

# Theory of Computer Science

## C6. Rice's Theorem

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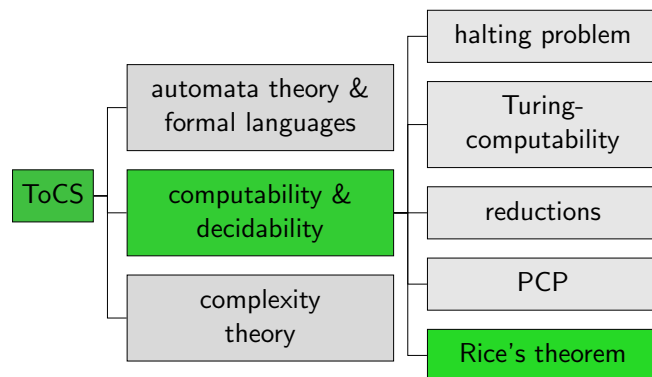
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## C6.1 Rice's Theorem

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C6. Rice's Theorem

Rice's Theorem

## C6.1 Rice's Theorem

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## Rice's Theorem (1)

- ▶ We have shown that the following problems are undecidable:
  - ▶ halting problem  $H$
  - ▶ halting problem on empty tape  $H_0$
  - ▶ post correspondence problem PCP
- ▶ Many more results of this type could be shown.
- ▶ Instead, we prove a much more general result, **Rice's theorem**, which shows that a very large class of different problems are undecidable.
- ▶ Rice's theorem can be summarized informally as: **every** non-trivial question about **what** a given Turing machine computes is undecidable.

## Rice's Theorem (2)

### Theorem (Rice's Theorem)

Let  $\mathcal{R}$  be the class of all computable partial functions.

Let  $S$  be an **arbitrary** subset of  $\mathcal{R}$  except  $S = \emptyset$  or  $S = \mathcal{R}$ .

Then the language

$$C(S) = \{w \in \{0, 1\}^* \mid \text{the (partial) function computed by } M_w \text{ is in } S\}$$

is undecidable.

**Question:** why the restriction to  $S \neq \emptyset$  and  $S \neq \mathcal{R}$ ?

**Extension (without proof):** in most cases neither  $C(S)$  nor  $\overline{C(S)}$  is Turing-recognizable. (But there are sets  $S$  for which one of the two languages is Turing-recognizable.)

## Rice's Theorem (3)

### Proof.

Let  $\Omega$  be the partial function that is undefined everywhere.

### Case distinction:

#### Case 1: $\Omega \in S$

Let  $q \in \mathcal{R} \setminus S$  be an arbitrary computable partial function outside of  $S$  (exists because  $S \subseteq \mathcal{R}$  and  $S \neq \mathcal{R}$ ).

Let  $Q$  be a Turing machine that computes  $q$ . ...

## Rice's Theorem (4)

### Proof (continued).

We show that  $\overline{H_0} \leq C(S)$ .

Consider function  $f : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^*$ , where  $f(w)$  is defined as follows:

- ▶ Construct TM  $M$  that first behaves on input  $y$  like  $M_w$  on the empty tape (independently of what  $y$  is).
- ▶ Afterwards (if that computation terminates!)  $M$  clears the tape, creates the start configuration of  $Q$  for input  $y$  and then simulates  $Q$ .
- ▶  $f(w)$  is the encoding of this TM  $M$

$f$  is total and computable. ...

## Rice's Theorem (5)

Proof (continued).

Which function is computed by the TM encoded by  $f(w)$ ?

$$M_{f(w)} \text{ computes } \begin{cases} \Omega & \text{if } M_w \text{ does not terminate on } \varepsilon \\ q & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

For all words  $w \in \{0, 1\}^*$ :

$$\begin{aligned} w \in H_0 &\implies M_w \text{ terminates on } \varepsilon \\ &\implies M_{f(w)} \text{ computes the function } q \\ &\implies \text{the function computed by } M_{f(w)} \text{ is not in } \mathcal{S} \\ &\implies f(w) \notin C(\mathcal{S}) \end{aligned}$$

...

## Rice's Theorem (6)

Proof (continued).

Further:

$$\begin{aligned} w \notin H_0 &\implies M_w \text{ does not terminate on } \varepsilon \\ &\implies M_{f(w)} \text{ computes the function } \Omega \\ &\implies \text{the function computed by } M_{f(w)} \text{ is in } \mathcal{S} \\ &\implies f(w) \in C(\mathcal{S}) \end{aligned}$$

Together this means:  $w \notin H_0$  iff  $f(w) \in C(\mathcal{S})$ ,  
thus  $w \in \bar{H}_0$  iff  $f(w) \in C(\mathcal{S})$ .

Therefore,  $f$  is a reduction of  $\bar{H}_0$  to  $C(\mathcal{S})$ .

Since  $H_0$  is undecidable,  $\bar{H}_0$  is also undecidable.

We can conclude that  $C(\mathcal{S})$  is undecidable.

...

## Rice's Theorem (7)

Proof (continued).

Case 2:  $\Omega \notin \mathcal{S}$

Analogous to Case 1 but this time choose  $q \in \mathcal{S}$ .

The corresponding function  $f$  then reduces  $H_0$  to  $C(\mathcal{S})$ .

Thus, it also follows in this case that  $C(\mathcal{S})$  is undecidable.  $\square$

## Rice's Theorem: Consequences

Was it worth it?

We can now conclude immediately that (for example) the following informally specified problems are all undecidable:

- ▶ Does a given TM compute a constant function?
- ▶ Does a given TM compute a total function (i. e. will it always terminate, and in particular terminate in a "correct" configuration)?
- ▶ Is the output of a given TM always longer than its input?
- ▶ Does a given TM compute the identity function?
- ▶ Does a given TM compute the computable function  $f$ ?
- ▶ ...

## Rice's Theorem: Examples

- ▶ Does a given TM compute a constant function?  
 $\mathcal{S} = \{f \mid f \text{ is total and computable and for all } x, y \text{ in the domain of } f : f(x) = f(y)\}$
- ▶ Does a given TM compute a total function?  
 $\mathcal{S} = \{f \mid f \text{ is total and computable}\}$
- ▶ Does a given TM compute the identity function?  
 $\mathcal{S} = \{f \mid f(x) = x \text{ for all } x\}$
- ▶ Does a given TM add two natural numbers?  
 $\mathcal{S} = \{f : \mathbb{N}_0^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{N}_0 \mid f(x, y) = x + y\}$
- ▶ Does a given TM compute the computable function  $f$ ?  
 $\mathcal{S} = \{f\}$   
 (full automatization of software verification is impossible)

## Rice's Theorem: Pitfalls

- ▶  $\mathcal{S} = \{f \mid f \text{ can be computed by a DTM with an even number of states}\}$   
 Rice's theorem not applicable because  $\mathcal{S} = \mathcal{R}$
- ▶  $\mathcal{S} = \{f : \{0, 1\}^* \rightarrow_p \{0, 1\} \mid f(w) = 1 \text{ iff } M_w \text{ does not terminate on } \epsilon\}$   
 Rice's theorem not applicable because  $\mathcal{S} \not\subseteq \mathcal{R}$
- ▶ Show that  $\{w \mid M_w \text{ traverses all states on every input}\}$  is undecidable.  
 Rice's theorem not directly applicable because not a semantic property (the function computed by  $M_w$  can also be computed by a TM that does not traverse all states)

## Rice's Theorem: Practical Applications

Undecidable due to Rice's theorem + a small reduction:

- ▶ **automated debugging:**
  - ▶ Can a given variable ever receive a null value?
  - ▶ Can a given assertion in a program ever trigger?
  - ▶ Can a given buffer ever overflow?
- ▶ **virus scanners and other software security analysis:**
  - ▶ Can this code do something harmful?
  - ▶ Is this program vulnerable to SQL injections?
  - ▶ Can this program lead to a privilege escalation?
- ▶ **optimizing compilers:**
  - ▶ Is this dead code?
  - ▶ Is this a constant expression?
  - ▶ Can pointer aliasing happen here?
  - ▶ Is it safe to parallelize this code path?
- ▶ **parallel program analysis:**
  - ▶ Is a deadlock possible here?
  - ▶ Can a race condition happen here?

## C6.2 Further Undecidable Problems

## And What Else?

- ▶ Here we conclude our discussion of undecidable problems.
- ▶ Many more undecidable problems exist.
- ▶ In this section, we briefly discuss some further classical results.

## Undecidable Grammar Problems

### Some Grammar Problems

Given context-free grammars  $G_1$  and  $G_2, \dots$

- ▶ ... is  $\mathcal{L}(G_1) \cap \mathcal{L}(G_2) = \emptyset$ ?
- ▶ ... is  $|\mathcal{L}(G_1) \cap \mathcal{L}(G_2)| = \infty$ ?
- ▶ ... is  $\mathcal{L}(G_1) \cap \mathcal{L}(G_2)$  context-free?
- ▶ ... is  $\mathcal{L}(G_1) \subseteq \mathcal{L}(G_2)$ ?
- ▶ ... is  $\mathcal{L}(G_1) = \mathcal{L}(G_2)$ ?

Given a context-sensitive grammar  $G, \dots$

- ▶ ... is  $\mathcal{L}(G) = \emptyset$ ?
- ▶ ... is  $|\mathcal{L}(G)| = \infty$ ?

$\rightsquigarrow$  all undecidable by reduction from PCP  
(see Schöning, Chapter 2.8)

## Gödel's First Incompleteness Theorem (1)

### Definition (Arithmetic Formula)

An **arithmetic formula** is a closed predicate logic formula using

- ▶ constant symbols 0 and 1,
- ▶ function symbols + and  $\cdot$ , and
- ▶ equality (=) as the only relation symbols.

It is called **true** if it is true under the usual interpretation of 0, 1, + and  $\cdot$  over  $\mathbb{N}_0$ .

**Example:**  $\forall x \exists y \forall z ((x \cdot y) = z) \wedge ((1 + x) = (x \cdot y))$

## Gödel's First Incompleteness Theorem (2)

### Gödel's First Incompleteness Theorem

The problem of **deciding if a given arithmetic formula is true** is undecidable.

Moreover, neither it nor its complement are Turing-recognizable.

As a consequence, there exists no sound and complete proof system for arithmetic formulas.

## Summary

### Rice's theorem:

- ▶ “In general one cannot determine algorithmically what a given program (or Turing machine) computes.”

### How to Prove Undecidability?

- ▶ statements on the computed function of a TM/an algorithm  
→ easiest with **Rice' theorem**
- ▶ other problems
  - ▶ **directly with the definition of undecidability**  
→ usually quite complicated
  - ▶ **reduction from an undecidable problem**, e.g.  
→ halting problem ( $H$ )  
→ Post correspondence problem (PCP)

## What's Next?

### contents of this course:

- background** ✓
  - ▷ mathematical foundations and proof techniques
- automata theory and formal languages** ✓
  - ▷ What is a computation?
- Turing computability** ✓
  - ▷ What can be computed at all?
- complexity theory**
  - ▷ What can be computed efficiently?
- more computability theory**
  - ▷ Other models of computability