

# Applications of algebraic effect theories

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# Reasoning about programs

$$f_1 = \text{fun } x \mapsto x + x$$

$$f_2 = \text{fun } x \mapsto 2 * x$$

We know mathematical properties of operations  $+$  and  $*$  so we can argue that the programs are equal (whatever that means).

This becomes harder with effectful operations, such as *print*.

$$\textit{print\_twice} = \text{fun } s \mapsto \textit{print } s; \textit{print } s$$

$$\textit{print\_double} = \text{fun } s \mapsto \textit{print } s \wedge s$$

# “Implementing print”

We give meaning to operations with handlers. An example:

```
collect_prints = handler {  
  | print(s; k)  $\mapsto$   
    do (v, s')  $\leftarrow$  k () in (v, s ^ s')  
  | ret x  $\mapsto$  (x, "")  
}
```

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and proceeds with the evaluation

`do (v, s') ← k () in  
 (v, "test" ^ s')`



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**We want reasoning tools that can separate handlers from the rest of our code!**

The theory of algebraic effects consists of operations and **equations** between them.

We can use equations such as

$$\textit{print } s_1; \textit{ print } s_2 \sim \textit{print } s_1 \hat{ } s_2$$

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Can we achieve that without restricting ourselves to a global effect theory?

Include the desired equations in types.

$$\underline{C} = A! \Sigma / \mathcal{E}$$

Operations of type  $\underline{C}$  either return a value of type  $A$  or call an operation from  $\Sigma$  in the effect theory  $\mathcal{E}$ .

Equations in  $\mathcal{E}$  tell us what computations we deem equal, e.g. *print\_double* and *print\_twice* are equal when using the effect theory with the equation *print*  $s_1$ ; *print*  $s_2 \sim \text{print } s_1 \hat{\ } s_2$  but not in a theory with no equations.

# Assigning types to example handler

Without equations, *collect\_prints* would have the type

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But before we wanted to use the theory

$$E_{no\_sep} = (print\ s_1; print\ s_2 \sim print\ s_1 \wedge s_2)$$

so we could instead use the type

$$A!\{print\} / E_{no\_sep} \Rightarrow (A * string)! \emptyset / \emptyset$$

## Another example

```
use_newline = handler {  
  | print(s; k)  $\mapsto$  print s; print "\n"; k ()  
  | ret x  $\mapsto$  x  
}
```

$$E_{no\_sep} = \textit{print } s_1; \textit{print } s_2 \sim \textit{print } s_1 \wedge s_2$$

$$E_{sep} = \textit{print } s_1; \textit{print } s_2 \sim \textit{print } s_1 \wedge "\n" \wedge s_2$$

$$use\_newline : A! \{ \textit{print} \} / E_{sep} \Rightarrow (A)! \{ \textit{print} \} / E_{no\_sep}$$



# How to type handlers?

All typing rules remain largely the same as when not using equations.

The only important change is

$$\frac{\Gamma, x:A \vdash c_r : \underline{D} \quad \Gamma \vdash h:\Sigma \Rightarrow \underline{D} \text{ respects } \mathcal{E}}{\Gamma \vdash \text{handler } (\text{ret } x \mapsto c_r; h): A! \Sigma / \mathcal{E} \Rightarrow \underline{D}}$$

# How to type handlers?

For  $\Gamma \vdash h:\Sigma \Rightarrow \underline{D}$  respects  $\mathcal{E}$  we first check that the types match. We then check correctness in a logic, but we have a choice which logic to use.

The general idea is checking that our handler maps equivalent computations to equivalent computations.

The choice of logic also bears impact on the denotational semantics of our language.

# Future work

- Implement the proposed equation system in Eff.
- Consider options for easier checks of the [respects](#) relation.
- How to define subtyping?
- Concrete applications (probabilistic programming).