

CSE341: Programming Languages

Lecture 22

OOP vs. Functional Decomposition; Adding Operators & Variants; Double-Dispatch

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Breaking things down

- In functional (and procedural) programming, break programs down into **functions that perform some operation**
- In object-oriented programming, break programs down into **classes that give behavior to some kind of data**

This lecture:

- These two forms of *decomposition* are **so exactly opposite** that they are two ways of looking at the same “matrix”
- Which form is “better” is somewhat personal taste, but also depends on **how you expect to change/extend software**
- For some operations over two (multiple) arguments, functions and pattern-matching are straightforward, but with OOP we can do it with **double dispatch** (multiple dispatch)

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2

The expression example

Well-known and compelling example of a common *pattern*:

- Expressions for a small language
- Different **variants** of expressions: ints, additions, negations, ...
- Different **operations** to perform: **eval**, **toString**, **hasZero**, ...

Leads to a matrix (2D-grid) of variants and operations

- Implementation will involve deciding what “should happen” for each entry in the grid *regardless of the PL*

	eval	toString	hasZero	...
Int				
Add				
Negate				
...				

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3

Standard approach in ML

	eval	toString	hasZero	...
Int				
Add				
Negate				
...				

- Define a *datatype*, with one *constructor* for each variant
 - (No need to indicate datatypes if dynamically typed)
- “Fill out the grid” via **one function per column**
 - Each function has one branch for each column entry
 - Can combine cases (e.g., with wildcard patterns) if multiple entries in column are the same

[See the ML code]

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4

Standard approach in OOP

	eval	toString	hasZero	...
Int				
Add				
Negate				
...				

- Define a *class*, with one *abstract method* for each operation
 - (No need to indicate abstract methods if dynamically typed)
- Define a *subclass* for each variant
- So “fill out the grid” via **one class per row** with one method implementation for each grid position
 - Can use a method in the superclass if there is a default for multiple entries in a column

[See the Ruby and Java code]

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5

A big course punchline

	eval	toString	hasZero	...
Int				
Add				
Negate				
...				

- FP and OOP often doing the same thing in **exact opposite way**
 - Organize the program “by rows” or “by columns”
- Which is “most natural” may depend on what you are doing (e.g., an interpreter vs. a GUI) or personal taste
- Code layout is important, but there is no perfect way since software has many dimensions of structure
 - Tools, IDEs can help with multiple “views” (e.g., rows / columns)

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6

Extensibility

	eval	toString	hasZero	noNegConstants
Int				
Add				
Negate				
Mult				

- For implementing our grid so far, SML / Racket style usually by column and Ruby / Java style usually by row
- But beyond just style, this decision affects what (unexpected?) software *extensions* need not change old code
- Functions [see ML code]:
 - Easy to add a new operation, e.g., `noNegConstants`
 - Adding a new variant, e.g., `Mult` requires modifying old functions, but ML type-checker gives a to-do list if original code avoided wildcard patterns

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7

Extensibility

	eval	toString	hasZero	noNegConstants
Int				
Add				
Negate				
Mult				

- For implementing our grid so far, SML / Racket style usually by column and Ruby / Java style usually by row
- But beyond just style, this decision affects what (unexpected?) software *extensions* are easy and/or do not change old code
- Objects [see Ruby code]:
 - Easy to add a new variant, e.g., `Mult`
 - Adding a new operation, e.g., `noNegConstants` requires modifying old classes, but Java type-checker gives a to-do list if original code avoided default methods

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8

The other way is possible

- Functions allow new operations and objects allow new variants without modifying existing code *even if they didn't plan for it*
 - Natural result of the decomposition

Optional:

- Functions can support new variants somewhat awkwardly "if they plan ahead"
 - *Not explained here: Can use type constructors to make datatypes extensible and have operations take function arguments to give results for the extensions*
- Objects can support new operations somewhat awkwardly "if they plan ahead"
 - *Not explained here: The popular Visitor Pattern uses the double-dispatch pattern to allow new operations "on the side"*

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9

Thoughts on Extensibility

- Making software extensible is valuable and hard
 - If you know you want new operations, use FP
 - If you know you want new variants, use OOP
 - If both? Languages like Scala try; it's a hard problem
 - Reality: The future is often hard to predict!
- Extensibility is a double-edged sword
 - Code more reusable without being changed later
 - But makes original code more difficult to reason about locally or change later (could break extensions)
 - Often language mechanisms to make code *less* extensible (ML modules hide datatypes; Java's `final` prevents subclassing/overriding)

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10

Binary operations

	eval	toString	hasZero	...
Int				
Add				
Negate				
...				

- Situation is more complicated if an operation is defined over multiple arguments that can have different variants
 - Can arise in original program or after extension
- Function decomposition deals with this much more simply...

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11

Example

To show the issue:

- Include variants `String` and `Rational`
- (Re)define `Add` to work on any pair of `Int`, `String`, `Rational`
 - Concatenation if either argument a `String`, else math

Now just defining the addition operation is a *different* 2D grid:

	Int	String	Rational
Int			
String			
Rational			

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12

ML Approach

Addition is different for most `Int`, `String`, `Rational` combinations

- Run-time error for non-value expressions

Natural approach: pattern-match on the pair of values

- For *commutative* possibilities, can re-call with `(v2,v1)`

```
fun add_values (v1,v2) =
  case (v1,v2) of
    (Int i, Int j) => Int (i+j)
  | (Int i, String s) => String (Int.toString i ^ s)
  | (Int i, Rational(j,k)) => Rational (i*k+j,k)
  | (Rational _, Int _) => add_values (v2,v1)
  | ... (* 5 more cases (3*3 total): see the code *)

fun eval e =
  case e of
    ...
  | Add(e1,e2) => add_values (eval e1, eval e2)
```

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13

Example

To show the issue:

- Include variants `String` and `Rational`
- (Re)define `Add` to work on any pair of `Int`, `String`, `Rational`
 - Concatenation if either argument a `String`, else math

Now just defining the addition operation is a *different* 2D grid:

	Int	String	Rational
Int			
String			
Rational			

Worked just fine with functional decomposition — what about OOP...

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14

What about OOP?

Starts promising:

- Use OOP to call method `add_values` to one value with other value as result

```
class Add
...
def eval
  e1.eval.add_values e2.eval
end
end
```

Classes `Int`, `MyString`, `MyRational` then all implement

- Each handling 3 of the 9 cases: “add `self` to argument”

```
class Int
...
def add_values v
... # what goes here?
end
end
```

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15

First try

- This approach is common, but is “not as OOP”
 - *So do not do it on your homework*

```
class Int
  def add_values v
    if v.is_a? Int
      Int.new(v.i + i)
    elsif v.is_a? MyRational
      MyRational.new(v.i+v.j*i,v.j)
    else
      MyString.new(v.s + i.to_s)
    end
  end
end
```

- A “hybrid” style where we used dynamic dispatch on 1 argument and then switched to Racket-style type tests for other argument
 - Definitely not “full OOP”

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16

Another way...

- `add_values` method in `Int` needs “what kind of thing” `v` has
 - Same problem in `MyRational` and `MyString`
- In OOP, “always” solve this by calling a method on `v` instead!
- But now we need to “tell” `v` “what kind of thing” `self` is
 - We know that!
 - “Tell” `v` by calling different methods on `v`, passing `self`
- Use a “programming trick” (?) called *double-dispatch*...

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17

Double-dispatch “trick”

- `Int`, `MyString`, and `MyRational` each define all of `addInt`, `addString`, and `addRational`
 - For example, `String`’s `addInt` is for concatenating an integer argument to the string in `self`
 - 9 total methods, one for each case of addition
- `Add`’s `eval` method calls `e1.eval.add_values e2.eval`, which dispatches to `add_values` in `Int`, `String`, or `Rational`
 - `Int`’s `add_values`: `v.addInt self`
 - `MyString`’s `add_values`: `v.addString self`
 - `MyRational`’s `add_values`: `v.addRational self`So `add_values` performs “2nd dispatch” to the correct case of 9!

[Definitely see the code]

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18

Why showing you this

- Honestly, partly to belittle full commitment to OOP
- To understand dynamic dispatch via a sophisticated idiom
- Because required for the homework
- To contrast with *multimethods* (optional)

Works in Java too

- In a statically typed language, double-dispatch works fine
 - Just need all the dispatch methods in the type

```
abstract class Value extends Exp {
  abstract Value add_values(Value other);
  abstract Value addInt(Int other);
  abstract Value addString(Strng other);
  abstract Value addRational(Rational other);
}
class Int extends Value { ... }
class Strng extends Value { ... }
class Rational extends Value { ... }
```

[See Java code]

Being Fair

Belittling OOP style for requiring the manual trick of double dispatch is somewhat unfair...

What would work better:

- **Int**, **MyString**, and **MyRational** each define three methods all named **add_values**
 - One **add_values** takes an **Int**, one a **MyString**, one a **MyRational**
 - So 9 total methods named **add_values**
 - **e1.eval.add_values e2.eval** picks the right one of the 9 at run-time using the classes of the two arguments
- Such a semantics is called *multimethods* or *multiple dispatch*

Multimethods

General idea:

- Allow multiple methods with same name
- Indicate which ones take instances of which classes
- Use dynamic dispatch on arguments in addition to receiver to pick which method is called

If dynamic dispatch is essence of OOP, this is more OOP

- No need for awkward manual multiple-dispatch

Downside: Interaction with subclassing can produce situations where there is "no clear winner" for which method to call

Ruby: Why not?

Multimethods a bad fit (?) for Ruby because:

- Ruby places no restrictions on what is passed to a method
- Ruby never allows methods with the same name
 - Same name means overriding/replacing

Java/C#/C++: Why not?

- Yes, Java/C#/C++ allow multiple methods with the same name
- No, these language do *not* have multimethods
 - They have *static overloading*
 - Uses static types of arguments to choose the method
 - But of course run-time class of receiver [odd hybrid?]
 - No help in our example, so still code up double-dispatch manually
- Actually, C# 4.0 has a way to get effect of multimethods
- Many other language have multimethods (e.g., Clojure)
 - They are not a new idea