

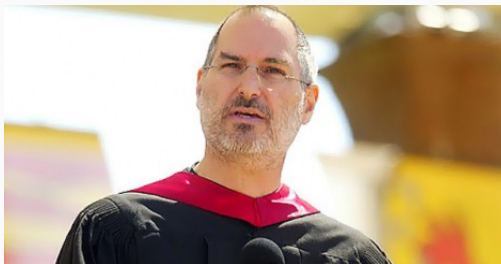
USING HASKELL PROFESSIONALLY

Alfredo Di Napoli

These slides are available at URL.

External links are references are provided at the end.

Today, I'm gonna tell you three stories.



1. My story
2. My company story
3. Your story

Back in 2007, I had my first exposure to FP, under the form of a university course. The course taught us OCaml.

Back in 2007, I had my first exposure to FP, under the form of a university course. The course taught us OCaml.

After the initial enthusiasm, I drifted back to Python and other OOP languages.

I was still in love with Python. At the time I was a regular attendee of **Python-it.org**, a popular Italian community.

I fell in love with Clojure.

Pushing myself forward in my holy grail search, I was exposed to a huge number of programming language, trying to find the “perfect” one: Scheme, Clojure, Common Lisp, **Haskell**, Io, Ruby, *put-yet-another-language-here*.

So, despite the interest, I did went back to Clojure and lisp-family languages.

I was writing my masters degree dissertation on *Parallel and Distributed Computing*, using nothing but C++. The topic, together with the exposure to C++ revamped in me the holy flame of fast and compiled languages.

I was writing my masters degree dissertation on *Parallel and Distributed Computing*, using nothing but C++. The topic, together with the exposure to C++ revamped in me the holy flame of fast and compiled languages.

Being Haskell a compiled language, I wanted to give it another go, so I bought *Learn You Some Haskell for Great Good* and worked my way through it.



I started an internship with a company in the defense field, doing C++ in Rome. To hone my Haskell skills I tried to contribute to an Haskell open source project, the Snap framework.

Being determined in earning a living with functional programming, I decided to concentrate my efforts only on three languages, based on different criteria (commercial users, personal preference, job offers abroad):

Haskell

OCaml

Scala

THE MANCHESTER ERA



Scala programmer during the day, Haskell coder at night.

2 DAY COURSE

Well-Typed's Fast Track to Haskell



After a couple of months (it was July 2013) Well Typed was hiring. I decided to take pot luck and I applied.

To maximise my chances, I applied to a couple of other positions for Haskell jobs.

Despite the rejections, **I was actually able to face an entire interview doing nothing but Haskell!**



Got rejected by WT, but they said "A client of us might be searching soon..."

LANDING THE TECH JOB I LOVED



On the 29th of August, I applied for a Haskell job @ Iris Connect. Took a train to Brighton, did the interview and was offered the position. **I was officially an Haskeller!**

1. Don't be afraid to take leaps into the dark
2. Life is about opportunities, seize them
3. Try to contribute to a “famous” Haskell OSS
4. Constantly “sharpen your saw”
5. Be receptive, do networking



discovers. develop. share.

A sharing and collaboration platform for teachers via video recording, feedback and introspection.

1. Initially build with RoR, it was rewritten from scratch in Haskell (backend) and RoR + Angular.js (frontend)

- 1.1 Effort initially started by my colleague Chris Dornan and Well Typed

2. The backend is composed by two main projects:

- 2.1 The frontend-facing API server which holds the model and the business logic (**Atlas**)

- 2.2 The video transcoding system (**Hermes**), a highly distributed and fault tolerant system, built on top of RabbitMQ.

WHY HASKELL?



Because software development is a marathon, not a sprint.

"It took me more time writing the specs than implementing the feature itself."



Because we are like Shlemiel the painter.

Shlemiel gets a job as a street painter, painting the dotted lines down the middle of the road.

On the first day he takes a can of paint out to the road and finishes 300 yards of the road. "That's pretty good!" says his boss, "you're a fast worker!"

The next day Shlemiel only gets 150 yards done. "Well, that's not nearly as good as yesterday, but you're still a fast worker."

The next day Shlemiel paints 30 yards of the road. "Only 30!" shouts his boss. "That's unacceptable! On the first day you did ten times that much work! What's going on?"

"I can't help it," says Shlemiel. "Every day I get farther and farther away from the paint can!"

1. The more time it pass, the farther we get from our “paint can”, the mental model we built of the system.
2. In large scale systems, you can have parts that won't be touched for *years*!
 - 2.1 How do you defend yourself when the refactoring or feature time comes?
3. A rich, strong and expressive type system can be your ultimate ally against complexity
 - 3.1 Things like **newtypes** and **ADTs** can help you cure common “diseases” like *Boolean Blindness*

**As universe expands, so does the entropy in your software:
use types to keep it at bay!**

1. Refactoring is a dream
2. EDSLs are a piece of cake
3. Makes impossible states unrepresentable
4. High quality libraries

1. The type system naturally guides you
2. In Haskell we tend to write small and generic functions
 - 2.1 Cfr. Bob Martin's "Clean Code"
 - 2.2 Most of the time they don't even break as they are written to work on polymorphic types
 - 2.3 Code reuse = profit!

So ultimately is not just about the strong type system, is about Haskell's (and Haskellers) natural tendency towards **composition** and **parametricity**.

```
fromPreset :: MediaFile -> MediaFile
            -> Maybe Atlas.VideoFilter
            -> VideoPreset -> Maybe VideoRotation
            -> LogLevel -> [T.Text]
fromPreset filename outFilePath flt vpres vi ll =
    let cli = ffmpegCLI $ mconcat [
        i $ toTextIgnore filename
        , loglevel ll
        , fromVideoPreset vpres
        , isVideoRotated vi <?> resetRotateMetadata
        , yuv420p
        , vf [rotateMb vi]
        , isJust flt <?> vf_technicolor
        , o_y_ext (toTextIgnore outFilePath) (Left vpres)
    ]
    in T.words cli
```

Real world scenario:

```
-- | Creates a new Supervisor.  
-- Maintains a map <ThreadId, ChildSpec>  
newSupervisor :: IO Supervisor  
  
-- | Start an async thread to supervise its children  
supervise :: Supervisor -> IO ()  
  
-- | forkIO-inspired function  
forkSupervised :: Supervisor  
                -> RestartStrategy  
                -> IO ()  
                -> IO ThreadId
```

Example usage:

```
main = do
  sup <- newSupervisor
  supervise sup
  _ <- forkSupervised sup OneForOne $ do
    threadDelay 1000000
    print "Done"
```

Can you spot a potential bug?

Nothing in the types is forcing us to call `supervise` before actually supervising some thread!

```
main = do
  sup <- newSupervisor
  -- Wrong! We forgot to start the supervisor...
  _ <- forkSupervised sup OneForOne $ do
    threadDelay 1000000
    print "Done"
```

As Haskellers, we can certainly do better!

PHANTOM TYPES TO THE RESCUE!

Phantom Types allow us to “embed” constrain on our types, together with smart constructors.

```
data Uninitialised
data Initialised

data Supervisor_ a = Supervisor_ {
    -- record fields (omitted)
}

type SupervisorSpec = Supervisor_ Uninitialised
type Supervisor = Supervisor_ Initialised
```

Let's now slightly change our API to be this:

```
-- | Creates a new Supervisor.  
newSupervisor :: IO SupervisorSpec  
  
-- | Start an async thread to supervise its children  
supervise :: SupervisorSpec -> IO Supervisor
```

What did we get? Let's try to run the “wrong” snippet again...

```
main = do
  sup <- newSupervisor
  _ <- forkSupervised sup OneForOne $ do
    threadDelay 1000000
    print "Done"
```

What did we get? Let's try to run the “wrong” snippet again...

```
main = do
  sup <- newSupervisor
  _ <- forkSupervised sup OneForOne $ do
    threadDelay 1000000
    print "Done"
```

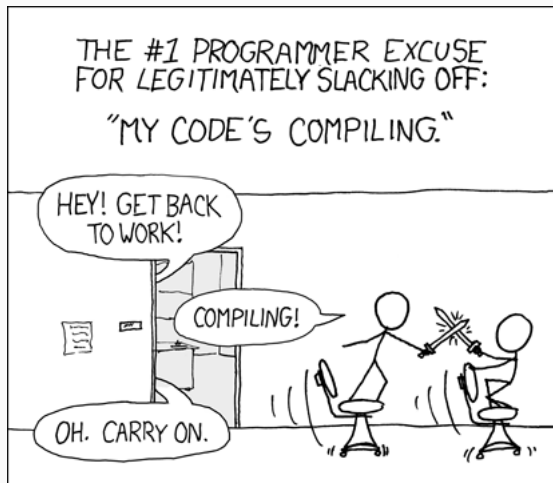
GHC will complain:

```
Couldn't match type Control.Concurrent.Supervisor.Uninitialised
      with Control.Concurrent.Supervisor.Initialised
Expected type: Supervisor
Actual type: Control.Concurrent.Supervisor.SupervisorSpec
```

1. This is because now we require a `Supervisor` to be initialised first
2. The type system prevented us making a silly mistake
 - 2.1 Failed with a very useful error message
3. Profit!

This is just a small example (this is only one of the possible solutions), but the benefits are real.

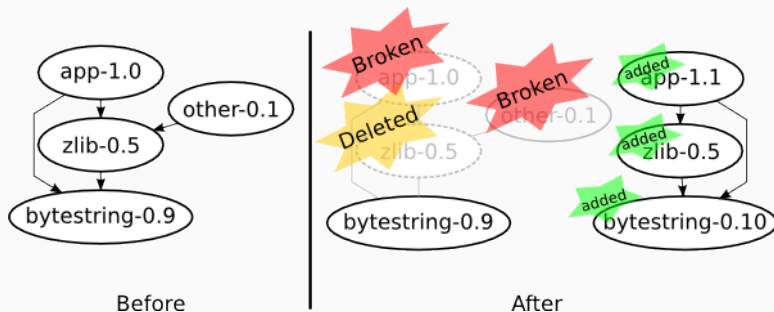
1. Slow(ish) Compilation
2. Cabal Hell



1. It's a problem all non-interpreted languages have to deal with
2. GHC indeed does incremental compilation, building only what's changed
3. It's even slower if..
 - 3.1 You have TH (Template Haskell) in your code
 - 3.2 You are building with profiling enabled

If you want faster feedback loop, consider using `ghci`

It's the aggregate of more than one problem, which ultimately results in "I couldn't install package X"



1. Sandboxes mitigate the issue

```
cabal sandbox init  
cabal install
```

2. “Package aggregates” can help

Stackage

Haskell LTS

Nix and NixOS

3. Broader solutions are in the pipeline

Edward Z. Yang’s “Backpack”

What can **you** do (as a community) to embrace, support and spread functional programming?

Be pragmatic.

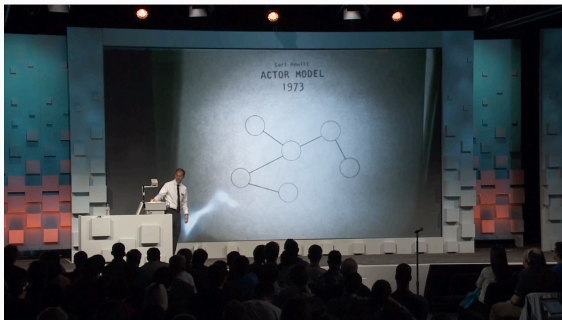
Don't be condescending.

[..]Haskell wasn't built on great ideas, although it has those. It was built on a culture of how ideas are treated.[..]

[..]In functional programming, our proofs are not by contradiction, but by construction. If you want to teach functional programming, or preach functional programming, or just to even have productive discussions[..], it will serve you well to learn that ethic.[..]

Keep an open mind.

QUOTING BRET VICTOR'S "THE FUTURE OF PROGRAMMING"



[..]So the most dangerous thought that you can have as a creative person is to think that you know what you're doing. Because once you think you know what you're doing, **you stop looking around for other ways of doing things.**[..]

[..]If you want to be open or receptive to new ways of thinking, to invent new ways of thinking, I think the first step is you have to say to yourself, "**I don't know what I'm doing.**"[..] I think you have to say, "we don't know what programming is".[..]

**And once you truly understand that - and once you truly
believe that - then you're free.**

Thank you.

Questions?

My road to Haskell

<http://www.alfredodinapoli.com/posts/2014-04-27-my-road-to-haskell.html>

Don Stewart - Haskell in the large

<http://code.haskell.org/~dons/talks/dons-google-2015-01-27.pdf>

Bret Victor - The Future of Programming

<http://vimeo.com/71278954>

Joel Spolsky - Back to Basics

<http://www.joelonsoftware.com/articles/fog0000000319.html>

Gershon Bazerman - Letter to a Young Haskell Enthusiast

<http://comonad.com/reader/2014/letter-to-a-young-haskell-enthusiast/>

How we might abolish Cabal hell (part one)

<http://www.well-typed.com/blog/2014/09/how-we-might-abolish-cabal-hell-part-1/>

How we might abolish Cabal hell (part two)

<http://www.well-typed.com/blog/104/>