Program Termination

http://d3s.mff.cuni.cz

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Introduction

• Task: determine correctly whether a given program will always finish (for all inputs)
  ▫ or give the answer “unknown”

• Practical motivation
  ▫ Infinite execution of some loop may result in a non-responsive operating system
  ▫ Common userspace applications get often stuck

Example program

1  x := input()
2  y := input();
3  while x > 0 and y > 0 do
4    if input() = 1 then
5      x := x - 1;
6    y := y + 1;
7      else
8        y := y - 1;
9      fi
10  done

Terminology

- Transition relation $R$
  - $R \subseteq S \times S$, $(s,s') \in R$ iff $s \rightarrow s'$

- Termination argument

- Well-order relation

- Ranking function $f$

- Well-founded relation
  - $T = \{ (s_1,s_2) \mid f(s_1) > f(s_2) \}$

- Disjunctive termination argument
  - $T = T_1 \cup T_2 \cup \ldots \cup T_N$
Current state of the art

• What can be proved (disproved)
  - Famous complex problems: Ackermann’s function
  - Industrial examples: Windows device drivers
    - Prover: Terminator (T2)
  - Sequential programs that use arithmetic expressions

• Research challenges
  - More complex programs (dynamic allocation, threads)
  - Processing non-linear arithmetic operators (*,/,%) 

• Other applications: checking liveness properties
Terminator (T2)

- Termination prover
  - Developed by Microsoft Research (B. Cook et al.)

- How it works
  - Iterative proving based on abstraction refinement

- Source code freely available
  - [http://mmjb.github.io/T2/](http://mmjb.github.io/T2/)

- Implementation languages: F#, ML
Dafny

- Simple language and program verifier

- Important features
  - Contracts: precondition, postcondition, invariant
  - Program termination analysis

- Web interface: http://rise4fun.com/dafny/
method Compute(x: int, y: int, z: int) {
    var x1: int := x;
    var y1: int := y;
    while (x1 > 0 && y1 > 0) {
        if (z == 1) {
            x1 := x1 - 1;
            y1 := y1 + 1;
        }
        else {
            y1 := y1 - 1;
        }
    }
}
method Compute(n: int) {
    var x: int := 0;
    while (x < n) {
        x := x + 1;
    }
}