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Meta-programming With Built-in Type Equality

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Abstract

We report our experience with exploring a new point in the design space for formal reasoning systems: the development of the programming language Ωmega. Ωmega is intended as both a practical programming language and a logic. The main goal of Ωmega is to allow programmers to describe and reason about semantic properties of programs from within the programming language itself, mainly by using a powerful type system.

We illustrate the main features of Ωmega by developing an interesting meta-programming example. First, we show how to encode a set of well-typed simply typed λ-calculus terms as an Ωmega data-type. Then, we show how to implement a substitution operation on these terms that is guaranteed by the Ωmega type system to preserve their well-typedness.

*Keywords:* Meta-programming, Meta-language, Equality types

# Introduction

There is a large semantic gap between what a programmer knows about his program and the way he has to express this knowledge to a formal system for reasoning about that program. While many reasoning tools are built on the Curry-Howard isomorphism, it is often hard for the programmers to conceptualize how they can put this abstraction to work. We propose the design of a language that makes this important isomorphism concrete – proofs are real object that programmers can build and manipulate without leaving their own programming language.

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We have explored a new point in the design space of formal reasoning systems and developed the programming language Ωmega. Ωmega is *both* a practical pro- gramming language *and* a logic. These sometimes irreconcilable goals are made possible by embedding the Ωmega logic in a type system based on *equality qualiﬁed* types[[6](#_bookmark12)]. This design supports the construction, maintenance, and propagation of semantic properties of programs using powerful old ideas about types in novel ways.

For what kind of programming would a language like Ωmega be useful? The rest of this paper describes one possibility.

Meta-programming in Ωmega

Meta-programs manipulate object-programs represented as data. Traditionally, object-language programs are represented with algebraic data-types as *syntactic objects*. This representation preserves syntactic properties of object-language pro- grams (i.e., it is impossible to represent syntactically incorrect object-language pro- grams). In this paper, we explore the benefits of representing object-language pro- grams as data in a manner that preserve important *semantic properties*, in particular *scoping* and *typing*. Representing typed object-languages in a way which preserves semantic properties can lead to real benefits. By preserving typing and scoping properties, we gain assurance in the correctness of a particular language processor (e.g. compiler, interpreter, or program analysis). Such semantics preserving repre- sentations statically catch errors introduced by incorrect meta-language programs.

Contributions

The first contribution is an approach to manipulating strongly typed object languages in a manner which is semantics preserving. This approach encodes *well- typed* and *statically scoped* object-language programs as data-types which embed the type of the object-language program in the type of its representation. While this can be done using only the standard extensions to the Haskell 98 type system (using equality types), we use Ωmega, an extension to Haskell inspired by Cheney and Hinze’s work on phantom types [[6](#_bookmark12)].

The second contribution is an implementation of Cheney and Hinze’s ideas that makes programming with well-typed object-language programs considerably less te- dious than using equality types in Haskell alone. Our implementation of Ωmega also supports several other features, such as extensible kinds and staging, which we shall not discuss in this paper. This integration creates a powerful meta-programming tool.

The third contribution is a demonstration that semantic properties of meta- programs (i.e., preserving object-language types) can be encoded in the type of the meta-program itself – the programmer need not resort to using another meta-logic to (formally) assure himself that his substitution algorithm preserves typing. We demonstrate this by implementing a type-preserving substitution operation on the object-language of simply typed *λ*-calculus.

The last contribution is the demonstration that these techniques support the embedding of logical frameworks style judgments into a programming language

such as Haskell. This is important because it moves logical style reasoning about programs from the meta-logical level into the programming language.

# Ωmega: A Meta-language with Type Equality

Type Equality in Haskell. A key technique that inspired the work described in this paper is the encoding of *equality between types* as a Haskell type constructor (Equal a b). Thus a non-bottom value (p::Equal a b), can be regarded asa proof of the proposition that a equals b.

The technique of encoding the equality between types a and b as a polymorphic function of type ∀*ϕ*. (*ϕ* a) → (*ϕ* b) was proposed by both Baars & Swierstra [[2](#_bookmark8)], and Cheney & Hinze [[6](#_bookmark12)] at about the same time, and is described somewhat earlier in a different setting by Weirich [[20](#_bookmark26)]. We illustrate this by the data-type Equal :

\* → \* → \*

data Equal a b = Equal (∀*ϕ*. (*ϕ* a) → (*ϕ* b)) cast :: Equal a b → (*ϕ* a) → (*ϕ* b)

cast (Equal f) = f

The logical intuition behind this definition (also known as Leibniz equality [[12](#_bookmark18)]) is that two types are equal if, and only if, they are interchangeable in any context. This context is represented by the arbitrary Haskell type constructor *ϕ*. Proofs are useful, since from a proof p :: Equal a b, we can extract functions that *cast* values of type (*C*[a]) to type (*C*[ b]) for type contexts *C*[ ]. For example, we can construct functions a2b::Equal a b → a → b and b2a::Equal a b → b → a which allow us to cast between the two types a and b in the identity context. Furthermore, it is possible to construct combinators that manipulate equality proofs based on the standard properties of equality (transitivity, reflexivity, congruence, and so on).

Equality types are described elsewhere [[2](#_bookmark8)], and we shall not belabor their expla- nation any further. The essential characteristic of programming with type equality in Haskell is the requirement that programmers manipulate proofs of equalities be- tween types using equality combinators. This has two practical drawbacks. First, manipulation of proofs using combinators is tedious. Second, while present through- out a program, the equality proof manipulations have no real computational content – they are used solely to leverage the power of the Haskell type system to accept certain programs that are not typable when written without the proofs. With all the clutter induced by proof manipulation, it is sometimes difficult to discern the difference between the truly important algorithmic part of the program and mere equality proof manipulation. This, in turn, makes programs brittle and rather dif- ficult to change.

* 1. *Type Equality in* Ω*mega*

What if we could extend the type system of Haskell, in a relatively minor way, to allow the type-checker itself to manipulate and propagate equality proofs? Such a type system was proposed by Cheney and Hinze [[6](#_bookmark12)], and is one of the ideas behind

Ωmega [[17](#_bookmark23)]. In the remainder of this paper, we shall use Ωmega, rather than pure Haskell to write our examples. We conjecture that, in principle, whatever it is possible to do in Ωmega, it is also possible to do in Haskell (plus the usual set of extensions), only in Ωmega it is expressed more cleanly and succinctly.

The syntax and type-system of Ωmega has been designed to closely resemble Haskell (with GHC extensions). For practical purposes, we could consider (and use) it as a conservative extension to Haskell. In this section, we will briefly outline the useful differences between Ωmega and Haskell.

In Ωmega, the equality between types is not encoded explicitly (as the type constructor Equal). Instead, it is built into the type system, and is used implicitly by the type-checker. Consider the following (fragmentary) data-type definitions. (We adopt the GHC syntax for writing the existential types with a universal quantifier that appears to the left of a data-constructor. We also replace the keyword forall with the symbol ∀. We shall write explicitly universally or existentially quantified variables with Greek letters. Arrow types (->) will be written as → , and so on.)

data Exp e t

= Lit Int where t=Int

| V (Var e t) data Var e t

= ∀*γ*. Z where e = (*γ*,t)

| ∀*γα*. S (Var *γ* t) where e = (*γ*,*α*)

Each data-constructor in Ωmega may contain a where clause which contains a list of equations between types in the scope of the constructor definition. These equations play the same role as the Haskell type Equal in Section [2](#_bookmark1), with one important difference. The user is not required to provide any actual evidence of type equality – the Ωmega type checker keeps track of equalities between types and proves and propagates them automatically.

The mechanism Ωmega uses to keep track of equalities between types is very similar to the constraints that the Haskell type checker uses to resolve class-based overloading. A special qualified type [[8](#_bookmark14)] is used to assert equality between types, and a constraint solving system is used to simplify and discharge these assertions. When assigning a type to a type constructor, the equations specified in the where clause just become predicates in a qualified type. Thus, the constructor Lit is given the type ∀e t.(t=Int) => Int → Exp e t. The equation t=Int is just another form of predicate, similar to the class membership predicate in the Haskell type (for example, Ord a => a → a → Bool).

Tracking equality constraints. When type-checking an expression, the Ωmega type checker keeps two sets of equality constraints: *obligations* and *assumptions*.

*Obligations.* The first set of constraints is a set of *obligations*. Obligations are generated by the type-checker either when (a) the program constructs data-values with constructors that contain equality constraints; or (b) an explicit type signature in a definition is encountered.

For example, consider type-checking the expression (Lit 5). The constructor

Lit is assigned the type ∀e t.(t=Int) => Int → Exp e t. Since Lit is polymor- phic in e and t, the type variable t can be instantiated to Int. Instantiating t to Int also makes the equality constraint obligation Int=Int, which can be trivially discharged by the type checker.

Lit 5 :: Int → Exp e Int *with obligation* Int = Int

One practical thing to note is that in this context, the data-constructors of Exp

and Var are given the following types:

Lit :: ∀e t.t=Int => Int → Exp e t Z :: ∀e e’ t.e=(e’,t) => Var e t

S :: ∀e t e’ t’. e=(e’,t’) => (Var e’ t) → (Var e t)

It is important to note that the above qualified types can be *instantiated* to the following types:

Lit :: Exp e Int Z :: Var (e,t) t

S :: (Var e’ t) → (Var (e’,t’) t)

We have already seen this for Lit. Consider the case for Z. First, the type variable e can be instantiated to (e’,t). After this instantiation, the obligation introduced by the constructor becomes (e’,t)=(e’,t), which can be immediately discharged by the built-in equality solver. This leaves the instantiated type (Var (e’,t) t).

*Assumptions.* The second set of constraints is a set of *assumptions* or *facts*. Whenever, a constructor with a where clause is pattern-matched, the type equalities in the where-clause are added to the current set of assumptions in the scope of the pattern. These assumptions can be used to discharge obligations. For example, consider the following partial definition:

evalList :: Exp e t → e → [t] evalList exp env =

case exp of Lit n → [n]

When the expression exp of type (Exp e t) is matched against the pattern (Lit n), the equality t=Int from the definition of Lit is introduced as an as- sumption. The type signature of evalList induces the obligation that the body of the definition has the type [t]. The right-hand side of the case expression, [n], has the type [Int]. The type checker now must discharge (prove) the obligation [t]=[Int], while using the fact, introduced by the pattern (Lit n) that t=Int. The Ωmega type-checker uses an algorithm based on congruence-closure [[11](#_bookmark17)], to discharge equality obligations. It automatically applies the laws of equality to solve such equations. In this case, the equation is discharged easily using congruence.

Expressions and types

*τ* ∈ T ::= b | *τ*1 → *τ*2

Γ ∈ G ::= ⟨⟩ | Γ*,τ*

*e* ∈ E ::= Var *n* | *λ*τ *e* | *e*1 *e*2

Γ*,τ* ▶ 0: *τ*

(Base)

Γ ▶ *n* : *τ*

Γ*,τ* ' ▶ (*n* + 1) : *τ*

(Weak)

Γ ▶ *n* : *τ*

Γ ▶ Var *n* : *τ*

(Var)

Γ*, τ*1 ▶ *e* : *τ*2

Γ ▶ *λ*τ1 *.e* : *τ*1 → *τ*2

Γ ▶ *e*1 : *τ*1 → *τ*2 Γ ▶ *e*2 : *τ*1

(Abs) (App)

Γ ▶ *e*1 *e*2 : *τ*2

Fig. 1. The simply typed λ-calculus fragment.

Γ ▶ *e* : *τ*

Substitutions a` la *λυ* [[4](#_bookmark10)]

*σ* ∈ S ::= *e/* | ⇑(*σ*) | ↑

Γ ▶ *σ* : Γ'

Γ ▶ *e/* : Γ*,τ*

(Slash)

Γ*,τ* ▶↑:Γ

(Shift)

Γ*,τ* ▶⇑(*σ*): Γ'*,τ*

(Lift)

Fig. 2. Explicit substitutions fragment.

# Ωmega Example: Substitution

Now, we shall develop our main example, showcasing the meta-programming fa- cilities of Ωmega. First, we shall define a sample object-language of simply typed *λ*-calculus judgments, and then implement a type-preserving substitution function on those terms. While this object-language is quite simple, useful perhaps only for didactic purposes, we have applied our techniques on a wider range of meta- programs and object-languages (e.g., tagless staged interpreters for typed impera- tive languages, object-languages with modal type systems, and so on [[13](#_bookmark19),[14](#_bookmark20)]).

This example demonstrates type-preserving *syntax-to-syntax* transformations between object-language programs. Substitution, which we shall develop in the remainder of this paper, is one such transformation. Furthermore, a correct im- plementation of substitution can be used to build more syntax-to-syntax trans- formations: we shall provide an implementation of big-step semantics that uses substitution.

The substitution operation we present preserves object-language typing. As a meta-program, it not only analyzes object-language typing judgments, but also builds new judgments based on the result of that analysis.

* 1. *The Simply Typed λ-calculus with Typed Substitutions*

Figures [1](#_bookmark2) and [2](#_bookmark3) define two sets of typed expressions. The first figure of expressions (Figure [1](#_bookmark2)) is just the simply typed *λ*-calculus. The second figure (Figure [2](#_bookmark3)) defines a set of typed substitutions. The substitution expressions are taken from the *λυ*- calculus [[4](#_bookmark10)]. There are several of other ways to represent substitutions explicitly as terms (see Kristoffer Rose’s excellent paper [[16](#_bookmark22)] for a comprehensive survey), but we have chosen the notation of *λυ* for its simplicity.

A substitution expression *σ* is intended to represent a mapping from de-Bruijn indices to expressions (i.e., a substitution), the same way that *λ*-expressions are intended to represent functions. As in *λυ*, we define three kinds of substitutions in Figure [2](#_bookmark3) :

* + 1. *Slash* (*e/*)*.* Intuitively, the slash substitution maps the variable with the index 0 to *e*, and any variable with the index *n* +1 to Var *n*.
    2. *Shift* (↑)*.* The shift substitution adjusts all the variable indices in a term by incrementing them by one. It maps each variable *n* to the term Var (*n* + 1).
    3. *Lift* ( ⇑ (*σ*))*.* The lift substitution ( ⇑ (*σ*)) is used to mark the fact that the substitution *σ* is being applied to a term in a context in which index 0 is bound and should not be changed. Thus, it maps the variable with the index 0 to Var 0. For any other variable index *n* + 1, it maps it to the term that *σ* maps to *n*, with the provision that the resulting term must be adjusted with a shift: ((*n* + 1) '→↑ (*σ*(*n*))).

Typing substitutions

The substitution expressions are typed. The typing judgments of substitutions, written Γ1 ▶ *σ* : Γ2, indicate that the type of a substitution, in a given type assignment, is another type assignment. The intuition behind the substitution typing judgment is the following: given a term whose variables are assigned types by Γ2, applying a the substitution *σ* yields an expression whose variables are assigned types by Γ1.

*Example.* We describe a couple of example substitutions.

1. Consider the substitution (True*/*). This substitution maps the variable with the index 0 to the Boolean constant True. The type of this substitution is Γ ▶ True*/*

: Γ*,* Bool. In other words, given any type assignment, the substitution (True*/*) can be applied in any context where the variable 0 is assigned type Bool.

1. Consider the substitution *σ* = ( ⇑ (True*/*)). *σ* is the substitution that replaces the variable with the index 1 with the constant True.

Recall that the type of any substitution *θ* under a type assignment Γ, is a type assignment Δ (written Γ ▶ *θ* : Δ), such that for any expression *e*' to which the substitution *θ* is applied, the following must hold Δ ▶ *e*' : *τ* and Γ ▶ *θ*(*e*'): *τ* .

So, what type should we assign to *σ*? When applied to an expression, a lift

substitution (*σ* = ⇑ (True*/*)) does not change the variable with the index 0.

Thus, when typing *σ* as Γ ▶ *σ* : Δ, we know something about the shape of Γ and Δ. Namely, for some Δ', we know that Δ = (Δ'*,τ* ), and for some Γ', we know that Γ = (Γ'*,τ* ). The type assignments Δ' and Γ' are determined by the sub-substitution True*/*, yielding the following typing derivation:

Γ ▶ True : Bool

Const

Slash

Lift

Γ ▶ Bool*/* : Γ*,* Bool

Γ*,τ* ▶⇑(Bool*/*): Γ*,* Bool*,τ*

There are three typing rules for the substitutions (Figure [2](#_bookmark3)):

1. *Slash* (*e/*)*.* A slash substitution *e/* replaces the 0-index variable in an expres- sion by *e*. Thus, in any context Γ, where *e* can be given type *τ* , the typing rule requires the substitution to work only on expressions in the type assign- ment Γ*,τ* , where the 0-index variable is assigned the type *τ* . Since the slash substitution also decrements the indexes of the remaining variables, they are all shifted to the right by one place, so that the remaining free variables can be assigned their old types in Γ after the substitution is applied.

Γ ▶ *e* : *τ*

Γ ▶ *e/* : Γ*,τ*

(Slash)

1. *Shift (*↑*).* The shift substitution maps all variables *n* to Var (*n* + 1). Thus, given a term whose variables are assigned type a by Γ, after performing the shift substitution, the types in the type assignment must for each variable must “move” to the left by one position. This is done by appending an arbitrary type *τ* for the variable with the index 0, which cannot occur free in the term after the substitution is performed.

(Shift)

Γ*,τ* ▶↑:Γ

1. *Lift* ( ⇑ (*σ*))*.* For any variable index (*n* + 1) in a term, the substitution ⇑ (*σ*) applies *σ* to *n* and then shifts the resulting term. Thus, the 0-index term in the type assignment remains untouched, and the rest of the type assignment is as specified by *σ*:

Γ ▶ *σ* : Γ'

Γ*,τ* ▶⇑(*σ*): Γ'*,τ*

(Lift)

Applying substitutions

In the remainder of this Section, we show how to implement a function (we call it subst) that takes a substitution expression *σ*, a *λ*-expression *e*, and returns an expression such that all the indices in *e* have been replaced according the substi-

Substitution on expressions

(·*,* ·) ⇒· ⊂ S × E × E

2 '

(*σ, e* ) ⇒ *e*'

(*σ,* (*e*

*e* )) ⇒ *e*' *e*'

( ⇑(*σ*)*, e*) ⇒ *e*

(*σ, n*) ⇒ *e*

1 1 1 2

1 2 (*σ, λ.e*) ⇒ *λe*'

(*σ,* Var *n*) ⇒ *e*

(*σ, e*2) ⇒ *e*'

2

Substitution on variables

(·*,* ·) ⇒·⊂ S × N × E

(*e/,* 0) ⇒ *e* (*e/, n* + 1) ⇒ Var *n* ( ⇑(*σ*)*,* 0) ⇒ Var 0 (*σ, n*) ⇒ *e* (↑*, e*) ⇒ *e*'

( ⇑(*σ*)*,n* + 1) ⇒ *e*' (↑*, n*) ⇒ Var (*n* + 1)

Fig. 3. Applying substitutions to terms

tution. In the simply typed *λ*-calculus, substitution preserves typing, so we expect the following property to be true of the substitution function subst: if Γ ▶ *σ* : Δ and Δ ▶ *e* : *τ* , then Γ ▶ subst *σ e* : *τ* .

How should subst work? Figure [3](#_bookmark4) presents two judgments, (*σ, e*1) ⇒ *e*2 and (*σ, n*) ⇒ *e*, which describe the action of substitutions on expressions and variables, respectively. These judgments are derived from the reduction relations of the *λυ*- calculus [[4](#_bookmark10)]. It is not difficult to show that this reduction strategy indeed does implement capture avoiding substitution sufficient to perform *β* reductions (see Benaissa, Lescanne & al. [[4](#_bookmark10)] for proofs).

# Implementing Substitution in Ωmega

Next, we show how to implement this substitution operation in Ωmega, using expres- sion and substitution judgments instead of expressions and substitution expressions.

* 1. *Judgments*

The expression and substitution judgments can be easily encoded in Ωmega. The data-types Var and Exp encode expression and variable judgments presented in Figure [1](#_bookmark2).

data Var e t = ∀d. Z where e = (d,t)

| ∀d t2. S (Var d t) where e = (d,t2)

data Exp e t = V (Var e t)

| ∀t1 t2. Abs (Exp (e,t1) t2)

where t = t1 → t2

| ∀t1. App (Exp e (t1 → t))

(Exp e t1)

The judgment Var implements the lookup and weakening rules for variables.

Just as in the judgment of Figure [1](#_bookmark2), there are two cases:

1. First, there is the constructor Z. This constructor translates the definition of Figure [1](#_bookmark2) directly: the where-clause requires the type system of Ωmega to prove that there exists some environment *γ* such that the environment t is equal to *γ* extended by t.
2. The second constructor, S takes a judgment of type (Var *γ* t), and a require- ment that the environment e is equal to the pair (*γ, α*), where both *γ* and *α* are existentially quantified.

The names S and Z are chosen to show how the judgments for variable are structurally the same as the natural number indices. Finally, the sub-judgments for the variable case are “plugged” into the definition of Exp e t using the constructor V.

The type of expression judgments (Exp e t) is constructed in a similar fashion. We shall only explain the abstraction case in some detail. The constructor Abs takes as its argument a judgment of type (Exp (e,t1) t2): an expression judgment of type t2 in the type assignment e, extended so that it assigns the variable 0 the type t1. If this argument can be supplied, then the result type of the Abs judgment is the function type (t1 → t2), as indicated by the where-clause.

Next, we define a data-constructor Subst gamma delta that represents the typ- ing judgments for substitutions . The type constructor Subst gamma delta repre- sents the typing judgment Γ ▶ *σ* : Δ presented in Figure [2](#_bookmark3).

data Subst gamma delta =

∀t1. Shift

where gamma = (delta,t1)

| ∀t1. Slash (Exp gamma t1)

where delta = (gamma,t1)

| ∀del1 gam1 t1. Lift (Subst gam1 del1) where delta = (del1,t1),

gamma = (gam1,t1)

* 1. *Substitution*

Finally, we define the substitution function subst. It has the following type:

subst :: Subst gamma delta →

Exp delta t → Exp gamma t

It takes a substitution whose type is delta in some type assignment gamma, an expression of type t that is typed in the type assignment delta, and produces an expression of type t typable in the type assignment gamma.

We will discuss the implementation of the function subst (Figure [4](#_bookmark6)) in more detail. In several relevant cases, we shall describe the process by which the Ωmega

1 subst :: Subst gamma delta →

2 Exp delta t → Exp gamma t

3 subst s (App e1 e2) = App (subst s e1) (subst s e2)

4 subst s (Abs e) = Abs (subst (Lift s) e)

5 subst (Slash e) (V Z) = e

6 subst (Slash e) (V (S n)) = V n

7 subst (Lift s) (V Z) = V Z

8 subst (Lift s) (V (S n)) = subst Shift (subst s (V n))

9 subst (Shift) (V n) = V (S n)

Fig. 4. Substitution in simply typed λ-calculus.

type-checker makes sure that the definitions are given correct types. Recall that every pattern-match over one of the Exp or Subst judgments may introduce zero or more equations between types, which are then available to the type-checker in the body of a case (or function definition). The type checker may use these equations to prove that two types are equal. In the text below, we sometimes use the type variables gamma and delta for notational convenience, but also Skolem constants like

1. These are an artifact of the Ωmega type-checker (they appear when pattern- matching against values that may contain existentially quantified variables) and should be regarded as type constants.

* + 1. The application case (line [3](#_bookmark5)) simply applies the substitution to the two sub- expression judgments and then rebuilds the application judgment from the results.
    2. The abstraction case (line [4](#_bookmark5)) pushes the substitution under the *λ*-abstraction. It may be interesting to examine the types of the various subexpressions in this definition.

Abs e : Exp delta t, where t=t1 → t2

e : Exp (delta,t1) t2

s : Subst gamma delta

Lift s : Subst (gamma,t1) (delta,t1) subst (Lift s) e : Exp (gamma,t1) t2

The body of the abstraction, e has the type (delta,t1), where t1 is the type of the domain of the *λ*-abstraction. In order to apply the substitu- tion s to the body of the abstraction (e), we need a substitution of type (Subst (gamma,t1) (delta,t1)). This substitution can be obtained by ap- plying Lift to s. Then, recursively applying subst with the lifted substitution to the body e, we obtain an expression of type (Exp (gamma,t1) t2), from which we can construct a *λ*-abstraction of the (Exp gamma (t1 → t2)).

* + 1. The variable-slash case (line [5](#_bookmark5)-[6](#_bookmark5)). There are two cases when applying the slash substitution to a variable expression:
       1. Variable 0. The substitution (Slash e) has the type

(Subst (gamma) (gamma,t)), and contains the expression e :: Exp gamma t. The expression (V Z) has the type (Exp (delta,t) t). Pattern matching introduces the equation gamma=delta, and we can use e to replace (V Z).

Slash e :: (Subst (gamma) (gamma,t)) e :: Exp gamma t

* + - 1. Variable *n* + 1. Pattern matching on the substitution argument introduces

the equation delta=(gamma,t1). Pattern matching against the expression (V (S n)) introduces the equation delta=(gamma’,t), for some gamma’. The expression result expression (V n) has the type (Exp gamma’ t). The type checker then uses the two equalities to prove that it has the type (Exp gamma t). It does this by first using congruence to prove that gamma=gamma’, and then by applying this equality to obtain Exp gamma’ t

= Exp gamma t.

Slash e :: Subst gamma (gamma,t) (V (S n)) :: Exp delta t

1. The variable-lift case (lines [7](#_bookmark5)-[8](#_bookmark5)). There are two cases when applying the lift substitution to a variable expression.
   1. Variable 0. This case is easy because the lift substitution places makes no changes to the variable with the index 0. We are able simply to return (V Z) as a result.
   2. Variable *n* + 1. The first pattern (Lift s :: Subst gamma delta), on the substitution, introduces the following equations:

delta = (d’,\_1),

gamma = (g’,\_1)

The pattern on the variable (V(S n):: Var delta t) introduces the equa- tion

delta = (d2,\_2)

The first step is to apply the substitution s of type (Subst g’ d’) to a decremented variable index (V n) which has the type n :: Var d2 t. To do this, the type checker has to show that g’=d2, which easily fol- lows from the equations introduced by the pattern, yielding a result of type (Exp g’ t). Applying the Shift substitution to this result yields an expression of type (Exp (g’,a) t) (where a is can be any type). Now, equations above can be used to prove that this expression has the type (Exp gamma t) using the equation gamma=(g’, 1).

1. Variable-shift case (line [9](#_bookmark5)). Pattern matching on the Shift substitution in- troduces the equation gamma = (delta, 1). The expression has the type (Exp delta t). Applying the successor to the variable results in an expres- sion (V (S n)) of type (Exp (delta,a) t). Immediately, the type checker can use the equation introduced by the pattern to prove that this type is equal to (Exp gamma t).

We have defined type-preserving substitution simply typed *λ*-calculus judg- ments. Recall, that since equality proofs can be encoded in Haskell, it should be possible (with certain caveats) to implement the function subst in Haskell (with a couple of GHC extensions). It is worth noting that Ωmega has proven very helpful in writing such complicated functions: explicitly manipulating equality proofs for such a function in Haskell, would result in code that is both verbose and difficult to understand.

# A Big-step Evaluator

Finally, we implement a simple evaluator based on the big-step semantics for the

*λ*-calculus. The evaluation relation is given by the following judgment:

*e*1 ⇒ *λe*' (*e*2*/, e*') ⇒ *e*3 *e*3 ⇒ *e*''

*λe* ⇒ *λe x* ⇒ *x*

*e*1 *e*2 ⇒ *e*''

Note that in the application case, we first use the substitution (*e*2*/, e*') ⇒ *e*3 to substitute the argument *e*2 for the variable with index 0 into the body of the *λ*-abstraction.

The big-step evaluator is implemented as the function eval which takes a well- typed expression judgment of type (Exp delta t), and returns judgments of the same type. The evaluator reduces *β*-redices using a call-by-name strategy, relying upon the substitution implemented above.

eval :: Exp delta t -> Exp delta t eval (App e1 e2) =

case eval e1 of

Abs body -> eval (subst (Slash e2) body) eval x = x

Note that the type of the function eval statically ensures that it preserves the typing of the object language expressions it evaluates, with the usual caveats that the Exps faithfully encode well-typed *λ*-expressions.

Finally, let us apply the big-step evaluator to a simple example. Consider the expression, example.

example :: Exp gamma (a → a)

example = (Abs (V Z)) ‘App‘ ((Abs (Abs (V Z))) ‘App‘ (Abs (V Z)))

-- example = (*λ x.x*) ((*λ y.* (*λ z.z*))) (*λ x.x*)

The expression example evaluates to the identity function. Applying eval to it yields precisely that result:

evExample = eval example

*-- evExample = (Abs (V Z)) : Exp gamma (a* → *a)*

# Related Work

Implementations of simple interpreters that use equality proof objects implemented as Haskell datatypes, have been given by Weirich [[20](#_bookmark26)] and Baars and Swierstra [[2](#_bookmark8)]. Baars and Swierstra use an untyped syntax, but use equality proofs to encode dynamically typed values. Hinze and Cheney [[5](#_bookmark11),[6](#_bookmark12)] have recently resurrected the notion of “phantom type,” first introduced by Leijen and Meijer [[10](#_bookmark16)]. Hinze and Cheney’s phantom types are designed to address some of the problems that arise when using equality proofs to represent type-indexed data. Their main motivation is to provide a language in which polytypic programs, such as generic traversal operations, can be more easily written. Cheney and Hinze’s system bears a strong similarity to Xi et al.’s *guarded recursive datatypes* [[21](#_bookmark27)], although it seems to be a little more general.

We adapt Cheney and Hinze’s ideas to meta-programming and language imple- mentation. We incorporate their ideas into a Haskell-like programming language. The value added in our work is additional type system features (extensible kinds and rank-N polymorphism, not used in this paper) applying these techniques to a wide variety of applications, including the use of typed syntax, the specification of semantics for patterns, and its combination with staging to obtain tagless inter- preters, and the encoding of logical framework style judgments as first class values within a programming language.

Simonet and Pottier [[18](#_bookmark24)] proposed a system of *guarded algebraic data types,* which seem equivalent in expressiveness to *phantom types*, *guarded recursive datatype constructors*, and Ωmega’s equality qualified (data)types. They present a type sys- tem for guarded algebraic data types as an extension to the HM(X) [[19](#_bookmark25)] type system, and describe a type inference algorithm. They prove a number of important prop- erties about the type system and the inference algorithm (e.g., type soundness, correctness, and so on).

The technique of manipulating well-typedness judgments has been used exten- sively in various logical frameworks [[7](#_bookmark13),[15](#_bookmark21)]. We see the advantage of our work here in translating this methodology into a more main-stream functional programming idiom. Although our examples are given in Ωmega, most of our techniques can be adapted to Haskell with some fairly common extensions.

In previous work, we have used the techniques and programming language ex- tensions described above to address the problem of tagless interpreters in meta- programming [[14](#_bookmark20)]. Tagless interpreters can easily be constructed in dependently typed languages such as Coq [[3](#_bookmark9)] and Cayenne [[1](#_bookmark7)]. These languages, however, do not support staging, nor have they gained a wide audience in the functional program- ming community. Programming with well-typed object-language syntax, applied to the problem of constructing tagless staged interpreters, has been shown possible in a meta-language (provisionally called MetaD) with staging and dependent types [[14](#_bookmark20)]. The drawback of this approach is that there is no “industrial strength” implemen- tation for such a language. In fact, the judgment encoding technique presented in this paper is basically the same, except that instead of using a dependently typed

language, we encode the necessary machinery in a language which is arguably more recognizable to Haskell programmers. By using explicit equality types, everything can be encoded using the standard GHC extensions to Haskell 98. Ωmega adds fur- ther ease of use to these techniques, relieving the programmer of the responsibility of explicitly manipulating equality proofs.

A technique using *indexed type systems* [[22](#_bookmark28)], a restricted and disciplined form of dependent typing, has been used to write interpreters and source-to-source transfor- mations on typed terms [[21](#_bookmark27)]. The meta-language with guarded recursive datatype constructors, used by Xi & al., seems to be roughly equivalent in expressive power to Ωmega. Ωmega, however, is equipped with additional features, such as staging, which may give it a wider range of useful applications.

# Discussion and Future Work

*Meta-language Implementation.* The meta-language used in this paper can be seen as a (conservative) extension of Haskell, with built-in support for equality types. It was largely inspired by the work of Cheney and Hinze. The meta-language we have used in our examples in this papers is the functional language Ωmega, a language designed to be as similar to Haskell. We have implemented our own Ωmega interpreter, similar in spirit and capabilities to the Hugs interpreter for Haskell [[9](#_bookmark15)]. Theoretical work demonstrating the consistency of type equality support in a functional language has been carried out by Cheney and Hinze. We have imple- mented these type system features into a type inference engine, combining it with an equality decision procedure to manipulate type equalities. The resulting imple- mentation has seen a good deal of use in practice, but more rigorous formal work

on this type inference engine is required.

*Polymorphism and Binding Constructs in Types.* The object-language of the example presented in this paper (Figure [1](#_bookmark2)), is simply typed: there are no binding constructs or structures in any index arguments to Exp. If, however, we want to represent object languages with universal or existential types, we will have to find a way of dealing with *type constructors* or *type functions* as index arguments to judgments, which is difficult to do in Haskell or Ωmega. We are currently working on extending the Ωmega type system to do just that. This would allow us to apply our techniques to object languages with more complex type systems (e.g., polymorphism, dependent types, and so on).

*Logical Framework in* Ω*mega.* The examples presented in this paper succeed be- cause we manage to encode the usual logical-framework-style inductive predicates into the type system of Ωmega. We have acquired considerable experience in doing this for typing judgments, lists with length, logical propositions, and so on. What is needed now is to come up with a formal and general scheme of translating such predicates into Ωmega type constructors, as well as to explore the range of expres- siveness and the limitations of such an approach. We intend to work on this in the future.

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