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 $s \in \langle \text{statement} \rangle$ 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: Uniquely Quantified Poly Type

Let Δ be a type context. $T', T \in \mathcal{T}.a_i \in \mathcal{V}$ for $i \in \mathbb{N}_0^n$. Let T' be the mono type of T.

We say $\forall a_1 \dots \forall a_n.T'$ is a uniquely quantified poly type of T in Δ , iff the following holds:

$$(_, \forall a_1 \ldots \forall a_n . T') \in \Delta_2 \land \{a_1, \ldots, a_n\} = \{a \mid a \in \text{free}(T') \land (a, _) \notin \Delta_2\}$$

A uniquely quantified poly type ensures that all type variables are renamed in order to not clash with free variables in Δ . They also ensure that all currently free variables are being bound.

Definition 3.3: Generalization

Let Δ_1, Δ_2 be type contexts, $a \in \mathcal{V}$.

We define

This definition essentially states that all quantified variables of T, that occur in Δ_2 , will be dropped and any free variables will be quantified. The act of removing a quantified variable that is already in the type context is called *Generalization* and is also typically found as an inference rule in text books.

PREDEFINED TYPES

Additionally, we define

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

3.3.3 Inference Rules for Type Signatures

LIST-TYPE-FIELDS

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

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

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

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: $\Gamma \vdash t : T$

$$\begin{split} & \frac{Bool = T}{\Gamma \vdash \text{"Bool"}: T} \\ & \frac{Int = T}{\Gamma \vdash \text{"Int"}: T} \\ & \frac{List \ T_2 = T_1 \quad \Gamma \vdash t : T_2}{\Gamma \vdash \text{"List"} \ \ t : T_1} \\ & \frac{(T_1, T_2) = T_0 \quad \Gamma \vdash t_1 : T_1 \quad \Gamma \vdash t_2 : T_2}{\Gamma \vdash \text{"("} \ t_1 \ \text{","} \ t_2 \ \text{")"} : T_0} \\ & \frac{\Gamma \vdash ltf : T}{\Gamma \vdash \text{"{"} \ tr} \ \text{"} \ \text{"} : T} \\ & \frac{T_1 \to T_2 = T_0 \quad \Gamma \vdash t_1 : T_1 \quad \Gamma \vdash t_2 : T_2}{\Gamma \vdash t_1 \to t_2 : T_0} \\ & \frac{(c, T') \in \Gamma \quad \Gamma \vdash l : (T_1, \dots, T_n) \quad \overline{T'} \ T_1 \dots T_n = T}{\Gamma \vdash c \ l : T} \end{split}$$

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EXP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

$$\Gamma, \Delta \vdash "not" : Bool \rightarrow Bool$$

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

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

$$\frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 : T_1 \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_2 : T_1 \rightarrow T_2}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 : "|>" e_2 : T_2}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 : T_1 \rightarrow T_2 \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_2 : T_2 \rightarrow T_3}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 : ">>" e_2 : T_1 \rightarrow T_3}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1 : Bool \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_2 : T \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_3 : T}{\Gamma, \Delta \vdash "if" e_1 "then" e_2 "else" e_3 : T}$$

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

$$\begin{split} & \underbrace{ \begin{pmatrix} a_1, \{a_2:T,\dots\} \end{pmatrix} \in \Delta}_{\Gamma,\,\Delta \vdash a_1 \text{"."} a_2:T} \\ \\ & \underbrace{ (a,_) \not \in \Delta \quad \Gamma, \Delta \vdash e_1:T_1 \quad mes:T_1 \vdash a:T_1}_{\Gamma,\, \text{insert}_\Delta(\{(a,T_1)\}) \vdash e_2:T_2} \\ \\ & \underbrace{ \Gamma,\Delta \vdash \text{"let" } mes \text{ a"=" } e_1 \text{ "in" } e_2:T_2}_{\Gamma,\Delta \vdash \text{"let" } mes \text{ a"=" } e_1 \text{ "in" } e_2:T_2} \\ \\ & \underbrace{ \Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_1:T_1 \quad \Gamma,\Delta,T_1 \vdash lc:T_2}_{\Gamma,\Delta \vdash \text{"case" } e_1 \text{ "of" " } \text{"[" } lc \text{ "]" } :T_2} \\ \\ & \underbrace{ \Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_1:T_1 \rightarrow T_2 \quad \Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_2:T_1}_{\Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_1:T_2} \\ \\ & \underbrace{ \Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_1:T_1 \rightarrow T_2 \quad \Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_2:T_1}_{\Gamma,\Delta \vdash e_1:T_2} \end{split}$$

$$\frac{b:T}{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash b:T}$$

$$\frac{i:T}{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash i:T}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash le:T}{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash "["le"]":T}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash e_1:T_1}{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash "("e_1:T_1)":e_2:T_2}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash "("e_1:T_1)":e_2:T_2}{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash "("e_1:T_1)":e_2:T_2}$$

$$\frac{\Gamma,\operatorname{insert}_\Delta(\{(a,T_1)\})\vdash e:T_2}{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash "\backslash "a"-\gt"e:T_1\to T_2}$$

$$\frac{\Delta(c)\sqsubseteq T}{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash c:T}$$

$$\frac{\Delta(a)\sqsubseteq T}{\Gamma,\Delta\vdash a:T}$$

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

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

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

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

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

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

STATEMENT

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

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

$$T_2 \text{ is a mono type} \quad lsv : (a_1, \dots, a_n) \quad \{a_1 \dots a_n\} = \operatorname{free}(T_2)$$

$$\forall a_1, \dots, \forall a_n, T_2 = T_1 \quad \Gamma_2 = \Gamma_2 \cup \{(c, T_1)\}$$

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

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

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

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

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

$$\Gamma_1 \cup \{(c, T_1)\} = \Gamma_2 \quad \operatorname{insert}_{\Delta_1}(\left\{ \begin{pmatrix} (c_1, T_{1,1} \to \dots \to T_{1,k_1} \to T_1), \\ \vdots \\ (c_n, T_{n,1} \to \dots \to T_{n,k_n} \to T_1) \end{pmatrix} \right\} = \Delta_2$$

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

 $\Delta_1 = \Delta_2 \quad (c, \quad) \not\in \Gamma_1 \quad \Gamma \vdash t : T_1$

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

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

PROGRAM

Judgment: prog: T

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