

Rice's Theorem is a general statement about the decidability of a language. Informally, if a language L asks a nontrivial question about languages, then $L \notin \text{DEC}$. Let's formalize this.

A property of languages (or an I/O property) is a set $P \subseteq \mathcal{P}(\Sigma^*)$.

Define the set

$$L_P = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid L(M) \in P \}$$

A property P is trivial if $L_P = \emptyset$ or L_P is the set of all TMs. P is nontrivial if L_P contains at least one TM but not all of them (i.e. not trivial).

A property P is a property of the TM's language if for all TMs M_1 and M_2 for which $L(M_1) = L(M_2)$, $\langle M_1 \rangle \in L_P$ iff $\langle M_2 \rangle \in L_P$.

Ex) $P = \emptyset$ is trivial

$P = \emptyset(\Sigma^*)$ is trivial

$P = \text{RE}$ is trivial (L_P contains all TMs)

\bar{P} where P is trivial is trivial

$P = \{ L \mid \exists \text{ TM } M \text{ with } L(M) = L \text{ and } M \text{ has an even \# of states} \} = \text{RE}$
is not a property of the TM's language

obs) Any trivial property P has $L_P \in \text{DEC}$.

Proof Why?

You either always accept or always reject.

Thm (Rice's Theorem) For any nontrivial property P that is a property of the TM's language, L_P is undecidable.

Pf) We give a reduction from A_{TM} to L_p .
Assume wlog that $\emptyset \notin P$ (we get the same result from \bar{P} if so).
Since P is non-trivial, $\exists L \in P$ and $\exists \langle N \rangle \in L_p : L(N) = L$.

Now consider the TM $D_{M,w}$.

$D_{M,w}$ = "On input v ,

- 1) Run $M(w)$.
- 2) If $M(w)$ does not accept, reject
- 3) Run $N(v)$ and accept if it does
- 4) Reject."

Clearly, $L(D_{M,w}) = \begin{cases} \emptyset & M(w) \text{ does not accept} \\ L & M(w) \text{ accepts.} \end{cases}$

This yields $\langle D_{M,w} \rangle \in L_p$ iff $M(w)$ accepts. ($\emptyset \notin P$).

Now assume $L_p \in \text{DEC}$. Then there is a decider R with $L(R) = L_p$.

Consider the TM D .

D = "On input $\langle M, w \rangle$

- 1) Run $R(\langle D_{M,w} \rangle)$.
- 2) Accept if $R(\langle D_{M,w} \rangle)$ accepts and reject otherwise"

Clearly, $L(D) = \{ \langle M, w \rangle \mid M(w) \text{ accepts} \} = A_{TM}$, so D decides A_{TM} .

$\rightarrow \leftarrow$

$\therefore L_p$ is not decidable. □

Ex) $ALL_{TM} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \Sigma^* \}$ is not decidable.

Not all TMs accept Σ^* , so this is a non-trivial property.

Moreover, if $L(M_1) = L(M_2) = \Sigma^*$ for TM M_1, M_2 , then $\langle M_1 \rangle, \langle M_2 \rangle \in ALL_{TM}$

iff $L(M_1) = L(M_2) = \Sigma^*$, hence this is a property of the TM's language.

By Rice's Theorem, ALL_{TM} is undecidable.