### Bridging Reinforcement Learning and Creativity: Implementing Reinforcement Learning in Processing

Jieliang Luo Media Arts & Technology jieliang@ucsb.edu Sam Green Computer Science sam.green@cs.ucsb.edu

University of California, Santa Barbara Santa Barbara, CA, 93106

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### Abstract

Artists are underrepresented in the reinforcement learning (RL) community due to the steep learning curve involved in in-depth understanding of RL algorithms. However, artists can play an important role in the RL community by defining innovative problems, designing creative environments, and creating novel applications. As a popular tool for artists to experiment with programming, Processing has been highly adapted by many artists as their entry point to programming. Given the popularity of Processing in the creative community, we use this tutorial as a steppingstone to bridge RL and creativity by introducing RL core concepts in Processing. The purpose of this workshop is twofold: 1) to attract more artists to the RL community by demonstrating RL demos in their familiar IDE; 2) to demystify RL problems by implementing them in a high-level language without any external libraries. Importantly, this tutorial is not about introducing a specific programming language, but will focus on how to analyze, frame, and solve RL problems.

#### **Course Motivations**

### - Why we need artists in RL

For decades, media artists have played an essential role in advancing AI, exploring its full extent, and pushing the boundaries. Back to the 1970s, artists like Harold Cohen started to investigate the use of machines for autonomous drawings. Cohen's iconic project AARON, a computer program creating original artistic physical images, has been used as an artistic equivalent of the Turing Test. In the modern AI age, GANs and RNNs have been widely adapted for artistic expressions that were featured at major technical conferences, such as *I Touch You And You Touch Me* at SIGGRAPH Asia 2017, and *Magenta and deeplearng.js: Real-time Control of DeepGenerative Music Models in the Browser* at NIPS 2017. ECCV 2018 even opens a workshop called *Computer Vision for Fashion, Art and Design* and actively calls for artworks.

As a breakthrough technology in AI in 2015, deep reinforcement learning is an efficient class of sequential decision-making algorithms that have achieved remarkable success in a broad range of applications, such as image classification, robotic manipulation, and strategic games. The most well-known example of RL is AlphaGo, a computer program that plays the board game Go and outperforms top human Go players. Recently, Prof. Sergey Levine's lab from UC Berkeley used reinforcement learning to create interactive natural skeleton animations that has great potentials to be adapted by animation artists. Unlike other machine learning techniques, such as GANs or RNNs, in which media artists are actively engaged, RL has resulted in very few artworks. The current RL tools require an in-depth understanding of RL algorithms that can create a barrier for artists to explore RL. On the other hand, many intriguing RL problems, such as robotic architecture, cannot be solved without artists' engagement.

Regarding the collaboration between artists and computer scientists, one common misconception is that artists are only responsible for proposing creative ideas, and computer scientists are responsible for solving technical challenges. However, this solid distinction obscures the communication between the two groups as the languages might be entirely different. A better approach would be enabling artists to have some hands-on experience in solving some basic RL problems, which can inspire them to provide more constructive ideas. In addition, artistic/creative applications of RL can generate a larger social impact and attract more public attention to the RL community.

#### - Why Processing

As discussed in the previous section, artists need easier access to basic RL problems. Popular deep learning libraries, such as PyTorch and TensorFlow, are designed primarily for researching algorithms and optimizations. On the other hand, Processing, initiated by Ben Fry and Casey Reas in 2003, has become the steppingstone for many artists to practice programming in their artworks. Given the facts that Processing does not require any extra configurations to install and that its code can be compiled across platforms, it is convenient for artists to rapidly examine new technologies. Many important libraries, such as OpenCV, OSC, and Box2D, all have their Processing versions, and many artworks based on those libraries have been featured at major conferences and art galleries. A small sample of examples includes: 1) *The Ghost in the Dandelion* at IEEE Vis 2017, 2) *Abstract Reality* at SIGGRAPH Asia 2017, and 3) *California Drought Impact v2* at CHI 2017.

Thus far, neither neural network libraries nor RL demos are available for Processing. Such technologies are, however, completely implementable by only using the native Processing language. For example, the tabular Q-learning algorithm can be implemented within 200 lines of code without any external libraries. Jieliang (Rodger) Luo, one of the presenters, has implemented the algorithm in Processing during OpenAl's one-day Hackathon. The work has been featured on the OpenAl's website<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>https://blog.openai.com/hackathon-follow-up/

### **Course Overview**

### 5 minutes: Welcome and Introduction

Welcome, overview of course & motivation for attending. Speaker introductions

### 10 minutes: What is Reinforcement Learning

A brief introduction to the concepts of reinforcement learning

### 10 minutes: Reinforcement Learning and Creativity

Discussion the importance to have reinforcement learning accessible to creative community

### 10 minutes: Why Processing

A brief introduction to Processing and the reasons of choosing it as the entrance of reinforcement learning for non-experts

### 35 minutes: Q-Learning & Policy Gradient

Explain two fundamental reinforcement learning algorithms

### 30 minutes: Implementing Tabular Q-Learning in Processing

Discuss how to create a reinforcement learning environment Show how to implement tabular q-learning in Processing without external libraries

### 5 minutes: Next Steps, Conclusion, Questions & Answers

Discuss the future trends, wrap up, questions

#### **Goals & Target Audience**

The general purpose of this workshop is twofold: 1) to attract more artists to the RL community by demonstrating RL demos in their familiar IDE; 2) to demystify RL problems by implementing them in a high-level language without any external libraries. That said, the tutorial is NOT about introducing a specific programming language, but will focus on how to analyze, frame, and solve RL problems. The highlights covered in the tutorial, such as defining environments and implementing neural networks, are normally neglected because libraries like OpenAI Gym or PyTorch have taken care that. But those details are important not only for artists but also for non-experts to have a better understanding of RL problems. Therefore, the target audience of the tutorial are artists and non-experts who are interested to apply reinforcement learning in creative domain.

#### **Presenters Information**

Jieliang Luo is a researcher and media artists working with reinforcement learning, robotics, and visualization. Currently, he is a Ph.D. candidate and lecturer in Media Arts & Technology at UC Santa Barbara, where he teaches Reinforcement Learning, Data Visualization, and Intelligent Machine Vision. His research focuses on bridging reinforcement learning and creativity by exploring potential simulated and physical platforms for artists, designers, and architects to have easy access to reinforcement learning. He also has worked for Autodesk Robotics Lab as a robotic and machine learning researcher since June, 2018.

Sam Green is a Ph.D. candidate in Computer Science, at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research is focused on numerical and architectural optimizations for reinforcement learning, as well as visualization diagnostics for CNN-based RL policies. Prior to attending UCSB, Sam was a Senior Member of Technical Staff, at Sandia National Laboratories, where he gained five years of experience contributing to and leading cryptographic hardware assessment R&D. Sam holds a master's in Applied Math and a bachelor's in Computer Science from the University of Central Arkansas.

In the Spring of 2018, the two presenters gave a graduate seminar course at UCSB in deep RL. The course covered Value Iteration, Deep Q-Learning, Policy Gradients, Actor-Critic, Deep Deterministic Policy Gradients, Temporal Difference Models, and World Models. Instruction was provided for both theory and coding implementation.

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Jieliang Luo Media Arts & Technology Sam Green Computer Science

University of California, Santa Barbara

SIGGRAPH Asia 2018 Tokyo, Japan December, 2018

# Course Agenda

- What is reinforcement learning
- Reinforcement learning and creativity
- Why Processing
- Q-Learning & Policy Gradient
- Implementing Tabular Q-Learning in Processing
- Next Steps

Chapter I:

# What is reinforcement learning?

# **Trial-and-error Learning**

- B.F. Skinner, 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologist
- Also called operant conditioning
- Give rewards or punishments to encourage behavior



Pigeon learning ping pong Credit: Psychology Pictures

# **Reinforcement Learning Paradigm**



- Agent Makes actions on an environment. Attempts to collect rewards
- Environment Hosts the agent. Partially influenced by agent. Gives agent rewards

# AlphaZero

- Trained RL agent to play
  - Chess
  - Go
  - Shogi



Credit: Wikipedia

- Used a single algorithm to achieve super human levels of performance
- State observation for Go includes
  - Last 8 board configurations for player 1 and 2
  - Current player's color

# Dactyl

- Used robotic hand and RL to achieve humanlevel dexterity
- Reward was cube position relative to desired
- Used three cameras and finger tip locations for state observation



# Dactyl





Credit: OpenAl

Chapter II:

### Reinforcement Learning + Creativity



### A TDK SA90 Type II Compact Cassette, developed by Philips

Credit: "A TDK SA90 Type II Compact Cassette" from Wikipedia (public domain)



An untitled AARON drawing

Credit: "An untitled AARON drawing" from Computer History Museum



### **Portraits of Imaginary People**

Credit: Mike Tyka's Portraits of Imaginary People from the NIPS 2017 creativity art gallery

# **Performance RNN**





Performance RNN was trained in TensorFlow on MIDI from piano performances. It was then ported to run in the browser using only Javascript in the <u>deeplearn.js</u> environment.

### **Performance RNN**

Credit: Performance RNN from magenta.tensorflow.org



**Robotic Joint-Assembly Tasks** 

Credit:Autodesk Robotics Lab

Why we don't see many creative applications in RL?

### Algorithm 1 DDPG algorithm

Randomly initialize critic network  $Q(s, a|\theta^Q)$  and actor  $\mu(s|\theta^\mu)$  with weights  $\theta^Q$  and  $\theta^\mu$ . Initialize target network Q' and  $\mu'$  with weights  $\theta^{Q'} \leftarrow \theta^Q$ ,  $\theta^{\mu'} \leftarrow \theta^\mu$ Initialize replay buffer Rfor episode = 1, M do Initialize a random process  $\mathcal{N}$  for action exploration Receive initial observation state  $s_1$ for t = 1, T do Select action  $a_t = \mu(s_t|\theta^\mu) + \mathcal{N}_t$  according to the current policy and exploration noise Execute action  $a_t$  and observe reward  $r_t$  and observe new state  $s_{t+1}$ Store transition  $(s_t, a_t, r_t, s_{t+1})$  in RSample a random minibatch of N transitions  $(s_i, a_i, r_i, s_{i+1})$  from RSet  $y_i = r_i + \gamma Q'(s_{i+1}, \mu'(s_{i+1}|\theta^{\mu'})|\theta^{Q'})$ Update critic by minimizing the loss:  $L = \frac{1}{N} \sum_i (y_i - Q(s_i, a_i|\theta^Q))^2$ Update the actor policy using the sampled policy gradient:

$$\nabla_{\theta^{\mu}} J \approx \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i} \nabla_{a} Q(s, a | \theta^{Q}) |_{s=s_{i}, a=\mu(s_{i})} \nabla_{\theta^{\mu}} \mu(s | \theta^{\mu}) |_{s_{i}}$$

Update the target networks:

$$\theta^{Q'} \leftarrow \tau \theta^Q + (1 - \tau) \theta^{Q'}$$
$$\theta^{\mu'} \leftarrow \tau \theta^\mu + (1 - \tau) \theta^{\mu'}$$

end for end for

### Hurdle I: In-depth understanding of RL algorithms

Credit: Deep Deterministic Policy Gradient algorithm by DeepMind

```
for episode in range(MAX_EPISODES):
state = env.reset()
for setp in range(MAX_STEPS):
   if episode > warmup_episode:
       # select action
       action = actor.forward(Variable(torch.Tensor(state)))
       action += random_process.sample()
   else:
       action = np.random.uniform(-1., 1., action_dim)
   # execute action
   next_state, reward, done, info = env.step(action)
   # store transition in the memory
   memory.push(state, action, next_state, reward)
    if episode > warmup_episode:
        # sample a random mini batch
       #transitions = memory.sample(BATCH SIZE)
       states, actions, next_states, rewards = memory.sample(BATCH_SIZE)
        # get a batch of g target values
       next_action_values = actor_target.forward(Variable(torch.Tensor(next_states)))
       next_q_values = critic_target.forward(Variable(torch.Tensor(next_states), next_action_values))
       target_q_batch = torch.Tensor(rewards) + discount*next_q_values
        # update critic
       q_batch = critic.forward(Variable(torch.Tensor(states)), Variable(torch.Tensor(actions)))
```

Hurdle II: Current RL tools are designed for scientific researches

Chapter III:

Why Processing



A screenshot of Processing IDE



Abstract Reality, Jieliang Luo, SIGGRAPH Asia 2017



*Machinery Interference* Jieliang Luo, Times Arts Museum, Beijing, 2018



Ferret, Windsor Tie, and Abaya



Swimming Trunks, Brassiere, and Wig



Band Aid, Nematode, and Lipsticks



Maillot, Thunder Snake, and Sunglass



Windsor Tie, Tick, and Proboscis Monkey



Hair Slide, Brassiere, and Sunglass



Brassiere, Pedestal, and Indian Cobra Indi



Indian Cobra, Butternut Squash, and Snail Brassiere, Ice Lolly, and Yorkshire Terrier



Tick, Platypus, and Eggnog

Human Portraits Decomposition, Jieliang Luo, IEEE VIS 2018

Chapter IV:

Q-Learning & Policy Gradient

# Q: How to assign value to actions?



Idea: Pull lever many times and keep track of each reward and its frequency



Value	Frequency
+10	
+7	HI
+3	11
+2	
-5	

# Idea: Pull lever many times and keep track of the average reward



# Use average value for decision making



: Play A

# How to calculate efficiently?

Try	<u>Reward</u>	<u>Average</u>		Must recalculate
1	7	7/1	= 7	numerator each
2	-5	(7-5)/2	= 1	time!
3	7	(7+7+7)/3	= 3	
4	7	(7+7-5+7+7)/4	= 4	What if N is
•	•	•		1,000,000?
•	•	•		
•	•	•		
Ν		Total rewards/N ≈ 3.25		

# Use moving average (MA)


## Recalculated vs. Moving Average



The "noise" of the moving average is worth the computational savings.

## Markov Reward Process

• A mathematical model where agent *tries* to extract rewards from environment



## Rewards given at state transition



## Rewards given at state transition















### Agent needs to maximize the return

• The *return* (R) is the expected sum of rewards:

Timesteps in episode  

$$I = \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \gamma^t r_t \leftarrow \text{Reward at timestep}$$
Discount factor

• Example of impact of discount factor

$\gamma$	r <sub>o</sub>	r <sub>1</sub>	r <sub>2</sub>	R
1	-7	3	6	2
.5	-7	3	6	-4

Track the moving average of the return to evaluate actions (  $\gamma = .99, \alpha = .1$  )



$$R = .99^{0}(-10) + .99^{1}(-1) + .99^{2}(3) = -8.05$$
$$Q(0, R) = -8.05$$

Track the moving average of the return to evaluate actions (  $\gamma = .99, \alpha = .1$  )



# How to use the information?

- Explore the environment many times
- Calculate Q-values for storing the value of decisions
- After training, use the Q-values to make actions

# Q-value table for states 0, 1, and 2

State	Action	Q-value
0	L	-4.5
0	F	3.0
0	R	4.7
1	F	4
1	R	-8.5
2	F	3.2

Derive a policy by taking the action with largest Q-value:

$$a_t = \operatorname{argmax}_a Q(s, a)$$

### Monte Carlo vs Temporal Difference

- Previous approach was *Monte Carlo*: perform entire rollouts to calculate returns
- *Temporal difference* methods are online: update Q-values as soon as possible



# Clarifying temporal difference error



Q-values approximate the expected value when the current action "a" is taken in state "s" and then the best known actions are taken in all subsequent steps.

# Exploration vs Exploitation

- So far we have exhaustively explored the environment
- How to reuse information we already have?
- One approach is *ε*-greedy: choose random action (explore) with probability *ε*, choose greedy action (exploit) with probability 1-*ε*
- $\epsilon$  commonly set to .05

# $\epsilon$ -greedy example in state 0

State	Action	Q-value
0	L	-4.5
0	F	3.0
0	R	4.7

- Use random number generator to get a value: rand = random()
- If rand  $< \epsilon$  then pick L, F, or R randomly
- Otherwise pick action R (it has highest Qvalue)

#### Algorithm 1 Tabular Q-Learning

1: Set all *Q*-values to 0 2: while Q-table has not converged do: Reset the agent and environment 3: while Episode not terminated do 4: Choose a from  $Q(s, \star)$  using  $\epsilon$ -greedy 5: Take action a, observe r and s'6:  $Q(s,a) = Q(s,a) - \alpha(Q(s,a) - r + \operatorname{argmax}_{a'}Q(s',a'))$ 7:  $s \leftarrow s'$ 8: end while **9**: 10: end while 11: Return trained Q-table

## Intro to Gradient Methods

- Q-Learning tracks the average *return* for state-action pairs
- *Gradient methods* assign a numerical preference to state-action pairs:

 $H(s_t, a_t)$ 

Preference converted to probability with softmax:

$$\Pr\{A_t|s_t\} = \pi(a_t|s_t) = \frac{e^{H(s_t, a_t)}}{\sum_{b=1}^k e^{H(s_t, b)}}$$

### Intro to Gradient Methods

 Update preference using following rule
 H(s<sub>t</sub>, A<sub>t</sub>) = H(s<sub>t</sub>, A<sub>t</sub>) + α(R<sub>t</sub> - R
 <sub>t</sub>)(1 - π(A<sub>t</sub>|s<sub>t</sub>))
 where A<sub>t</sub> is the action taken,
 and R<sub>t</sub> is the reward at time t,
 and R
 <sub>t</sub> is the average reward at time t

# Approximate methods

- If number of states is extremely high and/or number of actions is high (e.g. images)
- Then tables become impractical:
   #entries = #states x #actions
- Use regression to approximate the table
- Neural network used for regression
- Basis for all modern reinforcement learning
- Uses similar update rules for the network

Chapter V:

### Implementing Tabular Q-Learning in Processing

Implementing Tabular Q-Learning in Processing Part I: Create a RL environment



CartPole, OpenAl Gym



Tennis, Unity ML



Collect Box, Luo & Green



KUKA Grasp, pyBullet



Grid in Processing, Luo & Green

- Observations
- Actions
- Starting/Reset State
- Terminal State
- Step Function
- Reward
- Render Function
- Sample Function

Observations



#### Type: Box

Observation	Min	Max
Cart Position	-4.8	4.8
Cart Velocity	-Inf	Inf
Pole Angle	-24°	24°
Pole Velocity At Tip	-Inf	Inf



#### Type: Discrete

<b>Observation</b> Grey Cube Position			tion	Min Max Position 0 Red Cube		ube	
0	1	2	3	••••	N-2	N-1	Ν

• Actions





Type: Discrete(2)

Num	Action
0	Push cart to the left
1	Push cart to the right

Type: Discrete(2)

Num	Action
0	Push cube to the left
1	Push cube to the right

• Starting/Reset State

CartPole

All observations are assigned a uniform random value between ±0.05

**Grid in Processing** 

At state 0

#### Type: Box

Observation	Min	Max
Cart Position	-4.8	4.8
Cart Velocity	-Inf	Inf
Pole Angle	-24°	24°
Pole Velocity At Tip	-Inf	Inf



• Terminal State

CartPole

- Pole Angle is more than  $\pm 12^{\circ}$
- Cart Position is more than ±2.4 (center of the cart reaches the edge of the display)
- Considered solved when the average reward is greater than or equal to 195.0 over 100 consecutive trials.

**Grid in Processing** 

At state N



• Terminal State

CartPole

- Pole Angle is more than ±12°
- Cart Position is more than ±2.4 (center of the cart reaches the edge of the display)
- Considered solved when the average reward is greater than or equal to 195.0 over 100 consecutive trials.

#### • Reward

Reward is 1 for every step taken, including the termination step

**Grid in Processing** 

At state N



Reward is 0 for every step taken, excluding the termination step

Reward is 1 for the termination step

• Step Function

**observation**, **reward**, **done**, **info** = step\_function(action)

Observation: any state between 0 and N

Reward: 0 or 1

Done: true or false

Info: none

**Codes:** <u>https://github.com/RodgerLuo/RL\_Processing/blob/master/Tabular\_Q\_Learning/Env.pde#L35</u>

• Basic Structure in Processing

class Grid{

// initialize parameters
Grid(){}

// reset the state to 0
reset(){}

// agent interacts with the environment
step(){}

// visualize the environment in Processing
render(){}

// randomly select an action
sample(){}

}

#### Codes:

https://github.com/RodgerLuo/RL\_Processing/blob/master/Tabular\_Q\_Learning/Env.pde

Implementing Tabular Q-Learning in Processing Part II: Tabular Q-Learning Algorithm
### Tabular Q-Learning Algorithm

### Algorithm:

Algorithm 1 Tabular Q-Learning
1: Set all $Q$ -values to 0
2: while Q-table has not converged do:
3: Reset the agent and environment
4: while Episode not terminated <b>do</b>
5: Choose a from $Q(s, \star)$ using $\epsilon$ -greedy
6: Take action $a$ , observe $r$ and $s'$
7: $Q(s,a) = Q(s,a) - \alpha(Q(s,a) - r + \operatorname{argmax}_{a'}Q(s',a'))$
8: $s \leftarrow s'$
9: end while
10: end while
11: Return trained $Q$ -table

#### Implementations:

https://github.com/RodgerLuo/RL\_Processing

**Live Coding Session** 

Chapter VI:

Next Steps

# A Reinforcement Learning Library for Processing

- Tabular Q-Learning & Policy Gradient
- Deep Neural Network
- Policy Gradient
- Actor-Critic
- DDPG
- Customizable Environments
- Demos with Physical Objects

# A Reinforcement Learning Library for Processing

Demos with Physical Objects



Obor & Nog Credit:Andreas Schlegel Thank you!

Jieliang Luo jieliang@ucsb.edu

Sam Green sam.green@cs.ucsb.edu