

INTRODUCTION TO PROOF THEORY

Lecture 4 - *Hauptsatz*: the cut-elimination theorem

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These slides are available at <http://www.anupamdas.com/mgs21>.

Based on slides from ESSLLI'18, prepared with Thomas Powell.

Recap: the system LK

INITIAL AND STRUCTURAL RULES

$$\text{id} \frac{}{A \vdash A} \quad \text{w-l} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta}{A, \Gamma \vdash \Delta} \quad \text{w-r} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A} \quad \text{c-l} \frac{A, A, \Gamma \vdash \Delta}{A, \Gamma \vdash \Delta} \quad \text{c-r} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A, A}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A}$$

PROPOSITIONAL RULES:

$$\perp\text{-l} \frac{}{\perp \vdash} \quad \perp\text{-r} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, \perp} \quad \rightarrow\text{-l} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \quad B, \Gamma \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, A \rightarrow B \vdash \Delta} \quad \rightarrow\text{-r} \frac{\Gamma, A \vdash B, \Delta}{\Gamma \vdash A \rightarrow B, \Delta}$$

QUANTIFIER RULES:

$$\forall\text{-l} \frac{\Gamma, A[t/x] \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, \forall x.A \vdash \Delta} \quad \forall\text{-r} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A[y/x]}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, \forall x.A} \quad \exists\text{-l} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A[t/x]}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, \exists x.A} \quad \exists\text{-r} \frac{\Gamma, A[y/x] \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, \exists x.A \vdash \Delta}$$

where $y \notin \text{FV}(\Gamma, \Delta, A)$.

CUT RULE:

$$\text{cut} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \quad A, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}$$

- 1 The problem of cut-elimination
- 2 Key and commutative logical reductions
- 3 Structural rules: a bit of a headache
- 4 A strategy and an induction measure
- 5 Proofs of some consequences
- 6 References

The subject matter of *structural proof theory*

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Structural proof theory is the study of *normal forms* and *normalisation*

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*“cut-elimination is the **most beautiful result** with the **most horrible proof**”*

This is one of the **hardest termination arguments** in graduate mathematics and computer science!



Theorem (*Hauptsatz*, Gentzen '34)

Every theorem of LK has a proof that *does not use the cut rule*.

Corollary (Subformula property)

Every theorem of LK has a proof that contains *only subformulae* of it, up to substitution of variables for terms.

How cut-elimination works

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BASIC IDEA, IN A NUTSHELL

*“push” the cuts **upwards** in a proof, until they **disappear completely!***

How cut-elimination works

BASIC IDEA, IN A NUTSHELL

“*push*” the cuts **upwards** in a proof, until they *disappear completely!*

I will outline the argument, but **understanding comes through practice!** I recommend standard references for detailed proofs:

- [Buss, 1998]. *Handbook of Proof Theory*.
- [Troelstra and Schwichtenberg, 1996]. *Basic Proof Theory*.
- [Negri and von Plato, 2001]. *Structural Proof Theory*.
- [Szabo, 1972]. *The Collected Papers of Gerhard Gentzen*.
- Or do it yourself!

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Key propositional case

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$$\frac{\frac{\frac{\text{1}}{\Gamma, A \vdash \Delta, B}}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \rightarrow B} \rightarrow\text{-r} \quad \frac{\frac{\frac{\text{2}}{\Gamma' \vdash \Delta', A} \quad \frac{\text{3}}{\Gamma', B \vdash \Delta'}}{\Gamma', A \rightarrow B \vdash \Delta'} \rightarrow\text{-l}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'} \text{cut}}$$

Key propositional case

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \frac{\frac{\frac{\text{1}}{\Gamma, A \vdash \Delta, B}}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \rightarrow B} \rightarrow\text{-r}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'} \text{cut} \quad \frac{\frac{\frac{\text{2}}{\Gamma' \vdash \Delta', A} \quad \frac{\text{3}}{\Gamma', B \vdash \Delta'}}{\Gamma', A \rightarrow B \vdash \Delta'} \rightarrow\text{-l}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'} \text{cut}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'} \\
 \rightsquigarrow \\
 \frac{\frac{\frac{\text{2}}{\Gamma' \vdash \Delta', A} \quad \frac{\text{1}}{\Gamma, A \vdash \Delta, B}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta', B} \text{cut} \quad \frac{\text{3}}{\Gamma', B \vdash \Delta'}}{\Gamma, \Gamma', \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta', \Delta'} \text{cut} \\
 \frac{\Gamma, \Gamma', \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta', \Delta'}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'} \text{c}
 \end{array}$$

Key quantifier case

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$$\frac{\frac{\frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A(t)}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, \exists x.A(x)} \exists\text{-r}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'} \text{cut}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'} \frac{\frac{\Gamma', A(x) \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma', \exists x.A(x) \vdash \Delta'} \exists\text{-l}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}$$

The diagram shows a cut rule for the existential quantifier. On the left, a triangle labeled '1' contains the expression $\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A(t)$. Below it is the rule $\exists\text{-r}$ which takes $\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A(t)$ as input and produces $\Gamma \vdash \Delta, \exists x.A(x)$ as output. On the right, a triangle labeled '2(y)' contains the expression $\Gamma', A(x) \vdash \Delta'$. Below it is the rule $\exists\text{-l}$ which takes $\Gamma', A(x) \vdash \Delta'$ as input and produces $\Gamma', \exists x.A(x) \vdash \Delta'$ as output. A horizontal line labeled 'cut' spans both of these. Below this line is the final result: $\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'$.

Key quantifier case

$$\frac{\frac{\frac{\text{1}}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A(t)}}{\exists\text{-r}} \quad \frac{\frac{\text{2}(y)}{\Gamma', A(x) \vdash \Delta'}}{\exists\text{-l}}}{\text{cut}} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, \exists x.A(x) \quad \Gamma', \exists x.A(x) \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{\text{cut}} \frac{\frac{\text{1}}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A(t)} \quad \frac{\text{2}(t)}{\Gamma', A(t) \vdash \Delta'}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}$$

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- Implicitly assume **free variable conditions** are respected.
- Write $2(t)$ for the derivation arising from $2(y)$ by **replacing every free occurrence** of y by t .

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NB: The key \forall case is **dual**.

(Example of) commutative cases

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$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{1} \\
 \hline
 \Gamma \vdash \Delta, A
 \end{array}
 \xrightarrow{\rightarrow-r}
 \frac{\text{2} \quad \Gamma', A, B \vdash \Delta', C}{\Gamma', A \vdash \Delta', B \rightarrow C}
 \rightsquigarrow
 \frac{\text{1} \quad \Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \quad \text{2} \quad \Gamma', A, B \vdash \Delta', C}{\text{cut} \quad \Gamma, \Gamma', B \vdash \Delta, \Delta', C}
 \xrightarrow{\rightarrow-r}
 \frac{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta', B \rightarrow C}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta', B \rightarrow C}$$

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \text{1} \\
 \hline
 \Gamma \vdash \Delta, A
 \end{array}
 \xrightarrow{\rightarrow-l}
 \frac{\text{2} \quad \Gamma', A \vdash \Delta', B \quad \text{3} \quad \Gamma', A, C \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma', B \rightarrow C, A \vdash \Delta'}
 \xrightarrow{\text{cut}}
 \frac{\Gamma, \Gamma', B \rightarrow C \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}{\Gamma, \Gamma', B \rightarrow C \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}$$

$$\rightsquigarrow
 \frac{\text{1} \quad \Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \quad \text{2} \quad \Gamma', A \vdash \Delta', B}{\text{cut} \quad \Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta', B}
 \xrightarrow{\rightarrow-l}
 \frac{\text{1} \quad \Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \quad \text{3} \quad \Gamma', A, C \vdash \Delta'}{\text{cut} \quad \Gamma, \Gamma', C \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}
 \xrightarrow{\rightarrow-l}
 \frac{\Gamma, \Gamma', B \rightarrow C \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}{\Gamma, \Gamma', B \rightarrow C \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}$$

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Weakening: enter non-confluence

$$\frac{\frac{\text{1}}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta} \quad \frac{\text{2}}{\Gamma', A \vdash \Delta'}}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A} \text{w-r} \quad \text{cut} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \quad \Gamma', A \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}$$

\rightsquigarrow

$$\frac{\text{1}}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta} \quad \text{w} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}$$

$$\frac{\frac{\text{1}}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A} \quad \frac{\text{2}}{\Gamma', A \vdash \Delta'}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'} \text{cut} \quad \text{w-l} \frac{\Gamma' \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma', A \vdash \Delta'}$$

\rightsquigarrow

$$\frac{\text{2}}{\Gamma' \vdash \Delta'} \quad \text{w} \frac{\Gamma' \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}$$

Weakening: enter non-confluence II

NB: cut-reduction is **not confluent!**

$$\frac{\frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{w}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{\leftarrow \text{wavy}} \frac{\frac{\frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A}}{w-r} \quad \frac{\frac{\Gamma' \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma', A \vdash \Delta'}}{w-l}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}{\text{cut}}}{\rightarrow \text{wavy}} \frac{\frac{\Gamma' \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{w}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}$$

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$$\frac{\frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{w}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{\leftarrow \text{wavy}} \quad \frac{\frac{\frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A}}{w-r} \quad \frac{\frac{\Gamma' \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma', A \vdash \Delta'}}{w-l}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}{\text{cut}}}{\rightarrow \text{wavy}} \quad \frac{\frac{\Gamma' \vdash \Delta'}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{w}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}$$

This is known as **Lafont's counterexample**.

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One particularly nasty issue is:

$$\frac{\frac{\frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A}{\text{cut}}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{\text{cut}} \quad \frac{\frac{\frac{\Gamma', A, A \vdash \Delta'}{\text{c-l}}}{\Gamma', A \vdash \Delta'}}{\text{cut}}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{\text{cut}} \rightsquigarrow \frac{\frac{\frac{\frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A}{\text{cut}}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{\text{cut}}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{\text{cut}} \quad \frac{\frac{\frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A}{\text{cut}}}{\Gamma, \Gamma', A \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{\text{cut}} \quad \frac{\frac{\Gamma', A, A \vdash \Delta'}{\text{c-l}}}{\Gamma', A \vdash \Delta'}}{\text{cut}}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'}}{\text{cut}}$$

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Here the entire subproof 1 is **duplicated!**

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NB: the reduction for $c-r$ is **dual**.

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The sequent in **red** is **trivial**.

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The sequent in red is **trivial**.

NB: cut-reduction is **not strongly normalising**.

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- 1 The problem of cut-elimination
- 2 Key and commutative logical reductions
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The critical lemma via left-then-right strategy

Lemma

For any proof

$$\text{cut} \frac{\frac{\pi}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A} \quad \frac{\pi'}{\Gamma', A \vdash \Delta'}}{\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'} \quad (1)$$

where the subproofs π and π' have only cuts on formulas *smaller than* A , there is a proof of $\Gamma, \Gamma' \vdash \Delta, \Delta'$ with only cuts on formulas smaller than A .

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Proof idea.

- First push the cut up π' maximally (by induction on $|\pi'|$).
- For any topmost resulting cut, push up the LHS maximally (by induction on $|\text{LHS}|$) and apply **key reduction** to leave a **smaller cut**.
- **Repeat the process** for remaining cuts. □

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MORE DETAILS: ...will be given in the exercise session.

An induction measure

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Definition (Multiset measure)

For two multisets M, N of natural numbers, we say $M < N$ if I may transform N into M by the continually applying the following operation:

delete a number $n \in N$ and insert any number of numbers $< n$

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Example

$\{1, 2, 3, 4, 4, 5\} < \{2, 5, 5\}$ and $\{1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 2\} < \{1, 2, 3\}$.

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NB: This can also be seen as a lexicographic order.

Proposition

$<$ is a well-order on the class of multisets of natural numbers.

Putting it all together

Definition (Degrees)

The **degree** of a proof is the **multiset of sizes of its cut-formulae**.

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Proof sketch of cut-elimination.

By induction on the degree of a proof, under $<$:

- Identify a **topmost cut** in a proof, and apply the critical lemma.
- The degree of the resulting proof will be **smaller**, under $<$.
- Thus we may conclude by the **inductive hypothesis**. □

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Proof sketch of cut-elimination.

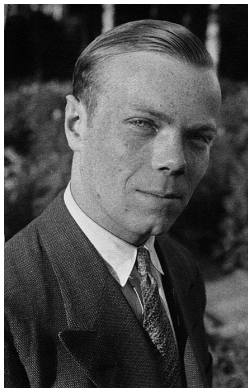
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EXERCISE: fill in all the details for yourself!

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Herbrand's theorem



Theorem (Herbrand '30)

If $\models \exists x.A(x)$, with A quantifier-free, there is a finite set $\{t_i\}_{i=1}^n$ s.t. $\models A(t_1) \vee \cdots \vee A(t_n)$.

Proof idea of Herbrand's Theorem

The basic idea is that the terms in the Herbrand disjunction are just those from which the \exists originates.

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Proof idea of Herbrand's Theorem

The basic idea is that the terms in the Herbrand disjunction are just those from which the \exists **originates**.

Formally, we can prove it by **induction on the structure of a cut-free proof**.
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EXERCISE: Try to check how each of the other cases works for yourself!

Digression: recovering richer expressivity

Do we still have cut-free completeness for the **richer language** with \vee and \wedge ?

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We say that a rule is **cut-free-invertible** if, whenever its conclusion is cut-free provable each of its premisses are too.

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We say that a rule is **cut-free-invertible** if, whenever its conclusion is cut-free provable each of its premisses are too.

Proposition

*All of our **propositional rules** are cut-free-invertible.*

Proof idea.

By induction on the structure of the proof. Essentially we ‘replace’ each formula with its ‘inverses’. □

Rules for \vee , \wedge and an encoding in $\{\rightarrow, \perp\}$

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Recall that we can encode \vee and \wedge in $\{\rightarrow, \perp\}$ by **adequacy**:

$$\begin{aligned} A \vee B &\equiv \neg A \rightarrow B \\ A \wedge B &\equiv \neg(A \rightarrow \neg B) \end{aligned}$$

Rules for \vee , \wedge and an encoding in $\{\rightarrow, \perp\}$

Recall that we can encode \vee and \wedge in $\{\rightarrow, \perp\}$ by **adequacy**:

$$\begin{aligned} A \vee B &\equiv \neg A \rightarrow B \\ A \wedge B &\equiv \neg(A \rightarrow \neg B) \end{aligned}$$

We could also have **native** rules for \vee and \wedge :

$$\begin{array}{l} \wedge\text{-}l \frac{\Gamma, A, B \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, A \wedge B \vdash \Delta} \qquad \wedge\text{-}r \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \quad \Gamma \vdash \Delta, B}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \wedge B} \\ \vee\text{-}r \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A, B}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \vee B} \qquad \vee\text{-}l \frac{\Gamma, A \vdash \Delta \quad \Gamma, B \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, A \vee B \vdash \Delta} \end{array}$$

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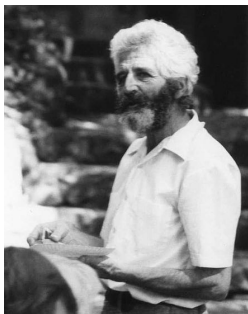
$$\begin{array}{c} \wedge\text{-l} \frac{\Gamma, A, B \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, A \wedge B \vdash \Delta} \qquad \wedge\text{-r} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \quad \Gamma \vdash \Delta, B}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \wedge B} \\ \vee\text{-r} \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A, B}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \vee B} \qquad \vee\text{-l} \frac{\Gamma, A \vdash \Delta \quad \Gamma, B \vdash \Delta}{\Gamma, A \vee B \vdash \Delta} \end{array}$$

Proposition

The sequent system with \vee and \wedge native is also cut-free complete.

Proof idea.

Use cut-free-invertibility of the \rightarrow and \perp rules to **simulate** the rules above. □



Theorem (Craig Interpolation)

If $\models A \rightarrow B$, there is some I in the *common language* of A and B s.t. $\models A \rightarrow I$ and $\models I \rightarrow B$.

Proof of Craig Interpolation

By the previous arguments, we will work in the calculus including only the connectives \neg , \vee , \wedge and all formulae in **negation normal form**, i.e. with negation only on atoms.

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Proof idea of Craig Interpolation.

By **structural induction on a cut-free proof**. For instance, if the proof ends with,

$$\begin{array}{c} \begin{array}{ccc} \triangleleft & & \triangleleft \\ & \pi_0 & \\ \Gamma \vdash \Delta, A & & \Gamma \vdash \Delta, B \end{array} \\ \wedge\text{-}r \frac{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \quad \Gamma \vdash \Delta, B}{\Gamma \vdash \Delta, A \wedge B} \end{array}$$

and I_0, I_1 are interpolants obtained from π_0, π_1 resp., then we may define the new interpolant as $I_0 \wedge I_1$. □

- 1 The problem of cut-elimination
- 2 Key and commutative logical reductions
- 3 Structural rules: a bit of a headache
- 4 A strategy and an induction measure
- 5 Proofs of some consequences
- 6 References**

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