example: Planning a trip from here to a resort in Cancun, Mexico

Knowledge given versus knowledge learned from experience

How much do we know about the world in advance?

- The agent is provided with a model of the world before it starts to act
- The agent must learn how the world works based on experience
    - in this case, the agent often still does start out with some prior knowledge

Goals versus complex preferences

If an agent doesn't want to achieve anything, it has no reason to act. How do we represent an agent's desire(s)?

- An agent may have a goal that it wants to achieve
  - e.g., there is some state or set of states of the world that the agent wants to be in
  - e.g., there is some proposition or set of propositions that the agent wants to make true

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- An agent may have complex preferences
  - e.g., there is some preference function that describes how happy the agent is in each state of the world; the agent's task is to put the world into a state which makes it as happy as possible

Perfect rationality versus bounded rationality

We've defined rationality as an abstract ideal. Is the agent able to live up to this ideal?

- Perfect rationality: the agent can derive what the best course of action is.
- Bounded rationality: the agent must make good decisions based on its perceptual, computational and memory limitations.