3.3 Type Inference

In the first section of this chapter we defined a type system, in the second section we introduced a syntax for our language. Now we want to define rules how to obtain the type of a given program written in our language.

3.3.1 Typing Judgments

A type system is a set of inference rules to derive various kinds of typing judgments. These *inference rules* have the following form

$$\frac{P_1 \dots P_n}{C}$$

where the judgments P_1 up to P_n are the premises of the rule and the judgment C is its conclusion.

We can read it in two ways:

- "If all premises hold then the conclusion holds as well" or
- "To prove the conclusion we need to prove all premises".

We will now provide a judgment for every production rule defined in the last section. Ultimately, we will have a judgment p:T which indicates that a program p is of a type T and therefore well-formed.

If the type T is known then we talk about type checking else we call the process of finding the judgment type inference.

TYPE SIGNATURE JUDGMENTS

For type signature judgments, let Γ be a type context, $T \in \mathcal{T}$ and $a_i \in \mathcal{V}, T_i \in \mathcal{T}$ for all $i \in \mathbb{N}_1^n$ and $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

For $ltf \in <$ list-type-fields> the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma \vdash ltf : \{a_1 : T_1, \dots, a_n : T_n\}$$

which can be read as "given Γ , ltf has the type $\{a_1: T_1, \ldots, a_n: T_n\}$ ".

For $lt \in \langle list-type \rangle$ the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma \vdash lt : (T_1, \ldots, T_n)$$

which can be read as "given Γ , lt defines the list (T_1, \ldots, T_n) ".

For $t \in \langle type \rangle$ the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma \vdash t : T$$

which can be read as "given Γ , t has the type T".

EXPRESSION JUDGMENTS

For expression judgments, let Γ , Δ be type contexts, $T \in \mathcal{T}$, $a \in \mathcal{V}$ and $T_i \in \mathcal{T}$, $a_i \in \mathcal{V}$ for all $i \in \mathbb{N}_0^n$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

For $lef \in <$ list-exp-field> the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash lef : \{a_1 : T_1, \dots, a_n : T_n\}$$

which can be read as "given Γ and Δ , lef has the type $\{a_1: T_1, \ldots, a_n: T_n\}$ ".

For $mes \in \langle maybe-exp-sign \rangle$ the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma$$
, $mes \vdash a : T$

which can be read as "given Γ , a has the type T under the assumption mes".

For $b \in \langle bool \rangle$ the judgment has the form

which can be read as "b has the type T".

For $i \in \langle int \rangle$ the judgment has the form

which can be read as "i has the type T".

For $le \in \langle list-exp \rangle$ the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash le : List T$$

which can be read as "given Γ and Δ , le has the type List T".

For $e \in \langle \exp \rangle$ the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e : T$$

which can be read as "given Γ and Δ , e is of type T".

STATEMENT JUDGMENTS

For statement judgments, let $\Gamma, \Gamma_1, \Gamma_2, \Delta, \Delta_1, \Delta_2$ be a type contexts, $T, T_1, T_2 \in \mathcal{T}$, $a \in \mathcal{V}$ and $T_i, A_i \in \mathcal{T}, a_i \in \mathcal{V}$ for $i \in \mathbb{N}_0^n$ and $T_{i,j} \in \mathcal{T}$ for $i \in \mathbb{N}_0^n$, $n \in \mathbb{N}, j \in \mathbb{N}_0^{k_i}$ and $k_i \in \mathbb{N}$.

For $lsv \in <$ list-statement-var the judgment has the form

$$lsv:(a_1,\ldots,a_n)$$

which can be read as "lsv describes the list (a_1, \ldots, a_n) ".

For $ls \in \langle list-statement \rangle$ the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma_1, \Delta_2, \mathit{ls} \vdash \Gamma_2, \Delta_2$$

which can be read as "the list of statements ls maps Γ_1 to Γ_2 and Δ_1 to Δ_2 ".

For $mss \in \text{<maybe-statement-sign>}$ the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma$$
, $mss \vdash a : T$

which can be read as "given Γ , a has the type T_2 under the assumption mss".

For $s \in \langle statement \rangle$ the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma_1, \Delta_1, s \vdash \Gamma_2, \Delta_2$$

which can be read as "the statement s maps Γ_1 to Γ_2 and Δ_1 to Δ_2 ".

For $mms \in \langle maybe-main-sign \rangle$ the judgment has the form

$$\Gamma$$
, $mms \vdash main : T$

which can be read as "the main function has type T under the assumtion mms".

For $prog \in \langle program \rangle$ the judgment has the form

which can be read as "the program prog is wellformed and has the type T".

3.3.2 Auxiliary Definitions

We will assume that T is a mono type, T is a type variable and $T_1 = T_2$ denotes the equiality of two given types T_1 and T_2 .

We will write $a_1, \ldots, a_n = \text{free}(T)$ to denote all free variables a_1, \ldots, a_n of T.

INSTANTIATION, GENERALIZATION

The type system that we are using is polymorphic, meaning that whenever a judgment holds for a type, it will also hold for a more specific type. To counter this polymorphism we will force the types in a judgment to be unique by explicitly stating whenever we want to use a more specific or general type.

Definition 3.1: Instantiation

Let $\Delta: \mathcal{V} \to \mathcal{T}$ be a type context, $T \in \mathcal{T}$ and e be an expression.

Then we define

$$e \sqsubseteq_{\Delta} T : \Leftrightarrow \exists T_0 \in \mathcal{T} . (e, T_0) \in \Delta \land T_0 \sqsubseteq T$$

Note that Δ is a partial function and therefore $\Delta(e)$ would only be defined if T_0 exists. If T_0 does not exist, then this predicate will be false.

The act of replacing T_0 with the more specific type T is called *Instantiation* and is typically in the text books introduced as an additional inference rule.

Definition 3.2: Most General Type

Let Γ be a type context, $T \in \mathcal{T}$,.

We define $\overline{\Gamma}:\Gamma\to\mathcal{T}$ as

$$\overline{\Gamma}(T) := \forall a_1 \dots \forall a_n . T_0$$
such that $\{a_1, \dots, a_n\} = \text{free}(T') \setminus \{a \mid (a, \underline{\ }) \in \Gamma\}$
where $a_i \in \mathcal{V}$ for $i \in \mathbb{N}_0^n$ and T_0 is the mono type of T .

We say $\overline{\Gamma}(T)$ is the most general type of T.

The most general type ensures that all type variables are bound by either an quantifier or a type alias in the type context Γ . It also ensure that every type variable bound by a quantifier occurs in the mono type T_0 . The act of replacing types with more general onces, by binding free variables, is called *Generalization* and is also typically found as an inference rule in text books.

PREDEFINED TYPES

Additionally, we define

$$\begin{split} Bool &:= \mu_. \mathit{True} | \mathit{False} \\ \mathit{Nat} &:= \mu C.1 | \mathit{Succ} \ C \\ \mathit{Int} &:= \mu_.0 \mid \mathit{Pos} \ \mathit{Nat} \mid \mathit{Neg} \ \mathit{Nat} \\ \mathit{List} &:= \forall a.\mu C. [\] \mid \mathit{Cons} \ a \ C \end{split}$$

3.3.3 Inference Rules for Type Signatures

LIST-TYPE-FIELDS

Judgment:
$$\Gamma \vdash ltf : \{a_1 : T_1, \dots, a_n : T_n\}$$

$$\Gamma \vdash "" : \{\}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash t : T_0 \quad \Gamma \vdash ltf : \{a_1 : T_1, \dots, a_n : T_n\} \quad \{a_0 : T_0, a_1 : T_1, \dots, a_n : T_n\} = T}{\Gamma \vdash a_0 " : " t ", " ltf : T}$$

The type context Γ is used in the judgment $\Gamma \vdash t : T_0$ that turns the type signature t into a type T_0 .

LIST-TYPE

Judgment: $\Gamma \vdash lt : (T_1, \ldots, T_n)$

$$\Gamma \vdash "":()$$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash t : T_0 \quad \Gamma \vdash lt : (T_1, \dots, T_n) \quad (T_0, T_1, \dots, T_n) = T}{\Gamma \vdash t \ lt : T}$$

TYPE

Judgment: $\Gamma \vdash t : T$

For a given type T we write the application constructor as \overline{T} .

$$\frac{\forall a.a = T}{\Gamma \vdash a : T}$$

Example 3.1

In example ?? we have looked at the syntax for a list reversing function.

The type signiture for the reverse function was List a -> List a. We will now show how we can obtain the curresponding type T_0 . For that, let $\Gamma = \emptyset$.

We can therefore conclude that $T_0 = List\ (\forall a.a) \to List\ (\forall a.a) = \forall a.List\ a \to List\ a.$

3.3.4 Inference Rules for Expressions

LIST-EXP-FIELD

Judgment: $\Gamma, \Delta \vdash lef : \{a_1 : T_1, \dots, a_n : T_n\}$

$$\frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e : T}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash a \text{ "=" } e : \{a : T\}}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash \mathit{lef} : T \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e : T_0 \quad \{a_0 : T_0, \dots, a_n : T_n\} = T}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash a_0 \text{ "=" } e \text{ "," } \mathit{lef} : T}$$

MAYBE-EXP-SIGN

Judgment: $\Gamma, mes \vdash a : T$

$$\Gamma$$
, "" $\vdash a : T$

If no argument is given, then we do nothing.

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash t : Ta_1 = a_2}{\Gamma, a_1 " : "t" ; " \vdash a_2 : T}$$

If we have a variable a_1 and a type T, then the variables a_2 need to match. The type signature t defines the type of a_2 .

BOOL

 ${\bf Judgment}\colon\, b:T$

b: Bool

INT

Judgment: i:T

i:Int

We have proven in theorem ?? that Nat is isomorph to \mathbb{N} . Is should be trivial to therefore conclude that Int is isomorph to \mathbb{Z} . And therefore this rule is justified.

LIST-EXP

Judgment: $\Gamma, \Delta \vdash le : List T$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash "" : \forall a.List \ a$$

$$\frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e : T \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash le : List \ T}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e \text{ ", "} \ le : List \ T}$$

EXP

Judgment: $\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e : T$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash \texttt{"foldl"} : \forall a. \forall b. (a \to b \to b) \to b \to \mathit{List} \ a \to b$$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash$$
 "(::)": $\forall a.a \rightarrow List \ a \rightarrow List \ a$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash "(+)" : Int \rightarrow Int \rightarrow Int$$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash$$
 "(-)": $Int \rightarrow Int \rightarrow Int$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash "(*)" : Int \rightarrow Int \rightarrow Int$$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash "(//)" : Int \rightarrow Int \rightarrow Int$$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash "(<)" : Int \rightarrow Int \rightarrow Bool$$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash "(==)" : Int \rightarrow Int \rightarrow Bool$$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash \texttt{"not"} : Bool \rightarrow Bool$$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash$$
 "(&&)": $Bool \rightarrow Bool \rightarrow Bool$

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash "(||)" : Bool \rightarrow Bool \rightarrow Bool$$

$$\begin{split} \frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 : T_1 \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_2 : T_1 \to T_2}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 \text{ "}| > \text{"} e_2 : T_2} \\ \frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 : T_1 \to T_2 \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_2 : T_2 \to T_3}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 : > > \text{"} e_2 : T_1 \to T_3} \\ \frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 : Bool \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_2 : T \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_3 : T}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash \text{"if" } e_1 \text{ "then" } e_2 \text{ "else" } e_3 : T} \\ \frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash \text{"if" } e_1 \text{"then" } e_2 \text{"else" } e_3 : T}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash \text{"f" } \text{"elf "} \text{"} : \{a_1 : T_1, \dots, a_n : T_n\}} \\ \frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash \text{"f" } \text{"elf "} \text{"} : \{\}}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash \text{"f" } \text{"elf } \text{"elf } \text{"f" } \text{"elf } \text{"elf } \text{"f" } \text{"elf } \text{"f" } \text{"elf } \text{"elf } \text{"f" } \text{"elf } \text{"elf } \text{"elf$$

Since Elm version 0.19, released in 2018, setters are not allowed to change the type of a field in a record.

$$\begin{array}{c} (a_1,\{a_2:T,\dots\}) \in \Delta \\ \hline \Gamma,\Delta \vdash a_1"."a_2:T \\ \\ (a,_) \not\in \Delta \quad \Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_1:T_1 \quad mes:T_1 \vdash a:T_1 \\ \hline \Gamma,\Delta \cup \{(a,\overline{\Gamma}(T_1))\} \vdash e_2:T_2 \\ \hline \Gamma,\Delta \vdash "let" \quad mes \ a"=" \ e_1 \ "in" \ e_2:T_2 \\ \hline \hline \Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_1:T_1 \quad \Gamma,\Delta,T_1 \vdash lc:T_2 \\ \hline \Gamma,\Delta \vdash "case" \ e_1 \ "of" \ "[" \ lc \ "]":T_2 \\ \hline \hline \hline \Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_1:T_1 \rightarrow T_2 \quad \Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_2:T_1 \\ \hline \Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_1 \ e_2:T_2 \\ \hline \hline \begin{array}{c} b:T \\ \hline \Gamma,\Delta \vdash b:T \\ \hline \hline \end{array} \\ \hline \begin{array}{c} i:T \\ \hline \Gamma,\Delta \vdash i:T \\ \hline \hline \Gamma,\Delta \vdash [" \ le \ "]":T \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{split} \frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 : T_1 \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_2 : T_2}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash \text{"("} \ e_1 \text{","} \ e_2 \text{")"} : (T_1, T_2)} \\ \frac{\Gamma, \Delta \cup \{(a, \overline{\Gamma}(T_1))\} \vdash e : T_2}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash \text{"\"}a\text{"->"}e : T_1 \to T_2} \\ \frac{c \sqsubseteq_{\Delta} T}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash c : T} \\ \frac{a \sqsubseteq_{\Delta} T}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash a : T} \end{split}$$

Example 3.2

In example ?? we have looked at the syntax for a list reversing function. We can now check the type $T_0 = \forall a.List \ a \rightarrow List \ a$ of the reverse function for $\Gamma = \Delta = \emptyset$, $\Delta = \emptyset$. The body of the reverse function is as follows:

fold1 (::) []

where $T_1 = \forall a.List \ a \rightarrow List \ a \rightarrow List \ a$ and $T_2 = \forall a.(List \ a \rightarrow List \ a) \rightarrow List \ a \rightarrow List \ a \rightarrow List \ a$.

3.3.5 Inference Rules for Statements

LIST-STATEMENT-VAR

Judgment: $lsv:(a_1,\ldots,a_n)$

$$\frac{lsv:(a_1,\ldots,a_n)}{a_0\ lsv:(a_0,a_1,\ldots,a_n)}$$

LIST-STATEMENT-SORT

Judgment: $lss: (c_1: (T_{1,1}, \ldots, T_{1,k_1}), \ldots, c_n: (T_{n,1}, \ldots, T_{n,k_n}))$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash lt : (T_0, \dots, T_n)}{c \ lt : (c : (T_0, \dots, T_n))}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash lt: (T_{0,1}, \dots, T_{0,k_n}) \quad lss: \begin{pmatrix} a_1: (T_{1,1}, \dots, T_{1,k_1}), \\ \vdots \\ a_n: (T_{n,1}, \dots, T_{n,k_n}) \end{pmatrix}}{c \quad lt \; " \mid " \; lss: \begin{pmatrix} a_0: (T_{0,1}, \dots, T_{0,k_0}), \\ a_1: (T_{1,1}, \dots, T_{1,k_1}), \\ \vdots \\ a_n: (T_{n,1}, \dots, T_{n,k_n}) \end{pmatrix}}$$

LIST-STATEMENT

Judgment: $\Gamma_1, \Delta_1, ls \vdash \Gamma_2, \Delta_2$

$$\frac{\Gamma_1 = \Gamma_2 \quad \Delta_1 = \Delta_2}{\Gamma_1, \Delta_1 "" \vdash \Gamma_2, \Delta_2}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma_1, \Delta_1, s \vdash \Gamma_2, \Delta_2 \quad \Gamma_2, \Delta_2, \mathit{ls} \vdash \Gamma_3, \Delta_3}{\Gamma_1, \Delta_1, s \text{ "; "} \mathit{ls} \vdash \Gamma_3, \Delta_3}$$

MAYBE-STATEMENT-SIGN

Judgment: $\Gamma, mss \vdash a : T$

$$\Gamma$$
, "" $\vdash a : T$

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash t : Ta_1 = a_2}{\Gamma, a_1 \text{ ":" } t \text{ ";"} \vdash a_2 : T}$$

STATEMENT

Judgment: $\Gamma_1, \Delta_1, s \vdash \Gamma_2, \Delta_2$

$$\begin{split} \Gamma_1 &= \Gamma_2 \quad (a,_) \not\in \Delta_1 \\ \frac{\Gamma_1, \mathit{mss} \vdash e : T \quad \Gamma_1, \Delta_1 \vdash e : T \quad \Delta_2 = \Delta_1 \cup \{(a,\overline{\Gamma}(T))\}}{\Gamma_1, \Delta_1, \mathit{mss} \ a \ "="e \vdash \Gamma_2, \Delta_2} \end{split}$$

$$\Delta_1 = \Delta_2 \quad (c,_) \not\in \Gamma_1 \quad \Gamma \vdash t : T_1$$
 T_2 is a mono type $lsv : (a_1,\ldots,a_n) \quad \{a_1\ldots a_n\} = \mathrm{free}(T_2)$
$$\frac{\forall a_1\ldots\forall a_n.T_2 = T_1 \quad \Gamma_2 = \Gamma_2 \cup \{(c,T_1)\}}{\Gamma_1,\Delta_1,\text{"type alias" c } lsv \text{"="} t \vdash \Gamma_2,\Delta_2}$$

$$(c,_) \not\in \Gamma_1 \quad lsv: (a_1,\ldots,a_n)$$

$$lss: (c_1:(T_{1,1},\ldots,T_{1,k_1}),\ldots,c_n:(T_{n,1},\ldots,T_{n,k_n}))$$

$$\Delta_1 \cap \{(c_1,_),\ldots,(c_n,_)\} = \varnothing \quad \{a_1\ldots a_n\} = \operatorname{free}(T_2)$$

$$\mu C.c_1 \ T_{1,1} \ \ldots \ T_{1,k_1} \ | \ \ldots \ | \ c_n \ T_{n,1} \ \ldots \ T_{n,k_n} = T_2 \quad \forall a_1\ldots \forall a_n.T_2 = T_1$$

$$\Gamma_1 \cup \{(c,T_1)\} = \Gamma_2 \quad \Delta_1 \cup \left\{ \begin{matrix} (c_1,\overline{\Gamma}(T_{1,1}\to\cdots\to T_{1,k_1}\to T_1)),\\ \vdots\\ (c_n,\overline{\Gamma}(T_{n,1}\to\cdots\to T_{n,k_n}\to T_1)) \end{matrix} \right\}) = \Delta_2$$

$$\Gamma_1,\Delta_1, \text{"type"} \ c \ lsv \text{"="} lss \vdash \Gamma_2,\Delta_2$$

The list lss provides us with the structure of the type. From there we construct the type T_2 and bind all variables, thus creating the poly type T_1 . Additionally, every sort c_i for $i \in \mathbb{N}_1^n$ has its own constructor that gets added to Δ_1 under the name c_i . In Elm these constructors are the only constants beginning with an upper-case letter.

MAYBE-MAIN-SIGN

Judgment: Γ , $mms \vdash main : T$

$$\Gamma$$
, "" \vdash main : T

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash t : T}{\Gamma, \texttt{"main } : \texttt{"}t"; \texttt{"} \vdash \min : T}$$

PROGRAM

Judgment: prog: T

$$\frac{\varnothing,\varnothing,ls\vdash\Gamma,\Delta\quad\Gamma,mms\vdash\min:T\quad\Gamma,\Delta\vdash e:T}{ls\ mms\ \texttt{"main}\ \texttt{=}\ "\ e:T}$$