

Intro. to Functional Programming in OCaml

CS 4100
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(slides adapted with permission
from Dave Walker,
COS326 Princeton University)

Thinking Functionally

In **Java** or **C**, you get (most) work done by *changing* something

```
temp = pair.x;  
pair.x = pair.y;  
pair.y = temp;
```



commands *modify* or *change* an existing data structure (like pair)

In **OCaml**, you get (most) work done by *producing something new*

```
let pair = (3,4) in  
let  
  (x,y) = pair  
in  
  (y,x+y)
```



you *analyze* existing data (like pair) and you *produce* new data (y,x)

This simple switch in perspective can change the way you
think
about programming and problem solving.

Thinking Functionally

pure, functional code:

```
let (x,y) = pair in  
(y,x)
```

- *outputs are everything!*
- *output is function of input*
- *persistent*
- *repeatable*
- *parallelism apparent*
- *easier to test*
- *easier to compose*

imperative code:

```
temp = pair.x;  
pair.x = pair.y;  
pair.y = temp;
```

- *outputs are irrelevant!*
- *output is not function of input*
- *volatile*
- *unrepeatable*
- *parallelism hidden*
- *harder to test*
- *harder to compose*

Why OCaml?



Small, *orthogonal* core based on the *lambda calculus*.

- Control is based on (recursive) functions.
- Instead of for-loops, while-loops, do-loops, iterators, etc.
 - can be defined as library functions.
- Makes it easy to define semantics

Supports *first-class, lexically-scoped, higher-order* procedures

- first-class functions: a.k.a. closures or lambdas.
- *first-class*: functions are data values like any other data value
 - like numbers, they can be stored, defined anonymously, ...
- *lexically-scoped*: meaning of variables determined statically.
- *higher-order*: functions as arguments and results
 - programs passed to programs; generated from programs

These features also found in Racket, Haskell, SML, F#, Clojure,

Why OCaml?

Statically typed: debugging and testing aid

- compiler catches many silly errors before you can run the code.
- e.g., calling a function with the wrong number of arguments
- Java is also strongly, statically typed.
- Scheme, Python, Javascript, etc. are all strongly, *dynamically typed* – type errors are discovered while the code is running.

Strongly typed: compiler enforces type abstraction.

- cannot cast an integer to a record, function, string, etc.
 - so we can utilize *types as capabilities*.
 - crucial for local reasoning
- C/C++ are *weakly-typed* languages. The compiler will happily let you do something smart (*more often stupid*).

Type inference: compiler fills in types for you

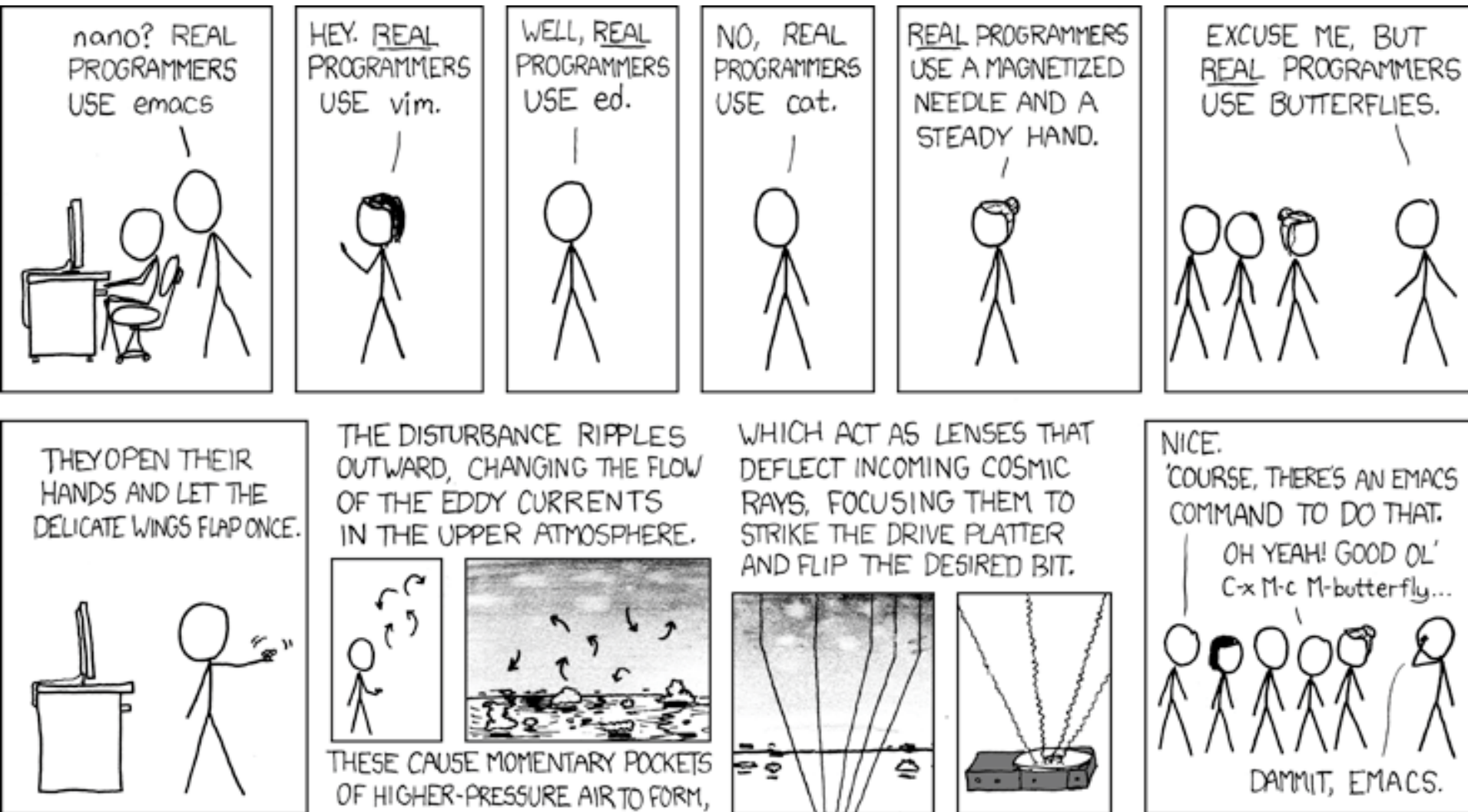
Running Ocaml

- Ocaml comes with an interactive, top-level loop.
 - useful for testing and debugging code.
 - “ocaml” at the prompt.
- It also comes with compilers
 - “ocamlc” – fast bytecode compiler
 - “ocamlopt” – optimizing, native code compiler
 - “ocamlbuild” – a nice wrapper that computes dependencies
- And many other tools
 - e.g., debugger, dependency generator, profiler, etc.

Editing Ocaml Programs

- Many options: pick your own poison
 - Emacs
 - what I'll be using in class.
 - good but not great support for OCaml.
 - on the other hand, it's still the best code editor I've encountered.
 - (extensions written in elisp – a functional language!)
 - OCaml IDE
 - integrated development environment written in Ocaml.
 - haven't used it much, so can't comment.
 - Eclipse
 - [Ocaml plugin: http://www.algo-prog.info/ocaide/](http://www.algo-prog.info/ocaide/)
 - I haven't tried it but others recommend it

XKCD on Editors



AN INTRODUCTORY EXAMPLE (OR TWO)

OCaml Compiler and Interpreter

- Demo:
 - emacs
 - .ml files
 - writing simple programs: hello.ml, sum.ml
 - simple debugging and unit tests
 - ocamlc compiler
 - ocaml top-level loop
 - #use: import a .ml file into top-level loop
 - #load import a .ml file that's already been compiled
 - #quit exit the top-level loop

A First OCaml Program

hello.ml:

```
print_string "Hello CS 4100!!\n";;
```

A First OCaml Program

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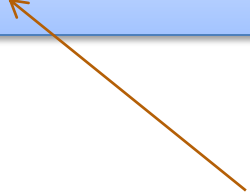
a function



it's string argument
enclosed in "..."



top-level
expressions
terminated by ;;



A First OCaml Program

hello.ml:

```
print_string "Hello CS 4100!!\n";;
```

compiling and running hello.ml:

```
$ ocamlbuild hello.byte  
$ ./hello.byte  
Hello CS 4100!!  
$
```

A First OCaml Program

hello.ml:

```
print_string "Hello CS 4100!!\n";;
```

interpreting and playing with hello.ml:

```
$ ocaml
      Objective Caml Version 4.02.1
#
```

A First OCaml Program

hello.ml:

```
print_string "Hello CS 4100!!\n";;
```

interpreting and playing with hello.ml:

```
$ ocaml
      Objective Caml Version 4.02.1
# 3 + 1;;
- : int = 4
#
```


A First OCaml Program

hello.ml:

```
print_string "Hello CS 4100!!\n";;
```

interpreting and playing with hello.ml:

```
$ ocaml
      Objective Caml Version 4.02.1
# 3 + 1;;
- : int = 4
# #use "hello.ml";;
Hello CS 4100!!
- : unit = ()
#
```

A First OCaml Program

hello.ml:

```
print_string "Hello CS 4100!!\n";;
```

interpreting and playing with hello.ml:

```
$ ocaml
      Objective Caml Version 4.02.1
# 3 + 1;;
- : int = 4
# #use "hello.ml";;
Hello CS 4100!!
- : unit = ()
# #quit;;
$
```

A Second OCaml Program

sumTo8.ml:

```
(* sum the numbers from 0 to n
   precondition: n must be a natural number
   *)
let rec sumTo (n:int) : int =
  match n with
  | 0 -> 0
  | n -> n + sumTo (n-1)
;;

print_int (sumTo 8);;
print_newline();;
```

a comment
(* ... *)



A Second O'Caml Program

the name of the function being defined

sumTo8.ml:

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;;

print_int (sumTo 8);;
print_newline();;
```

top-level
declaration
ends with
“;;”

the keyword “let” begins a definition
the keyword “rec” indicates the definition is recursive

A Second O'Caml Program

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;;

print_int (sumTo 8);;
print_newline();;
```

result type int

argument
named n
with type int

A Second O'Caml Program

deconstruct the value *n*
using pattern matching

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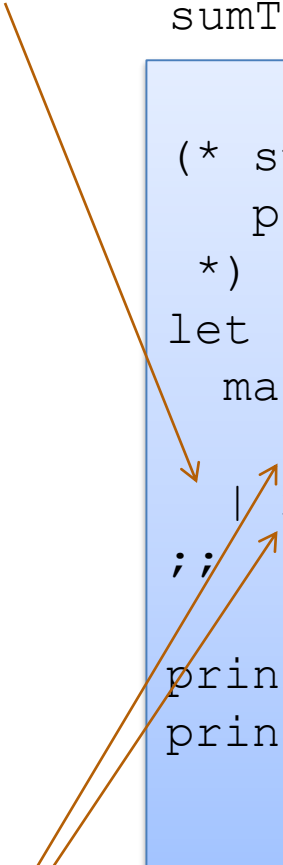
print_int (sumTo 8);;
print_newline();;
```

data to be
deconstructed
appears
between
key words
“match” and
“with”

A Second O'Caml Program

vertical bar "|" separates the alternative patterns

sumTo8.ml:



```
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   precondition: n must be a natural number
   *)
let rec sumTo (n:int) : int =
  match n with
  | 0 -> 0
  | n -> n + sumTo (n-1)
;;

print_int (sumTo 8);;
print_newline();;
```

deconstructed data matches one of 2 cases:

(i) the data matches the pattern 0, or (ii) the data matches the variable pattern n

A Second O'Caml Program

Each branch of the match statement constructs a result

sumTo8.ml:

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   precondition: n must be a natural number
   *)
let rec sumTo (n:int) : int =
  match n with
    0 -> 0
  | n -> n + sumTo (n-1)
;;

print_int (sumTo 8);;
print_newline();;
```

construct
the result 0

construct
a result
using a
recursive
call to sumTo

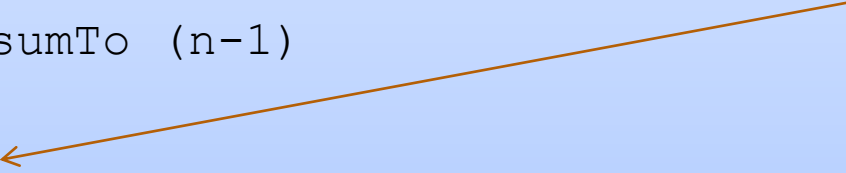
A Second O'Caml Program

sumTo8.ml:

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   precondition: n must be a natural number
   *)
let rec sumTo (n:int) : int =
  match n with
    0 -> 0
  | n -> n + sumTo (n-1)
;;

print_int (sumTo 8);;
print_newline();;
```

print the
result of
calling
sumTo on 8



print a
new line



O'CAML BASICS:

EXPRESSIONS, VALUES, SIMPLE TYPES

Expressions, Values, Types

- **Expressions** are computations
 - $2 + 3$ is a computation
- **Values** are the results of computations
 - 5 is a value
- **Types** describe collections of values and the computations that generate those values
 - int is a type
 - values of type int include
 - 0, 1, 2, 3, ..., max_int
 - -1, -2, ..., min_int

More simple types, values, operations

<u>Type:</u>	<u>Values:</u>	<u>Expressions:</u>
int	-2, 0, 42	42 * (13 + 1)
float	3.14, -1., 2e12	(3.14 +. 12.0) *. 10e6
char	'a', 'b', '&'	int_of_char 'a'
string	"moo", "cow"	"moo" ^ "cow"
bool	true, false	if true then 3 else 4
unit	()	print_int 3

For more primitive types and functions over them,
see the OCaml Reference Manual here:

<http://caml.inria.fr/pub/docs/manual-ocaml/libref/Pervasives.html>

O'CAML BASICS:

CORE EXPRESSION SYNTAX

Core Expression Syntax

The simplest O'Caml expressions e are:

- values *numbers, strings, bools, ...*
- id *variables (x, foo, ...)*
- $e_1 \text{ op } e_2$ *operators (x+3, ...)*
- id $e_1 e_2 \dots e_n$ *function call (foo 3 42)*
- **let** id = e_1 **in** e_2 *local variable decl.*
- **if** e_1 **then** e_2 **else** e_3 *a conditional*
- (e) *a parenthesized expression*
- (e : t) *an expression with its type*

A note on parentheses

In most languages, arguments are parenthesized & separated by commas:

`f (x , y , z)` `sum (3 , 4 , 5)`

In OCaml, we don't write the parentheses or the commas:

`f x y z` `sum 3 4 5`

But we do have to worry about *grouping*. For example,

`f x y z`
`f x (y z)`

The first one passes three arguments to `f` (`x`, `y`, and `z`)

The second passes two arguments to `f` (`x`, and the result of applying the function `y` to `z`.)

O'CAML BASICS: TYPE CHECKING

Type Checking

- Every value has a type and so does every expression
- This is a concept that is familiar from Java but it becomes more important when programming in a functional language
- The type of an expression is determined by the type of its subexpressions
- We write $(e : t)$ to say that expression e has type t . eg:

$2 : \text{int}$

$\text{"hello"} : \text{string}$

$2 + 2 : \text{int}$

$\text{"I say " ^ "hello"} : \text{string}$

Type Checking Rules

- There's a set of **simple rules** that govern type checking
 - programs that do not follow the rules will not type check and O'Caml will refuse to compile them for you (the nerve!)
 - at first you may find this to be a pain ...
- But types are a great thing:
 - they *help us think* about *how to construct* our programs
 - they help us *find stupid programming errors*
 - they help us track down compatibility errors quickly when we edit and *maintain our code*
 - they allow us to *enforce powerful invariants* about our data structures

Type Checking Rules

- Example rules:

(1) `0 : int` (and similarly for any other integer constant `n`)

(2) `"abc" : string` (and similarly for any other string constant `"..."`)

Type Checking Rules

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(2) $"\text{abc}" : \text{string}$ (and similarly for any other string constant "...")

(3) if $e1 : \text{int}$ and $e2 : \text{int}$
then $e1 + e2 : \text{int}$

(4) if $e1 : \text{int}$ and $e2 : \text{int}$
then $e1 * e2 : \text{int}$

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then `string_of_int e : string`

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- Using the rules:

`2 : int` and `3 : int`. (By rule 1)

Type Checking Rules

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then $e1 * e2 : \text{int}$
- (5) if $e1 : \text{string}$ and $e2 : \text{string}$
then $e1 \wedge e2 : \text{string}$
- (6) if $e : \text{int}$
then $\text{string_of_int } e : \text{string}$

- Using the rules:

$2 : \text{int}$ and $3 : \text{int}$. (By rule 1)
Therefore, $(2 + 3) : \text{int}$ (By rule 3)

Type Checking Rules

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- Using the rules:

$2 : \text{int}$ and $3 : \text{int}$.	(By rule 1)
Therefore, $(2 + 3) : \text{int}$	(By rule 3)
$5 : \text{int}$	(By rule 1)

Type Checking Rules

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then $\text{string_of_int } e : \text{string}$

- Using the rules:

$2 : \text{int}$ and $3 : \text{int}$. (By rule 1)
Therefore, $(2 + 3) : \text{int}$ (By rule 3)
 $5 : \text{int}$ (By rule 1)
Therefore, $(2 + 3) * 5 : \text{int}$ (By rule 4 and our previous work)

Type Checking Rules

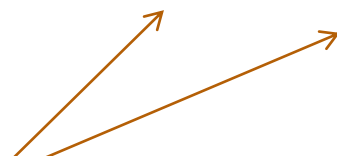
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- Another perspective:

rule (4) for typing expressions
says I can put any expression
with type `int` in place of the `????`

`???? * ???? : int`



Type Checking Rules

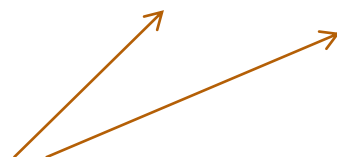
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- Another perspective:

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`7 * ???? : int`



Type Checking Rules

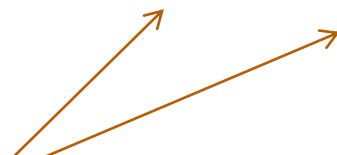
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- Another perspective:

rule (4) for typing expressions
says I can put any expression
with type `int` in place of the `????`

`7 * (add_one 17) : int`



Type Checking Rules

- You can always start up the O'Caml interpreter to find out a type of a simple expression:

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$ ocaml
      Objective Caml Version 4.02.1
#
```

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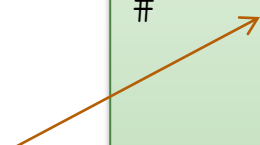
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Type Checking Rules

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```
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# 3 + 1;;
- : int = 4
#
```

press
return
and you
find out
the type
and the
value



Type Checking Rules

- You can always start up the O'Caml interpreter to find out a type of a simple expression:

```
$ ocaml
      Objective Caml Version 4.02.1
# 3 + 1;;
- : int = 4
# "hello " ^ "world";;
- : string = "hello world"
#
```



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Type Checking Rules

- You can always start up the O'Caml interpreter to find out a type of a simple expression:

```
$ ocaml
      Objective Caml Version 4.02.1
# 3 + 1;;
- : int = 4
# "hello " ^ "world";;
- : string = "hello world"
# #quit;;
$
```

Type Checking Rules

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then `string_of_int e : string`

- Violating the rules:

`"hello" : string`

`1 : int`

`1 + "hello" : ??`

(By rule 2)

(By rule 1)

(NO TYPE! Rule 3 does not apply!)

Type Checking Rules

- Violating the rules:

```
# "hello" + 1;;
```

```
Error: This expression has type string but an  
expression was expected of type int
```

- The type error message tells you the type that was **expected** and the type that it **inferred** for your subexpression
- By the way, this was one of the nonsensical expressions that did not evaluate to a value
- I consider it a good thing that this expression does not type check

Type Checking Rules

- Violating the rules:

```
# "hello" + 1;;
```

```
Error: This expression has type string but an  
expression was expected of type int
```

- A possible fix:

```
# "hello" ^ (string_of_int 1);;  
- : string = "hello1"
```

- *One of the keys to becoming a good OCaml programmer is to understand type error messages.*

Type Checking Rules

- More rules:

(7) `true : bool`

(8) `false : bool`

(9) `if e1 : bool`
and `e2 : t` and `e3 : t` (for some type `t`)
then `if e1 then e2 else e3 : t`

- Using the rules:

`if ??? then ??? else ??? : int`

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- Using the rules:

`if true then ???? else ???? : int`

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- Using the rules:

`if true then 7 else ???? : int`

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(9) if `e1 : bool`
and `e2 : t` and `e3 : t` (for some type `t`)
then `if e1 then e2 else e3 : t`

- Using the rules:

`if true then 7 else 8 : int`

Type Checking Rules

- More rules:

(7) `true : bool`

(8) `false : bool`

(9) if `e1 : bool`
and `e2 : t` and `e3 : t` (for some type `t`)
then `if e1 then e2 else e3 : t`

- Violating the rules

`if false then "1" else 2 : ????`



types don't agree -- one is a string and one is an int

Type Checking Rules

- Violating the rules:

```
# if true then "1" else 2;;
```

```
Error: This expression has type int but an  
expression was expected of type string
```

```
#
```

Type Checking Rules

- What about this expression:

```
# 3 / 0 ;;  
Exception: Division_by_zero.
```

- Why doesn't the ML type checker do us the favor of telling us the expression will raise an exception?

Type Checking Rules

- What about this expression:

```
# 3 / 0 ;;  
Exception: Division_by_zero.
```

- Why doesn't the ML type checker do us the favor of telling us the expression will raise an exception?
 - In general, detecting a divide-by-zero error requires we know that the divisor evaluates to 0.
 - In general, deciding whether the divisor evaluates to 0 requires solving the halting problem:

```
# 3 / (if turing_machine_halts m then 0 else 1) ;;
```

- There are type systems that will rule out divide-by-zero errors, but they require that programmers supply proofs to the type checker

OVERALL SUMMARY:
A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO
FUNCTIONAL PROGRAMMING

Ocaml Tips/Tricks: Using Libraries

Loading libraries in the Ocaml toplevel loop:

```
# #use "topfind";;
```

Loads the “topfind” library

```
# #require "batteries";;
```

Which can be used to find and load other libraries like “Batteries”, which we’ll be using later in the course.

```
# open Batteries;;
```

Import the contents of the Batteries library

Compiling Ocaml code that uses libraries:

```
# ocamlbuild -package batteries sum.byte  
# ./sum.byte
```

Supplementary Resources

- [The OCaml language manual: Chapter 1: The core language](#)
- [Real World Ocaml](#)

OCaml

OCaml is a *functional* programming language

- Java gets most work done by *modifying* data
- OCaml gets most work done by producing *new, immutable* data

OCaml is typed programming language

- the *type* of an expression *correctly predicts* the kind of *value* the expression will generate when it is executed
- types help us *understand* and *write* our programs