### **GADTs in OCaml**

# Functional Conf, Bangalore, India Anmol Sahoo, IIT Madras

### **About Me**

- Project associate at IIT Madras
- · Working on the OCaml compiler
- Guided by KC Sivaramakrishanan (kcsrk.info) (All slides thanks to him as well!)

#### **Multicore OCaml at IIT Madras**

- Working on upstreaming the multicore compiler for OCaml
- Lots of work on the compiler as well as application libraries
- Good mix of theoretical and practical work

We are hiring - <u>Hiring Page</u> (http://kcsrk.info/ocaml/multicore/job/2019/09/16/1115-multicore-job/)

#### Agenda

- Introduction to OCaml syntax let bindings, functions and pattern matching
- Algebraic Datatypes in OCaml
- Generalized Algebraic Datatypes (GADTs)

#### **But first, Why GADTs?**

- Type safety Not just the typed interpreter, practical examples
  - Safely typed GraphQL in OCaml (https://andreas.github.io/2017/11/29/type-safe-graphql-with-ocaml-part-1/)
- Performance
  - Why GADTs matter for performance (https://blog.janestreet.com/why-gadts-matter-for-performance/)
- Generic programming
  - Generic Programming in OCaml (https://arxiv.org/pdf/1812.11665.pdf)

# **Syntax Primer**

### Values in OCaml

In [ ]:	
42	
In [ ]:	
<pre>In [ ]: "Hello"</pre>	
Tiecco	
In [ ]:	
3.1415	

- Observe that the values have
  - static semantics: types int, string, float.
  - dynamic semantics: the value itself.

# Type Inference and annotation

- OCaml compiler infers types
  - Compilation fails with type error if it can't
  - Hard part of language design: guaranteeing compiler can infer types when program is correctly written
- You can manually annotate types anywhere Replace e with (e : t)
  - Useful for resolving type errors

```
In [ ]:
(42.4 : float)
```

#### More values

OCaml also support other values. See manual (https://caml.inria.fr/pub/docs/manual-ocaml/values.html).

```
In []:
()
In []:
(1,"hello", true, 3.4)
In []:
[1;2;3]
In []:
```

# **Static vs Dynamic distinction**

Static typing helps catch lots errors at compile time.

Which of these is static error?

```
In []:

23 = 45.0

In []:

23 = 45
```

# If expression

```
if e1 then e2 else e3
```

- **Static Semantics:** If e1 has type bool, and e2 has type t2 and e3 has type t2 then if e1 then e2 else e3 has type t2.
- Dynamic Semantics: If e1 evaluates to true, then evaluate e2, else evaluate e3

```
In [ ]:
if 32 = 31 then "Hello" else "World"

In [ ]:
if true then 13 else 13.4
```

# Let expression

```
let x = e1 in e2
```

- x is an identifier
- e1 is the binding expression
- e2 is the body expression
- let x = e1 in e2 is itself an expression

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let x = 5 in x + 5
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let x = 5 in
let y = 10 in
x + y
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let x = 5 in
let x = 10 in
x
```

### **Scopes & shadowing**

```
let x = 5 in
let x = 10 in
x
```

is parsed as

```
let x = 5 in
(let x = 10 in
x)
```

- Importantly, x is not mutated; there are two x s in different **scopes**.
- Inner definitions **shadow** the outer definitions.

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let x = 5 in
let y =
   let x = 10 in
   x
in
x+y
```

### **Functions**

```
In [ ]:
```

```
fun x -> x + 1
```

The function type int -> int says that it takes one argument of type int and returns a value of type int.

#### **Function scope**

The function body can refer to any variables in scope.

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let foo =
  let y = 10 in
  let x = 5 in
  fun z -> x + y + z
```

#### **Functions are values**

Can use them anywhere we can use values:

- Functions can take functions as arguments
- Functions can **return** functions as arguments

As you will see, this is an incredibly powerful language feature.

# **Function application**

```
The syntax is
```

```
e0 e1 ... en
```

• No parentheses necessary

### **Function Application Evaluation**

```
e0 e1 ... en
```

- Evaluate e0 ... en to values v0 ... vn
- Type checking will ensure that v0 is a function fun x1 ... xn -> e
- Substitute vi for xi in e yielding new expression e'
- Evaluate e' to a value v, which is result

### **Function Application**

```
In [ ]:
```

```
(fun \ x \ -> \ x \ + \ 1) \ 1
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
(fun x y z -> x + y + z) 1 2 3
```

The above function is syntactic sugar for

```
In [ ]:
```

```
(fun \ x \ -> \ fun \ y \ -> \ fun \ z \ -> \ x \ + \ y \ + \ z) \ 1 \ 2 \ 3
```

Multi-argument functions do not exist!

#### **Function definition**

We can name functions using let .

```
let succ = fun x -> x + 1
```

which is semantically equivalent to

```
let succ x = x + 1
```

You'll see the latter form more often.

### **Function definition**

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let succ x = x + 1
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
succ 10
```

### **Function definition**

```
In [ ]:
let add x y = x + y

In [ ]:
let add = fun x -> fun y -> x + y

In [ ]:
add 5 10
```

# **Partial Application**

```
(fun x y z -> x + y + z) 1
returns a function
  (fun y z -> 1 + y + z)

In []:
let foo = (fun x y z -> x + y + z) 1

In []:
foo 2 3
```

# **Partial Application**

```
In [ ]:

let succ = add 1
let pred = add (-1)
```

```
In [ ]:
succ 10
```

```
In [ ]:
pred 10
```

# **Recursive Functions**

Recursive functions can call themselves. The syntax for recursive function definition is:

```
let rec foo x = \dots
```

Notice the rec key word.

### **Recursive Functions**

```
In [ ]:

let rec sum_of_first_n n =
   if n <= 0 then 0
   else n + sum_of_first_n (n-1)</pre>
```

```
In [ ]:
sum_of_first_n 5
```

# **Mutually recursive functions**

```
In [ ]:

let rec even n =
    if n = 0 then true
    else odd (n-1)

and odd n =
    if n = 0 then false
    else even (n-1)
```

```
In []:
odd 44
```

# **Data Types**

# Type aliases

OCaml support the definition of aliases for existing types. For example,

```
In [ ]:

type int_float_pair = int * float

In [ ]:

let x = (10, 3.14)

In [ ]:

let y : int_float_pair = x
```

### **Records**

- Records in OCaml represent a collection of named elements.
- $\bullet\,$  A simple example is a point record containing x, y and z fields:

```
In []:

type point = {
    x : int;
    y : int;
    z : int;
}
```

### **Records: Creation and access**

We can create instances of our point type using  $\{\ldots\}$ , and access the elements of a point using the . operator:

```
In [ ]:

let origin = { y = 0; x = 0; z = 0 }

let get_y (r : point) = r.y
```

# **Product Types**

- Records and tuples are known as product types.
  - Each value of a product type includes all of the types that constitute the product.

```
type person_r = {name: string; age: int; height: float}
type person_t = string * int * float
```

Records are indexed by names whereas tuples are indexed by positions (1st, 2nd, etc.).

# **Sum Types a.k.a Variants**

The type definition syntax is:

```
type t =
| C1 of t1
| C2 of t2
| C3 of t2
```

- C1, C2, C2 are known as constructors
- t1, t2 and t3 are optional data carried by constructor

```
• Also known as Algebraic Data Types
In [ ]:
type color =
   Red
    Green
   Blue
In [ ]:
let v = (Green, Red)
In [ ]:
type point = {x : int; y : int}
type shape =
   Circle of point * float (* center, radius *)
    Rect of point * point (* lower-left, upper-right *)
  | ColorPoint of point * color
In [ ]:
Circle ({x=4;y=3}, 2.5)
In [ ]:
Rect (\{x=3; y=4\}, \{x=7; y=9\})
```

# **Recursive variant types**

Let's define an integer list

```
In [ ]:

type intlist =
    | INil
    | ICons of int * intlist

In [ ]:

ICons (1, ICons (2, ICons (3, INil)))
```

• Nil and Cons originate from Lisp.

# **String List**

• Now what about pointlist, shapelist, etc?

#### **Parameterized Variants**

```
In []:

type 'a lst =
    Nil
    | Cons of 'a * 'a lst

In []:

Cons (1, Cons (2, Nil))

In []:

Cons ("Hello", Cons("World", Nil))
```

### **Type Variable**

- Variable: name standing for an unknown value
- Type Variable: name standing for an unknown type
- Java example is List<T>
- OCaml syntax for type variable is a single quote followed by an identifier
  - 'foo, 'key,'value
- Most often just 'a, 'b.
  - Pronounced "alpha", "beta" or "quote a", "quote b".

# **Polymorphism**

- The type 'a 1st that we had defined earlier is a polymorphic data type.
- poly = many, morph = change.
- write functionality that works for many data types.
- Related to Java Generics and C++ template instantiation.
- In 'a lst, lst is known as a type constructor.
  - constructs types such as int lst, string lst, shape lst, etc.

# **OCaml built-in lists are just variants**

OCaml effectively codes up lists as variants:

```
type 'a list = [] | :: of 'a * 'a list
```

- [] and :: are constuctors.
- Just a bit of syntactic magic to use [] and :: as constructors rather than alphanumeric identifiers.

```
In []:
[]
In []:
1::2::[]
```

# **Pattern Matching**

### Pattern Matching

- · Pattern matching is data deconstruction
  - Match on the shape of data
  - Extract part(s) of data

#### **Syntax**

```
match e with
| p1 -> e1
| p2 -> e2
| pn -> en
```

• p1 ... pn are patterns.

# **Pattern Matching on Lists**

```
type 'a list = [] | :: of 'a * 'a list
```

- For lists, the patterns allowed follow from the constructors
  - The pattern [] matches the value [].
  - The patterh h::t
    - matches 2::[], binding h to 2 and t to [].
    - matches 2::3::[], binding h to 2 and t to 3::[].
  - The pattern is a wildcard pattern and matches anything.

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let list status l =
 match l with
  | [] -> print endline "The list is empty"
  | h::t -> Printf.printf "The list is non-empty. Head = %d\n%!" h
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
list_status []
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
list_status [1;2;3]
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
list status (2::[3;4])
```

# Advantages of pattern matching

1. You cannot forget to match a case (Exhaustivity warning)

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let list status l =
 match l with
   [] -> print_endline "The list is empty"
   h1::h2::t -> Printf.printf "The list is non-empty. 2nd element = %d\n%!" h2
```

# Advantages of pattern matching

- 1. You cannot forget to match a case (Exhaustivity warning)
- 2. You cannot duplicate a case (Unused case warning)

```
In [ ]:
let list status l =
 match l with
  | [] -> print_endline "The list is empty"
  h::t -> Printf.printf "The list is non-empty. Head = %d\n%!" h
  | h1::h2::t -> Printf.printf "The list is non-empty. 2nd element = %d\n%!" h2
```

### Length of list (tail recursive)

```
In [ ]:
let rec length' l acc =
  match l with
  | [] -> acc
  | h::t -> length' t (1+acc)
let length l = length' l 0
In [ ]:
```

```
length [1;2;3;4]
```

### Match ordering

The patterns are matched in the order that they are written down.

```
In [ ]:
let is_empty l =
 match l with
     -> false
  | [] -> true
```

#### nth

In [ ]:

Implement indexing into the list

```
let rec nth l n =
 match (l, n) with
```

```
\mid (hd::_, 0) -> Some hd
(hd::tl, n) -> nth tl (n-1)
| _ -> None
```

```
In [ ]:
nth [1;2;3] 4
```

# **Nested Matching**

```
In [ ]:
type color = Red | Green | Blue
type point = {x : int; y : int}
type shape =
   Circle of point * float (* center, radius *)
    Rect of point * point (* lower-left, upper-right *)
  | ColorPoint of point * color
```

# Nested Matching

Is the first shape in a list of shapes a red point?

```
In [ ]:

let is_hd_red_circle l =
  match l with
  | ColorPoint(_,Red)::_ -> true
  | _ -> false
```

### **Nested Matching**

Print the coordinates if the point is green.

# **Generalized Algebraic Data Types**

# Simple language

Consider this simple language of integers and booleans

```
In [ ]:
```

```
type value =
    | Int of int
    | Bool of bool

type expr =
    | Val of value
    | Plus of expr * expr
    | Mult of expr * expr
    | Ite of expr * expr * expr
```

# **Evaluator for the simple language**

We can write a simple evaluator for this language

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let rec eval : expr -> value =
  fun e -> match e with
  | Val (Int i) -> Int i
  | Val (Bool i) -> Bool i
  | Plus (e1, e2) ->
    let Int i1, Int i2 = eval e1, eval e2 in
    Int (i1 + i2)
  | Mult (e1, e2) ->
    let Int i1, Int i2 = eval e1, eval e2 in
    Int (i1 * i2)
  | Ite (p,e1,e2) ->
    let Bool b = eval p in
    if b then eval e1 else eval e2
```

# **Evaluator for the simple language**

- The compiler warns that programs such as true + 10 is not handled.
  - Our evaluator gets **stuck** when it encouters such an expression.

```
In [ ]:
```

```
eval (Plus (Val (Bool true), Val (Int 10)))
```

- We need Types
  - Well-typed programs do not get stuck!

### Phantom types

We can add types to our values using a technique called phantom types

```
In [ ]:
```

```
type 'a value =
    | Int of int
    | Bool of bool
```

- Observe that 'a only appears on the LHS.
  - This 'a is called a phantom type variable.
- · What is this useful for?

### **Typed expression language**

We can add types to our expression language now using phantom type

```
In [ ]:
```

```
type 'a expr =
  | Val of 'a value
  | Plus of int expr * int expr
  | Mult of int expr * int expr
  | Ite of bool expr * 'a expr * 'a expr
```

# **Typed expression language**

Assign concerte type to the phantom type variable  $\ 'a\ .$ 

```
In [ ]:
```

```
(* Quiz: What types are inferred without type annotations? *)
let mk_int i : int expr = Val (Int i)
let mk_bool b : bool expr = Val (Bool b)
let plus e1 e2 : int expr = Plus (e1, e2)
let mult e1 e2 : int expr = Mult (e1, e2)
```

# **Benefit of phantom types**

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let i = Val (Int 0);;
let i' = mk_int 0;;

let b = Val (Bool true);;
let b' = mk_bool true;;

let p = Plus (i,i);;
let p' = plus i i;;
```

### Benefit of phantom types

We no longer allow ill-typed expression if we use the helper functions.

```
In [ ]:
```

```
plus (mk_bool true) (mk_int 10)
```

### Typed evaluator

We can write an evaluator for this language now.

Let's use the same evaluator as the earlier one.

#### In [ ]:

```
let rec eval : 'a expr -> 'a value =
  fun e -> match e with
  | Val (Int i) -> Int i
  | Val (Bool i) -> Bool i
  | Plus (e1, e2) ->
    let Int i1, Int i2 = eval e1, eval e2 in
    Int (i1 + i2)
  | Mult (e1, e2) ->
    let Int i1, Int i2 = eval e1, eval e2 in
    Int (i1 * i2)
  | Ite (p,e1,e2) ->
    let Bool b = eval p in
    if b then eval e1 else eval e2
```

### Typed evaluator

- We see a \$\color{red}{\text{type error}}\$.
- OCaml by default expects the function expression at the recursive call position to have the same type as the outer function.
- This need not be the case if the recursive function call is at different types.
  - eval (p : int expr) and eval (p : bool expr).

# Polymorphic recursion.

- In order to allow this, OCaml supports polymorphic recursion (aka Milner-Mycroft typeability)
  - Robin Milner co-invented type infererence + polymorphism that we use in OCaml.

# Fixing the interpreter with polymorphic recursion

type a is known as locally abstract type.

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let rec eval : type a. a expr -> a value =
  fun e -> match e with
  | Val (Int i) -> Int i
  | Val (Bool i) -> Bool i
  | Plus (e1, e2) ->
    let Int i1, Int i2 = eval e1, eval e2 in
    Int (i1 + i2)
  | Mult (e1, e2) ->
    let Int i1, Int i2 = eval e1, eval e2 in
    Int (i1 * i2)
  | Ite (p,e1,e2) ->
    let Bool b = eval p in
    if b then eval e1 else eval e2
```

### Errors gone, but warning remains

- Compiler still warns us that there are unhandled cases in pattern matches
- But haven't we added types to the expression language?
- Observe that mk\_int i = Val (Int i) is just convention.
  - You can still write ill-typed expression by directly using the constructors.

### Errors gone, but warning remains

```
In [ ]:
eval (Plus (Val (Bool true), Val (Int 10)))
```

- Here, Bool true is inferred to have the type int value.
  - Need a way to inform the compiler that Bool true has type bool value.

# **Generalized Algebraic Data Types**

GADTs allow us to **refine** the return type of the data constructor.

```
In [ ]:
```

```
type 'a value =
  | Int : int -> int value
  | Bool : bool -> bool value

type 'a expr =
  | Val : 'a value -> 'a expr
  | Plus : int expr * int expr -> int expr
  | Mult : int expr * int expr -> int expr
  | Ite : bool expr * 'a expr -> 'a expr
```

#### **Evaluator remains the same**

Observe that the warnings are also gone!

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let rec eval : type a. a expr -> a value =
    fun e -> match e with
    | Val (Int i) -> Int i
    | Val (Bool i) -> Bool i
    | Plus (e1, e2) ->
        let Int i1, Int i2 = eval e1, eval e2 in
        Int (i1 + i2)
    | Mult (e1, e2) ->
        let Int i1, Int i2 = eval e1, eval e2 in
        Int (i1 * i2)
    | Ite (p,e1,e2) ->
        let Bool b = eval p in
        if b then eval e1 else eval e2
```

# **Absurd expressions are ill-typed**

```
In [ ]:
```

```
eval (Plus (Val (Bool true), Val (Int 10)))
```

# **Absurd types**

GADTs don't prevent you from instantiating absurd types. Consider

```
In [ ]:
```

```
type t = string value
```

- There is no term with type string value
- We will ignore such types.

### **GADTs are very powerful!**

- Allows refining return types and introduce existential types (to be discussed).
- Some uses
  - Typed domain specific languages
    - The example that we just saw...
  - (Lightweight) dependently typed programming
    - Enforcing shape properties of data structures
  - Generic programming
    - Implementing functions like map and fold operate on the shape of the data once and for all!

### **GADT** examples

- · Units of measure
- · Abstract (existential) types encoding first-class modules
- · Generic programming encoding tuples
- · Shape properties length-indexed lists

#### Units of measure

- In 1999, \$125 million mars climate orbiter (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mars\_Climate\_Orbiter) was lost due to units of measurement error
  - Lockheed Martin used Imperial and NASA used Metric
  - Use GADTs to avoid such errors, but still host both units of measure in the same program

### **Units of measure**

```
In [ ]:
```

### Units of measure

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let add_temp : type a. a temp -> a temp =
fun a b -> match a,b with
    | Kelvin a, Kelvin b -> Kelvin (a+.b)
    | Celcius a, Celcius b -> Celcius (a+.b)
    | Farenheit a, Farenheit b -> Farenheit (a+.b)
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
add_temp (Kelvin 20.23) (Kelvin 30.5)
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
add_temp (Kelvin 20.23) (Celcius 12.3)
```

### Abstract types

• GADTs also introduce abstract types (aka existential type).

```
In [ ]:

type t = Pack : 'a -> t
```

- Observe that the 'a does not appear on the RHS.
  - 'a is the existential type.
  - Given a value Pack x of type t, we know nothing about the type of x except that such a type exists.
- Compare with Some x which has type 'a t, where x is of type 'a.

#### **Abstract List**

With GADTs you can create list that contains values of different types.

```
In [ ]:
```

```
[Pack 10; Pack "Hello"; Pack true]
```

- This particular list isn't useful
  - Given Pack v, we only know that v has some type 'a.
  - We do not have any useful operations on values of type 'a; it is too polymorphic.

#### **Existential list: showable**

Here is a more useful heterogeneous list: List of printable values.

# **Encoding Tuples**

We can encode OCaml-like tuples using GADTs.

```
let l = Cons (10, Cons (false, Cons (10.4, Nil)))
```

# **Encoding Pairs: Accessor Functions**

```
In [ ]:

let fst : ('a * _) hlist -> 'a = fun (Cons (x,_)) -> x
let snd : (_ * ('a * _)) hlist -> 'a = fun (Cons (_,Cons(x,_))) -> x
let trd : (_ * (_ * ('a * _))) hlist -> 'a = fun (Cons(_,Cons(_,Cons(x,_)))) -> x
```

# **Encoding Pairs: Accessor Functions**

```
In [ ]:
trd (Cons (10, Cons (true, Cons(10.5, Nil))))
In [ ]:
trd (Cons (true, Cons(10.5, Nil)))
```

### Length-indexed lists

Some of the list function in the OCaml list library as quite unsatisfying.

```
In [ ]:
List.hd []
In [ ]:
List.tl []
```

### Morever, these errors caught at runtime

```
In []:
let get_head x = List.hd x

In []:
get_head []
```

# Length indexed lists

- Let's implement our own list type which will statically catch these errors.
- The idea is to encode the **length** of the list in the **type** of the list.
  - Use our encoding of church numerals from lambda calculus.

# **Church numerals in OCaml types**

```
In [ ]:

type z = Z
type 'n s = S : 'n -> 'n s

In [ ]:
S (S Z)
```

# Length indexed list

**Cons**(0,**Nil**);;

Cons(0, Cons(1, Nil));;

```
In [ ]:

type (_,_) list =
    | Nil : ('a, z ) list
    | Cons : 'a * ('a,'n) list -> ('a, 'n s) list

In [ ]:
Nil;;
```

#### Safe hd and tl

Define the function hd and tl such that they can only be applied to non-empty lists.

```
In []:
```

```
let hd (l : ('a,'n s) list) : 'a =
  let Cons (v,_) = l in
  v
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
hd (Cons (1, Nil))
```

```
In [ ]:
```

hd **Nil** 

#### Safe hd and tl

Define the function hd and tl such that they can only be applied to non-empty lists.

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let hd (l : ('a,'n s) list) : 'a =
  let Cons (x,_) = l in
  x
```

- Observe that OCaml does not complain about Nil case not handled.
  - Does not apply since l is non-empty!
  - GADTs allow the compiler to refute cases statically
    - Generate more efficient code!

### Safe hd and tl

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let tl (l : ('a,'n s) list) : ('a, 'n) list =
  let Cons (_,xs) = l in
  xs
```

```
In [ ]:
```

```
tl (Cons (0, Cons(1,Nil)));;
tl (Cons (0, Nil));;
```

### List map

map is length preserving

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let rec map : type n. ('a -> 'b) -> ('a, n) list -> ('b, n) list =
fun f l ->
  match l with
  | Nil -> Nil
  | Cons (x,xs) -> Cons(f x, map f xs)
```

# Non length-preserving map rejected

```
In [ ]:
```

#### **Trees**

In [ ]:

Here is an unconstrained tree data type:

### **Tree operations**

# Perfectly balanced tree using GADTs

# **Operations on gtree**

```
In [ ]:
let rec depthG : type n. ('a,n) gtree -> int =
   fun t -> match t with
   | EmptyG -> 0
   | TreeG (l,_,_) -> 1 + depthG l
```

```
In [ ]:
let topG : ('a, 'n s) gtree -> 'a =
   fun t -> let TreeG(_,v,_) = t in v
```

```
In []:

let rec swivelG : type n.('a,n) gtree -> ('a,n) gtree =
fun t -> match t with
    EmptyG -> EmptyG
    | TreeG (l,v,r) -> TreeG (swivelG r, v, swivelG l)
```

# **Zipping perfect trees**

```
In [ ]:
```

```
let rec zipTree :
    type n.('a,n) gtree -> ('b,n) gtree -> ('a * 'b,n) gtree =
    fun x y -> match x, y with
        EmptyG, EmptyG -> EmptyG
    | TreeG (l,v,r), TreeG (m,w,s) ->
        TreeG (zipTree l m, (v,w), zipTree r s)
```

# Thank you.

**Questions?**