# Typed $\lambda$ -calculus: Concepts and Syntax

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## 1 Introduction

 $\lambda$ -calculus is a small language based on some common mathematical idioms. It was invented by Alonzo Church in 1936, but his version was *untyped*, making the connection with mathematics rather problematic. In this course we'll be looking at a *typed* version.

 $\lambda\text{-calculus}$  has had an impact throughout computer science and logic. For example

- it is the basis of functional programming languages such as Haskell, ML, Lisp, Scheme, Miranda, Erlang.
- it is often used to give semantics for programming languages. This was initiated by Peter Landin, who in 1965 described the semantics of Algol-60 by translating it into  $\lambda$ -calculus.
- it closely corresponds to a kind of logic called *intuitionistic* logic, via the *Curry-Howard isomorphism*. That isn't in this course, but you may notice that a lot of notation (e.g.  $\vdash$ ) and terminology ("introduction/elimination rule") has been imported from logic into  $\lambda$ -calculus. And the influence in the opposite direction has been much greater.

# 2 Notations for Sets and Elements

#### or Sums your primary school never taught you

In this section, we're going to learn some notations and abbreviations for describing *sets* and *elements of sets*.

Recall that  $x \in A$  means "x is an element of the set A".

#### 2.1 Sets

First, the notations for describing sets.

**integers** We define  $\mathbb{Z}$  to be the set of integers. **booleans** We define  $\mathbb{B}$  to be the set of booleans {true, false}. **cartesian product** Suppose A and B are sets. Then we write  $A \times B$ 

for the set of ordered pairs

$$\{(x,y)|x\in A, y\in B\}$$

**disjoint union** Suppose A and B are sets. Then we write A + B for the set of ordered pairs

$$\{(\# \text{left}, x) | x \in A\} \cup \{(\# \text{right}, x) | x \in B\}$$

Here we are using #left = 0 and #right = 1 as "tags", to ensure that the two sets are kept disjoint.

function space Suppose A and B are sets. Then we write  $A \to B$  for the set of functions from A to B.

These operations on sets correspond to familiar operations on integers. If A is finite with m elements, and B is finite with n elements, then

- $-A \times B$  has mn elements
- -A+B has m+n elements
- $A \rightarrow B$  has  $n^m$  elements.

#### 2.2 Integers and Booleans

Recall that  $\mathbb{Z}$  is the set of integers, and  $\mathbb{B}$  is the set of booleans. Some ways of describing integers.

#### Arithmetic Here is an integer:

 $3 + (7 \times 2)$ 

**Conditionals** Here is another integer:

case 7 > 5 of {true  $\rightarrow 20 + 3 \mid \text{false} \rightarrow 53$ }

This is an "if...then ... else" construction. Here, **case** stands for "pattern-match". Any boolean, such as 7 > 5, either "matches the pattern" (i.e. is) true, or it "matches the pattern" (i.e. is) false.

Local definitions Here is another integer:

let  $y = (2 \times 18) + (3 \times 102)$  in  $y + 17 \times y$ This is a shorthand for  $y + 17 \times y$ , where we define y to be  $(2 \times 18) + (3 \times 102)$ 

It's rather like a static final declaration in Java.

*Exercise 1.* What integer is

```
1. (2+5) \times 8

2. case (case 1 > 8 of {true \rightarrow 5 > 2 + 4 \mid \text{false} \rightarrow 3 > 2})

of {true \rightarrow 3 \times 7 \mid \text{false} \rightarrow 100}

3. let y = \text{let } x = 3 + 2

in x + 3

in y + 15

4. let x = 5 + 7

in case x > 3 of {true \rightarrow 12 \mid \text{false} \rightarrow 3 + 3}
```

### 2.3 Cartesian Product

?

Recall that  $A \times B$  is the set of ordered pairs (x, y) such that  $x \in A$ and  $y \in B$ .

**projections** If x is an ordered pair, we write fst x for its first component, and snd x for its second component. For example, here is another integer

let x = (3, 7+2)in (fst x) × (snd x) + (snd x)

**pattern-match** We can also pattern-match an ordered pair. For example:

let x = (3, 7+2)

in case x of  $(y, z) \rightarrow y \times z + z$ 

Here, you don't need to select the appropriate pattern, because there's only one. Since x is the pair (3, 9), it matches the pattern (y, z), and y and z are thereby defined to be 3 and 9 respectively.

Pattern-matching is often a more convenient notation than projections.

*Exercise 2.* What integer is

4 P. B. Levy adapted for G53POP by T.Altenkirch 1. let y = (7, let x = 3 in x + 7)in fst  $y + (\text{case } y \text{ of } (u, v) \rightarrow u + v)$ 2. case (fst  $(7, 357 \times 128) > 2$ ) of {true  $\rightarrow 13$  | false  $\rightarrow 2$ } 3. let x = (5, (2, true))in fst x + fst (case x of  $(y, z) \rightarrow z$ ) ?

### 2.4 Disjoint Union

Recall that A+B is the set of (#left, x), where  $x \in A$ , and (#right, x) where  $x \in B$ .

We can pattern-match an element of A + B. For example, here is an integer:

let x = (# left, 3)in let y = 7

in case x of  $\{(\# \text{left}, z) \to z + y \mid (\# \text{right}, z) \to z \times y\}$ Since x is defined here to be (# left, 3), it matches the pattern (# left, z),

and z is thereby defined to be 3.

Exercise 3. What integer is

```
1. case (case 3 < 7 of {true \rightarrow (#right, (8 + 1))
| false \rightarrow (#left, 2)}) of
{ (#left, u) \rightarrow u + 8
| (#right, u) \rightarrow u + 3}
2. let z = (3, (#right, (7, true)))
in fst z + case (snd z) of {
(#left, y) \rightarrow y + 2
| (#right, y) \rightarrow let x = 4 in (x + fst y) + fst z}
```



### 2.5 Function Space

Recall that  $A \to B$  is the set of all functions from A to B.

 $\lambda$ -abstraction Suppose A is a set. We write  $\lambda x \in A$  . ... to mean "the function that takes each  $x \in A$  to ...". For example,

$$\lambda x \in \mathbb{Z}$$
 .  $2 \times x + 1$ 

is the function taking each integer x to  $2 \times x + 1$ .

**application** If f is a function from A to B, and  $x \in A$ , then we write f x to mean f applied to x. For example, here is another integer:

 $(\lambda x \in \mathbb{Z} \cdot 2 \times x + 1) 7$ 

And that completes our notation.

*Exercise* 4. What integer is

1.  $(\lambda f \in \mathbb{Z} \to \mathbb{Z} . \lambda x \in \mathbb{Z} . f(f x)) (\lambda x \in \mathbb{Z} . x + 3) 2$ 2.  $\operatorname{let} f = \lambda z \in \mathbb{Z} + \mathbb{B}$ . case z of  $\{(\#\operatorname{left}, y) \to y + 3 | (\#\operatorname{right}, y) \to 7\}$ in  $f(\#\operatorname{left}, 5) + f(\#\operatorname{right}, \operatorname{false})$ 3.  $\operatorname{let} f = \lambda z \in \mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}$ . case x of  $(y, z) \to 2 \times y + z$ in  $f(\operatorname{let} u = 4 \text{ in } u + 1, 8)$ 

### **3** A Calculus For Integers and Booleans

#### 3.1 Calculus of Integers

?

We want to turn all of the above notations into a calculus. Typically, calculi are defined inductively. As an example, here is a little calculus of integer expressions:

- $-\underline{n}$  is an integer expression for every  $n \in \mathbb{Z}$ .
- If M is an integer expression, and N is an integer expression, then M + N is an integer expression.
- If M is an integer expression, and N is an integer expression, then  $M \times N$  is an integer expression.

Thus an integer expression is a finite string of symbols. Don't get confused between the integer expression 3+4, and the integer 3+4, which is 7. (I normally won't bother with the underlining, but in principle it's necessary.)

Actually, I lied: an integer expression isn't really a finite string of symbols, it's a finite *tree* of symbols. So  $(\underline{3} + \underline{4}) \times \underline{2}$  and  $\underline{3} + \underline{4} \times \underline{2}$  represent different expressions. But  $\underline{3} + \underline{4} \times \underline{2}$  and  $\underline{3} + ((\underline{4} \times \underline{2}))$  are the same expression i.e. the same tree.

Let us write  $\vdash M$ : int to mean "*M* is an integer expression". Then the above inductive definition can be abbreviated as follows.

The two expressions shown above can be written as "proof trees", this time with the root at the bottom (like in botany).

$\vdash 3: \texttt{int}$	$\vdash 4:\texttt{int}$	
$\vdash 3 + 4$	1:int	$\vdash 2:\texttt{int}$
⊢ (	$(3+4) \times 2:$	int

and

	$\vdash 4:\texttt{int}$	$\vdash 2: \texttt{int}$
$\vdash 3:\texttt{int}$	$\vdash 4 \times 2$	2:int
$\vdash$ 3 + 4 × 2 : int		

### 3.2 Calculus of Integers and Booleans

Next we want to make a calculus of integers and booleans. We define the set of types (i.e. set expressions) to be {int,bool}. We write  $\vdash M : A$  to mean that M is an expression of type A. To the above rules we add:

⊢ true : bool	⊢ false:bool
$\vdash M: \texttt{int}  \vdash N: \texttt{int}$	$\vdash M:\texttt{bool}  \vdash N:B  \vdash N':B$
$\vdash M > N:\texttt{bool}$	$\vdash \texttt{case } M \texttt{ of } \{\texttt{true} \rightarrow N \mid \texttt{false} \rightarrow N'\} : B$

#### 3.3 Local Definitions

We next want to add local definitions to our calculus, but this presents a problem. On the one hand, let x = 3 in x + 4 should definitely be an integer expression. If we type it into the computer, we get

#### Answer: 7

So we want let x = 3 in x + 4: int.

But  $\mathbf{x} + 4$  is not valid as an integer expression. If we type it into the computer, we get

```
Error: you haven't defined x.
```

So we don't want  $\vdash \mathbf{x} + 4$ : int.

How then can we define the calculus? We have a valid expression with a subterm that is not syntactically valid!

The solution is to write

$$x: int \vdash x + 4: int$$

This means: "once  $\mathbf{x}$  has been defined to be some integer,  $\mathbf{x} + 4$  is an integer expression".

*Exercise 5.* Which of the following would you expect to be correct statements?

```
1. x : int \vdash x + y : int

2. x : int \vdash let y = 3 in x + y : int

3. x : int, y : int \vdash x + y : int

4. x : int, y : int \vdash x + 3 : int
```

Some terminology.

- 1. A, B and C range over types.
- 2. M and N and (if I'm desperate) P range over terms.
- 3. x, y and z are called *identifiers* (not "variables" please, the binding doesn't change over time).
- 4. A finite set of distinct identifiers with associated types x : int, y :int is called a *typing context*.  $\Gamma$  and  $\Delta$  range over typing contexts.

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- 5. Any term that can be proved in the *empty context* is said to be *closed*. These are the terms that really matter; but, to reason about closed terms, we have to study non-closed terms.

Before I can give you the rules for let, I have to go back and change all the rules we've seen so far to incorporate a context. So the rule for + becomes

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M: \texttt{int} \quad \Gamma \vdash N: \texttt{int}}{\Gamma \vdash M + N: \texttt{int}}$$

and similarly for  $\times$  and >.

The rule for 3 becomes

$$\Gamma \vdash 3 : \texttt{int}$$

and similarly for all the other integers, and true and false. And the rule for conditionals becomes

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M : \texttt{bool} \quad \Gamma \vdash N : B \quad \Gamma \vdash N' : B}{\Gamma \vdash \texttt{case} \ M \ \texttt{of} \ \{\texttt{true} \rightarrow N, \texttt{false} \rightarrow N'\} : B}$$

We need a rule for identifiers, so that we can prove things like  $x : int, y : int \vdash x : int$ . Here's the rule:

$$\frac{1}{\Gamma \vdash \mathbf{x} : A} \ (\mathbf{x} : A) \in \Gamma$$

And finally we want a rule for let. How do we prove that  $\Gamma \vdash$ let  $\mathbf{x} = M$  in N : B? Certainly we would have to prove something about M and something about N. To be more precise: we have to show that  $\Gamma \vdash M : A$ , and we have to show  $\Gamma, \mathbf{x} : A \vdash M : B$ . So the rule is

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M : A \quad \Gamma, \mathbf{x} : A \vdash N : B}{\Gamma \vdash \mathtt{let} \ \mathbf{x} = M \ \mathtt{in} \ N : B}$$

*Exercise 6.* Prove  $\vdash$  let  $\mathbf{x} = 3$  in  $\mathbf{x} + 2$ : int

### 4 Bound Identifiers

#### 4.1 Scope and Shadowing

Let's consider the following term:

$$\mathtt{x}:\mathtt{int},\mathtt{y}:\mathtt{int}\vdash(\mathtt{x}+\mathtt{y})+\mathtt{let}\;\mathtt{y}=3\;\mathtt{in}\;(\mathtt{x}+\mathtt{y}):\mathtt{int}$$

There are 4 occurrences of identifiers in this term. The two occurrences of  $\mathbf{x}$  are *free*. The first occurrence of  $\mathbf{y}$  is free, but the second is *bound*. More specifically, it is bound to a particular place.

We can draw a *binding diagram* for any term:

- replace every binding of an identifier by a rectangle
- replace each bound occurrence by a circle, and draw an arrow from the circle to the rectangle where it is bound
- leave the free occurrences

How do we draw this? Every binding has a *scope* which is the term that it is applied to. Any occurrence of **x** that is outside the scope of an **x**-binder is a free occurrence. If it is inside the scope of an **x**-binding, it is bound to that **x**-binding. Sometimes, an **x**-binder sits inside the scope of another **x**-binder:

let x = 3 in let x = 4 in (x + 2)

This is called *shadowing*, and the scope of the inner binder is subtracted from the scope from the outer binder. So the occurrence of  $\mathbf{x}$  at the end is bound to the second binder. The rule is always

Given an occurrence of  $\mathbf{x}$ , move up the branch of the tree, and as soon as you hit an  $\mathbf{x}$ -binder, that's the place the occurrence is bound to. If you never hit an  $\mathbf{x}$ -binder, the occurrence is free.

Exercise 7. Draw a binding diagram for

let x = 3 in let y = (let y = x + 2 in y + 7) in x + y

#### 4.2 $\alpha$ -equivalence

Now here is a variation on the above term:

 $x: int, y: int \vdash (x + y) + let z = 3 in (x + z): int$ 

The only difference is that we've changed a bound identifier. So the binding diagrams are the same. We say that two terms are  $\alpha$ equivalent when the binding diagrams are the same.

 $\alpha$ -equivalent terms are, to all intents and purposes, the same. In fact, it would be more accurate to define a term to be a binding diagram. We take this as the definition. Bound identifiers are just a convenient way of writing a term (rather like brackets are), but the term itself is a binding diagram.

This geometrical definition of "term" is rather old-fashioned. In recent years, some more abstract formulations have been developed that use pure induction and obviate the need for geometry. I recommend them!

### 5 The $\lambda$ -calculus

#### 5.1 Types

Now that we've learnt the general concepts of a calculus with binding, we're ready to make a calculus out of all the notations that we saw. The *types* of this calculus are given by the inductive definition:

 $A ::= \text{ int } \mid \text{bool } \mid A \times A \mid A + A \mid A \to A \mid 0 \mid 1$ 

where 0 is a type corresponding to the empty set, and 1 is a type corresponding to a singleton set (a set with one element).

Like a term, a type is just a tree of symbols. Don't confuse the *type* int  $\rightarrow$  int with the set  $\mathbb{Z} \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$ .

As we look at the typing rules for  $A \times B$  and A + B and  $A \rightarrow B$ , we'll see that there are two kinds.

- The *introduction rules* for a type tell us how to *form* something of that type.
- The *elimination rules* for a type tell us how to *use* something of that type.

In fact, we've already seen these for the type **bool**. The typing rules for **true** and **false** are introduction rules. The typing rule for conditionals is an elimination rule.

(The type int is an exception to this neat pattern. Because of problems with infinity, there isn't a simple elimination rule.)

#### 5.2 Cartesian Product

How do we form something of type  $A \times B$ ? We use pairing. So the introduction rule is

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M : A \quad \Gamma \vdash N : B}{\Gamma \vdash (M, N) : A \times B}$$

How do we use something of type  $A \times B$ ? As we saw before, there's actually a choice here: we can either project or pattern-match. For projections, our elimination rules are

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M : A \times B}{\Gamma \vdash \texttt{fst} \ M : A} \ \frac{\Gamma \vdash M : A \times B}{\Gamma \vdash \texttt{snd} \ M : B}$$

For pattern-matching, how do we prove that

$$\Gamma \vdash \mathsf{case} \ M \ \mathsf{as} \ (\mathsf{x},\mathsf{y}) \ \mathsf{in} \ N : C?$$

Certainly we have to show something about M and something about N. And to be more precise: we have to show that  $\Gamma \vdash M : A \times B$ , and that  $\Gamma, \mathbf{x} : A, \mathbf{y} : B \vdash N : C$ . So the elimination rule is

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M : A \times B \quad \Gamma, \mathbf{x} : A, \mathbf{y} : B \vdash N : C}{\Gamma \vdash \mathsf{case} \ M \ \mathsf{of} \ (\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) \ \mathsf{in} \ N : C}$$

We also include a type 1, representing a singleton set—the nullary product. The introduction rule is

$$\Gamma \vdash ():1$$

If we are using projection syntax, there are no elimination rules. If we are using pattern-match syntax, there is one elimination rule:

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M: 1 \quad \Gamma \vdash N: C}{\Gamma \vdash \texttt{case } M \texttt{ as } () \texttt{ in } N: C}$$

#### 5.3 Disjoint Union

The rules for disjoint union are fairly similar to those for bool. You might like to think about why this should be so.

How do we form something of type A + B? By pairing with a tag. So we have two introduction rules:

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M : A}{\Gamma \vdash (\# \text{left}, M) : A + B} \frac{\Gamma \vdash M : B}{\Gamma \vdash (\# \text{right}, M) : A + B}$$

How do we use something of type A + B? By pattern-matching it. To prove that

$$\Gamma \vdash \texttt{case } M \texttt{ of } \{(\# \text{left}, \texttt{x}) \to N \mid (\# \text{right}, \texttt{x}) \to N'\} : C,$$

we have to prove something about M, something about N and something about N'. To be more precise, we have to prove that  $\Gamma \vdash M : A + B$ , that  $\Gamma, \mathbf{x} : A \vdash N : C$  and that  $\Gamma, \mathbf{x} : B \vdash N' : C$ . So here's the elimination rule:

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M : A + B \quad \Gamma, \mathbf{x} : A \vdash N : C \quad \Gamma, \mathbf{x} : B \vdash N' : C}{\Gamma \vdash \mathsf{case} \ M \ \mathsf{of} \ \{(\#\text{left}, \mathbf{x}) \to N \mid (\#\text{right}, \mathbf{x}) \to N'\} : C}$$

We also include a type 0 representing the empty set—the nullary disjoint union. It has no introduction rule and the following elimination rule:

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M : 0}{\Gamma \vdash \mathsf{case} \ M \ \mathsf{of} \ \{\} : A}$$

### 5.4 Function Space

We're almost done now—we just need the rules for  $A \to B$ . How do we form something of type  $A \to B$ ? We use  $\lambda$ -abstraction. To show that  $\Gamma \vdash M : A \to B$ , we need to show that  $\Gamma, \mathbf{x} : A \vdash M : B$ . So the introduction rule is

$$\frac{\Gamma, \mathbf{x} : A \vdash M : B}{\Gamma \vdash \lambda \mathbf{x} : A \cdot M : A \to B}$$

How do we use something of type  $A \to B$ ? By applying it to something of type A. And that gives us something of type B. So the elimination rule is

$$\frac{\Gamma \vdash M : A \to B \quad \Gamma \vdash N : A}{\Gamma \vdash MN : B}$$

### 6 Substitution

The most important operation on terms (i.e. operation on binding diagrams) is *substitution*. If M and N are terms, we write  $M[N/\mathbf{x}]$  for the term in which we substitute N for  $\mathbf{x}$  in M. For example, if M is  $(\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{y}) \times 3$  and N is  $(\mathbf{y} \times 2)$  then  $M[N/\mathbf{x}]$  is  $((\mathbf{y} \times 2) + \mathbf{y}) \times 3$ . It is most important to remember here that terms are binding diagrams:

- 1. Suppose *M* is x + let x = 3 in  $x \times 7$ , and *N* is  $y \times 2$ , Writing these as binding diagrams ensures that we substitute for only the *free* occurrences. We therefore obtain  $(y \times 2) + \text{let } 3$  be x in  $x \times 7$ .
- 2. Suppose *M* is let y = 3 in x + y, and *N* is  $y \times 2$ . Writing these as binding diagrams ensures that the free occurrence of y in *N* remains free. So we obtain let z = 3 in  $(y \times 2) + z$ . If we try to substitute naively, we get let y = 3 in  $(y \times 2) + y$ . That's the wrong answer, because the free occurrence of y in *N* has been *captured*. "Substitution" always means *capture-free* substitution.

Exercise 8. Substitute

let 
$$x = x + 1$$
 in  $x + y$ 

for x in

x + (let y = x + 2 in let x = x + y in x + y)

### 7 Exercises

- 1. Turn some of the descriptions of integers from the notes into expressions. Write out binding diagrams and proof trees for these examples (hint: use a large piece of paper in landscape orientation).
- 2. What integer is

```
let x = 3 in

let u = (\# \text{left}, (\lambda y : \mathbb{Z} \to x + y)) in

let x = 4 in

case u of \{(\# \text{left}, f) \to f \ 2 \mid (\# \text{right}, f) \to 0\}?
```

```
3. What integer is

\operatorname{let} f = \lambda x : \mathbb{Z} \to (\#\operatorname{left}, (\lambda z : \mathbb{Z} \to x + y)) \text{ in}
\operatorname{let} u = f \ 0 \text{ in}
\operatorname{case} u \text{ of } \{
(\#\operatorname{left}, g) \to \operatorname{let} v = f \ 1
\operatorname{in} \operatorname{case} v \text{ of } \{(\#\operatorname{left}, h) \to g \ 3
\mid (\#\operatorname{right}, h) \to 0\}
\mid (\#\operatorname{right}, g) \to 0\}
```

?

4. (variant record type) For sets A, B, C, D, E, we define  $\alpha(A, B, C, D, E)$  to be the set of values

$$\{(\#\text{left}, x, y) | x \in A, y \in B\} \cup \{(\#\text{right}, x, y, z) | x \in C, y \in D, z \in E\}$$

Now think of  $\alpha$  as an operation on types. Give typing rules for

- (#left, M, N)
- (#right, M, N, P)
- case M of  $\{(\# left, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) \rightarrow N \mid (\# right, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}, \mathbf{z}) \rightarrow N'\}$

i.e. two introduction rules and one elimination rule for  $\alpha$ .

- 5. (variant function type) For sets A, B, C, D, E, F, G, we define  $\beta(A, B, C, D, E, F, G)$  to be the set of functions that take
  - a sequence of arguments (#left, x, y), where  $x \in A$  and  $y \in B$ , to an element of C
  - a sequence of arguments (#right, x, y, z), where  $x \in D$  and  $y \in E$  and  $z \in F$ , to an element of G.

Thus the first argument is always a tag, indicating how many other arguments there are, what their type is, and what the type of the result should be.

Now think of  $\beta$  as an operation on types. Give typing rules for

- -M(# left, N, N')
- M(# right, N, N', N'')
- $\lambda \{ (\# \text{left}, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) . M \mid (\# \text{right}, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}, \mathbf{z}) . M' \}$

i.e. two elimination rules and one introduction rule for  $\beta$ .