

# CS 410/610, MTH 410/610

## Theoretical Foundations of Computing

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Slides 4

**Pascal Hitzler**

Kno.e.sis Center

Wright State University, Dayton, OH

<http://www.knoesis.org/pascal/>



Chapter 11 of [Sudkamp 2006].

1. **Decision Problems**
2. **Problem Reduction**
3. **The Church-Turing Thesis**
4. **A Universal Turing Machine**

**A decision problem is a set of related questions each of which has a yes or no answer.**

- **Is the non-negative integer  $n$  a square number?  
[One question for each  $n$ .]**
- **Given a fixed language  $L$ , is the string  $x$  in  $L$ ?  
[One question for each  $n$ .]**
- **Does the Turing Machine  $M$  halt on input  $x$ ?  
[One question for each pair  $(M,x)$ .]**

**A decision problem is a set of related questions each of which has a yes or no answer.**

**A decision problem  $P$  is *decidable* if there is an algorithm that, for every question  $p \in P$ , terminates and determines the appropriate answer.**

**A decision problem  $P$  is *semi-decidable* (or, *partially solvable*) if there is an algorithm that, for every question  $p \in P$  for which the answer is “yes”, terminates and determines the appropriate answer.**

**However, we have not defined the notion of *algorithm*. – and we’re not going to, as such.**

**An *effective procedure* for a decision problem satisfies the following properties**

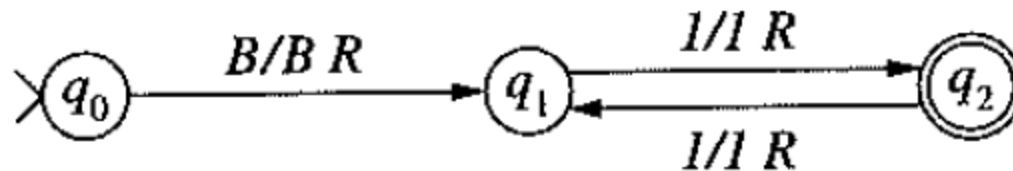
- **Complete:** It produces the correct answer for each problem instance. [Note: this implies termination of the procedure.]
- **Mechanistic:** It consists of a finite sequence of instructions, each of which can be carried out without requiring insight, ingenuity, or guesswork.
- **Deterministic:** When presented with identical input, it always performs the same computation.

**Note: If a decision problem  $P$  has an effective procedure, then  $P$  is decidable.**

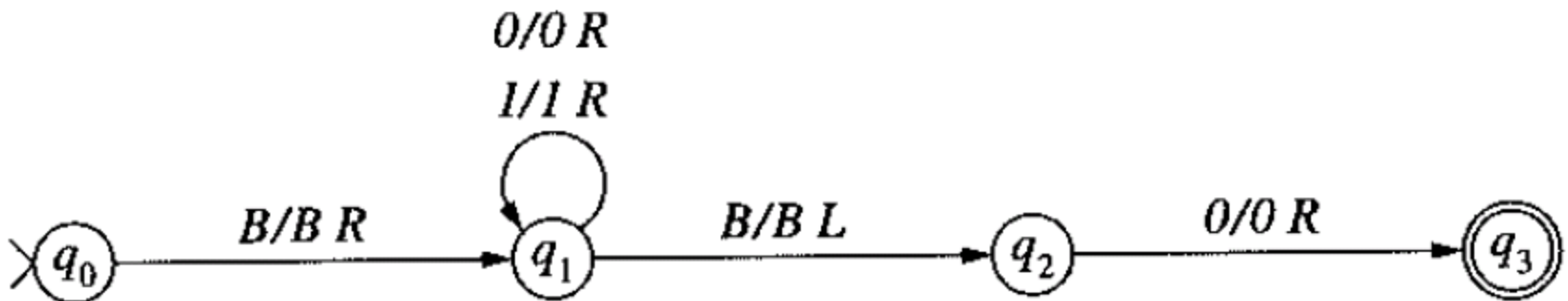
- In the TM paradigm, effective procedures would be specified by TMs which always terminate.
- If we drop the completeness requirement (i.e., termination), then TMs are an appropriate paradigm. It is unproven (unprovable?) if TMs are an *exhaustive* paradigm for algorithmization.
- To invoke TMs for decision problems, the latter must be represented as input to TMs – and we will focus on language accepting TMs.

**I.e., we require a representation of the decision problem as a language acceptance problem.**

- Different representations of the same decision problem result in different TMs for solving them.
- E.g. – determining whether a non-negative integer is even.
  - Unary representation of numbers:



- Binary representation of numbers:



- The membership problem for (a language)  $L$ :  
“Is the input string  $x$  in  $L$ ?”
- The membership problem for  $L$  is
  - decidable if and only if  $L$  is recursive.  
[We say “ $L$  is decidable” in this case.]
  - semi-decidable if and only if  $L$  is recursively enumerable.  
[We say “ $L$  is semi-decidable” in this case.]

A language or decision problem is *undecidable* if it is not decidable.



**The membership problem for  $L$  is decidable if and only if there exists a nondeterministic TM  $M$  with  $L(M)=L$ , such that all computations of  $M$  terminate.**

**Why does this hold?**

**Because we have shown earlier that in this case we can construct an always terminating deterministic TM  $N$  with  $L(N)=L$ .**

Chapter 11 of [Sudkamp 2006].

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## Definition 4.1

Let  $L$  be a language over  $\Sigma_1$  and  $Q$  be a language over  $\Sigma_2$ .

$L$  is (*many-to-one*) *reducible* to  $Q$

if there is a Turing computable function  $r: \Sigma_1^* \rightarrow \Sigma_2^*$   
such that  $w \in L$  if, and only if,  $r(w) \in Q$ .

**Note:** If  $L$  is reducible to  $Q$ , then

- if  $Q$  is decidable, so is  $L$ .
- if  $Q$  is semi-decidable, so is  $L$ .
- if  $L$  is undecidable, so is  $Q$ .

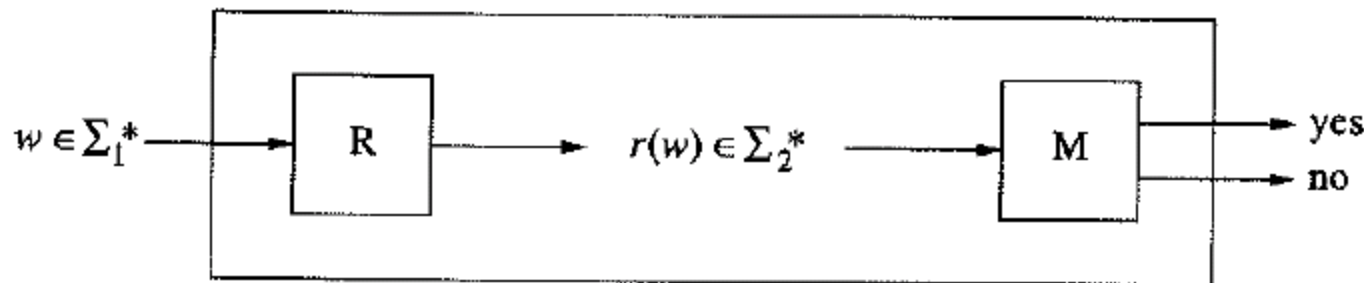
If  $Q$  is decidable, and  $L$  is reducible to  $Q$ , then  $L$  is decidable.

**Proof:** Since  $Q$  is decidable, there is an always terminating TM  $M$  with  $L(M)=Q$ .

Since  $L$  is reducible to  $Q$ , there is a TM  $R$  computing a function  $r$  s.t.  $w \in L$  iff  $r(w) \in Q$ .

The TM  $N$  resulting from the composition of  $R$  with  $M$  thus computes, for each  $w$ , whether or not  $w \in L$ , i.e.,  $L(N)=L$ .

$N$  always terminates since  $R$  terminates (for valid input) and  $M$  always terminates.



# Exercise 29 [hand-in]

**Prove the following:**

**If  $Q$  is semi-decidable, and  $L$  is reducible to  $Q$ , then  $L$  is semi-decidable.**

# Exercise 30 [hand-in]

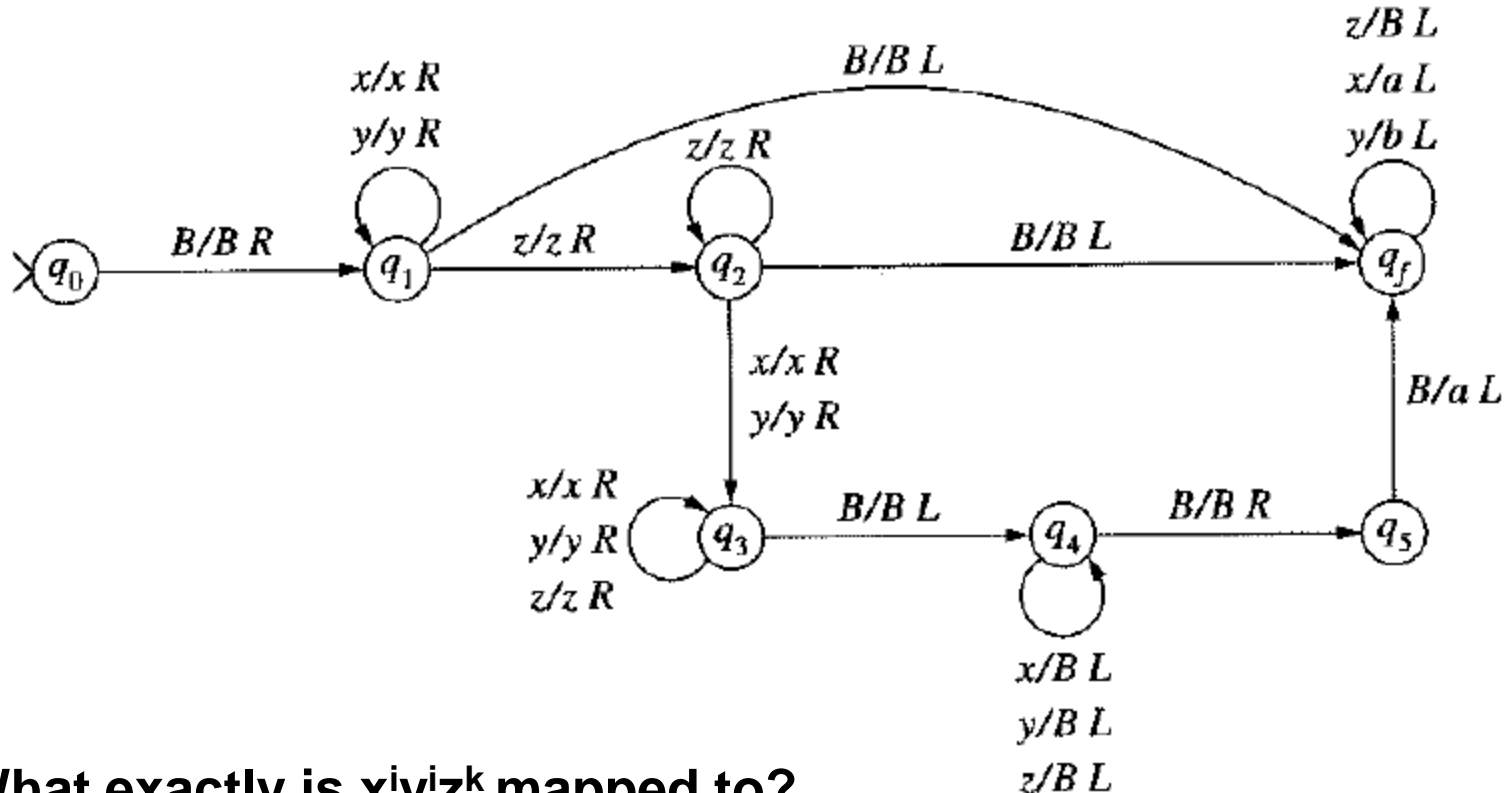
**Prove the following:**

**If  $L$  is undecidable and reducible to  $Q$ , then  $Q$  is undecidable.**

**[Note: there is a two-line proof for this.]**

# Reduction example – Example 4.2

TM reducing  $L = \{x^i y^j z^k \mid i \geq 0, k \geq 0\}$  to  $Q = \{a^i b^j \mid i \geq 0\}$



- What exactly is  $x^i y^j z^k$  mapped to?
- What are the other strings mapped to?
- Why is this sufficient?

# Exercise 31 [no hand-in]

Construct a TM which reduces  $\{a^i b^i a^i \mid i \geq 0\}$  to  $\{c^i d^i \mid i \geq 0\}$ .



# Example 4.3

We show that  $L = \{uu \mid u=a^ib^ic^i \text{ for some } i \geq 0\}$  is decidable.

**Proof:**

From Example 1.7 we know that  $Q = \{a^ib^ic^i \mid i \geq 0\}$  is decidable.

It thus suffices to reduce  $L$  to  $Q$ . We do this as follows:

From Example 1.12 we know how to check if an input string  $w$  is of the form  $uu$  (for some string  $u$ ). Hence,

1. if  $w \neq uu$  (for some  $u$ ), then erase the tape and output a single  $a$ .
2. if  $w = uu$  (for some  $u$ ), then the copy and the second  $u$  in the input string are erased, leaving  $u$  in the input position.

Chapter 11 of [Sudkamp 2006].

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**Intuitively: “Everything that is computable is computable by a TM.”**

## **CTT for Decision Problems:**

**There is an effective procedure to solve a decision problem if, and only if, there is a TM that halts for all input strings and solves the problem.**

## **CTT for Recognition Problems:**

**A decision problem  $P$  is semi-decidable if, and only if, there is a TM that accepts precisely the instances of  $P$  whose answer is yes.**

## **CTT for Computable Functions:**

**A function  $f$  is effectively computable if, and only if, there is a TM that computes  $f$ .**

- **It's not a mathematical theorem, and has not been (cannot be) formally proven.**
- **However, it could be disproved!**
- **We actually have already invoked the CTT frequently in this lecture, namely whenever we refrained from giving a TM in detail, but instead gave a high-level description of a TM – with the understanding that a TM could be explicitly constructed in these cases, if desired.**

Chapter 11 of [Sudkamp 2006].

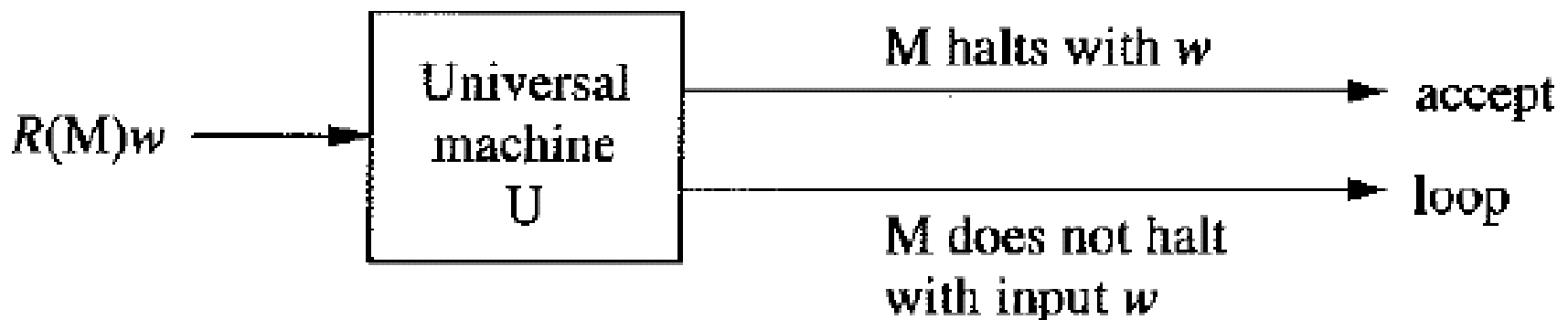
1. Decision Problems
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A universal TM simulates the computations of an arbitrary TM.  
→ think of the simulated TM as an algorithm specified by software, while the universal TM is the analogy to hardware.

We focus on TMs which accept by halting.

We need to be able *to give a TM as input* to a computation, i.e., we need to identify each TM  $M$  with a string  $R(M)$ , the *representation* of  $M$ .

Schematically:



We consider only TMs with  $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$  and  $\Gamma = \{0,1,B\}$ .

States are called  $\{q_0, \dots, q_n\}$  with  $q_0$  the start state.

A transition has the form  $\delta(q_i, x) = [q_j, y, d]$

where  $q_i, q_j \in Q$ ;  $x, y \in \Gamma$ ,  $d \in \{L, R\}$ .

We encode  $\delta(q_i, x) = [q_j, y, d]$  as

$$\text{en}(q_i)0\text{en}(x)0\text{en}(q_j)0\text{en}(y)0\text{en}(d)$$

where  $\text{en}(0) = 1$        $\text{en}(1) = 11$        $\text{en}(B) = 111$

$\text{en}(q_0) = 1$        $\text{en}(q_1) = 11$       ...       $\text{en}(q_n) = 1^{n+1}$

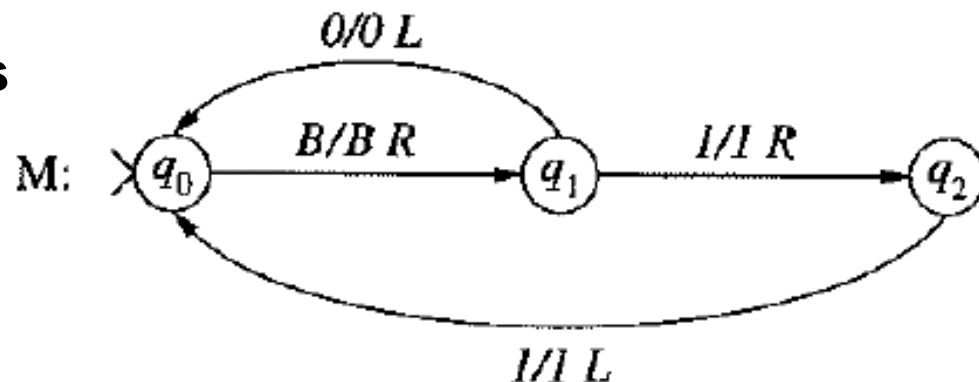
$\text{en}(L) = 1$        $\text{en}(R) = 11$

Two consecutive 0's separate transitions.

The beginning and end of the representation have three 0's.

# Example 4.4

M does not terminate on strings starting with 0, and accepts all others.



Encoded transitions:

Transition	Encoding
$\delta(q_0, B) = [q_1, B, R]$	101110110111011
$\delta(q_1, 0) = [q_0, 0, L]$	1101010101
$\delta(q_1, 1) = [q_2, 1, R]$	110110111011011
$\delta(q_2, 1) = [q_0, 1, L]$	1110110101101

R(M):

00010111011011101100110101010100110110111011011001110110101101000



**Given a string  $u \in \{0,1\}^*$ .**

**Check if  $u$  consists of**

- **a prefix 000,**
- **followed by a finite sequence of encoded transitions separated by 00's, all transitions being of the specified form,**
- **followed by 000.**

**If yes, then  $u$  is the representation of a TM  $M$ .**

**$M$  is deterministic if the combination of the state and input symbol in every encoded transition is distinct.**

**Computation begins with input on tape 1. Idea: If the input has the form  $R(M)w$ , then the computation of  $M$  is simulated on tape 3.**

**A computation of  $U$  does the following:**

- 1. If input is not of the form  $R(M)w$  for a det. TM  $M$ , then  $U$  loops.**
- 2. Write  $w$  on tape 3 from position 1. Reposition tape head on left.**
- 3. “1”, encoding state  $q_0$ , is written on tape 2.**
- 4. Simulate transition on tape 3: Let  $x$  be the current symbol on tape 3 and  $q_i$  be the state encoded on tape 2.**
  - a. Scan tape 1 for an applicable transition. If there is none, halt and accept the input.**
  - b. If applicable transition is found on tape 1, then**
    - i. Put new state on tape 2**
    - ii. Put output symbol on tape 3**
    - iii. Move tape head on tape 3 as specified.**
- 5. Computation continues with step 4**

# Theorem 4.5

**The language**

$$L_H = \{R(M)w \mid M \text{ halts with input } w\}$$

**is recursively enumerable.**

**Proof idea?**

**The language  $L_H = \{R(M)w \mid M \text{ halts with input } w\}$  is recursively enumerable.**

**Proof:**

**The universal machine  $U$  accepts strings of the form  $R(M)w$ , where  $R(M)$  is the representation of a TM and  $M$  halts when run with input  $w$ .**

**For all other strings, the computation of  $U$  does not terminate.**

**Thus,  $L(U)=L_H$ .**

# Example 4.5

**The decision problem**

***Halts on  $n$ 'th Transition***

**Input: TM  $M$ , string  $w$ , integer  $n$**

**Output: yes, if the computation of  $M$  with input  $w$  performs exactly  
           $n$  transitions before halting  
          no, otherwise**

**is decidable.**

**Proof idea?**

**Modify  $U$  to become  $U'$ , by adding a fourth tape to record the number of transitions in the simulation of  $M$ .**

**Represent a problem instance as  $R(M)w0001^{n+1}$ .**

**Computation of  $U'$  on input  $u$ :**

- 1. If input does not end with  $0001^{n+1}$ ,  $U'$  halts rejecting the input.**
- 2.  $1^n$  is written on tape 4 (from pos. 1);  $000^{n+1}$  is erased from the end of the string on tape 1; head of tape 4 returns to left.**
- 3. If string on tape 1 is not of the form  $R(M)w$ ,  $U'$  halts rejecting the input.**
- 4.  $w$  is copied to tape 3; the  $en(q_0)$  is written on tape 2.**
- 5. Now simulate  $M$ , using tape 4 as transition counter (move right).**
  - If  $M$  is found to terminate while a blank is read on tape 4, halt and accept.**
  - If  $M$  terminates without a blank on tape 4, or if  $M$  would not terminate but there is a blank read on tape 4, halt and reject.**