CPS 170: Artificial Intelligence

http://www.cs.duke.edu/courses/spring09/cps170/

Two-player, zero-sum, perfect-information

Games

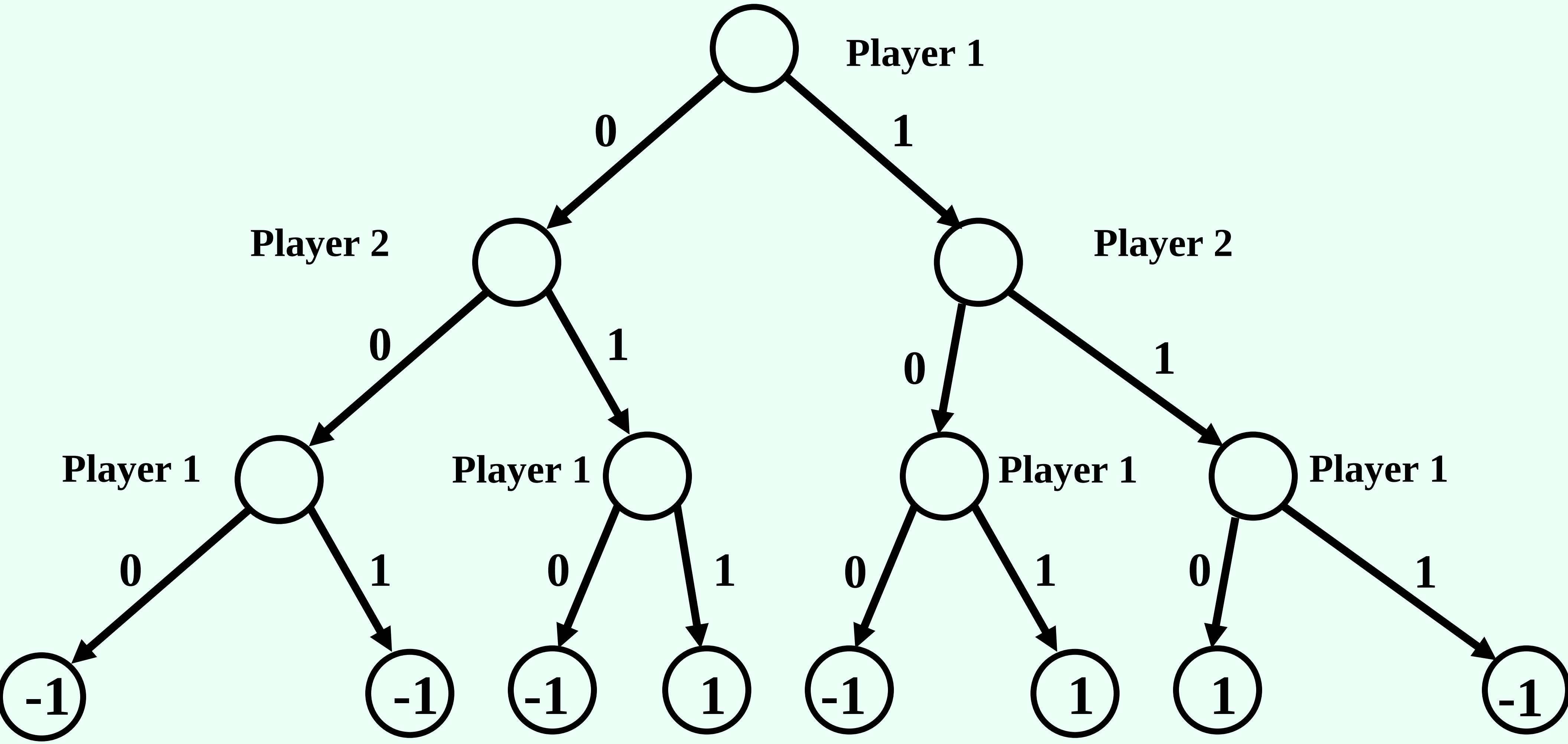
Instructor: Vincent Conitzer

Game playing

- Rich tradition of creating game-playing programs in AI
- Many similarities to search
- Most of the games studied
  - have two players,
  - are zero-sum: what one player wins, the other loses
  - have perfect information: the entire state of the game is known to both players at all times
- E.g., tic-tac-toe, checkers, chess, Go, backgammon, …
- Will focus on these for now
- Recently more interest in other games
  - Esp. games without perfect information; e.g., poker
    - Need probability theory, game theory for such games

"Sum to 2" game

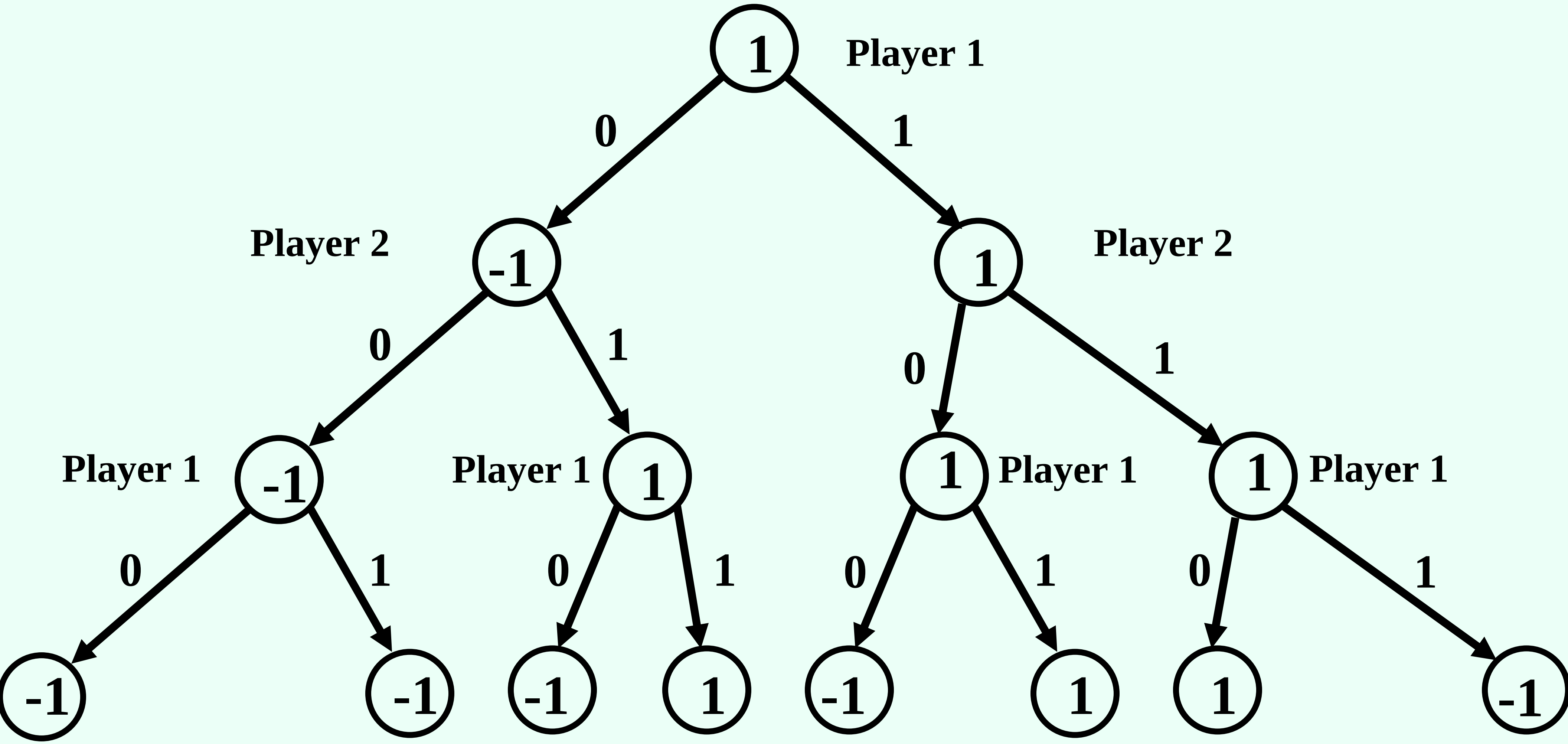
- Player 1 moves, then player 2, finally player 1 again
- Move = 0 or 1
- Player 1 wins if and only if all moves together sum to 2



Player 1's utility is in the leaves; player 2's utility is the negative of this

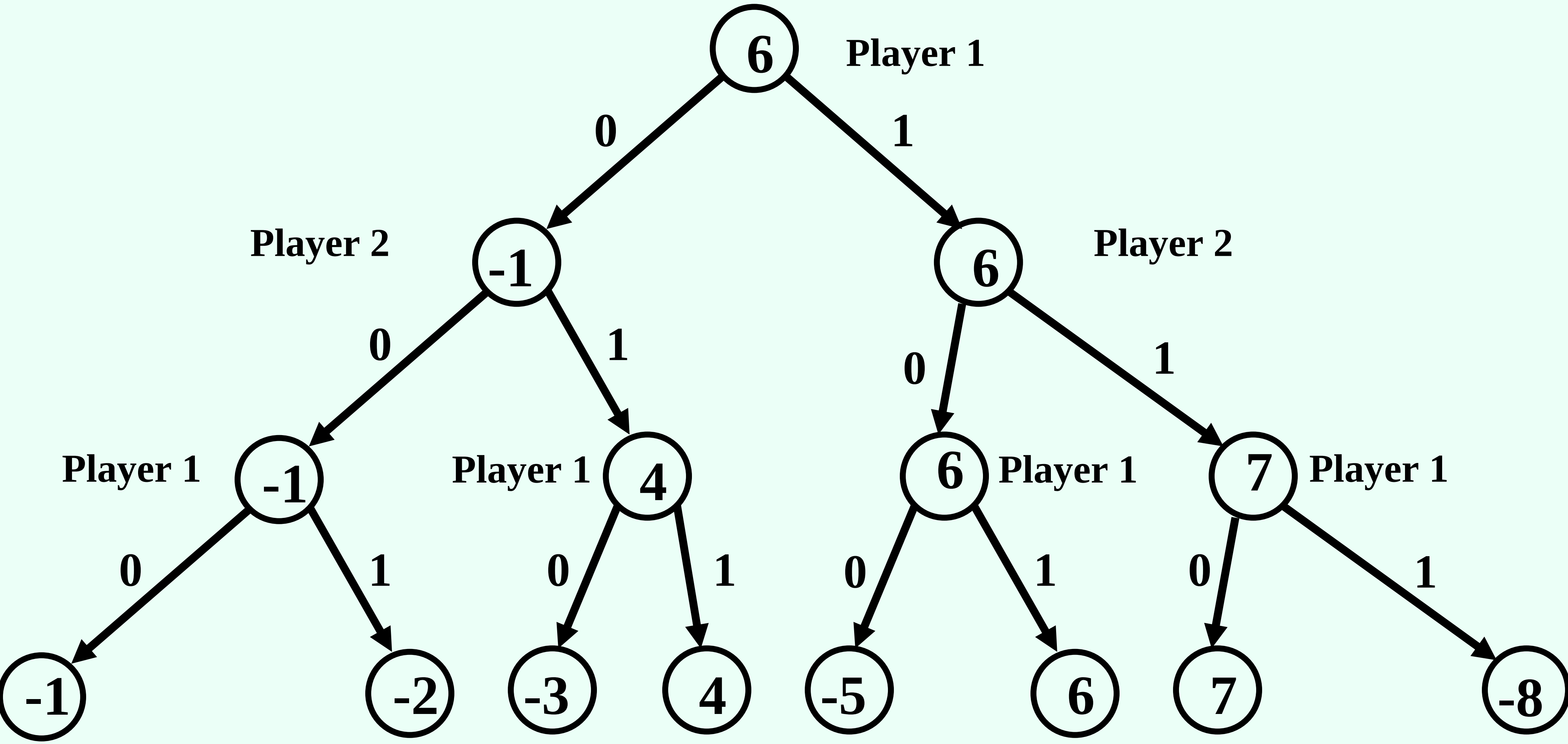
Backward induction (aka. minimax)

- From leaves upward, analyze best decision for player at node, give node a value
  - Once we know values, easy to find optimal action (choose best value)



Modified game

- From leaves upward, analyze best decision for player at node, give node a value



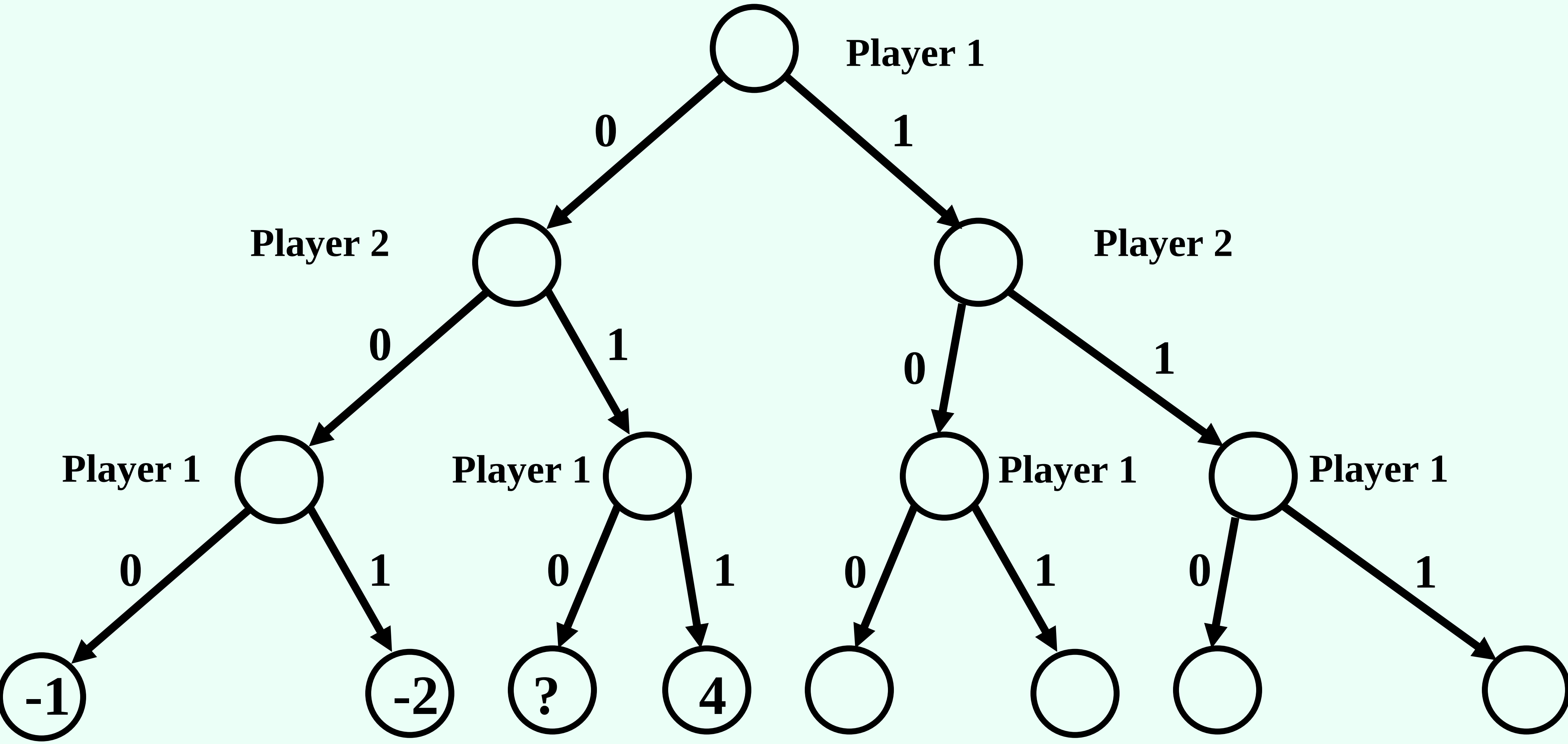
A recursive implementation

- **Value(state)**
- If state is terminal, return its value
- If (player(state) = player 1)
  - v := -infinity
  - For each action
    - v := max(v, Value(successor(state, action)))
  - Return v
- Else
  - v := infinity
  - For each action
    - v := min(v, Value(successor(state, action)))
  - Return v

Space? Time?

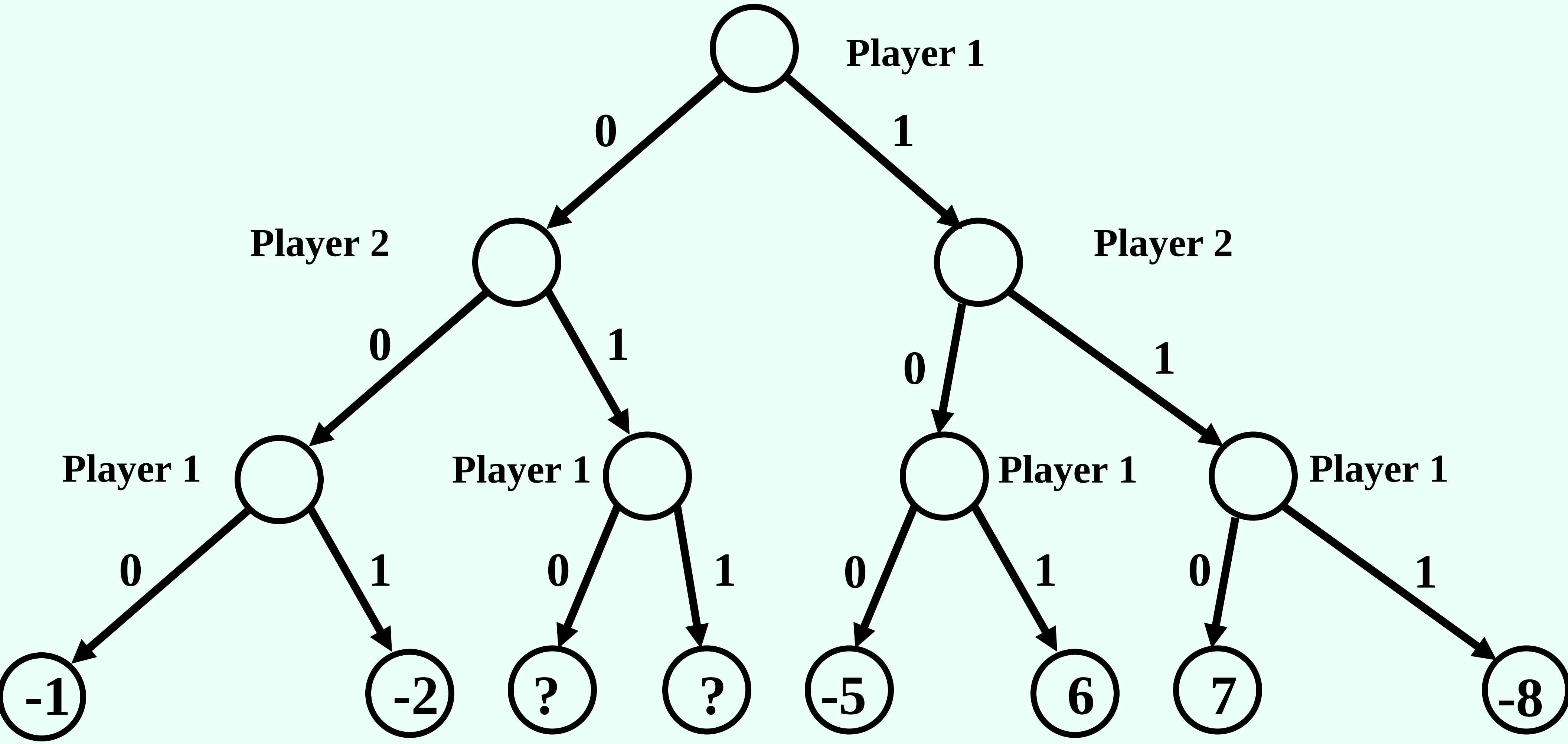
Do we need to see all the leaves?

- Do we need to see the value of the question mark here?



Do we need to see all the leaves?

- Do we need to see the values of the question marks here?

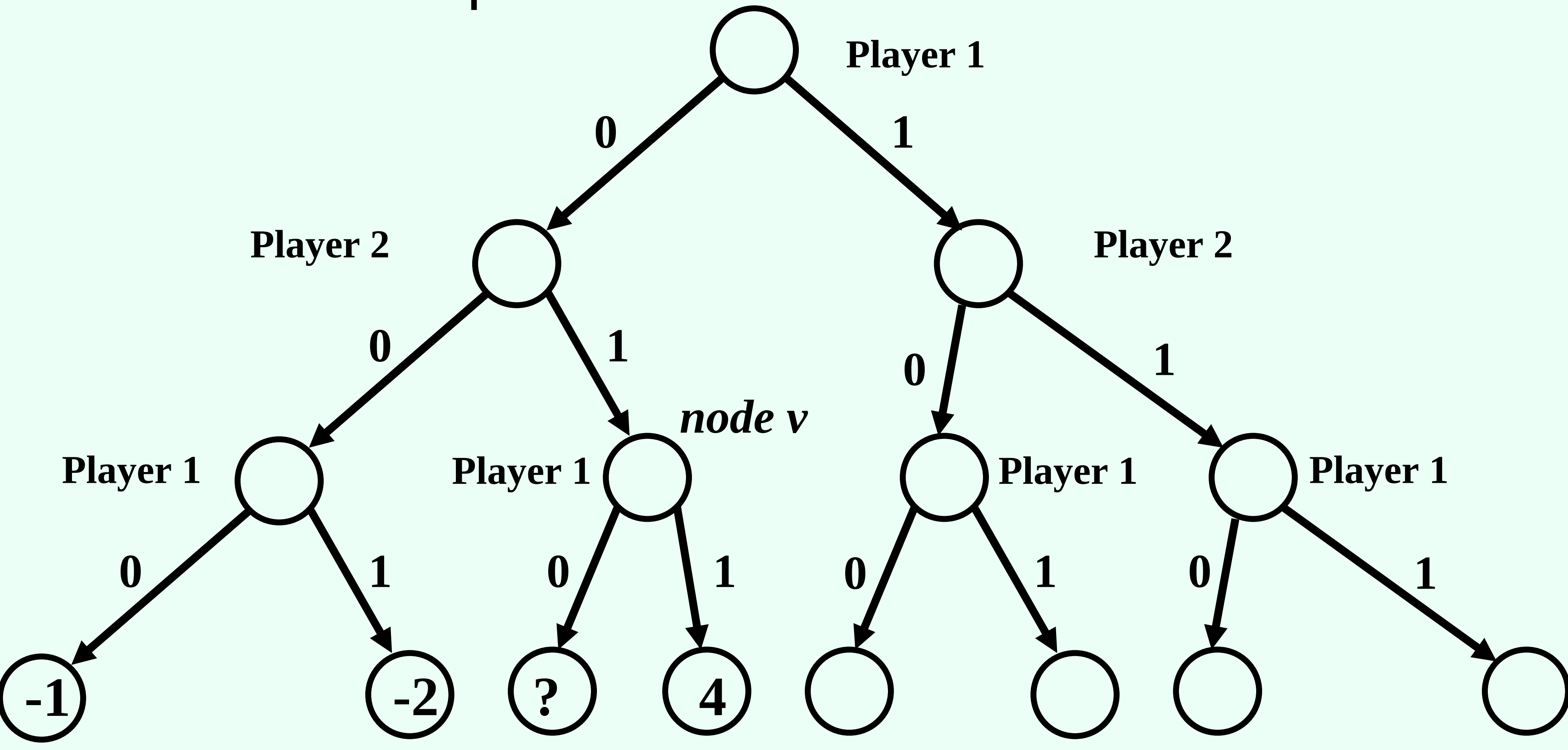


Alpha-beta pruning

- Pruning = cutting off parts of the search tree (because you realize you don’t need to look at them)
  - When we considered A* we also pruned large parts of the search tree
- Maintain alpha = value of the best option for player 1 along the path so far
- Beta = value of the best option for player 2 along the path so far

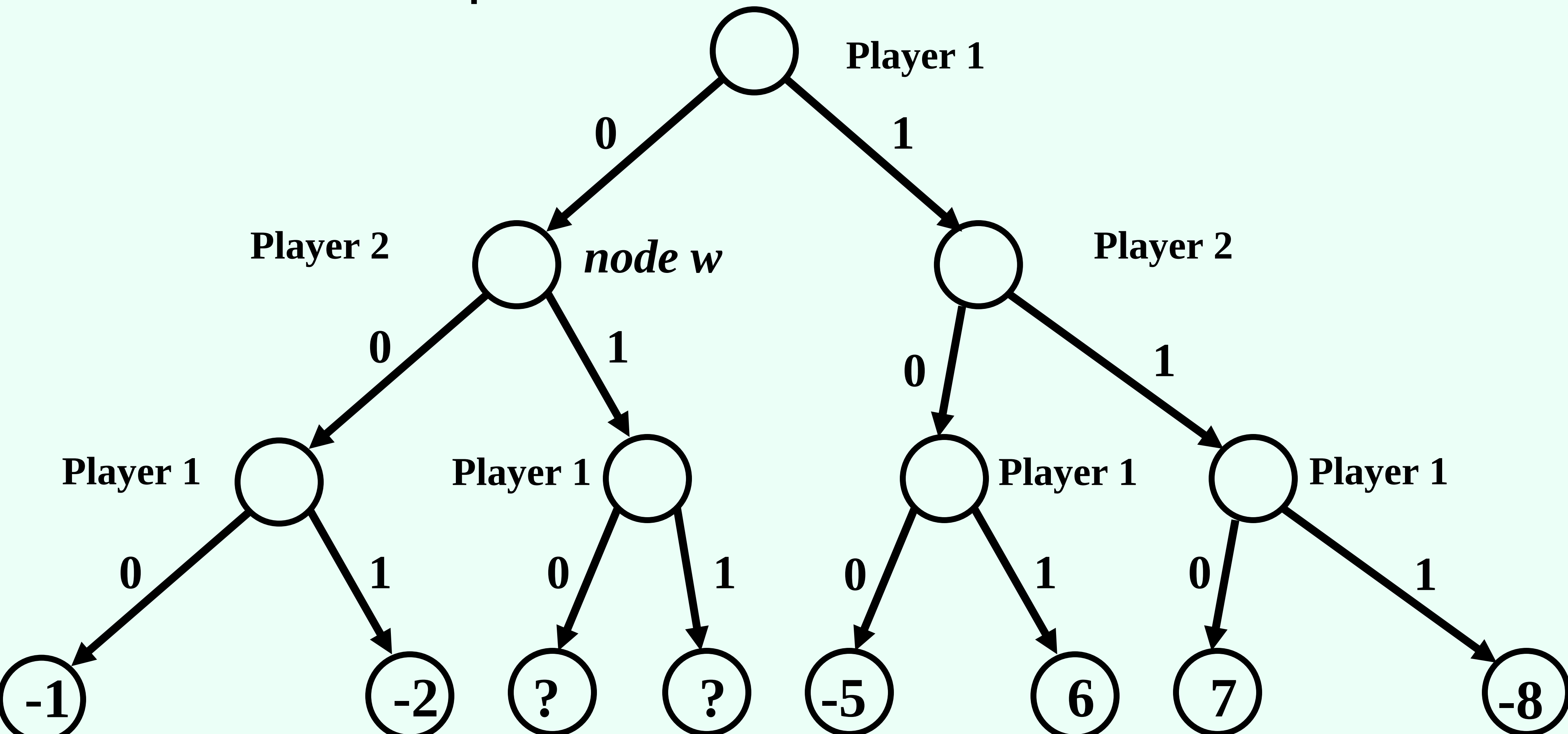
Pruning on beta

- Beta at node v is -1
- We know the value of node v is going to be at least 4, so the -1 route will be preferred
- No need to explore this node further



Pruning on alpha

- Alpha at node w is 6
- We know the value of node w is going to be at most -1, so the 6 route will be preferred
- No need to explore this node further



Modifying recursive implementation to do alpha-beta pruning

- **Value(state, alpha, beta)**
- If state is terminal, return its value
- If (player(state) = player 1)
  - v := -infinity
  - For each action
    - v := max(v, Value(successor(state, action), alpha, beta))
    - If v >= beta, return v
    - alpha := max(alpha, v)
  - Return v
- Else
  - v := infinity
  - For each action
    - v := min(v, Value(successor(state, action), alpha, beta))
    - If v <= alpha, return v
    - beta := min(beta, v)
  - Return v

Benefits of alpha-beta pruning

- Without pruning, need to examine $O(b^m)$ nodes
- With pruning, depends on which nodes we consider first
- If we choose a random successor, need to examine $O(b^{3m/4})$ nodes
- If we manage to choose the best successor first, need to examine $O(b^{m/2})$ nodes
  - Practical heuristics for choosing next successor to consider get quite close to this
- Can effectively look twice as deep!
  - Difference between reasonable and expert play

Repeated states

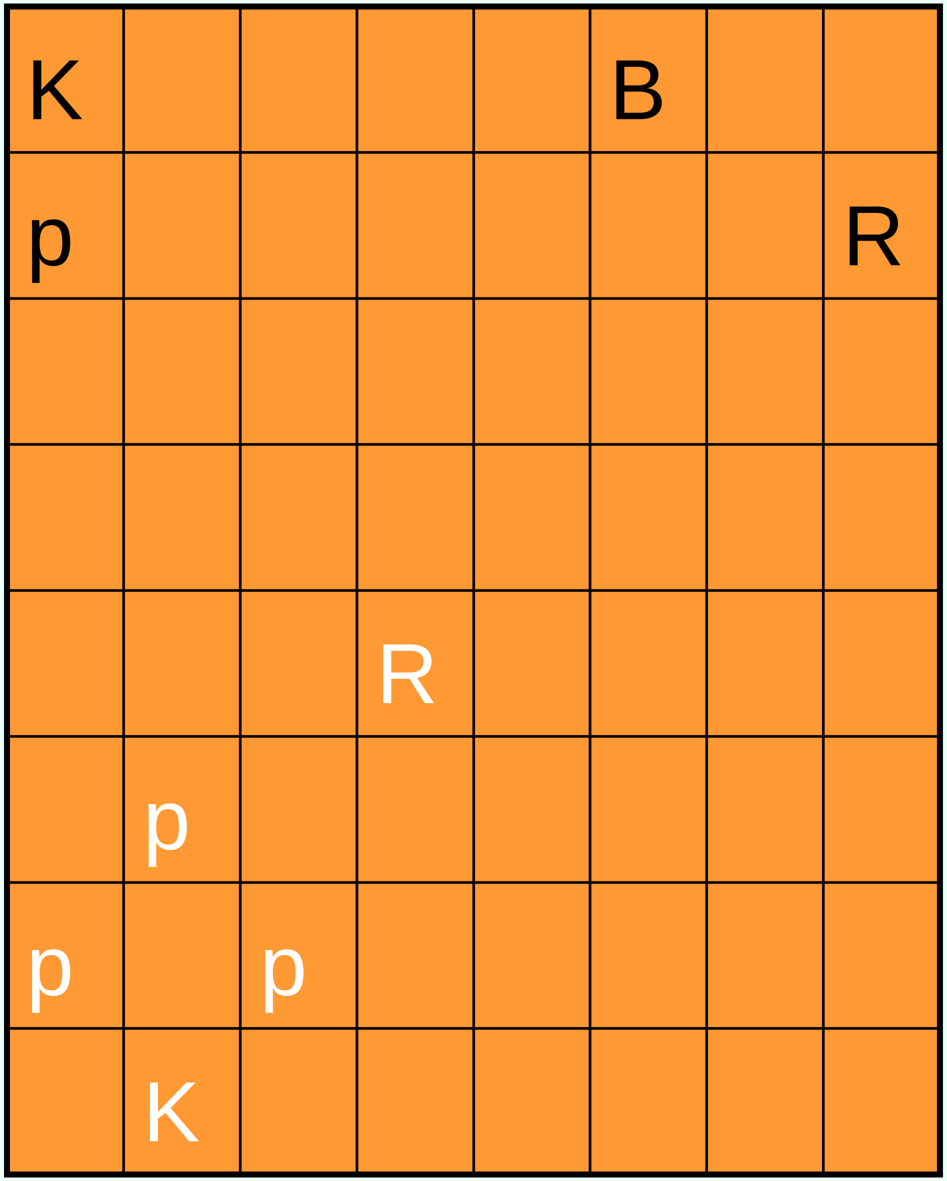
- As in search, multiple sequences of moves may lead to the same state
- Again, can keep track of previously seen states (usually called a transposition table in this context)
  - May not want to keep track of **all** previously seen states…

Using evaluation functions

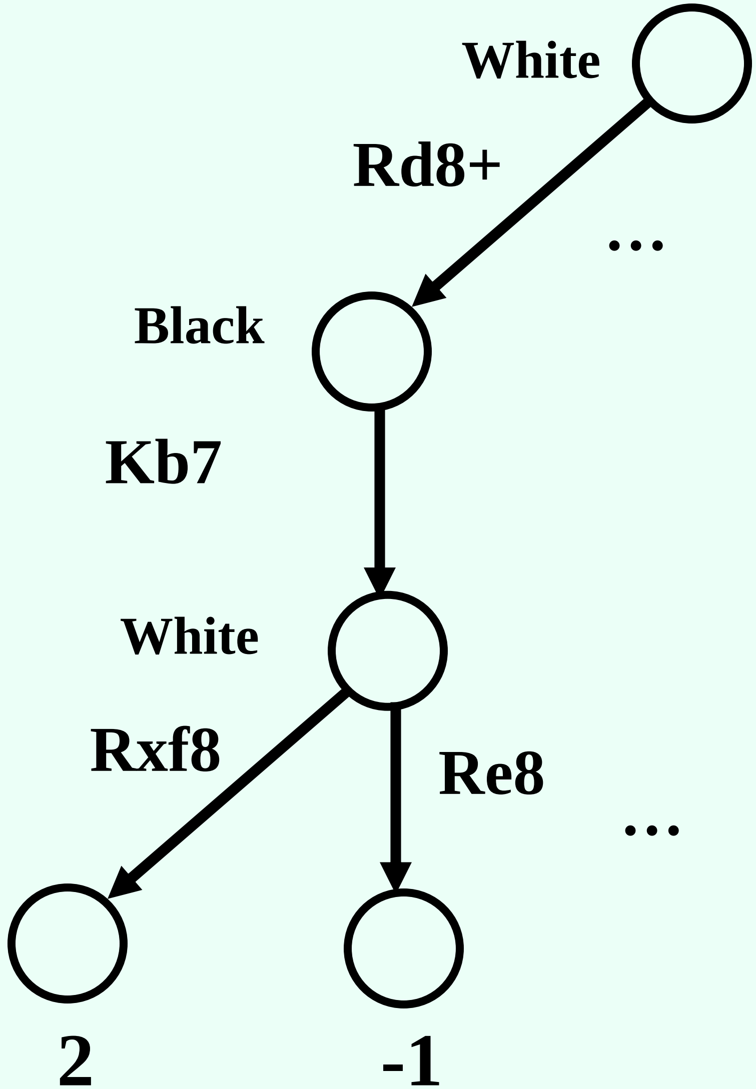
- Most games are too big to solve even with alpha-beta pruning
- Solution: Only look ahead to limited depth (nonterminal nodes)
- Evaluate nodes at depth cutoff by a heuristic (aka. evaluation function)
- E.g., chess:
  - Material value: queen worth 9 points, rook 5, bishop 3, knight 3, pawn 1
  - Heuristic: difference between players’ material values

Chess example

- White to move

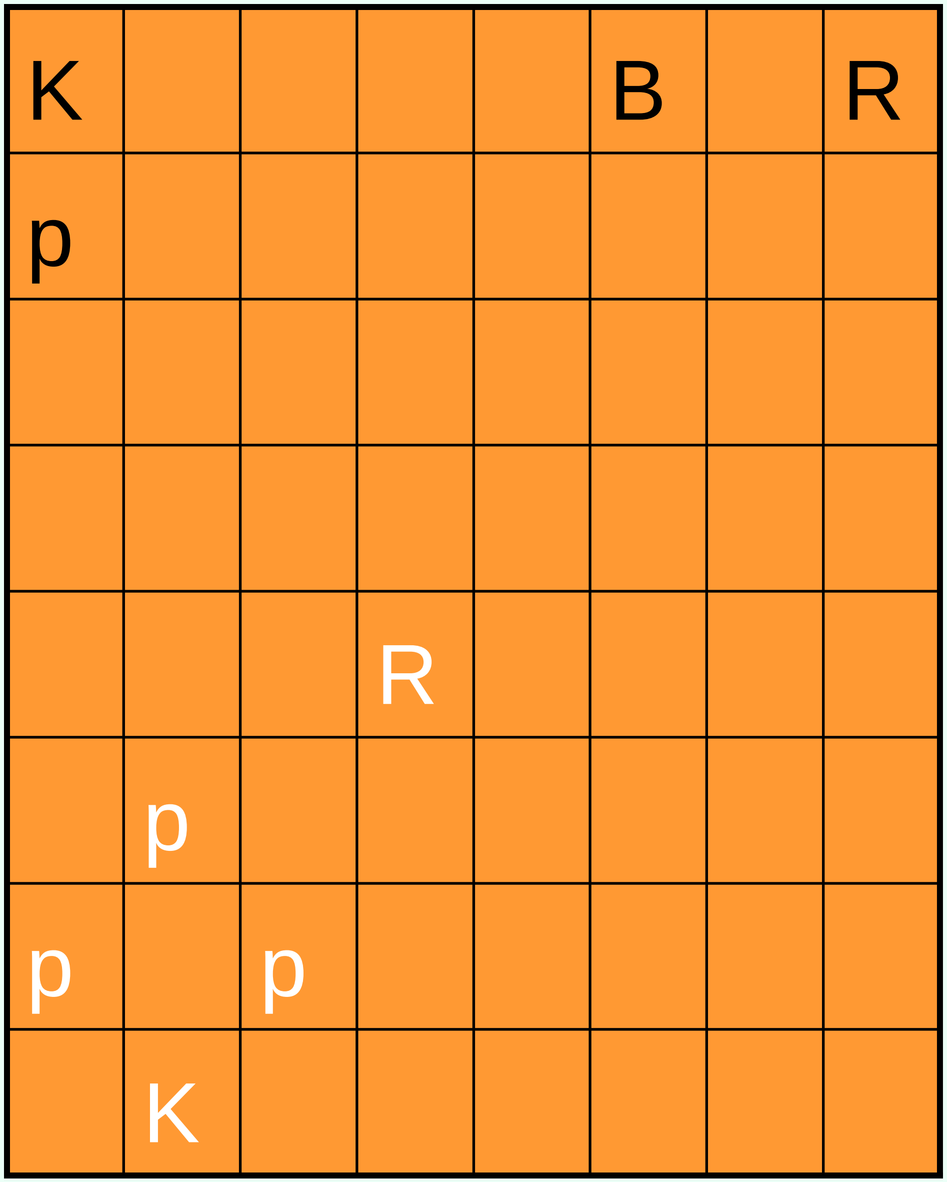


- Depth cutoff: 3 ply
  - Ply = move by one player

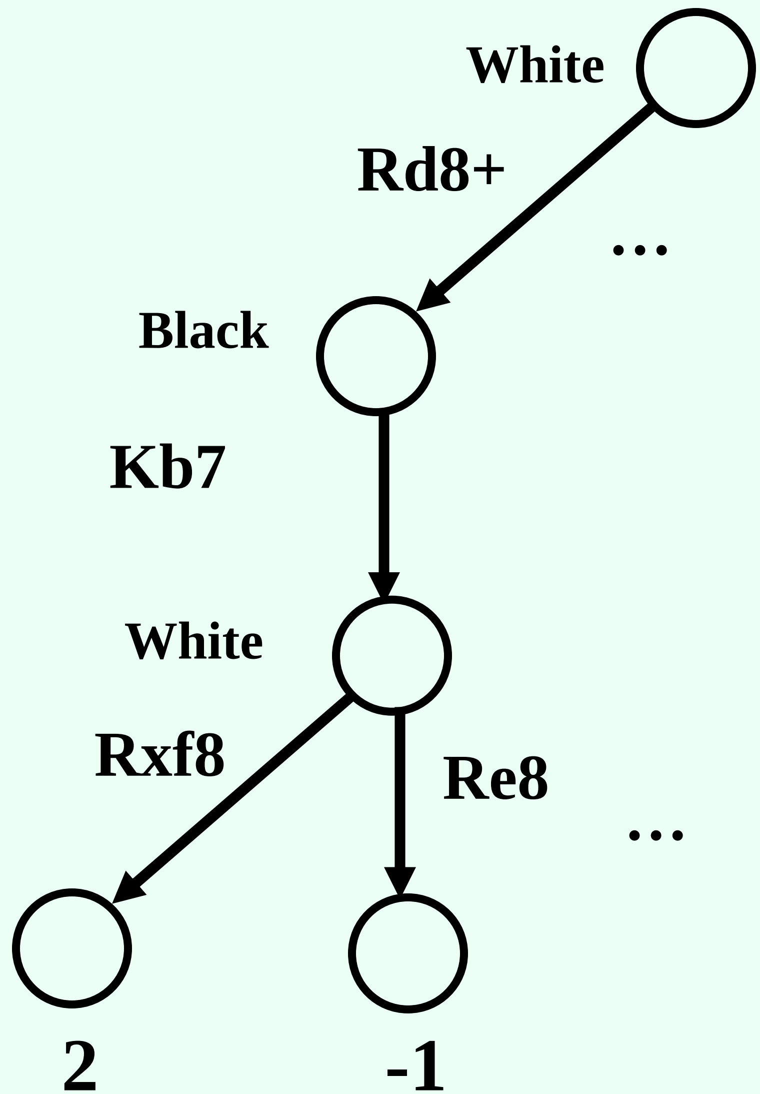


Chess (bad) example

- White to move



- Depth cutoff: 3 ply
  – Ply = move by one player



Depth cutoff obscures fact that white R will be captured

Addressing this problem

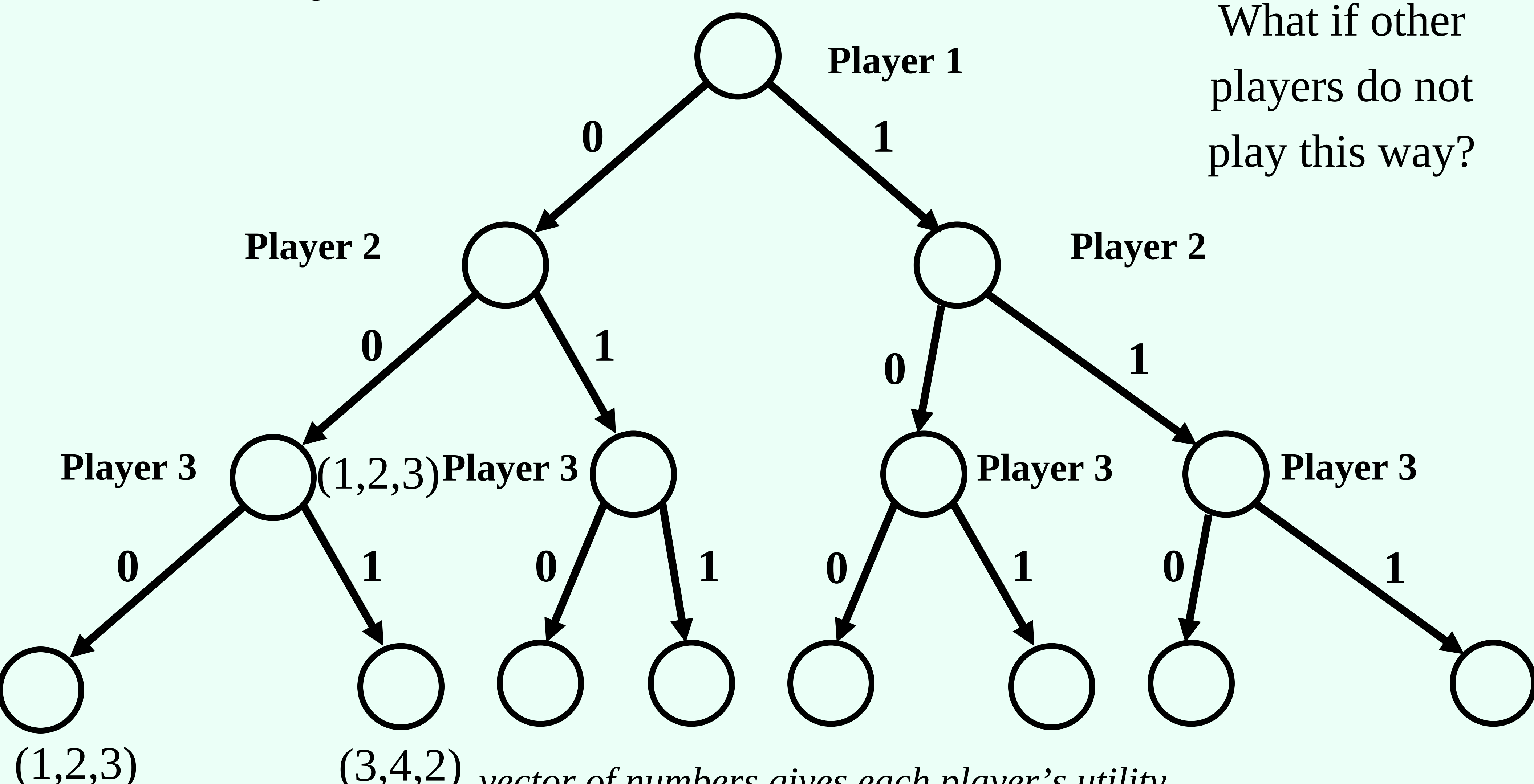
- Try to evaluate whether nodes are quiescent
  - Quiescent = evaluation function will not change rapidly in near future
  - Only apply evaluation function to quiescent nodes
- If there is an “obvious” move at a state, apply it before applying evaluation function

Playing against suboptimal players

- Minimax is optimal against other minimax players
- What about against players that play in some other way?

Many-player, general-sum games of perfect information

- Basic backward induction still works
  - No longer called minimax

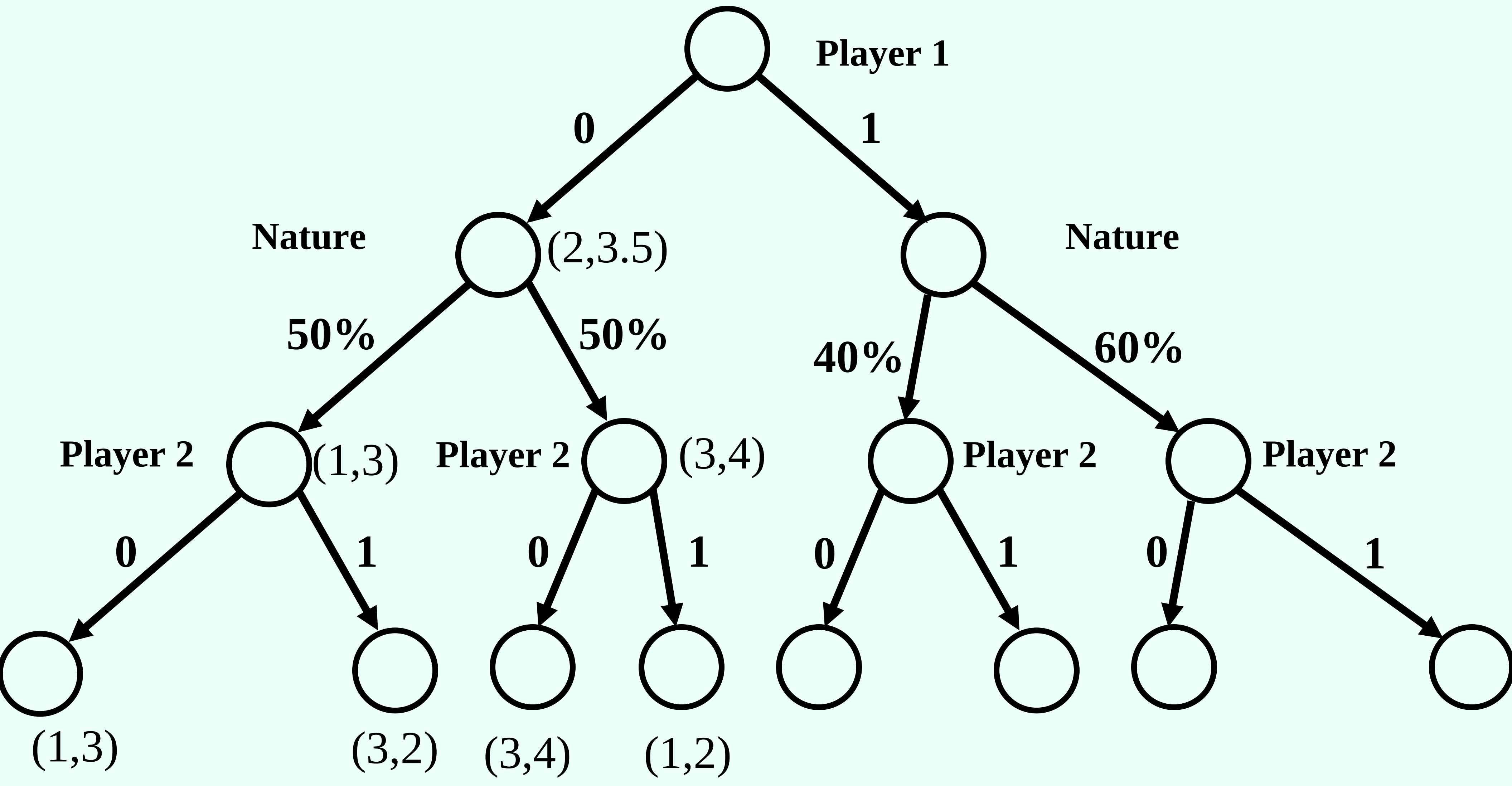


What if other players do not play this way?

vector of numbers gives each player's utility

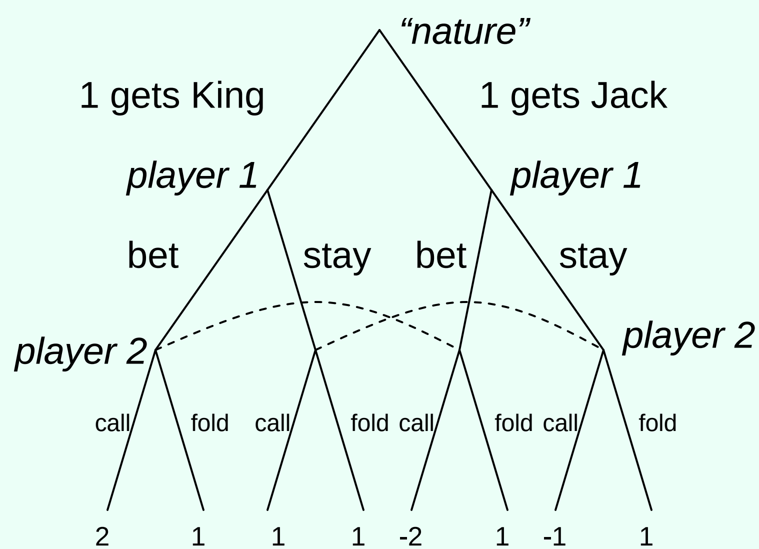
Games with random moves by "Nature"

- E.g., games with dice (Nature chooses dice roll)
- Backward induction still works…
- For two-player zero-sum games with random moves, can we generalize alpha-beta? How?



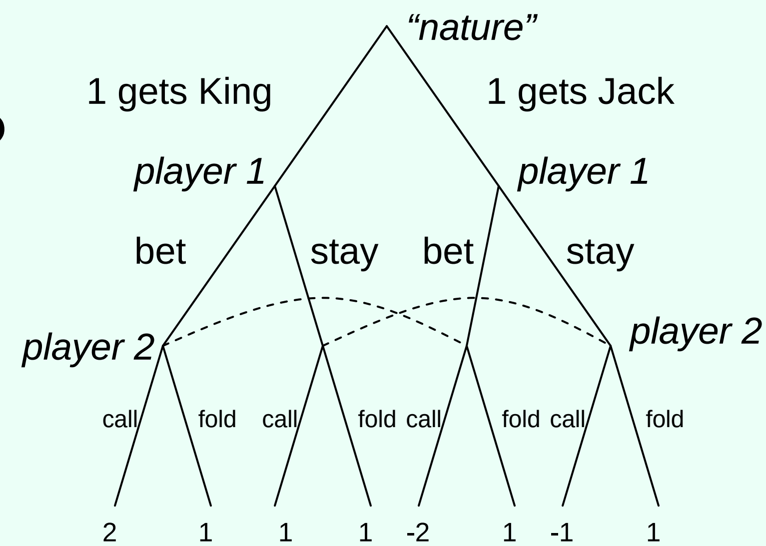
Games with imperfect information

- Players cannot necessarily see the whole current state of the game
  – Card games
- Ridiculously simple poker game:
  – Player 1 receives King (winning) or Jack (losing),
  – Player 1 can bet or stay,
  – Player 2 can call or fold
- Dashed lines indicate indistinguishable states
- Backward induction does **not** work, need random strategies for optimality! (more later in course)



Intuition for need of random strategies

- Suppose my strategy is “bet on King, stay on Jack”
  - What will you do?
  - What is your expected utility?
- What if my strategy is “always bet”?
- What if my strategy is “always bet when given King, 10% of the time bet when given Jack”?



The state of the art for some games

- Chess:
  - 1997: IBM Deep Blue defeats Kasparov
  - … there is still debate about whether computers are really better
- Checkers:
  - Computer world champion since 1994
  - … there was still debate about whether computers are really better…
  - until 2007: checkers solved optimally by computer
- Go:
  - Computers still not very good
  - Branching factor really high
  - Some recent progress
- Poker:
  - Competitive with top humans in some 2-player games
  - 3+ player case much less well-understood

Is this of any value to society?

- Some of the techniques developed for games have found applications in other domains
  - Especially “adversarial” settings
- Real-world strategic situations are usually not two-player, perfect-information, zero-sum, …
- But game theory does not need any of those
- Example application: security scheduling at airports