Chapter 6

Universal RAM Programs and Undecidability of the Halting Problem

6.1 Pairing Functions

Pairing functions are used to encode pairs of integers into single integers, or more generally, finite sequences of integers into single integers.

We begin by exhibiting a bijective pairing function, $J: \mathbb{N}^2 \to \mathbb{N}$.

The function $J$ has the graph partially showed below:
The function $J$ corresponds to a certain way of enumerating pairs of integers. Note that the value of $x + y$ is constant along each diagonal, and consequently, we have

\[ J(x, y) = 1 + 2 + \cdots + (x + y) + x, \]
\[ = ((x + y)(x + y + 1) + 2x)/2, \]
\[ = ((x + y)^2 + 3x + y)/2, \]

that is,

\[ J(x, y) = ((x + y)^2 + 3x + y)/2. \]
Let $K : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{N}$ and $L : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{N}$ be the *projection functions* onto the axes, that is, the unique functions such that

$$K(J(a, b)) = a \quad \text{and} \quad L(J(a, b)) = b,$$

for all $a, b \in \mathbb{N}$.

Clearly, $J$ is a recursive function (even primitive recursive), since it is given by a polynomial.

It can be shown that $J$ is injective and surjective, and that it is strictly monotonic in each argument, which means that for all $x, x', y, y' \in \mathbb{N}$, if $x < x'$ then $J(x, y) < J(x', y)$, and if $y < y'$ then $J(x, y) < J(x, y')$.

The projection functions $K$ and $L$ can be computed explicitly, although this is a bit tricky.
We only need to observe that by monotonicity of $J$,

$$x \leq J(x, y) \quad \text{and} \quad y \leq J(x, y),$$

and thus,

$$K(z) = \min(x \leq z)(\exists y \leq z)[J(x, y) = z],$$

and

$$L(z) = \min(y \leq z)(\exists x \leq z)[J(x, y) = z].$$

These functions can be computed by RAM programs involving two nested loops. Thus, they are recursive (in fact, primitive recursive).
More explicit formulae can be given for $K$ and $L$.

If we define

$$Q_1(z) = \lfloor \lfloor \sqrt{8z+1} + 1 \rfloor + 1 \rfloor / 2 - 1$$
$$Q_2(z) = 2z - (Q_1(z))^2,$$

then it can be shown that

$$K(z) = \frac{1}{2}(Q_2(z) - Q_1(z))$$
$$L(z) = Q_1(z) - \frac{1}{2}(Q_2(z) - Q_1(z)).$$

In the above formula, the function $m \mapsto \lfloor \sqrt{m} \rfloor$ yields the largest integer $s$ such that $s^2 \leq m$. It can be computed by a RAM program.
The pairing function $J(x, y)$ is also denoted as $\langle x, y \rangle$, and $K$ and $L$ are also denoted as $\Pi_1$ and $\Pi_2$.

By induction, we can define bijections between $\mathbb{N}^n$ and $\mathbb{N}$ for all $n \geq 1$. We let

$$\langle z \rangle_1 = z,$$

$$\langle x_1, x_2 \rangle_2 = \langle x_1, x_2 \rangle,$$

and

$$\langle x_1, \ldots, x_n, x_{n+1} \rangle_{n+1} = \langle x_1, \ldots, x_{n-1}, \langle x_n, x_{n+1} \rangle \rangle_n.$$

Note that

$$\langle x_1, \ldots, x_n, x_{n+1} \rangle_{n+1} = \langle x_1, \langle x_2, \ldots, x_{n+1} \rangle_1 \rangle.$$
We can define a *uniform projection function*, $\Pi$, with the following property:
if $z = \langle x_1, \ldots, x_n \rangle$, with $n \geq 2$, then
$$\Pi(i, n, z) = x_i$$
for all $i$, where $1 \leq i \leq n$.

The function $\Pi$ is defined by cases as follows:

$$\begin{align*}
\Pi(i, 0, z) &= 0, \quad \text{for all } i \geq 0, \\
\Pi(i, 1, z) &= z, \quad \text{for all } i \geq 0, \\
\Pi(i, 2, z) &= \Pi_1(z), \quad \text{if } 0 \leq i \leq 1, \\
\Pi(i, 2, z) &= \Pi_2(z), \quad \text{for all } i \geq 2,
\end{align*}$$

and for all $n \geq 2$,

$$\Pi(i, n + 1, z) = \begin{cases} 
\Pi(i, n, z) & \text{if } 0 \leq i < n, \\
\Pi_1(\Pi(n, n, z)) & \text{if } i = n, \\
\Pi_2(\Pi(n, n, z)) & \text{if } i > n.
\end{cases}$$
By a previous exercise, this is a legitimate (primitive) recursive definition. Some basic properties of $\Pi$ are given as exercises. In particular, the following properties are easily shown:

(a) $\langle 0, \ldots, 0 \rangle_n = 0$, $\langle x, 0 \rangle = \langle x, 0, \ldots, 0 \rangle_n$;

(b) $\Pi(0, n, z) = \Pi(1, n, z)$ and $\Pi(i, n, z) = \Pi(n, n, z)$, for all $i \geq n$ and all $n, z \in \mathbb{N}$;

(c) $\langle \Pi(1, n, z), \ldots, \Pi(n, n, z) \rangle_n = z$, for all $n \geq 1$ and all $z \in \mathbb{N}$;

(d) $\Pi(i, n, z) \leq z$, for all $i, n, z \in \mathbb{N}$;

(e) There is a (primitive) recursive function $\text{Large}$, such that,

$$\Pi(i, n + 1, \text{Large}(n + 1, z)) = z,$$

for $i, n, z \in \mathbb{N}$. 
6.1. PAIRING FUNCTIONS

As a first application, we observe that we need only consider partial recursive functions of a single argument.

Indeed, let \( \varphi : \mathbb{N}^n \to \mathbb{N} \) be a partial recursive function of \( n \geq 2 \) arguments. Let

\[
  \overline{\varphi}(z) = \varphi(\Pi(1, n, z), \ldots, \Pi(n, n, z)),
\]

for all \( z \in \mathbb{N} \).

Then, \( \overline{\varphi} \) is a partial recursive function of a single argument, and \( \varphi \) can be recovered from \( \overline{\varphi} \), since

\[
  \varphi(x_1, \ldots, x_n) = \overline{\varphi}(\langle x_1, \ldots, x_n \rangle).
\]

Thus, using \( \langle -, - \rangle \) and \( \Pi \) as coding and decoding functions, we can restrict our attention to functions of a single argument.
It can be shown that there exist coding and decoding functions between $\Sigma^*$ and $\{a_1\}^*$, and that partial recursive functions over $\Sigma^*$ can be recoded as partial recursive functions over $\{a_1\}^*$.

Since $\{a_1\}^*$ is isomorphic to $\mathbb{N}$, this shows that we can restrict our attention to functions defined over $\mathbb{N}$.
6.2 Coding of RAM Programs

In this Section, we present a specific encoding of RAM programs which allows us to treat programs as integers.

Encoding programs as integers also allows us to have programs that take other programs as input, and we obtain a universal program.

Universal programs have the property that given two inputs, the first one being the code of a program and the second one an input data, the universal program simulates the actions of the encoded program on the input data.

A coding scheme is also called an indexing or a Gödel numbering, in honor to Gödel, who invented this technique.
From results of the previous Chapter, without loss of generality, we can restrict our attention to RAM programs computing partial functions of one argument over \( \mathbb{N} \).

Furthermore, we only need the following kinds of instructions, each instruction being coded as shown below. Because we are only considering functions over \( \mathbb{N} \), there is only one kind of instruction of the form add and jmp (and add increments by 1 the contents of the specified register \( R_j \)).

\[
\begin{align*}
N_i \quad & \text{add} \quad R_j \quad \text{code} = \langle 1, i, j, 0 \rangle \\
N_i \quad & \text{tail} \quad R_j \quad \text{code} = \langle 2, i, j, 0 \rangle \\
N_i \quad & \text{continue} \quad \text{code} = \langle 3, i, 1, 0 \rangle \\
N_i \quad R_j \quad & \text{jmp} \quad N_{ka} \quad \text{code} = \langle 4, i, j, k \rangle \\
N_i \quad R_j \quad & \text{jmp} \quad N_{kb} \quad \text{code} = \langle 5, i, j, k \rangle
\end{align*}
\]

Recall that a conditional jump causes a jump to the closest address \( N_k \) above or below iff \( R_j \) is nonzero, and if \( R_j \) is null, the next instruction is executed.
We assume that all lines in a RAM program are numbered. This is always feasible, by labeling unnamed instructions with a new and unused line number.

*The code of an instruction* $I$ *is denoted as* $\#I$. To simplify the notation, we introduce the following decoding primitive recursive functions $\text{Typ}$, $\text{Nam}$, $\text{Reg}$, and $\text{Jmp}$, defined as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Typ}(x) &= \Pi(1, 4, x), \\
\text{Nam}(x) &= \Pi(2, 4, x), \\
\text{Reg}(x) &= \Pi(3, 4, x), \\
\text{Jmp}(x) &= \Pi(4, 4, x).
\end{align*}
\]

The functions yield the type, line number, register name, and line number jumped to, if any, for an instruction coded by $x$.

We can define the (primitive) recursive predicate $\text{INST}$, such that $\text{INST}(x)$ holds iff $x$ codes an instruction.
First, we need the connective \( \supset \) (\textit{implies}), defined such that
\[
P \supset Q \iff \neg P \lor Q.
\]

Then, \( \text{INST}(x) \) holds iff:
\[
[1 \leq \text{Typ}(x) \leq 5] \land [1 \leq \text{Reg}(x)] \land \\
[\text{Typ}(x) \leq 3 \supset \text{Jmp}(x) = 0] \land \\
[\text{Typ}(x) = 3 \supset \text{Reg}(x) = 1]
\]

Program are coded as follows. If \( P \) is a RAM program composed of the \( n \) instructions \( I_1, \ldots, I_n \), \textit{the code of} \( P \), \textit{denoted as} \( \#P \), is
\[
\#P = \langle n, \#I_1, \ldots, \#I_n \rangle.
\]

Recall from a previous exercise that
\[
\langle n, \#I_1, \ldots, \#I_n \rangle = \langle n, \langle \#I_1, \ldots, \#I_n \rangle \rangle.
\]
Also recall that

\[ \langle x, y \rangle = ((x + y)^2 + 3x + y)/2. \]

Consider the following program Padd2 computing the function \( \text{add2}: \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N} \) given by

\[ \text{add2}(n) = n + 2. \]

We have

\[
\begin{align*}
#I_1 &= \langle 1, 1, 1, 0 \rangle_4 = \langle 1, \langle 1, \langle 1, 0 \rangle \rangle \rangle = 37 \\
#I_2 &= \langle 1, 2, 1, 0 \rangle_4 = \langle 1, \langle 2, \langle 1, 0 \rangle \rangle \rangle = 92 \\
#I_3 &= \langle 3, 3, 1, 0 \rangle_4 = \langle 3, \langle 3, \langle 1, 0 \rangle \rangle \rangle = 234
\end{align*}
\]
and

\[
\text{#Padd2} = \langle 3, \#I1, \#I2, \#I3 \rangle_4 = \langle 3, \langle 37, \langle 92, 234 \rangle \rangle \rangle = 1018748519973070618.
\]

The codes get big fast!

We define the (primitive) recursive functions $L_n$, $P_g$, and $L_{\text{line}}$, such that:

\[
\begin{align*}
L_n(x) &= \Pi(1, 2, x), \\
P_g(x) &= \Pi(2, 2, x), \\
L_{\text{line}}(i, x) &= \Pi(i, L_n(x), P_g(x)).
\end{align*}
\]

The function $L_n$ yields the length of the program (the number of instructions), $P_g$ yields the sequence of instructions in the program (really, a code for the sequence), and $L_{\text{line}}(i, x)$ yields the code of the $i$th instruction in the program.

If $x$ does not code a program, there is no need to interpret these functions.
The (primitive) recursive predicate PROG is defined such that PROG(x) holds iff x codes a program.

Thus, PROG(x) holds if each line codes an instruction, each jump has an instruction to jump to, and the last instruction is a `continue`. Thus, PROG(x) holds iff

\[
\forall i \leq \text{Ln}(x)[i \geq 1 \supset \left[\text{INST}(\text{Line}(i, x)) \land \text{Typ}(\text{Line}(\text{Ln}(x), x)) = 3 \\land \text{Typ}(\text{Line}(i, x)) = 4 \supset \exists j \leq i - 1[j \geq 1 \land \text{Nam}(\text{Line}(j, x)) = \text{Jmp}(\text{Line}(i, x))]) \land \left[\text{Typ}(\text{Line}(i, x)) = 5 \supset \exists j \leq \text{Ln}(x)[j > i \land \text{Nam}(\text{Line}(j, x)) = \text{Jmp}(\text{Line}(i, x))]]\right]\]

Note that we have used the fact proved as an exercise that if \( f \) is a (primitive) recursive function and \( P \) is a (primitive) recursive predicate, then \( \exists x \leq f(y)P(x) \) is (primitive) recursive.
We are now ready to prove a fundamental result in the theory of algorithms. This result points out some of the limitations of the notion of algorithm.

**Theorem 6.1. (Undecidability of the halting problem)** There is no RAM program **Decider** which halts for all inputs and has the following property when started with input \(x\) in register \(R_1\) and with input \(i\) in register \(R_2\) (the other registers being set to zero):

1. **Decider** halts with output 1 iff \(i\) codes a program that eventually halts when started on input \(x\) (all other registers set to zero).

2. **Decider** halts with output 0 in \(R_1\) iff \(i\) codes a program that runs forever when started on input \(x\) in \(R_1\) (all other registers set to zero).

3. If \(i\) does not code a program, then **Decider** halts with output 2 in \(R_2\).
**Proof.** Assume that **Decider** is such a RAM program, and let $Q$ be the following program with a single input:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Program } Q \text{ (code } q) & \begin{cases} \\
R2 \leftarrow R1 \\
\text{Decider} \\
N1 \text{ continue} \\
R1 \text{ jmp } N1a \\
\text{continue} \\
\end{cases} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Let $i$ be the code of some program $P$.

Key point: *the termination behavior of $Q$ on input $i$ is exactly the opposite of the termination behavior of **Decider** on input $i$ and code $i$.*

(1) If **Decider** says that program $P$ coded by $i$ *halts* on input $i$, then $R1$ just after the *continue* in line $N1$ contains 1, and $Q$ *loops forever*.

(2) If **Decider** says that program $P$ coded by $i$ *loops forever* on input $i$, then $R1$ just after *continue* in line $N1$ contains 0, and $Q$ *halts.*
The program $Q$ can be translated into a program using only instructions of type 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, described previously, and let $q$ be the code of this program.

Let us see what happens if we run the program $Q$ on input $q$ in $R1$ (all other registers set to zero).

Just after execution of the assignment $R2 \leftarrow R1$, the program Decider is started with $q$ in both $R1$ and $R2$.

Since Decider is supposed to halt for all inputs, it eventually halts with output 0 or 1 in $R1$.

If Decider halts with output 1 in $R1$, then $Q$ goes into an infinite loop, while if Decider halts with output 0 in $R1$, then $Q$ halts.

But then, because of the definition of Decider, we see that Decider says that $Q$ halts when started on input $q$ iff $Q$ loops forever on input $q$, and that $Q$ loops forever on input $q$ iff $Q$ halts on input $q$, a contradiction.

Therefore, Decider cannot exist. \qed
If we identify the notion of algorithm with that of a RAM program which halts for all inputs, the above theorem says that *there is no algorithm for deciding whether a RAM program eventually halts for a given input.*

We say that the halting problem for RAM programs is *undecidable* (or *unsolvable*).

The above theorem also implies that *the halting problem for Turing machines is undecidable.*

Indeed, if we had an algorithm for solving the halting problem for Turing machines, we could solve the halting problem for RAM programs as follows: first, apply the algorithm for translating a RAM program into an equivalent Turing machine, and then apply the algorithm solving the halting problem for Turing machines.

The argument if typical in computability theory and is called a “reducibility argument.”
Our next goal is to define a (primitive) recursive function that describes the computation of RAM programs.

Assume that we have a RAM program $P$ using $n$ registers $R_1, \ldots, R_n$, whose contents are denoted as $r_1, \ldots, r_n$.

We can code $r_1, \ldots, r_n$ into a single integer $\langle r_1, \ldots, r_n \rangle$.

Conversely, every integer $x$ can be viewed as coding the contents of $R_1, \ldots, R_n$, by taking the sequence $\Pi(1, n, x), \ldots, \Pi(n, n, x)$. 
Actually, it is not necessary to know \( n \), the number of registers, if we make the following observation:

\[
\text{Reg}(\text{Line}(i, x)) \leq \text{Line}(i, x) \leq \text{Pg}(x)
\]

for all \( i, x \in \mathbb{N} \).

Then, if \( x \) codes a program, then \( R_1, \ldots, R_x \) certainly include all the registers in the program. Also note that from a previous exercise,

\[
\langle r_1, \ldots, r_n, 0, \ldots, 0 \rangle = \langle r_1, \ldots, r_n, 0 \rangle.
\]

We now define the (primitive) recursive functions Nextline, Nextcont, and Comp, describing the computation of RAM programs.
Definition 6.1. Let $x$ code a program and let $i$ be such that $1 \leq i \leq \text{Ln}(x)$. The following functions are defined:

1. Nextline($i, x, y$) is the number of the next instruction to be executed after executing the $i$th instruction in the program coded by $x$, where the contents of the registers is coded by $y$.

2. Nextcont($i, x, y$) is the code of the contents of the registers after executing the $i$th instruction in the program coded by $x$, where the contents of the registers is coded by $y$.

3. Comp($x, y, m$) = $\langle i, z \rangle$, where $i$ and $z$ are defined such that after running the program coded by $x$ for $m$ steps, where the initial contents of the program registers are coded by $y$, the next instruction to be executed has line number $i$, and $z$ is the code of the current contents of the registers.
Lemma 6.2. The functions Nextline, Nextcont, and Comp, are (primitive) recursive.

We can now prove that every RAM computable function can be computed in such a way that only one while loop is needed (all the other loops involve a fixed number of iterations).

Such a function is partial recursive in the sense of Kleene.

Indeed, assume that $x$ codes a program $P$.

We define the partial function End so that for all $x, y$, where $x$ codes a program $P$ and $y$ codes the contents of its registers, $\text{End}(x, y)$ is the number of steps for which the computation of $P$ runs before halting, if it halts.

If the program does not halt, then $\text{End}(x, y)$ is undefined.
We define $\text{End}(x, y)$ as

$$\text{End}(x, y) = \min m[\Pi_1(\text{Comp}(x, y, m)) = \text{Ln}(x)],$$

Since $\text{Comp}(x, y, m) = \langle i, z \rangle$, we have

$$\Pi_1(\text{Comp}(x, y, m)) = i,$$

where $i$ is the line number of the instruction reached after running the program $P$ coded by $x$ with initial values of the registers coded by $y$ for $m$ steps.

Thus, $P$ halts if $i$ is the last instruction in $P$, namely $\text{Ln}(x)$, iff

$$\Pi_1(\text{Comp}(x, y, m)) = \text{Ln}(x).$$
End is a partial recursive function; it can be computed by a RAM program involving only one while loop searching for the number of steps $m$.

However, in general, End is not a total function.

If $\varphi$ is the partial recursive function computed by the program $P$ coded by $x$, then we have

$$\varphi(y) = \Pi_1(\Pi_2(\text{Comp}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle, \text{End}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle))))$$

This is because if $m = \text{End}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle)$ is the number of steps after which the program $P$ coded by $x$ halts on input $y$, then

$$\text{Comp}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle, m) = \langle \text{Ln}(x), z \rangle,$$

where $z$ is the code of the register contents when the program stops.
Consequently
\[
z = \Pi_2(\text{Comp}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle, m)) \\
z = \Pi_2(\text{Comp}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle, \text{End}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle))).
\]

The value of the register $R1$ is $\Pi_1(z)$, that is
\[
\varphi(y) = \Pi_1(\Pi_2(\text{Comp}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle, \text{End}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle))).
\]
Observe that $\varphi$ is written in the form $\varphi = g \circ \min f$, for some (primitive) recursive functions $f$ and $g$.

We can also exhibit a partial recursive function which enumerates all the unary partial recursive functions. It is a *universal function*.

Abusing the notation slightly, we will write $\varphi(x, y)$ for $\varphi(\langle x, y \rangle)$, viewing $\varphi$ as a function of two arguments (however, $\varphi$ is really a function of a single argument).

We define the function $\varphi_{univ}$ as follows:

$$
\varphi_{univ}(x, y) = \begin{cases} 
\Pi_1(\Pi_2(\text{Comp}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle), \text{End}(x, \langle y, 0 \rangle))) & \text{if PROG}(x) \\
\text{undefined otherwise.} & 
\end{cases}
$$
The function $\varphi_{univ}$ is a partial recursive function with the following property: for every $x$ coding a RAM program $P$, for every input $y$,

$$\varphi_{univ}(x, y) = \varphi_x(y),$$

the value of the partial recursive function $\varphi_x$ computed by the RAM program $P$ coded by $x$.

If $x$ does not code a program, then $\varphi_{univ}(x, y)$ is undefined for all $y$.

By Lemma 5.9, $\varphi_{univ}$ is not recursive. Indeed, being an enumerating function for the partial recursive functions, it is an enumerating function for the total recursive functions, and thus, it cannot be recursive.

Being a partial function saves us from a contradiction.

The existence of the function $\varphi_{univ}$ leads us to the notion of an *indexing* of the RAM programs.
We can define a listing of the RAM programs as follows.

If $x$ codes a program (that is, if PROG($x$) holds) and $P$ is the program that $x$ codes, we call this program $P$ the $x$th RAM program and denote it as $P_x$.

If $x$ does not code a program, we let $P_x$ be the program that diverges for every input:

\[
\begin{align*}
N1 & \quad \text{add} \quad R1 \\
N1 & \quad R1 \quad \text{jmp} \quad N1a \\
N1 & \quad \text{continue}
\end{align*}
\]

Therefore, in all cases, $P_x$ stands for the $x$th RAM program.

Thus, we have a listing of RAM programs, $P_0, P_1, P_2, P_3, \ldots$, such that every RAM program (of the restricted type considered here) appears in the list exactly once, except for the “infinite loop” program.
For example, the program Padd2 (adding 2 to an integer) appears as

\[ P_{1018748519973070618}. \]

In particular, note that \( \varphi_{univ} \) being a partial recursive function, it is computed by some RAM program UNIV that has a code univ and is the program \( P_{univ} \) in the list.

Having an indexing of the RAM programs, we also have an indexing of the partial recursive functions.

**Definition 6.2.** For every integer \( x \geq 0 \), we let \( P_x \) be the RAM program coded by \( x \) as defined earlier, and \( \varphi_x \) be the partial recursive function computed by \( P_x \).

For example, the function add2 (adding 2 to an integer) appears as

\[ \varphi_{1018748519973070618}. \]
**Remark:** Kleene used the notation \( \{x\} \) for the partial recursive function coded by \( x \). Due to the potential confusion with singleton sets, we follow Rogers, and use the notation \( \varphi_x \).

It is important to observe that different programs \( P_x \) and \( P_y \) may compute the same function, that is, while \( P_x \neq P_y \) for all \( x \neq y \), it is possible that \( \varphi_x = \varphi_y \).

In fact, it is **undecidable** whether \( \varphi_x = \varphi_y \).

The existence of the universal function \( \varphi_{\text{univ}} \) is sufficiently important to be recorded in the following Lemma.

**Lemma 6.3.** For the indexing of RAM programs defined earlier, there is a universal partial recursive function \( \varphi_{\text{univ}} \) such that, for all \( x, y \in \mathbb{N} \), if \( \varphi_x \) is the partial recursive function computed by \( P_x \), then

\[
\varphi_x(y) = \varphi_{\text{univ}}(\langle x, y \rangle).
\]
The program UNIV computing $\varphi_{univ}$ can be viewed as an
*interpreter* for RAM programs.

By giving the universal program UNIV the “program” $x$
and the “data” $y$, we get the result of executing program
$P_x$ on input $y$. We can view the RAM model as a *stored
program computer*.

By Theorem 6.1 and Lemma 6.3, the halting problem for
the single program UNIV is undecidable. Otherwise, the
halting problem for RAM programs would be decidable,
a contradiction.

It should be noted that the program UNIV can actually
be written (with a certain amount of pain).
6.3 Undecidability and Reducibility

In Section 5.6 we defined the recursively enumerable languages and the recursive languages in terms of Turing machines.

In view of the equivalence of RAM-computability and Turing-computability it will be convenient to define such languages in terms of recursive or partial recursive functions.

Given a set $L \subseteq \mathbb{N}$ of more generally $L \subseteq \Sigma^*$, recall that the \textit{characteristic function} $C_L$ of $L$ is defined by

\[
C_L(x) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{if } x \in L \\
0 & \text{if } x \notin L.
\end{cases}
\]

In other words, $C_L$ decides membership in $L$.

We have the following equivalent definitions of the recursively enumerable languages and the recursive languages.
Definition 6.3. A set $L \subseteq \mathbb{N}$ (or $L \subseteq \Sigma^*$) is \textit{recursive} (or \textit{decidable}) if its characteristic function $C_L$ is total recursive.

A set $L \subseteq \mathbb{N}$ (or $L \subseteq \Sigma^*$) is \textit{recursively enumerable} (or \textit{partially decidable}) if it is the domain of a partial recursive function.

A set $L \subseteq \mathbb{N}$ (or $L \subseteq \Sigma^*$) is \textit{undecidable} iff $L$ is \textit{not} recursive.

Thus, a set $L$ is recursively enumerable iff there is a partial recursive function $f : \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$ (or $f : \Sigma^* \rightarrow \Sigma^*$) such that

$$f(x) \text{ is defined } \iff x \in L.$$

If we think of $f$ as computed by a Turing machine, then this is equivalent to Definition 5.11.
The following important result is a special case of Lemma 7.9.

**Lemma 6.4.** A set $L \subseteq \mathbb{N}$ (or $L \subseteq \Sigma^*$) is recursively enumerable if and only if either $L = \emptyset$ or $L$ is the range of a total recursive function $f$; that is, $L = f(\mathbb{N})$ (or $L = f(\Sigma^*)$).

Intuitively, the recursive function $f$ is a method for effectively listing all (and only) elements in $L$.

A closer look at the proof of the undecidability of the halting problem (Theorem 6.1) shows that the set of codes of RAM programs that halt on their own code as input

$$K = \{x \in \mathbb{N} \mid \varphi_x(x) \text{ is defined}\}$$

is not recursive.
However, since $K$ is the domain of the partial recursive function $f(x) = \varphi_{univ}(x, x)$, it is recursively enumerable.

Therefore, the set $K$ is a set that is recursively enumerable but not recursive.

The set $K$ is partially decidable but undecidable.

**Lemma 6.5.** A set $L$ is recursive iff both $L$ and $\overline{L}$ are recursively enumerable.

For a proof, see the proof of Lemma 7.8.

From the above, we conclude that

$$\overline{K} = \{x \in \mathbb{N} \mid \varphi_x(x) \text{ is undefined}\}$$

is not recursively enumerable.
The undecidability of the halting problem (Theorem 6.1) also shows that the set

\[ K_0 = \{ \langle x, y \rangle \in \mathbb{N} \mid \varphi_x(y) \text{ is defined} \} \]

is not recursive. This set is an encoding of the halting problem.

However, since \( K_0 \) is the domain of the partial recursive function \( f(z) = \varphi_{univ}(\Pi_1(z), \Pi_2(z)) \), it is recursively enumerable.

*The set \( K_0 \) is another set that is recursively enumerable but not recursive.*

The set \( K_0 \) is partially decidable but undecidable.

By Lemma 6.5, the set \( \overline{K_0} \) is not recursively enumerable.
Even more surprising, the set

\[ \text{TOTAL} = \{ x \mid \varphi_x \text{ is a total function} \} \]

is not recursively enumerable. We will prove this later.

This shows that the notion of a total recursive function is a very elusive notion, from a computable point of view.

We can’t even enumerate recursively the total recursive functions!

**Lemma 6.6.** If \( f \) and \( g \) are any two (total) recursive functions, then their composition \( g \circ f \) is also (total) recursive. Similarly, if \( f \) and \( g \) are any two partial recursive functions, then their composition \( g \circ f \) is also partial recursive.

The above is easily proved using RAM programs.
Consider the set

\[ H_0 = \{ x \in \mathbb{N} \mid \varphi_x(0) \text{ is defined} \}, \]

the set of codes of RAM programs that halt on input 0.

We claim that \( H_0 \) is not recursive, but how do we prove this?

We use a technique known as reducibility.

We construct a (total) recursive function \( f \) such that:

Given an integer \( i \), the code of the RAM program \( P_i \), the number \( f(i) \) is the code of the program \( P_{f(i)} \) obtained from \( P_i \) by adding instructions before \( P_i \) to initialize register \( R1 \) with the value \( i \).

This new program \( P_{f(i)} \) **ignores the initial value of its input and replaces it by \( i \). After that, it simulates \( P_i \) on input \( i \).**
Thus, observe that $P_i$ halts on input $i$ iff $P_{f(i)}$ halts on input 0 (since $P_{f(i)}$ ignores its input and then simulates $P_i$ on input $i$).

This fact can be stated as

$$i \in K \iff f(i) \in H_0.$$ 

Therefore, if we had an algorithm to decide recursively membership in $H_0$, namely if $C_{H_0}$ was recursive, then we would have an algorithm to decide recursively membership in $K$, since $C_K = C_{H_0} \circ f$ is also recursive as the composition of two recursive functions.

However $K$ is not recursive, so $H_0$ is not recursive either.

The above is an instance of reducibility.
Definition 6.4. Let $A$ and $B$ be subsets of $\mathbb{N}$ (or $\Sigma^*$). We say that the set $A$ is \textit{many-one reducible} to the set $B$ if there is a \textit{total recursive} function $f : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{N}$ (or $f : \Sigma^* \to \Sigma^*$) such that

$$x \in A \iff f(x) \in B \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbb{N}.$$ 

We write $A \leq B$, and for short, we say that $A$ is \textit{reducible} to $B$.

Intuitively, deciding membership in $B$ is as hard as deciding membership in $A$.

This is because any method for deciding membership in $B$ can be converted to a method for deciding membership in $A$ by first applying $f$ to the number (or string) to be tested.
Here is another example of the use of reducibility to show that a set is not recursive.

Let us prove that

\[
\text{TOTAL} = \{ x \mid \varphi_x \text{ is a total function} \}
\]

is not recursive by providing a reduction from \( H_0 \) to \( \text{TOTAL} \).

We construct a \( (\text{total}) \) \( \text{recursive} \) function \( f \) such that:

Given an integer \( i \), the code of the RAM program \( P_i \), the number \( f(i) \) is the code of the program \( P_{f(i)} \) obtained from \( P_i \) by adding instructions before \( P_i \) to initialize register \( R1 \) with the value 0.

The program \( P_{f(i)} \) \text{ignores the initial value of its input and replaces it by 0. After that, it simulates } P_i \text{ on input 0.}
Now, observe that $P_i$ halts for input 0 iff $P_{f(i)}$ halts for all inputs (since $P_{f(i)}$ ignores its input and then simulates $P_i$ on input 0).

This fact can be stated as

$$i \in H_0 \quad \text{iff} \quad f(i) \in \text{TOTAL}.$$ 

Therefore, if we had an algorithm to decide recursively membership in TOTAL, namely if $C_{\text{TOTAL}}$ was recursive, then we would have an algorithm to decide recursively membership in $H_0$, since $C_{H_0} = C_{\text{TOTAL}} \circ f$ is also recursive as the composition of two recursive functions.

However $H_0$ is not recursive, so TOTAL is not recursive either.

We have the following general result.
Lemma 6.7. Let \( A, B, C \) be subsets of \( \mathbb{N} \) (or \( \Sigma^* \)). The following properties hold:

(1) If \( A \leq B \) and \( B \leq C \), then \( A \leq C \).

(2) If \( A \leq B \) then \( \overline{A} \leq \overline{B} \).

(3) If \( A \leq B \) and \( B \) is r.e., then \( A \) is r.e.

(4) If \( A \leq B \) and \( A \) is not r.e., then \( B \) is not r.e.

(5) If \( A \leq B \) and \( B \) is recursive, then \( A \) is recursive.

(6) If \( A \leq B \) and \( A \) is not recursive, then \( B \) is not recursive.

In most cases, we use (4) and (6).

A remarkable (and devastating) result of Rice shows that all nontrivial sets of partial recursive functions are not recursive.
Let $C$ be any set of partial recursive functions.

We define the set $P_C$ as

$$P_C = \{ x \in \mathbb{N} \mid \varphi_x \in C \}.$$ 

We can view $C$ as a property of some of the partial recursive functions. For example

$$C = \{ \text{all total recursive functions} \}.$$ 

We say that $C$ is nontrivial if $C$ is neither empty nor the set of all partial recursive functions.

Equivalently $C$ is nontrivial iff $P_C \neq \emptyset$ and $P_C \neq \mathbb{N}$.

**Theorem 6.8. (Rice’s Theorem)** For any set $C$ of partial recursive functions, the set

$$P_C = \{ x \in \mathbb{N} \mid \varphi_x \in C \}$$

is nonrecursive unless $C$ is trivial.
For proof of Theorem 6.8, see the proof of Theorem 7.6. The idea is construct a reduction from $K$ to $P_C$, where $C$ is any nontrivial set of partial recursive functions.

Rice’s Theorem shows that all nontrivial properties of the input/output behavior of programs are undecidable!

The scenario to apply Rice’s Theorem to a class $C$ of partial functions is to show that some partial recursive function belongs to $C$ ($C$ is not empty), and that some partial recursive function does not belong to $C$ ($C$ is not all the partial recursive functions). This demonstrates that $C$ is nontrivial.

For example, in (a) of the next lemma, we need to exhibit a constant (partial) recursive function, such as $zero(n) = 0$, and a nonconstant (partial) recursive function, such as the identity function (or $succ(n) = n + 1$).
In particular, the following properties are undecidable.

**Lemma 6.9.** The following properties of partial recursive functions are undecidable.

(a) A partial recursive function is a constant function.

(b) Given any integer \( y \in \mathbb{N} \), is \( y \) in the range of some partial recursive function.

(c) Two partial recursive functions \( \varphi_x \) and \( \varphi_y \) are identical.

(d) A partial recursive function \( \varphi_x \) is equal to a given partial recursive function \( \varphi_a \).

(e) A partial recursive function yields output \( z \) on input \( y \), for any given \( y, z \in \mathbb{N} \).

(f) A partial recursive function diverges for some input.

(g) A partial recursive function diverges for all input.

We conclude with the following crushing result which shows that TOTAL is not only undecidable, but not even partially decidable.
Lemma 6.10. The set
\[
\text{TOTAL} = \{ x \mid \varphi_x \text{ is a total function} \}
\]
is not recursively enumerable.

Proof. If TOTAL was r.e., then there would be a recursive function \( f \) such that TOTAL = \( \text{range}(f) \). Define \( g \) as follows:

\[
g(x) = \varphi_{f(x)}(x) + 1 = \varphi_{\text{univ}}(f(x), x) + 1
\]

for all \( x \in \mathbb{N} \). Since \( f \) is total and \( \varphi_{f(x)} \) is total for all \( x \in \mathbb{N} \), the function \( g \) is total recursive. Let \( e \) be an index such that

\[
g = \varphi_{f(e)}.
\]

Since \( g \) is total, \( g(e) \) is defined. Then, we have

\[
g(e) = \varphi_{f(e)}(e) + 1 = g(e) + 1,
\]
a contradiction. Hence, TOTAL is not r.e. \( \square \)
6.4 KLEENE’S $T$-PREDICATE

The object of this Section is to show the existence of Kleene’s $T$-predicate. This will yield another important normal form. In addition, the $T$-predicate is a basic tool in recursion theory.

In Section 6.2, we have encoded programs. The idea of this Section is to also encode computations of RAM programs.

Assume that $x$ codes a program, that $y$ is some input (not a code), and that $z$ codes a computation of $P_x$ on input $y$. The predicate $T(x, y, z)$ is defined as follows:

$T(x, y, z)$ holds iff $x$ codes a RAM program, $y$ is an input, and $z$ codes a halting computation of $P_x$ on input $y$.

We will show that $T$ is (primitive) recursive.
First, we need to encode computations. We say that $z$ codes a computation of length $n \geq 1$ if

$$z = \langle n + 2, \langle 1, y_0 \rangle, \langle i_1, y_1 \rangle, \ldots, \langle i_n, y_n \rangle \rangle,$$

where each $i_j$ is the physical location (not the line number) of the next instruction to be executed and each $y_j$ codes the contents of the registers just before execution of the instruction at the location $i_j$. Thus, $i_{n-1} = \text{Ln}(x)$ and $i_n$ is irrelevant. Writing the definition of $T$ is a little simpler if we let $i_n = \text{Ln}(x) + 1$.

Also, $y_0$ codes the initial contents of the registers, that is, $y_0 = \langle y, 0 \rangle$, for some input $y$. We let $\text{Ln}(z) = \Pi_1(z)$. 
Definition 6.5. The $T$-predicate is the (primitive) recursive predicate defined as follows:

$$T(x, y, z) \text{ iff } \text{PROG}(x) \text{ and } (\text{Ln}(z) \geq 3) \text{ and }$$
$$\forall j \leq \text{Ln}(z) - 3[0 \leq j \geq$$
Nextline($\Pi_1(\Pi(j + 2, \text{Ln}(z), z)), x, \Pi_2(\Pi(j + 2, \text{Ln}(z), z))$$
$$= \Pi_1(\Pi(j + 3, \text{Ln}(z), z))$$
and
Nextcont($\Pi_1(\Pi(j + 2, \text{Ln}(z), z)), x, \Pi_2(\Pi(j + 2, \text{Ln}(z), z))$$
$$= \Pi_2(\Pi(j + 3, \text{Ln}(z), z))$$
and
$\Pi_1(\Pi(\text{Ln}(z) - 1, \text{Ln}(z), z)) = \text{Ln}(x)$ and
$\Pi_1(\Pi(2, \text{Ln}(z), z)) = 1$ and
$y = \Pi_1(\Pi_2(\Pi(2, \text{Ln}(z), z)))$ and
$\Pi_2(\Pi_2(\Pi(2, \text{Ln}(z), z))) = 0$]

The reader can verify that $T(x, y, z)$ holds iff $x$ codes a RAM program, $y$ is an input, and $z$ codes a halting computation of $P_x$ on input $y$. 
In order to extract the output of $P_x$ from $z$, we define the (primitive) recursive function $\text{Res}$ as follows:

$$\text{Res}(z) = \Pi_1(\Pi_2(\Pi(\text{Ln}(z), \text{Ln}(z), z))).$$

Using the $T$-predicate, we get the so-called Kleene normal form.

**Theorem 6.11. (Kleene Normal Form)** Using the indexing of the partial recursive functions defined earlier, we have

$$\varphi_x(y) = \text{Res}[\min z(T(x, y, z))],$$

where $T(x, y, z)$ and $\text{Res}$ are (primitive) recursive.

Note that the universal function $\varphi_{univ}$ can be defined as

$$\varphi_{univ}(x, y) = \text{Res}[\min z(T(x, y, z))].$$

There is another important property of the partial recursive functions, namely, that composition is effective.
We need two auxiliary (primitive) recursive functions. The function Conprogs creates the code of the program obtained by concatenating the programs \( P_x \) and \( P_y \), and for \( i \geq 2 \), Cumclr\((i)\) is the code of the program which clears registers \( R2, \ldots, Ri \).

To get Cumclr, we can use the function \( \text{clr}(i) \) such that \( \text{clr}(i) \) is the code of the program

\[
\begin{align*}
N1 & \quad \text{tail} \quad Ri \\
N1 & \quad Ri \quad \text{jmp} \quad N1a \\
N & \quad \text{continue}
\end{align*}
\]

We leave it as an exercise to prove that \( \text{clr} \), Conprogs, and Cumclr, are (primitive) recursive.

**Theorem 6.12.** There is a (primitive) recursive function \( c \) such that

\[
\varphi_{c(x,y)} = \varphi_x \circ \varphi_y.
\]