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# Homogeneous interface for variant, any and optional (Revision 2)

This paper identifies some differences in the design of variant<Ts...>, any and optional<T>, diagnoses them as owing to unnecessary asymmetry between those classes, and proposes wording to eliminate the asymmetry.

# **History**

#### **Revision 2**

The 2nd revision of <u>P0032R1</u> fixes some typos and takes in account the feedback from Jacksonville meeting. Next follows the direction of the committee: Adopt it for C++17 with the following strapools

- Accept .reset() ,remove any.clear() ,leave optional=nullopt ? SF F N A SA 6 9 1 0 0
- Add .has\_value() to any and optional (in addition to optional 's bool conversion? SF F N A SA 3 7 3 3 0
- Add .has\_value() to smart pointers, including unique\_ptr and shared\_ptr ; equivalent to operator bool?

```
SF F N A SA
0 3 2 7 3
```

- Make any::any() (the default constructor) constexpr? (Alisdair raises warnings) SF F N A SA 2 4 9 0 1 (If implementations have significant problems, please tell us.)
- Change make\_optional to be like make\_unique ? SF F N A SA 0 1 7 5 2
- Add make\_any SF F N A SA 2 4 5 4 0 Yes.
- Want to change everything to in\_place ? SF F N A SA 4 6 3 2 2 Yes. (Send us the error messages, plz)
- Add any.emplace ? SF F N A SA 5 7 3 0 0
- Send the changes approved above to LWG for C++17?

Unanimous, with mention that in\_place might be instantiated into every object file.

Also check that <code>any(in\_place<Foo>)</code> stores <code>Foo{}</code>, not <code>in\_place<Foo></code>.

This revision then mainly moves the wording from std::experimental to std and

- Add a mention that <code>in\_place</code> might be instantiated into every object file.
- Add the wording for variant .

#### **Revision 1**

The 1st revision of <u>P0032R0</u> takes in account the feedback from Kona meeting. Next follows the direction of the committee: globally keep the consensual part and extract the conflicting and less polished parts.

• Do we want to adopt the new in\_place definition?

It is clear that we want a different name for the emplace function and the tag, however it is not clear the committee wants the <code>in\_place</code> function reference. Nevertheless, the author doesn't know how to have the <code>in\_place</code> both for <code>optional</code>, <code>any</code> and <code>variant</code> without using function references, so this paper preserve this design.

```
Leave optional different from variant and any 6
Member function is emplace; tag type is in_place 13
Both are emplace 6
```

• Do we want to adopt the new in\_place definition?

```
SF F N A SA
1 3 8 0 0
```

- Do we want in place constructor for any ? Unanimous Yes.
- · Do we want the clear and reset changes? Yes

How to empty an any or optional?

• Do we want the operator bool changes? No, instead a .something() member function (e.g. has\_value) is preferred for the 3 classes. This doesn't mean yet that we replace the existing explicit operator bool in optional.

Do we want emptiness checking to be consistent between any / optional ? Unanimous yes

```
Provide operator bool for both Y: 6 N: 5
Provide .something() Y: 17 N: 0
Provide =={} Y: 0 N: 5
Provide ==std::none Y: 5 N: 2
something(any/optional) Y: 3 N: 8
```

- Do we want the not-a-value none? No, too much unit types. The committee wants a separated paper for a generic none\_t / none.
- Do we want none\_t to be a separate paper?

```
SF F N A SA
11 1 3 0 0
```

• Do we want the make\_any factory? Yes

```
SF F N A SA
1 9 7 2 0
```

- Do we want to have a follow up for a concept based on the functions holds and storage\_address\_of ? Not in this paper.
- Do we want to have a follow up for select<T> / select<I> ? Not in this paper. Considered as invention
- Do we want to have a follow up for the observers reference\_of , value\_of and address\_of ? Not in this paper.

#### Other modifications

- Added a section in the design rationale describing the differences between the new and current in place.
- Improved the wording and in particular added some missing overloads using initializer list.
- Added constexpr for has\_value.
- Added a comparative table on the appendix also.

#### Introduction

This paper identifies some differences in the design of variant<Ts...>, any and optional<T>, diagnoses them as owing to unnecessary asymmetry between those classes, and proposes wording to eliminate the asymmetry.

The identified issues are related to the last Fundamental TS proposal N4562 and the variant proposal [P0088R1] and concerns mainly:

- · coherency of functions that behave the same but that are named differently,
- replace the in\_place tag by a function with overloads for type and index,
- replacement of emplace type<T> / emplace index<I> by in place<T> / in place<I> ,
- addition of emplace factories for any and optional classes.

# **Motivation and Scope**

Both optional and any are classes that can store possibly some underlying type. In the case of optional the underlying type is know at compile time, for any the underlying type is any and know at run-time.

If the variant proposal ends by having nullable variant, the stored type would be any of the Ts or a not-a-value type, know at run-time. Let me refer to this possible variant of nullable variant <Ts...>. The following inconsistencies have been identified:

- variant<Ts...> and optional provides in place construction with different syntax while any requires a specific instance.
- variant<Ts...> and optional provides emplace assignment while any requires a specific instance to be assigned.
- The in place tags for variant<Ts...> and optional are different. However the name should be the same. any doesn't provides in place construction and assignment yet.
- any provides any::clear() to unset the value while optional uses assignment from a nullopt\_t or from {}. This paper doesn't contains any proposal to improve this situation. A separated paper would include a generic none\_t / none proposal.
- optional provides a explicit bool conversion while any provides an any::empty member function.
- optional<T>, variant<Ts...> and any provides different interfaces to get the stored value. optional uses a value member function and pointer-like functions, variant uses a tuple like interface, while any uses a cast like interface. As all these classes are in someway classes that can possibly store a specific type, the first two limited and know at compile time, the last unlimited, it seems natural that all provide the same kind of interface. This paper doesn't contains any proposal to improve this situation. A separated paper would include a generic none\_t / none proposal.

The C++ standard should be coherent for features that behave the same way on different types. Instead of creating specific issues, we have preferred to write a specific paper so that we can discuss of the whole view.

# **Proposal**

```
We propose to:
```

```
Replace in_place_t / in_place by an overloaded function (see eggs-variant).
In class optional<T>

Add a reset member function.
Add a has_value member function.
Add an additional overload for make_optional factory to emplace construct.

In class any

make the default constructor constexpr,
add in_place forward constructors,
add emplace forward member functions,
rename the empty function with has_value and make it constexpr,
rename the clear member function to reset,
Add a make_any factory to emplace construct.

In class variant<T>

In class variant<T>
```

• Replace the uses of emplace\_type\_t<T> / emplace\_index\_t<I> by in\_place\_t<T> / in\_place\_t<I>.

• Replace the uses of emplace\_type<T> / emplace\_index<I> by in\_place<T> / in\_place<I>.

## **Design rationale**

## in place constructor

```
optional<T> in place constructor constructs implicitly a T.
```

```
template <class... Args>
constexpr explicit optional<T>::optional(in_place_t, Args&&... args);
```

In place construct for any cannot have an implicit type T. We need a way to state explicitly which T must be constructed in place.

```
struct in_place_tag {};
template <class T>
using in_place_type_t = in_place_tag(&)(unspecified<T>);
template <class T>
in_place_tag in_place(unspecified<T>) { return {} };
```

The function in\_place\_tag(&) (unspecified<T>) is used to transport the type T participating in overload resolution.

```
template <class T, class ...Args>
any(in_place_type_t<T>), Args&& ...);
```

This can be used as

```
any(in_place<X>, v1, ..., vn);
```

Adopting this template class to optional would needs to change the definition of in\_place\_t / in\_place to

```
using in_place_t = in_place_tag(&)(unspecified);
in_place_tag in_place(unspecified) { return {} };
```

The same applies to variant . We need an additional overload for in place

```
template <int I>
using in_place_index_t = in_place_tag(&)(unspecified<I>);
template <int I>
in_place_tag in_place(unspecified<I>) { return {} };
```

Given

```
struct Foo { Foo(int, double, char); };
```

Before:

```
optional<Foo> of(in_place, 0, 1.5, 'c');
variant<int, Foo> vf(emplace_type<Foo>, 0, 1.5, 'c');
variant<int, Foo> vf(emplace_index<1>, 0, 1.5, 'c');
any af(Foo(0, 1.5, 'c')); // (*)
```

After:

```
optional<Foo> of(in_place, 0, 1.5, 'c');
variant<int, Foo> vf(in_place<Foo>, 0, 1.5, 'c');
variant<int, Foo> vf(in_place<1>, 0, 1.5, 'c');
any af(in_place<Foo>, 0, 1.5, 'c');
```

Note that before any didn't support non-copyable-non-moveable objects like std::mutex . With in\_place we are able to store a mutex in

## Differences between the new in\_place\_t and the old one

#### Cost of function reference versus tags

The prosed function reference for <code>in\_place\_t(&)(unspecified)</code> takes the size of an address while the previous <code>in\_place\_t</code> struct tag was empty and so its size is 1. We don't think this would reduce significantly the performances and believe that it can even perform better, however some measure would be done if there is an interest.

#### Possible malicious attacks

Unfortunately using function references would work for any unary function taken the unspecified type and returning <u>in\_place\_tag</u> in addition to <u>in\_place</u>. Of course defining such a function would imply to hack the unspecified type. This can be seen as a hole on this proposal, but the author think that it is better to have a uniform interface than protecting from malicious attacks from a hacker.

#### No default constructible

While adapting optional < T > to the new  $in_place_t$  type we found that we cannot anymore use  $in_place_t$ . The authors don't consider this a big limitation as the user can use  $in_place$  instead. It needs to be noted that this is in line with the behavior of  $nullopt_t$  as  $nullopt_t$  fails as no default constructible. However  $nullpt_t$  seems to be well formed.

#### Not assignable from {}

After a deeper analysis we found also that the old <code>in\_place\_t</code> supported <code>in\_place\_t</code> t = {}; The authors don't consider this a big limitation as we don't expect that a lot of users could use this and the user can use <code>in\_place</code> instead.

```
in_place_t t = in_place;
```

It needs to be noted that this is in line with the behavior of <code>nullopt\_t</code> as the following compile fails.

```
nullopt_t t = {}; // compile fails However nullptr_t seems to be support it.
nullptr_t t = {}; // compile pass
```

emplace forward member function optional<T> emplace member function emplaces implicitly a T.

```
template <class ...Args>
optional<T>::emplace(Args&& ...);
```

emplace for any cannot have an implicit type T . We need a way to state explicitly which T must be emplaced.

```
template <class T, class ...Args>
any::emplace(Args&& ...);
```

and used as follows

```
any af;
    optional<Foo> of;
    variant<int, Foo> vf;
    af emplace<Foo>(v1, ..., vn);
    of.emplace<Foo>(v1, ..., vn);
    vf.emplace<Foo>(v1, ..., vn);
    ```c++

## About empty()/explicit operator bool() member functions

'empty()` is more associated with containers. We don't see neither `any` nor `optional` as container classes. For

Given

'``c++
    struct Foo { Foo(int, double, char); };
    unique_ptr<Foo> pf=...
    optional<Foo> of=...;
    any af=...;
```

Before:

```
if (pf) ...
if (of) ...
if ( ! af.empty()) ...
```

After:

```
if (pf) ...
if (of) ...
if (af) ...
```

A lot of people consider that the explicit operator bool() conversion is not explicit enough. An alternative to explicit operator bool() is to use a member function has value (or holds).

After:

```
if (pf.has_value()) ...
if (of.has_value()) ...
if (af.has_value()) ...
```

The has\_value member function is retained as more explicit and easy to read. As this proposal is not about any change in pointe-like classes we lost uniform syntax respect to pointe-like classes. For optional we propose to have both.

After:

```
if (pf) ...
if (of) ...
if (of.has_value()) ...
if (af.has_value()) ...
```

Having a uniform interface for pointe-like, type-erased and sum type classes should be the subject of another proposal. This is because there are other function for which the interfaces are not uniform.

## About clear()/reset() member functions

clear() is more associated to containers. We don't see neither any nor optional as container classes. For probably valued types (as are the smart pointers) the standard uses reset instead.

Given

```
struct Foo { Foo(int, double, char); };
unique_ptr<Foo> pf=...;
optional<Foo> of=...;
any af=...;
```

Before:

```
pf.reset();
of = nullopt;
af.clear();
```

After:

```
pf.reset();
of.reset();
af.reset();
```

# Do we need an explicit make any factory?

any is not a generic type but a type-erased type. any play the same role as a possible make\_any. This paper however propose a make\_any factory for the emplace case, see below. Note also that if <a href="P0091R0">P0091R0</a> is adopted we wouldn't need any more make\_optional, as e.g. optional(1) would be deduced as optional<int>.

### **About emplace factories**

However, we could consider a <code>make\_xxx</code> factory that in place constructs a <code>T</code> . <code>optional<T></code> and <code>any</code> could be in place constructed as follows:

```
optional<T> opt(in_place, v1, vn);
f(optional<T>(in_place, v1, vn));
any a(in_place<T>, v1, vn);
f(any(in_place<T>, v1, vn));
```

When we use auto things change a little bit

```
auto opt = optional<T>(in_place, v1, vn);
auto a = any(in_place<T>, v1, vn);
```

This is almost uniform. However having an <code>make\_xxx</code> factory function would make the code even more uniform

```
auto opt = make_optional<T>(v1, vn);
f(make_optional<T>(v1, vn));
auto a = make_any<T>(v1, vn);
f(make_any<T>(v1, vn));
```

The implementation of these emplace factories could as simple as:

```
template <class T, class ...Args>
optional<T> make_optional(Args&& ...args) {
    return optional(in_place, std::forward<Args>(args)...);
}
template <class T, class ...Args>
any make_any(Args&& ...args) {
    return any(in_place<T>, std::forward<Args>(args)...);
}
```

Given c++ struct Foo { Foo(int, double, char); };

Before:

```
auto up = make_unique<Foo>(v1, ..., vn)
auto sp = make_shared<Foo>(v1, ..., vn)
auto o = optional<Foo>(in_place, v1, ..., vn)
```

After:

```
auto a = any(Foo{v1, ..., vn})
auto up = make_unique<Foo>(v1, ..., vn)
auto sp = make_shared<Foo>(v1, ..., vn)
auto o = make_optional<Foo>(v1, ..., vn)
auto a = make_any<Foo>(v1, ..., vn)
```

## Which file for in\_place\_t and in\_place?

As in\_place\_t and in\_place are used by optional and any we need to move its definition to another file. The preference of the authors will be to place them in <utility> .

Note that in\_place could also be used by variant and that in this case it could also take an index as template parameter.

## **Open points**

None.

## **Proposed wording**

The wording is relative to N4562 even if

## **General utilities library**

Add in [utility/synop]

```
namespace std {

struct in_place_tag {};
    using in_place_t = in_place_tag(&)(unspecified);
    template <class T>
        using in_place_type_t = in_place_tag(&)(unspecified<T>);
    template <int N>
        using in_place_index_t = in_place_tag(&)(unspecified<N>);
    constexpr in_place_t in_place(unspecified);
    template <class T>;
        constexpr in_place_t in_place(unspecified<T>);
    template <size N>;
        constexpr in_place_t in_place(unspecified<N>);
}
```

in\_place might be instantiated into every object file.

## **Optional objects**

Remove in\_place\_t / in\_place from [optional/synop] and [optional/inplace]

Update [optional.synopsis] adding after make optional

```
namespace std {
  [...]

template <class T, class ...Args>
  optional<T> make_optional(Args&& ...args);
template <class T, class U, class ...Args>
  optional<T> make_optional(initializer_list<U> il, Args&& ...args);

[...]
}
```

#### Add in [optional.object]

```
void reset() noexcept;
```

Effects: If \*this contains a value, calls val->T::~T() to destroy the contained value; otherwise no effect.

Returns: \*this .

Postconditions: \*this does not contain a value.

```
constexpr bool has_value() const noexcept;
```

Returns: true if and only if \*this contains a value.

Remarks: This function shall be a constexpr function.

#### Add in [optional.specalg]

```
template <class T, class ...Args>
  optional<T> make_optional(Args&& ...args);
```

Returns: optional<T>(in\_place, std::forward(args)...).

```
template <class T, class U, class ...Args>
optional<T> make_optional(initializer_list<U> il, Args&& ...args);
```

Returns: optional<T>(in\_place, il, std::forward(args)...).

## Class any

Update [any.synopsis] adding

```
namespace std {
  [...]

template <class T, class ...Args>
  any make_any(Args&& ...args);

template <class U, class T, class ...Args>
  any make_any(initializer_list<U>, Args&& ...args);

[...]
}
```

Add constexpr on any default constructor

```
constexpr any() noexcept;
```

Add inside class any

```
// Constructors
template <class T, class ...Args>
    any(in_place_type_t<T>, Args&& ...);
template <class T, class U, class... Args>
    explicit any(in_place_type<T>, initializer_list<U>, Args&&...);
template <class T, class ...Args>
    void emplace(Args&& ...);
template <class T, class U, class... Args>
    void emplace(initializer_list<U>, Args&&...);
```

Replace inside class any

```
void clear() noexcept;
bool empty() const noexcept;
```

by

```
void reset() noexcept;
constexpr bool has_value() const noexcept;
```

and replace any use of empty() by ! has\_value()

#### Add in [any/cons]

```
constexpr any() noexcept;
template <class T, class ...Args>
  any(in_place_type_t<T>), Args&& ...);
```

Requires: is\_constructible\_v<T, Args&&...> is true .

Effects: Initializes the contained value as if direct-non-list-initializing an object of type T with the arguments std::forward<Args>(args)...

Postconditions: this contains a value of type T.

Throws: Any exception thrown by the selected constructor of T.

```
template <class T, class U, class ...Args>
    any(in_place_type_t<T>, initializer_list<U> il, Args&& ...args);
```

Requires: is\_constructible\_v<T, initializer\_list<U>&, Args&&...> is true.

Effects: Initializes the contained value as if direct-non-list-initializing an object of type T with the arguments il, std::forward<args>(args)...

Postconditions: \*this contains a value.

Throws: Any exception thrown by the selected constructor of T.

Remarks: The function shall not participate in overload resolution unless is\_constructible\_v<T, initializer\_list<U>&, Args&&...> is true.

#### Add in [any/modifiers]

```
template <class T, class ...Args>
void emplace(Args&& ...);
```

Requires: is\_constructible\_v<T, Args&&> is true.

Effects: Calls this.reset(). Then initializes the contained value as if direct-non-list-initializing an object of type T with the arguments std::forward<Args>(args)...

Postconditions: \*this contains a value.

Throws: Any exception thrown by the selected constructor of T.

Remarks: If an exception is thrown during the call to T's constructor, \*this does not contain a value, and the previous (if any) has been destroyed.

#### Add in [any.assign]

```
template <class T, class U, class ...Args>
void emplace(initializer_list<U> il, Args&& ...args);
```

Requires: is\_constructible<T, initializer\_list<U>&, Args&&...>

Effects: Calls this->reset(). Then initializes the contained value as if direct-non-list- initializing an object of type T with the argument sil, std::forward(args)...

Postconditions: \*this contains a value.

Throws: Any exception thrown by the selected constructor of T.

Remarks: If an exception is thrown during the call to T's constructor, \*this does not contain a value, and the previous (if any) has been destroyed.

The function shall not participate in overload resolution unless <code>is\_constructible\_v<T</code>, <code>initializer\_list<U>&</code>, <code>Args&&...></code> is <code>true</code>

Replace in [any/modifier], clear by reset.

Replace in [any/observers], empty by has value (reversing the meaning).

```
constexpr bool has_value() const noexcept;
```

Returns: true if \*this contains an object, otherwise false.

Add in [any.nonmembers]

```
template <class T, class ...Args>
any make_any(Args&& ...args);
```

Returns: any(in place<T>, std::forward<Args>(args)...)

```
template <class T, class U, class ...Args>
any make_any(initializer_list<U> il, Args& ...args);
```

Returns: any(in\_place<T>, il, std::forward<Args>(args)...)

## Class variant

Remove in\_place\_type\_t / in\_place\_type / in\_place\_index\_t / in\_place\_index from [variant/synop] and [variant/inplace]

Replace [variant.variant]

# **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Jeffrey Yasskin to encourage me to report these as possible issues of the TS.

Many thanks to Agustin Bergé K-Balo for the function reference idea to represent <code>in\_place</code> tags overloads and its valuable comments.

Thanks to Tony Van Eerd for championing this proposal during the C++ standard committee meetings and helping me to improve globally the paper. The comparative table in the appendix comes from him.

## References

- <u>eggs-variant</u> eggs::variant
  - https://github.com/eggs-cpp/variant
- N4562 Working Draft, C++ Extensions for Library Fundamentals
   http://www.open-std.org/jtc1/sc22/wg21/docs/papers/2015/n4562.html
- P0032R0 Homogeneous interface for variant, any and optional
   http://www.open-std.org/jtc1/sc22/wg21/docs/papers/2015/p0032r0.pdf
- P0032R1 Homogeneous interface for variant, any and optional
   http://www.open-std.org/jtc1/sc22/wg21/docs/papers/2015/p0032r1.pdf
- [P0088R1] Variant: a type-safe union that is rarely invalid (v5)
   http://www.open-std.org/jtc1/sc22/wg21/docs/papers/2016/p0088r1.pdf
- P0091R0 Template parameter deduction for constructors (Rev 3)
   http://www.open-std.org/jtc1/sc22/wg21/docs/papers/2015/p0091r0.html

# **Appendix**

#### WITHOUT proposal WITH proposal in\_place, emplace\_type, emplace\_index struct Foo { Foo(int, double, char); }; struct Foo { Foo(int, double, char); }; optional<Foo> of(in\_place, 0, 1.5, `c`); optional<Foo> of(in\_place, 0, 1.5, `c`); variant<int, Foo> vf(emplace\_type<Foo>, 0, 1.5, `c`); variant<int, Foo> vf(in\_place<Foo>, 0, 1.5, `c`); variant<int, Foo> vf(emplace\_index<1>, 0, 1.5, `c`); variant<int, Foo> vf(in\_place<1>, 0, 1.5, `c`); any $af(Foo\{0, 1.5, 'c'\});$ any af(in\_place<Foo>, 0, 1.5, `c`); NOTE: thus any currently does not support non move/copy-able Also, now any supports non move/copy-able any.emplace() of.emplace(0, 1.5, 'c'); of.emplace(0, 1.5, 'c'); vf.emplace<Foo>(0, 1.5, 'c'); vf.emplace<Foo>(0, 1.5, 'c'); vf.emplace<1>( 0, 1.5, 'c'); vf.emplace<1>( 0, 1.5, 'c'); af = $Foo\{0, 1.5, 'c'\};$ af.emplace<Foo>(0, 1.5, 'c'); any does not currently emplace Now any supports non move/copy-able reset() unique\_ptr<Foo> uf = new Foo(0, 1.5, 'c'); unique\_ptr<Foo> uf = new Foo(0, 1.5, 'c'); uf.reset(); uf.reset(); of = nullopt; of.reset(); af.clear(); af.reset(); variant? No. Does not go empty. Could default-construct, but also doesn't have has\_value(). Don't force false consistency. has\_value() if (uf.has\_value()) ... if (uf) ... if (of has value()) ... if (of) ... if ( ! af.empty()) ... if (af.has\_value()) ... NOTE: smart-ptrs as well variant? - No. intentionally "corrupted\_by\_exception" make\_...() factories

```
auto uf = make_unique<Foo>(0, 1.5, 'c');
auto sf = make_shared<Foo>(0, 1.5, 'c');
auto of = make_optional<Foo>(Foo{0, 1.5, 'c'});
auto af = any(Foo{0, 1.5, 'c'});
```

```
auto uf = make_unique<Foo>(0, 1.5, 'c');
auto sf = make_shared<Foo>(0, 1.5, 'c');
auto of = make_optional<Foo>(0, 1.5, 'c');
auto af = make_any<Foo>(0, 1.5, 'c');
```

NOTE: EWG has mandated RVO so non move/copy-able also work

#### constexpr any ctor

```
any a;
```

any a; // (at namespace scope) constant initialization