# An Alternative Introduction to Programming Read: A Tutorial of the Scheme Programming language

Shen Zheyu

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## Introduction

- Shen Zheyu, sophomore ECE student
- My GitHub: http://github.com/arsdragonfly/
- SSTIA projects https://github.com/SSTIA





## Overview

This seminar is intended to provide a different introduction to programming from VG101 (and arguably many other courses). In a (hopefully) friendly way, you'll learn many useful things unlikely to be found in other introductory material.

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Much of the content is adapted from *The Little Schemer, Fourth Edition* by D. P. Friedman and M. Felleisen. If you're very interested, You may also want to read *Structure and Interpretation of Computer Programs* by H. Abelson and G. J. Sussman.



# Setup

To begin with this seminar, you need to have a Scheme interpreter up and running. I personally recommend Racket (www.racket-lang.org), though other programs may also work (MIT Scheme, Guile, Chez Scheme, etc.).

# Setup

Before we start, we need to make sure that every program contains the following definitions of primitive functions:

```
(define add1
  (lambda (n)
        (+ n 1)))
(define sub1
    (lambda (n)
        (- n 1)))
(define atom? (lambda (x) (not (or (pair? x) (null? x)))))
```

It's recommended for this seminar now that you write your program in a single source code file, so that latter definitions of functions can build upon previous already-written ones.

## Setup



- What's the answer of (add1 0)?
- 1.

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- What's the answer of (sub1 3)?
- *2*.

- What's the answer of (add1 0)?
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- What's the answer of (sub1 3)?
- 2.
- What's the answer of (add1 (add1 0))?
- It's the answer of (add1 1).

- What's the answer of (add1 0)?
- 1.
- What's the answer of (sub1 3)?
- 2.
- What's the answer of (add1 (add1 0))?
- It's the answer of (add1 1).
- What's the answer of (add1 1) then?
- 2.

- What's the answer of (zero? 0)?
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- What's the answer of (zero? 810)?
- **#f**, which means "false".

- What's the answer of (zero? 0)?
- #t, which means "true".
- What's the answer of (zero? 810)?
- **#f**, which means "false".
- What's the answer of (zero? (sub1 (sub1 2)))?
- #t

- What's the answer of (lambda (x) (add1 (add1 x)))?
- A lambda expression, which is similar to a mathematical function.

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- What's the answer of

```
(define add2 (lambda (x) (add1 (add1 x))))
(add2 (add1 3))
```

6.

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- We first ask the question: what is (add1 3)?

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- 4.
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- It becomes ((lambda (x) (add1 (add1 x))) 4).

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- We first ask the question: what is (add1 3)?
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- Then?
- We substitute x for 4 in the lambda expression.

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- What will we get then?
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- We first ask the question: what is (add1 3)?
- What is the answer of (add1 3)?
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- It becomes ((lambda (x) (add1 (add1 x))) 4).
- Then?
- We substitute x for 4 in the lambda expression.
- What will we get then?
- (add1 (add1 4))
- Is that how we get 6?
- Yes.

• How does the following definition work out?

• We'll figure it out soon™.

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- #t.

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- #t.
- What's the answer of (one? 2)?
- #f.

- How does the above definition work out?
- Let's find it out step by step.
- What's the answer of (one? 1)?
- it boils down to

```
(cond
  ((zero? (sub1 1)) #t)
  (else #f))
```

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- How does cond work then?
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- It works by asking questions: is (zero? (sub1 1)) true?
- Yes. And then?
- We get #t.
- Let's look at another example.

```
(cond
  ((zero? (sub1 1)) #t)
  (else #f))
```

- What will happen when we try to find the answer of (one? 2)?
- We ask questions again. Is (zero? (sub1 2)) true?

```
(cond
  ((zero? (sub1 1)) #t)
  (else #f))
```

- What will happen when we try to find the answer of (one? 2)?
- We ask questions again. Is (zero? (sub1 2)) true?
- No. We then move on to the second question.
- And else is always true.
- Sure. It means "If the above don't work, try this." What do we get then?
- We eventually get #f.

• Let's look at this definition.

```
(define o+
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
            ((zero? y) x)
            (else (add1 (o+ x (sub1 y)))))))
```

• This looks complicated. How does it work?

• Let's look at this definition.

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(define o+
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
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- Let's follow it step by step. What's the answer of (zero? 1)?

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- This looks complicated. How does it work?
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- Let's follow it step by step. What's the answer of (zero? 1)?
- #f.

```
(define o+
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
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• What do we do then?

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(define o+
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
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- What do we do then?
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- We ask for the answer of (add1 (o+ x (sub1 y))).
- Okay. What's the value of (o+ x (sub1 y))?
- That's a good question. We need to first find the answer of x and  $(sub1\ y)$ .

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(define o+
  (lambda (x y)
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- What's the value of x? And what's the value of (sub1 y)?

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- What do we do then?
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- Okay. What's the value of (o+ x (sub1 y))?
- That's a good question. We need to first find the answer of x and  $(sub1\ y)$ .
- What's the value of x? And what's the value of (sub1 y)?
- The value of x is 2, and the value of  $(sub1 \ y)$  is 0.

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(define o+
  (lambda (x y)
     (cond
          ((zero? y) x)
          (else (add1 (o+ x (sub1 y)))))))
```

- What do we do then?
- We ask for the answer of (add1 (o+ x (sub1 y))).
- Okay. What's the value of (o+ x (sub1 y))?
- That's a good question. We need to first find the answer of x and (sub1 y).
- What's the value of x? And what's the value of (sub1 y)?
- The value of x is 2, and the value of  $(sub1 \ y)$  is 0.
- All right. We need to find the value of (o+ 2 0) then.
- What does this mean?

```
(define o+
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
            ((zero? y) x)
            (else (add1 (o+ x (sub1 y)))))))
```

- We enter the *lambda expression* again, but the value of x and y have changed!
- Yes. the value of x is now 2, and the value of y is now 0.

```
(define o+
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
            ((zero? y) x)
            (else (add1 (o+ x (sub1 y)))))))
```

- We enter the *lambda expression* again, but the value of x and y have changed!
- Yes. the value of x is now 2, and the value of y is now 0.
- What's the value of (zero? y) now?
- #t.

```
(define o+
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
            ((zero? y) x)
            (else (add1 (o+ x (sub1 y)))))))
```

- We enter the *lambda expression* again, but the value of x and y have changed!
- Yes. the value of x is now 2, and the value of y is now 0.
- What's the value of (zero? y) now?
- #t.
- What do we get then?
- The value of (o + 2 0) is now the value of x, which is 2.

```
(define o+
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
            ((zero? y) x)
            (else (add1 (o+ x (sub1 y)))))))
```

• Are we done yet?

- Are we done yet?
- Nope. We still need to add1 to the 2. Remember that else?

- Are we done yet?
- Nope. We still need to add1 to the 2. Remember that else?
- Fine. Is that all?
- Yes, and we finally get the 3.

- Now, let's try to write o-.
- This is easy. Remember that we only need to deal with natural numbers.

• What do we do at the first line after cond?

- What do we do at the first line after cond?
- This is the same as before. We ask (zero? y) and if it is true, we get x.

- What do we do at the first line after cond?
- This is the same as before. We ask (zero? y) and if it is true, we get x.
- Isn't that exactly the same?
- Yes. When dealing with numbers, always ask first if a number is zero.

• What next?

- What next?
- Isn't that still very similar as before? We only need to change a tiny bit.

```
(define o-
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
            ((zero? y) x)
            (else (____(___))))))
```

• What next?

- What next?
- Isn't that still very similar as before? We only need to change a tiny bit.

- Is this okay?
- Yes.

```
(define o-
    (lambda (x y)
      (cond
         ((zero? y) x)
         (else (sub1 (o- x (sub1 y)))))))
• Isn't the following one also okay?
  (define o-
    (lambda (x y)
      (cond
        ((zero? y) x)
        (else (o- (sub1 x) (sub1 y))))))
```

• Isn't the following one also okay?

- It seems so. but aren't they essentially the same?
- Not quite, but we'll see it soon™.

# **Building upon**

- Now, let's try to write o\*.
- Doesn't this require the o+ that we have just written?
- Yes, exactly.

# **Building upon**

- Now, let's try to write o\*.
- Doesn't this require the o+ that we have just written?
- Yes, exactly.

```
(define o*
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
            ((zero? y) x)
            (else (+ x (o* x (sub1 y)))))))
```

 Suppose we're using the definition above. What's left to do when (zero? y) finally becomes true when we're looking for the answer of (o- 5 5)?

- Suppose we're using the definition above. What's left to do when (zero? y) finally becomes true when we're looking for the answer of (o- 5 5)?
- It seems that we have a lot of (sub1 ...) to evaluate.

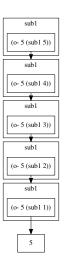


Figure: What we need to remember.

- What's the problem with this?
- We need to remember how many sub1's we need to evaluate.
- What if we have too many things to remember?

- What's the problem with this?
- We need to remember how many sub1's we need to evaluate.
- What if we have too many things to remember?
- We run out of memory. Technically the graph that you saw illustrates what is called a stack and the situation that we run out of memory is called a stack overflow.

- What's the problem with this?
- We need to remember how many sub1's we need to evaluate.
- What if we have too many things to remember?
- We run out of memory. Technically the graph that you saw illustrates what is called a stack and the situation that we run out of memory is called a stack overflow.
- Is there any way to avoid this situation?

- Now let's look at this definition of o-.
- Isn't it only slightly different at the last line?

- Now let's look at this definition of o-.
- Isn't it only slightly different at the last line?
- Yes. But what would be the stack look like?

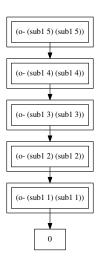


Figure: What we need to remember instead now.

```
(define o-
  (lambda (x y)
      (cond
            ((zero? y) x)
            (else (o- (sub1 x) (sub1 y))))))
```

• What becomes different this time?

- What becomes different this time?
- We don't need to remember how many sub1's we have to do now.

- What becomes different this time?
- We don't need to remember how many sub1's we have to do now.
- Do we really need to remember anything?

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- No, because we do not need to perform further calculations. All we need to do is to return the value.

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- Does this mean that we won't run out of memory?

```
(define o-
  (lambda (x y)
    (cond
      ((zero? y) x)
      (else (o- (sub1 x) (sub1 y))))))
```

- What becomes different this time?
- We don't need to remember how many sub1's we have to do now.
- Do we really need to remember anything?
- No, because we do not need to perform further calculations. All we need to do is to return the value.
- Does this mean that we won't run out of memory?
- Yes. When we call a function where no further calculation needs to be done, it becomes a tail call. The proper forgetting that prevents us from running out of memory is called tail-call optimization.

• What's the answer of (1 2)?

- What's the answer of (1 2)?
- No answer. 1 is not a function that accepts 2 as an argument.

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- What's the answer of (foo 2)?

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- What's the answer of (1 2)?
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- (1 2).

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- What's the answer of (foo 2)?
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- (1 2).
- What's the answer of '(1 2)?

- What's the answer of (1 2)?
- No answer. 1 is not a function that accepts 2 as an argument.
- What's the answer of (foo 2)?
- No answer. foo is not a function yet.
- What's the answer of (quote (1 2))?
- (1 2).
- What's the answer of '(1 2)?
- (1 2). Same as before.

- What's the answer of (atom? 1)?
- #t.

- What's the answer of (atom? 1)?
- #t.
- What's the answer of (atom? '())?
- #f, because it is an empty list.

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- #t.
- What's the answer of (atom? '())?
- #f, because it is an empty list.
- What's the answer of (atom? '(1 (2)))?
- #f, because it is a list.

- What's the answer of (atom? 1)?
- #t.
- What's the answer of (atom? '())?
- #f, because it is an empty list.
- What's the answer of (atom? '(1 (2)))?
- #f, because it is a list.
- What's the answer of (null? '())?
- #f, because it is an empty list.

- What's the answer of (atom? 1)?
- #t.
- What's the answer of (atom? '())?
- #f, because it is an empty list.
- What's the answer of (atom? '(1 (2)))?
- #f, because it is a list.
- What's the answer of (null? '())?
- #f, because it is an empty list.
- What's the answer of (null? '(1 (2)))?
- #f, because it is a non-empty list.

- What's the answer of (car '())?
- No answer, because it's an empty list.

- What's the answer of (car '())?
- No answer, because it's an empty list.
- What's the answer of (car '(1 (2)))?
- 1.

- What's the answer of (car '())?
- No answer, because it's an empty list.
- What's the answer of (car '(1 (2)))?
- 1.
- What's the answer of (cdr '())?
- No answer, because it's an empty list.

- What's the answer of (car '())?
- No answer, because it's an empty list.
- What's the answer of (car '(1 (2)))?
- 1.
- What's the answer of (cdr '())?
- No answer, because it's an empty list.
- What's the answer of (cdr '(1 (2)))?
- '((2)). Note that it's different from '(2)!

- What's the answer of (cons 1 '((2)))?
- '(1 (2)).

- What's the answer of (cons 1 '((2)))?
- '(1 (2)).
- Can we build up the list from the empty list?

- What's the answer of (cons 1 '((2)))?
- '(1 (2)).
- Can we build up the list from the empty list?
- (cons 1 (cons (cons 2 '()) '()))).

- Define a function that removes all numbers equal to x in a list of atoms.
- Sure.

- Define a function that removes all numbers equal to x in a list of atoms.
- Sure.

```
(define multirember
  (lambda (x lat)
       (cond
          ((null? lat) '())
       ((= (car lat) x) (multirember x (cdr lat)))
       (else (cons (car lat) (multirember x (cdr lat)))))))
```

- What are the steps to go through when dealing with a list of atoms?
- We always ask (null? lat) first, then ask other questions.
- What if we're dealing with list of lists?

- Define a function that removes all numbers equal to x in a list of atoms.
- Sure.

- What are the steps to go through when dealing with a list of atoms?
- We always ask (null? lat) first, then ask other questions.
- What if we're dealing with list of lists?
- We ask (null? 1), (atom? (car 1)) and other questions.

- Could you define a function that removes all numbers less than x?
- Isn't this easy?

- Could you define a function that removes all numbers greater than x?
- Isn't this also easy?

```
(define multirember2
  (lambda (x lat)
     (cond
          ((null? lat) '())
          ((> (car lat) x) (multirember x (cdr lat)))
          (else (cons (car lat) (multirember x (cdr lat)))))))
```

- Is it really so easy as you said?
- What's so hard about this? we just copy the whole definition and change what we want.

- Is it really so easy as you said?
- What's so hard about this? we just copy the whole definition and change what we want.
- Is there a way to not copy the whole thing?
- What does it mean?

- Is it really so easy as you said?
- What's so hard about this? we just copy the whole definition and change what we want.
- Is there a way to not copy the whole thing?
- What does it mean?
- Look at this function definition.

• What's the answer of ((mr-f =) 2 '(1 2 3))?

- What's the answer of ((mr-f =) 2 '(1 2 3))?
- '(1 3).

- What's the answer of ((mr-f =) 2 '(1 2 3))?
- '(1 3).
- What's the answer of ((mr-f <) 2 '(1 2 3))?

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- '(1 3).
- What's the answer of ((mr-f <) 2 '(1 2 3))?
- '(2 3).
- What's the answer of ((mr-f >) 2 '(1 2 3))?
- '(1 2).
- What's so special about mr-f?

- What's the answer of ((mr-f =) 2 , (1 2 3))?
- '(1 3).
- What's the answer of ((mr-f <) 2 '(1 2 3))?
- '(2 3).
- What's the answer of ((mr-f >) 2 '(1 2 3))?
- '(1 2).
- What's so special about mr-f?
- It accepts another function as an argument. Such functions are called higher-order functions.

- Let's write the plus function slightly differently.
- $(define \ o-plus \ (lambda \ (x) \ (lambda \ (y) \ (+ \ x \ y)))).$
- Can we write all functions with multiple arguments in this way?

- Let's write the plus function slightly differently.
- (define o-plus (lambda (x) (lambda (y) (+ x y)))).
- Can we write all functions with multiple arguments in this way?
- Sure. Why not? But What's the difference?
- Suppose we have the following function:

How to add 2 to every element of '(1 2 3)?

- How about this: ((maaaap (oplus 1)) '(1 2 3))?
- Yes, it works. Can we multiply it by 3?
- Sure. This is left for you as an exercise.

- How about this: ((maaaap (oplus 1)) '(1 2 3))?
- Yes, it works. Can we multiply it by 3?
- Sure. This is left for you as an exercise.
- Does the process of taking functions apart into many lambdas get a name?
- Yes. It's named Currying in honor of Haskell B. Curry.

• We put the definition of o= here for convenience.

Now, try to write the Fibonacci function.

The code above is a good place to start.

- The code above is a good place to start.
- Doesn't the following definition look natural?

- It might look natural, but it's definitely not the optimal.
- What does it mean?

- It might look natural, but it's definitely not the optimal.
- What does it mean?
- See how long it takes for (fib 10000) to work out.

How about this definition:

• How about this definition:

• Do we need to be careful about how fast our program runs?

How about this definition:

- Do we need to be careful about how fast our program runs?
- Absolutely.

# Thank you!