Representing operational semantics with enriched Lawvere theories

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Abstract

Many term calculi, like λ -calculus or π -calculus, involve binders for names, and the mathematics of bound variable names is subtle. Schönfinkel introduced the SKI combinator calculus in 1924 to clarify the role of quantified variables in intuitionistic logic by eliminating them. Yoshida demonstrated how to eliminate the bound names coming from the input prefix in the asynchronous π -calculus, but her combinators still depend on the new operator to bind names. Recently, Meredith and Stay showed how to modify Yoshida's combinators by replacing new and replication with reflective operators to provide the first combinator calculus with no bound names into which the asynchronous π -calculus has a faithful embedding. Here we provide an alternative set of combinators built from SKI plus reflection that also eliminates all nominal phenomena, yet provides a faithful embedding. We show that with the nominal features effectively eliminated as syntactic sugar, multisorted Lawvere theories enriched over graphs suffice to capture the operational semantics of the calculus.

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1 Introduction

Many term calculi, like λ -calculus or π -calculus, involve binders for names, and the mathematics of bound variable names is subtle. Schönfinkel introduced the SKI combinator calculus in 1924 to clarify the role of quantified variables in intuitionistic logic by eliminating them [12]. Yoshida demonstrated how to eliminate the bound names coming from the input prefix in the asynchronous π -calculus, but her combinators still depend on the new operator to bind names. Curry developed Schönfinkel's ideas much further. Recently, Meredith and Stay [9] showed how to modify Yoshida's combinators by replacing new and replication with reflective operators to provide the first combinator calculus with no bound names into which the asynchronous π -calculus has a faithful embedding. Here we provide an alternative set of combinators built from SKI plus reflection that also eliminates all nominal phenomena, yet provides a faithful embedding.

The recent work by Jamie Gabbay and Andrew Pitts [2] and others [1] on nominal set theory has put the study of bound names and substitution on a much nicer foundation, at the cost of an increase in the complexity of the semantic framework. It interprets nominal phenomena in terms of atoms in Fraenkl-Mostowski set theory. Clouston's work in particular makes evident the additional machinery needed to interpret nominal phenomena as Lawvere theories. On the other hand, with the nominal features effectively eliminated as syntactic sugar, we show that multisorted Lawvere theories enriched over graphs suffice to capture the operational semantics of the calculus.

2 Previous work

There is a long history and an enormous body of work on modeling term rewriting and operational semantics with various notions of category enriched over category-like structures; we only have room here for a sampling. Seely [13] suggested using 2-categories for modeling the denotational semantics of lambda calculus in Scott domains to capture the adjunction between β reduction and η conversion. Hilken [4] expands Seely's work by exploring the proof theory using categorical logic. Hirschowitz [5] generalizes algebraic signatures to cartesian closed 2-signatures; in addition to the usual product sorts, his system includes exponential sorts. Seely, Hilken, and Hirschowitz all deal with nominal issues by using closedness in the signature. Melliès

Stell [15] considered sesquicategories for term rewriting [[2-morphism involve substitutions of variables; we eliminate variables entirely]]. Lüth and Ghani [[Monads and Modular Term Rewriting]] use poset-enriched categories.

[[In each case above, one sentence about what they did and how their work differs from ours.]]

3 Gph-enriched categories

Here we review some standard definitions and results in enriched category theory; see [3], [11], [6], and [16] for more details.

A directed multigraph with self loops, hereafter graph, consists of a set E of edges, a set V of vertices, two functions $s,t\colon E\to V$ picking out the source and target of each edge, and a function $a\colon V\to E$ such that $s\circ a$ and $t\circ a$ are both the identity on V—that is, a equips each vertex in V with a chosen self loop. There are no constraints on E,V,s, or t, so a graph may have infinitely many vertices, infinitely many edges between any pair of vertices. A graph homomorphism from (E,V,s,t,a) to (E',V',s',t',a') is a pair of functions $(\epsilon\colon E\to E',v\colon V\to V')$ such that $v\circ s=s'\circ \epsilon$ and $v\circ t=t'\circ \epsilon$. Gph is the category of graphs and graph homomorphisms. Gph has finite products: the terminal graph is the graph with one vertex and one loop, while the product of two graphs $(E,V,s,t,a)\times (E',V',s',t',a')$ is $(E\times E',V\times V',s\times s',t\times t',a\times a')$.

A **Gph-enriched category** is a category where each hom set hom(x, y) is equipped with a set $E_{x,y}$ and functions $s_{x,y}, t_{x,y} : E_{x,y} \to hom(x, y)$; that is, each hom set is thought of as a set of vertices and is equipped with a set of edges making it into a graph. A Gph-enriched category has finite products if the underlying category does.

Any category is trivially Gph-enriched by taking the all the sets of edges to be empty. The category Gph is nontrivially Gph-enriched in multiple ways. Gph is a topos, and therefore cartesian closed, and therefore enriched over itself. Given two graph homomorphisms $F, F' : (E, V, s, t, a) \to (E', V', s', t', a')$, a **graph transformation** assigns to each vertex v in V an edge e' in E' such that s'(e') = F(v) and t'(e') = F'(v). Given any two graphs G and G', there is an exponential graph G'^G whose vertices are graph homomorphisms between them and whose edges are graph transformations.

A **Gph-enriched functor** between two Gph-enriched categories C, D is a functor between

the underlying categories such that the graph structure on each hom set is preserved, *i.e.* the functions between hom sets are graph homomorphisms between the hom graphs.

Let S be a finite set, FinSet be a skeleton of the category of finite sets and functions between them, and FinSet/S be the category of functions into S and commuting triangles. A **multisorted Gph-enriched Lawvere theory**, hereafter **Gph-theory** is a Gph-enriched category with finite products Th equipped with a finite set S of **sorts** and a Gph-enriched functor θ : FinSet^{op}/ $S \to Th$ that preserves products strictly. Any Gph-theory has an underlying multisorted Lawvere theory given by forgetting the edges of each hom graph.

A **model** of a Gph-theory Th is a Gph-enriched functor from Th to Gph that preserves products up to natural isomorphism. A **homomorphism of models** is a braided Gph-enriched natural transformation between the functors. Let FPGphCat be the 2-category of small Gph-enriched categories with finite products, product-preserving Gph-functors, and braided Gph-natural transformations. The forgetful functor U: FPGphCat[Th, Gph] \rightarrow Gph that picks out the underlying graph of a model has a left adjoint that picks out the free model on a graph.

Gph-enriched categories are part of a spectrum of 2-category-like structures. A strict 2-category is a category enriched over Cat with its usual product. Sesquicategories are categories enriched over Cat with the "funny" tensor product [?]; a sesquicategory can be thought of as a 2-category where the interchange law doesn't hold. A Gph-enriched category can be thought of as a sesquicategory where 2-morphisms (now edges) can't be composed. Any strict 2-category has an underlying sesquicategory, and any sesquicategory has an underlying Gph-enriched category. These forgetful functors have left adjoints.

4 Gph-theories as models of computation

Lawvere theories and their generalizations are categories with infinitely many objects and morphisms, but most theories of interest are finitely generated. A presentation of the underlying multisorted Lawvere theory of a finitely-generated Gph-theory is a signature for a term calculus, consisting of a set of sorts, a set of term constructors, and a set of equations, while the edges in the hom graphs of the theory encode the reduction relation.

Here is a presentation of the SKI combinator calculus as a Gph-theory:

- \blacksquare one sort T, for terms
- term constructors

$$\begin{array}{cc} S &: 1 \rightarrow T \\ K &: 1 \rightarrow T \\ I &: 1 \rightarrow T \\ (--) &: T^2 \rightarrow T \end{array}$$

- structural congruence (no equations)
- rewrites

$$\sigma : (((S x) y) z) \Rightarrow ((x z) (y z))$$

$$\kappa : ((K y) z) \Rightarrow y$$

$$\iota : (I z) \Rightarrow z$$

where in the rewrites we have used expressions like ((K y) z) as shorthand for

$$T \times T \xrightarrow[]{}^{\operatorname{left}^{-1}} 1 \times T \times T \xrightarrow{K \times T \times T} T \times T \times T \xrightarrow[]{}^{(--) \times T} T \times T \xrightarrow[]{}^{(--)} T.$$

A model M of this Gph-theory in Gph picks out a graph M(T) of terms and rewrites. It picks out three special vertices S, K, and I of M(T); it equips M(T) with a graph homomorphism from $M(T)^2$ to M(T) that says for every pair of vertices (u, v), there is a vertex (u, v), and similarly for edges; and it equips M(T) with graph transformations asserting the existence of an edge out of a reducible expression to the term it reduces to.

That this Gph-theory captures the operational semantics of the SKI calculus is almost definitional: there is an edge between distinct vertices in the free model on the empty graph if and only if the source vertex is reducible to the target vertex in a single step.

It is straightforward to verify that Gph-theories suffice to capture the operational semantics of any calculus where every context is a reduction context. This restriction on reduction contexts is a consequence of the fact that models map term constructors to graph homomorphisms: given a model M, a graph homomorphism $F: M(T) \to M(T)$, and an edge $e: t_1 \to t_2$, there is necessarily an edge $F(e): F(t_1) \to F(t_2)$.

5 Gph-theory for SKI with the weak head normal form evaluation strategy

In modern programming languages, many contexts are *not* reduction contexts. In Haskell, for instance, there are no reductions under a lambda abstraction: even if t_1 reduces to t_2 as a program, the term $x \to t_1$ does not reduce to $x \to t_2$.

Gph-theories can still capture the operational semantics of calculi with restrictions on reduction contexts by introducing term constructors that explicitly mark the reduction contexts. For example, suppose that we want an evaluation strategy for the SKI calculus that only reduces the leftmost combinator when it has been applied to sufficiently many arguments, *i.e.* we want the weak head normal form; we can accomplish this by introducing a term constructor $R\colon T\to T$ that explicitly marks the reduction contexts. We then add a structural congruence rule for propagating the context and modify the existing reduction rules to apply only to marked contexts.

- \blacksquare one sort T, for terms
- term constructors

$$\begin{array}{ccc} S & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ K & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ I & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ (--) & : T^2 \rightarrow T \\ R & : T \rightarrow T \end{array}$$

structural congruence

$$R(x y) = (Rx y)$$

rewrites

$$\begin{array}{ll} \sigma & : (((RS\;x)\;y)\;z) \Rightarrow ((Rx\;z)\;(y\;z)) \\ \kappa & : ((RK\;y)\;z) \Rightarrow Ry \\ \iota & : (RI\;z) \Rightarrow Rz \end{array}$$

▶ **Theorem 1.** Let t be a term in which R does not appear. Then Rt reduces to Rt', where t' is the weak head normal form of t.

Proof. If we form the term Rt where t contains no uses of R, no reductions will ever take place in the right-hand argument of an application: the structural congruence and rewrite rules enforce that the R context can only move to the left term in an application, never the right. The result follows by induction on the number of steps to reach t'.

[[Is it ever *not* possible to mark reduction contexts this way?]]

6 Explicit reduction contexts as gas

The Ethereum [17] and RChain [8] projects are building virtual machines on the blockchain. Both use the concept of a linear resource called "gas" (as in gasoline) that is consumed as the virtual machine executes. Gph-theories can capture the operational semantics of a calculus where reduction contexts are consumable, and thus play a role similar to that of gas [14].

- \blacksquare one sort T, for terms
- term constructors

$$\begin{array}{ccc} S &: 1 \rightarrow T \\ K &: 1 \rightarrow T \\ I &: 1 \rightarrow T \\ (--) &: T^2 \rightarrow T \\ R &: T \rightarrow T \end{array}$$

structural congruence

$$R(x y) = (Rx y)$$

rewrites

```
\begin{array}{ll} \sigma & : (((RS\;x)\;y)\;z) \Rightarrow ((x\;z)\;(y\;z)) \\ \kappa & : ((RK\;y)\;z) \Rightarrow y \\ \iota & : (RI\;z) \Rightarrow z \end{array}
```

▶ Theorem 2. Let t be a term in which R does not appear; let t' be the weak head normal form of t; let m be the number of steps by which Rt reduces to Rt' in the calculus of section 5; and let $n \ge m$. Then in this calculus, $R^n t$ reduces to $R^{n-m} t'$ in m steps.

Proof. As before, if we form the term Rt where t contains no uses of R, no reductions will ever take place in the right-hand argument of an application. Each application of the reduction rules reduces the number of Rs by one, and structural equivalence preserves the number of Rs. The result follows by induction on the number of steps to reach t'.

7 Gph-theory for a pi calculus variant

Gph-theories can capture the operational semantics of concurrent calculi as well as serial calculi like SKI above.

Meredith and Radestock [7] describe a reflective higher-order variant of pi calculus we call the RHO calculus. Rather than the usual replication and new operators, they have quoting and unquoting operators. Quoting turns a process into a name and unquoting does the opposite; freshness of names is obtained using a type discipline. They prove that there is a faithful embedding of the monadic asynchronous pi calculus into the RHO calculus.

7.1 The RHO calculus

7.1.1 Syntax

$$P,Q::=0$$
 the stopped process $| for(y \leftarrow x)P |$ input guarded process $| x!P |$ output process $| P|Q |$ parallel composition $| *x |$ deference $x,y:=\&P$ quotation

Note that in the original rho-calculus papers the notation was somewhat different. The quotation and dereference constructions were originally written, $\lceil P \rceil$ and $\lceil x \rceil$, respectively. Here we have adopted a more programmer friendly style employing the & and * of the C programming language for reference (quotation) and dereference, respectively. Input guards which were written with a whimper ? in more traditional process calculi style are now written in for-comprehension style as adopted in languages like Scala; e.g. x?(y)P is written here for $(y \leftarrow x)P$.

7.1.2 Free and bound names

$$FN(0) = \emptyset$$

$$FN(\text{for}(y \leftarrow x)P) = \{x\} \cup (FN(P) \setminus \{y\})$$

$$FN(x!P) = \{x\} \cup FN(P)$$

$$FN(P|Q) = FN(P) \cup FN(Q)$$

$$FN(*x) = \{x\}$$

7.1.3 Structural congruence

Structural (process) congruence is the smallest equivalence relation \equiv containing α -equivalence and making (|, 0) into a commutative monoid.

7.1.4 Name equivalence

Name equivalence is the smallest equivalence relation \equiv_N on names such that

$$\overline{ \begin{tabular}{ll} \&*x\equiv_N x \end{tabular} } \mbox{ and } \mbox{ } \frac{P\equiv Q}{\&P\equiv_N\&Q} \; .$$

7.1.5 Substitution

Syntactic substitution:

$$\begin{array}{ll} (0) \{\&Q/\&P\} &= 0 \\ (\text{for}(y \leftarrow x)R) \{\&Q/\&P\} &= \text{for}(z \leftarrow (x\{\&Q/\&P\}))(R\{z/y\}\{\&Q/\&P\}) \\ (x!R) \{\&Q/\&P\} &= (x\{\&Q/\&P\})!(R\{\&Q/\&P\}) \\ (R|S) \{\&Q/\&P\} &= (R\{\&Q/\&P\}) \mid (S\{\&Q/\&P\}) \\ (*x) \{\&Q/\&P\} &= \left\{ \begin{array}{ll} *\&Q & \text{when } x \equiv_N \&Q \\ *x & \text{otherwise,} \end{array} \right. \end{array}$$

where

$$x\{\&Q/\&P\} = \left\{ \begin{array}{cc} \&Q & \text{if } x \equiv_N \&P \\ x & \text{otherwise} \end{array} \right.$$

and, in the rule for input, z is chosen to be distinct from &P,&Q, the free names in Q, and all the names in R.

Semantic substitution, for use in α -equivalence:

$$(*x)\{\&Q/\&P\} = \left\{ \begin{array}{ll} Q & \text{when } x \equiv_N \&Q \\ *x & \text{otherwise} \end{array} \right.$$

7.1.6 Reduction rules

We use \rightarrow to denote single-step reduction.

$$x_0 \equiv_N x_1$$

$$for(y \leftarrow x_1)P \mid x_0!Q \rightarrow P\{\&Q/y\}$$

$$\frac{P \rightarrow P'}{P \mid Q \rightarrow P' \mid Q}$$

$$\frac{P \equiv P' \qquad P' \rightarrow Q' \qquad Q' \equiv Q}{P \rightarrow Q}$$

7.2 RHO combinators

We can define an embedding [-] of closed RHO calculus terms into a set of RHO combinators. We follow Milner [10] in thinking of an input-prefixed process for $(x \leftarrow y)P$ as consisting of two parts: the first names the channel y on which the process is listening, while the second describes the continuation $\lambda x.P$ in terms of an abstracted name. The right hand side of the communication rule, in effect, applies the continuation to the name to be substituted. Since the only bound names in the RHO calculus come from input prefixing, we can completely eliminate bound names by using abstraction elimination on the continuation. Like the weak head normal form SKI calculus above, this combinator calculus uses a linear resource C to reify reduction contexts.

A Gph-theory for the operational semantics of these combinators has:

- \blacksquare one sort T, for terms
- term constructors

$$\begin{array}{cccc} C & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ 0 & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ \mid & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ \text{for} & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ ! & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ \& & : 1 \rightarrow T \end{array} \qquad \begin{array}{c} * & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ S & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ K & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ I & : 1 \rightarrow T \\ () & : T \times T \rightarrow T \end{array}$$

structural congruence rules

$$\begin{array}{rcl} ((\mid 0) \; P) &= P & \text{unit law} \\ ((\mid ((\mid P) \; Q)) \; R) &= ((\mid P) \; ((\mid Q) \; R) & \text{associativity} \\ ((\mid P) \; Q) &= ((\mid Q) \; P) & \text{commutativity} \end{array}$$

reduction rules

$$\begin{split} \sigma \colon (((S\ P)\ Q)\ R) &\Rightarrow ((P\ R)\ (Q\ R)) \\ \kappa \colon ((K\ P)\ Q) &\Rightarrow P & \text{action of } S \\ \iota \colon (I\ P) &\Rightarrow P & \text{action of } I \\ \xi \colon ((|\ C)\ ((|\ ((\text{for }(\&\ P))\ Q))\ ((!\ (\&\ P))\ R))) \Rightarrow ((|\ C)\ (Q\ (\&\ R))) & \text{communication} \\ \epsilon \colon ((|\ C)\ (*\ (\&\ P))) &\Rightarrow ((|\ C)\ P) & \text{evaluation} \end{split}$$

7.3 Embedding

We define an interpretation function [-] from RHO calculus terms into RHO combinators by

where $[\![-]\!]_x$ eliminates the free name x:

7.4 Barbed bisimilarity

An observation relation $\downarrow_{\mathcal{N}}$ over a set of names \mathcal{N} is the smallest relation satisfying

$$\frac{y \in \mathcal{N} \quad x \equiv_N y}{x! P \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}} x} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{P \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}} x \text{ or } Q \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}} x}{P \mid Q \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}} x}$$

for the RHO calculus or

$$\frac{y \in \mathcal{N} \qquad x \equiv_N y}{((! \ x) \ P) \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}} x} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{P \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}} x \text{ or } Q \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}} x}{((| \ P) \ Q) \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}} x}.$$

for the RHO combinators.

We denote eventual reduction by \to^* and write $P \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}}^* x$ if there exists a process Q such that $P \to^* Q$ and $Q \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}} x$.

An \mathcal{N} -barbed bisimulation over a set of names \mathcal{N} is a symmetric binary relation $S_{\mathcal{N}}$ between agents such that $P S_{\mathcal{N}} Q$ implies

- 1. if $P \to P'$ then $Q \to^* Q'$ and $P S_{\mathcal{N}} Q'$, and
- **2.** if $P \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}} x$, then $Q \downarrow_{\mathcal{N}}^* x$.

P is \mathcal{N} -barbed bisimilar to Q, written $P \approx Q$, if $P S_{\mathcal{N}} Q$ for some \mathcal{N} -barbed bisimulation $S_{\mathcal{N}}$.

7.5 Faithfulness

▶ Theorem 3.
$$P \sim_{calc} Q \iff ((|C) \ \llbracket P \rrbracket) \sim_{comb} ((|C) \ \llbracket Q \rrbracket).$$
. $[[...]]$

8 Conclusion and future work

This paper is part of a pair of papers demonstrating that reflection provides a powerful technique for treating nominal phenomena as syntactic sugar, thus paving the way for simpler semantic treatments of richly featured calculi, such as the π -calculus and other calculi of

concurrency. We illustrated the point by providing faithful semantics of both the λ -calculus and the π -calculus in terms of graph-enriched Lawvere theories. This work may be considered preparatory for a more elaborate study of logics for concurrency in which the nominal phenomena have logical status, but may be treated in a technically simpler fashion.

9 Appendix: abstraction elimination calculations

```
((K \llbracket P \rrbracket) x)
= [P]
    (((S((S(K for))((S(K \&)) [P]_x))) [[Q]_y]_x) x)
= ((((S(K for)) ((S(K \&)) [P]_x)) x) ([[Q]_y]_x x))
= ((((K for) x) (((S (K \&)) [P]_x) x)) [Q]_y)
= ((for (((K \&) x) ([\![P]\!]_x x))) [\![Q]\!]_y)
= ((for (\& [P])) [Q]_y)
    (((S((S(K for))((S(K \&))[P]_x)))[Q]_y)x)
   ((((S(K for)) ((S(K \&)) [P]_x)) x) ([Q]_y x))
   ((((K \ for) \ x) \ (((S \ (K \ \&)) \ [P]_x) \ x)) \ [Q] \{x/y\})
= ((for (((K \&) x) ([\![P]\!]_x x))) [\![Q]\!]\{x/y\})
= ((for (\& [P])) [Q]\{x/y\})
    (((S ((S (K !)) ((S (K \&)) [P]_x))) [Q]_x) x)
    (((((S(K!))((S(K\&))[P]_x)))x)([Q]_x x))
= ((((K !) x) (((S (K \&)) \llbracket P \rrbracket_x) x)) \llbracket Q \rrbracket)
= ((!(((K \&) x) ([\![P]\!]_x x))) [\![Q]\!])
= ((! (\& [P])) [Q])
    (((S ((S (K |)) [P]_x)) [Q]_x) x)
= ((((S(K|)) [P]_x) x) ([Q]_x x))
= ((((K \mid) x) ([\![P]\!]_x x)) [\![Q]\!])
= (| [P] \rangle [Q])
    (((S(K*))I)x)
= (((K *) x) (I x))
= (*x)
    (((S(K *))((S(K \&))[P]_x))x)
= (((K *) x) (((S (K \&)) [P]_x) x))
= (*(((K \&) x) ([\![P]\!]_x x)))
= (*(\& [P]))
```

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