# Monad P3: Existential Types (1D)

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#### Based on

Haskell in 5 steps

https://wiki.haskell.org/Haskell\_in\_5\_steps

## **Existential Quantification**

https://stackoverflow.com/questions/3071136/what-does-the-forall-keyword-in-haskell-ghc-do

#### **Existentials**

#### **Existential types**, or

**Existentials** for short,

provide a way of

squashing <u>a group of types</u>

into one, single type.

#### **Existentials**

**Existentials** are part of GHC's type system **extensions**.

But not part of Haskell98

have to either compile with a command-line parameter of

 $\hbox{-XExistential} Quantification,$ 

or put at the top of your sources that use existentials.

**{-# LANGUAGE ExistentialQuantification #-}** 

#### forall type variables

The forall keyword is to explicitly bring fresh type variables into scope

#### type variables

those variables that begin with a **owercase** letter
the compiler allows **any type** to fill these variables

those variables that are universally quantified

## forall type variables

Example: A polymorphic function

map :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]

a lowercase type parameter

implicitly begins with a forall keyword,

Example: Explicitly quantifying the type variables

map :: forall a b. (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]

two type declarations for map are equivalent

#### forall type variables

```
Example: A polymorphic function
```

```
map :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]
```

Example: Explicitly quantifying the type variables

```
map :: forall a b. (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]
```

instantiating the general type of map

to a more specific type

a = Int

b = String

(Int -> String) -> [Int] -> [String]

# Hiding a type variable

https://stackoverflow.com/questions/3071136/what-does-the-forall-keyword-in-haskell-ghc-do

#### Hiding a type variable (1)

```
Normally when creating a new type
```

using type, newtype, data, etc.,

every **type variable** that appears on the <u>right-hand side</u> must also <u>appear</u> on the <u>left-hand side</u>.

newtype ST s a = ST (State# s -> (# State# s, a #))

Existential types are a way of escaping this rule

Existential types can be used for several different purposes.

But what they do is to <a href="https://example.com/hide">hide</a> a type variable on the <a href="right-hand side">right-hand side</a>.

#### Hiding a type variable (2)

```
Normally, any type variable appearing on the right must also appear on the left:

data Worker x y = Worker {buffer :: b, input :: x, output :: y}

This is an error, since the type b of the buffer is not specified on the right

(b is a type variable rather than a type)

but also is not specified on the left (there's no b in the left part).

In Haskell98, you would have to write data Worker b x y = Worker {buffer :: b, input :: x, output :: y}
```

## Hiding a type variable (3)

However, suppose that a **Worker** can use any type **b** so long as it belongs to some particular class.

Then every **function** that uses a **Worker** will have a type like

foo :: (Buffer b) => Worker b Int Int

In particular, failing to write an **explicit type signature** (Buffer b) will invoke the dreaded **monomorphism restriction**.

Using existential types, we can avoid this:

## Hiding a type variable (3')

The **monomorphism restriction** is a counter-intuitive rule in Haskell type inference.

If you *forget to provide* a **type signature**, sometimes this rule will fill the free type variables with specific types using **type defaulting** rules.

always less polymorphic than you'd expect, so often this results in **type errors** when you expected it to infer a perfectly sane type for a polymorphic expression.

## Hiding a type variable (3")

A simple example is plus = (+).

Without an explicit signature for **plus**, the compiler will <u>not infer</u> the type for **plus** 

(+) :: (Num a) => a -> a

but will apply defaulting rules to specify

plus :: Integer -> Integer -> Integer

When applied to **plus 3.5 2.7**, GHCi will then produce the somewhat-misleading-looking error,

No instance for (Fractional Integer) arising from the literal '3.5'.

#### Hiding a type variable (4)

```
Explicit type signature :

data Worker b x y = Worker {buffer :: b, input :: x, output :: y}

foo :: (Buffer b) => Worker b Int Int

Using existential type :

data Worker x y = forall b. Buffer b => Worker {buffer :: b, input :: x, output :: y}

foo :: Worker Int Int

The type of the buffer (Buffer) now does not appear in the Worker type at all. Worker x y
```

#### Hiding a type variable (5)

- it is now <u>impossible</u> for a function to demand a Worker having a <u>specific type</u> of buffer.
- the type of foo can now be <u>derived automatically</u> without needing an <u>explicit</u> type signature.
   (No monomorphism restriction.)
- since code now has no idea
   what type the buffer function returns,
   you are more limited in what you can do to it.

```
data Worker x y = forall b. Buffer b => Worker {buffer :: b, input :: x, output :: y}
foo :: Worker Int Int
```

## Hiding a type variable (6)

In general, when you use a **hidden type** in this way, you will usually want that **type** to belong to a **specific class**, or you will want to **pass some functions** along that can work on that type.

Otherwise you'll have some value belonging to a **random unknown type**, and you won't be able to do anything to it!

## Less specific types (1)

Note: You can use existential types

to convert a more specific type

into a **less specific one**.

constrained type variables

There is no way to perform the reverse conversion!

## Less specific types (2)

```
This illustrates creating a heterogeneous list,
all of whose members implement Show
and progressing through that list to show these items:

data Obj = forall a. (Show a) => Obj a

xs :: [Obj]
xs = [Obj 1, Obj "foo", Obj 'c']

doShow :: [Obj] -> String
doShow [] = ""
doShow ((Obj x):xs) = show x ++ doShow xs
```

With output: doShow xs ==> "1\"foo\"'c"

#### Existentials in terms of forall (1)

It is also possible to <u>express existentials</u> with **RankNTypes** as **type expressions** <u>directly</u> (without a **data** declaration)

forall r. (forall a. Show 
$$a \Rightarrow a \Rightarrow r \Rightarrow r$$
) -> r

(the leading **forall r.** is optional unless the expression is part of another expression).

the equivalent type **Obj**:

#### Existentials in terms of **forall** (2)

#### The conversions are:

```
fromObj :: Obj -> forall r. (forall a. Show a => a -> r) -> r fromObj (Obj x) k = k x
```

```
toObj :: (forall r. (forall a. Show a => a -> r) -> r) -> Obj toObj f = f Obj
```



https://stackoverflow.com/questions/3071136/what-does-the-forall-keyword-in-haskell-ghc-do

#### Type hider

Suppose we have a group of values.

they may not be all the <u>same</u> **type**, but they are all <u>members</u> of some **class** thus, they have a certain **property** 

It might be useful to throw all these values into a list.

normally this is impossible because lists elements

must be of the same type

(homogeneous with respect to types).

**existential types** allow us to <u>loosen</u> this requirement by defining a **type hider** or **type box**:

data ShowBox = forall s. Show s => SB s

heteroList :: [ShowBox]

heteroList = [SB (), SB 5, SB True]

#### Heterogeneous list example (1)

```
data ShowBox = forall s. Show s => SB s
```

-- type hider

heteroList :: [ShowBox]

heteroList = [SB (), SB 5, SB True]

[SB (), SB 5, SB True] calls the constructor

on three values of <u>different types</u>,

to place them all into <u>a single list</u>

virtually the same type for each one.

Use the forall in the constructor

SB :: forall s. Show s => s -> ShowBox.

#### Heterogeneous list example (2)

data ShowBox = forall s. Show  $s \Rightarrow SB s$  -- type hider

heteroList :: [ShowBox]

heteroList = [SB (), SB 5, SB True]

When passing **heteroList type parameters** to a function

we cannot take out the values inside the SB

because their type might Bool. Int, Char, ...

But each of the elements can be

converted to a **string** via **show**.

In fact, that's the only thing we know about them.

## Heterogeneous list example (3)

```
instance Show ShowBox where
show (SB s) = show s

f :: [ShowBox] -> IO ()
f xs = mapM_ print xs

main = f heteroList
```

#### Heterogeneous list example (4)

```
Example: Using our heterogeneous list instance Show ShowBox where show (SB s) = show s -- (*) see the comment in the text below f :: [ShowBox] -> IO () f xs = mapM_ print xs main = f heteroList

Example: Types of the functions involved print :: Show s => s -> IO () -- print x = putStrLn (show x) mapM_ :: (a -> m b) -> [a] -> m () mapM_ print :: Show s => [s] -> IO ()
```

#### mapM, mapM\_, and map (1)

```
The core idea is that mapM maps
an "action" (ie function of type a -> m b) over a list and
gives you all the results as m [b]

mapM_ does the same thing,
but never collects the results, returning a m ().

If you care about the results
    of your a -> m b function, use mapM.

If you only care about the effect,
    but not the resulting value,
    use mapM_, because it can be more efficient
```

https://stackoverflow.com/questions/27609062/what-is-the-difference-between-mapm-and-mapm-in-haskell/27609146

#### mapM, mapM\_, and map (2)

```
Always use mapM_ with functions of the type a -> m (),
like print or putStrLn.
these functions return () to signify that only the effect matters.

If you used mapM, you'd get a list of () (ie [(), (), ()]),
which would be completely useless
but waste some memory.

If you use mapM_, you would just get a (),
but it would still print everything.
```

https://stackoverflow.com/questions/27609062/what-is-the-difference-between-mapm-and-mapm-in-haskell/27609146

#### mapM, mapM\_, and map (3)

```
Normal map is something different: it takes a normal function (a -> b)
```

instead of one using a monad  $(a \rightarrow m b)$ .

This means that it <u>cannot</u> have any sort of <u>effect</u> besides returning the <u>changed list</u>.

You would use it if you want to transform a list using a normal function.

map\_doesn't exist because, since you don't have any effects, you always care about the results of using map.

https://stackoverflow.com/questions/27609062/what-is-the-difference-between-mapm-and-mapm-in-haskell/27609146

https://stackoverflow.com/questions/3071136/what-does-the-forall-keyword-in-haskell-ghc-do

A universally quantified type may be interpreted as an infinite product of types.

a **polymorphic function** can be understood as a **product**, or a **tuple**, of **individual functions**, one per every possible **type a**.

To <u>construct</u> a **value** of such **type**, we have to <u>provide</u> <u>all</u> the **components** of the **tuple** <u>at once</u>.

-- one formula generating an infinity of functions

```
Example: Identity function

id :: forall a. a -> a

id a = a

a polymorphic function can be understood

as a product, or a tuple, of individual functions,

one per every possible type a.

Int -> Int, Double -> Double, ...

Char -> Char, [Char] -> [Char], ...

...

...
```

To <u>construct</u> a **value** of such **type**, we have to <u>provide</u> <u>all</u> the **components** of the **tuple** <u>at once</u>.

in case of **numeric types**, <u>one</u> **numeric constant** may be used to <u>initialize</u> **many types** <u>at once</u>.

Example: Polymorphic value

x :: forall a. Num a => a

x = 0

x may be conceptualized as a **tuple** consisting of an **Int value**, a **Double value**, etc.

Similarly, an **existentially quantified type** may be interpreted as an **infinite sum**.

Example: Existential type

data ShowBox = forall s. Show s => SB s

may be conceptualized as a **sum**:

#### Quantified Types as Products and Sums

Example: Existential type

data ShowBox = forall s. Show s => SB s

Example: Sum type

data ShowBox = SBUnit | SBInt Int | SBBool Bool | SBIntList [Int] | ...

to construct a value of this type,

we only have to <u>pick</u> one of the constructors.

A polymorphic constructor SB

combines all those constructors into one.

# Quantification as a primitive

https://stackoverflow.com/questions/3071136/what-does-the-forall-keyword-in-haskell-ghc-do

#### Newtype creates a function (1)

```
newtype Parser a = Parser { parse :: String -> Maybe (a,String) }
```

- 1) A **type** named **Parser**.
- 2) A **term level constructor** of **Parser's** named **Parser**.

The **type** of this (constructor) function is

Parser :: (String -> Maybe (a, String)) -> Parser a

You give it a function of the type

(String -> Maybe (a, String))

and it wraps it inside a Parser

## Newtype creates a function (2)

```
newtype Parser a = Parser { parse :: String -> Maybe (a,String) }
```

3) A **function** named **parse** to remove the **Parser** wrapper and get your function back. The type of this function is:

```
parse :: Parser a -> String -> Maybe (a, String)
```

A term level constructor named Parser

Parser :: (String -> Maybe (a, String)) -> Parser a

## Newtype creates a function (3)

```
Prelude> newtype

Parser a = Parser { parse :: String -> Maybe (a,String) }

Prelude> :t Parser

Parser :: (String -> Maybe (a, String)) -> Parser a

Prelude> :t parse

parse :: Parser a -> String -> Maybe (a, String)
```

#### Newtype creates a function (4)

```
newtype Parser a = Parser { parse :: String -> Maybe (a,String) }

the term level constructor (Parser)
the function to remove the wrapper (parse)
Both can have arbitrary names
No need to match the type name.

It's common to write:
newtype Parser a = Parser { unParser :: String -> Maybe (a,String) }
```

## Newtype creates a function (5)

```
newtype Parser a = Parser { unParser :: String -> Maybe (a,String) }
```

this name makes it clear **unParser** <u>removes</u> the **wrapper** around the parsing function.

```
unParser :: Parser a -> String -> Maybe (a, String)
```

however, it is recommended that the **type** and **constructor** have the same name when using **newtypes**.

(Parser, Parser)

#### Newtype creates a function (6)

```
newtype Parser a = Parser { parser :: String -> Maybe (a,String) }
```

- 1) Parser is declared as a type with a type parameter a
- 2) can instantiate Parser by providing a parser functionp = Parser (\s -> Nothing)
- 3) a function name parser defined and it is capable of <u>running Parser's</u>. unwrap the function then apply the function

#### Newtype creates a function (7)

```
newtype Parser a = Parser { parser :: String -> Maybe (a,String) }

parser :: Parser a -> String -> Maybe (a, String)

parser (Parser (\s -> Nothing)) "my input"

(\s -> Nothing)) "my input"

Nothing
```

You are unwrapping the function using parse and then calling the unwrapped function with "myInput".

## Newtype creates a function (8)

First, let's have a look at a parser **newtype** <u>without</u> **record** syntax:

```
newtype Parser' a = Parser' (String -> Maybe (a,String))
```

it stores a function String -> Maybe (a, String).

To <u>run</u> this parser, we will need to make a **new function**:

```
runParser' :: Parser' a -> String -> Maybe (a,String)
runParser' (Parser' f) i = f i
```

#### Newtype creates a function (9)

```
runParser' :: Parser' a -> String -> Maybe (a,String)
runParser' (Parser' f) i = f i

runParser' (Parser' $ \s -> Nothing) "my input".
```

But now note that, since Haskell functions are <u>curried</u>, we can simply remove the reference to the input **i** to get:

```
runParser" :: Parser' -> (String -> Maybe (a,String))
runParser" (Parser' f') = f'
```

#### Newtype creates a function (10)

```
runParser" :: Parser' -> (String -> Maybe (a,String))
runParser" (Parser' f') = f'
```

This function is exactly equivalent to **runParser'**, but you could think about it differently:

instead of applying the parser function to the value explicitly, it simply takes a parser and fetches the parser function from it;  $(Parser' f') \rightarrow f'$ 

however, thanks to **currying**, **runParser**" can still be used with two arguments.

#### Newtype creates a function (11)

```
newtype Parser a = Parser { parse :: String -> Maybe (a,String) }
newtype Parser' a = Parser' (String -> Maybe (a,String))

difference : record syntax with only one field

this record syntax automatically defines a function

parse :: Parser a -> (String -> Maybe (a,String)),

which extracts the String -> Maybe (a,String) function

from the Parser a.
```

#### Newtype creates a function (12)

```
newtype Parser a = Parser { parse :: String -> Maybe (a,String) }
```

parse can be used with two arguments thanks to currying, and this simply has the effect of running the function stored within the Parser a.

equivalent definition to the following code:

newtype Parser a = Parser (String -> Maybe (a,String))

parse :: Parser a -> (String -> Maybe (a,String))
parse (Parser p) = p

#### Access functions in a record type (1)

return types of access functions

Person :: the input type of access functions

http://learnyouahaskell.com/making-our-own-types-and-typeclasses

#### Access functions in a record type (2)

http://learnyouahaskell.com/making-our-own-types-and-typeclasses

## Pair type example (1)

#### Universal quantification is useful

for <u>defining</u> data types that <u>aren't already defined</u>.

Suppose there was no such thing as **pairs** built into haskell.

**Quantification** could be used to <u>define</u> them.

{-# LANGUAGE ExistentialQuantification, RankNTypes #-}

newtype Pair a b = Pair (forall c. (a -> b -> c) -> c)

makePair :: a -> b -> Pair a b

makePair a b = Pair \$ \f -> f a b

**Pair \$ \f -> f a b :: Pair a b** 

f:: a -> b -> c

f a b :: c

f is not yet defined

**c** can be any type (forall **c**)

defining data type  ${\bf c}$ 

that aren't already defined

## Pair type example (2)

```
newtype Pair a b = Pair (forall c. (a -> b -> c) -> c)

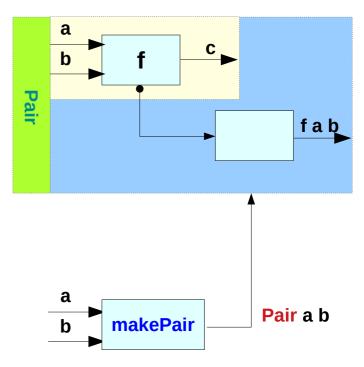
makePair :: a -> b -> Pair a b
makePair a b = Pair $ \f -> f a b

using a record type with a single field

\( \lambda > \text{ newtype Pair a b = Pair {runPair :: forall c. (a -> b -> c) -> c} \)

runPair is an access function
    takes an input of the type Pair a b
    returns an output of the type forall c. (a -> b -> c) -> c
```

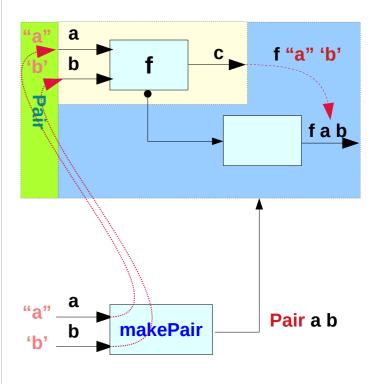
#### Pair \$ \f -> f a b :: Pair a b



#### Pair type example (3)

#### In GHCI **λ> :set -XExistentialQuantification λ> :set -XrankNTypes** $\lambda$ newtype Pair a b = Pair {runPair :: forall c. (a -> b -> c) -> c} $\lambda$ makePair a b = Pair \$ \f -> f a b $\lambda$ > pair = makePair "a" 'b' λ> :t pair pair :: Pair [Char] Char $\lambda$ runPair pair ((x y -> x) -- unwrap (a -> b -> c) -> c then apply "a" $\lambda$ runPair pair ((x y -> y) -- unwrap (a -> b -> c) -> c then apply 'b'

Pair \$ \f -> f a b :: Pair a b



makePair "a" 'b'
Pair \$ \f -> f "a" 'b' :: Pair a b

## Pair type example (4)

```
λ> newtype Pair a b = Pair {runPair :: forall c. (a -> b -> c) -> c}

λ> makePair a b = Pair $ \f -> f a b

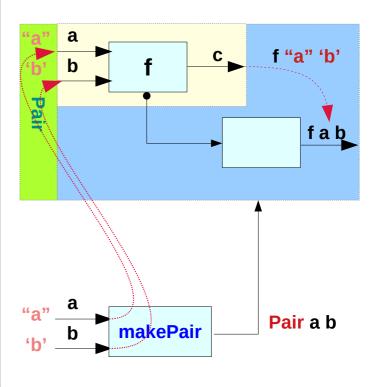
λ> pair = makePair "a" 'b'

Pair $ \f -> f "a" 'b'

If: function itself f :: a -> b -> c

f "a" 'b': the result of applying the function
```

#### Pair \$ \f -> f a b :: Pair a b

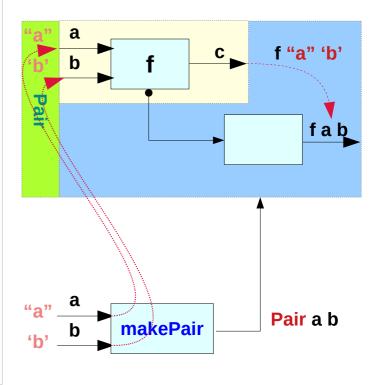


makePair "a" 'b'
Pair \$ \f -> f "a" 'b' :: Pair a b

## Pair type example (5)

```
newtype Pair a b = Pair \{runPair :: forall c. (a -> b -> c) -> c\}
runPair :: Pair a b -> forall c. (a -> b -> c) -> c
makePair a b = Pair $ \f -> f a b
runPair makePair a b = f - f a b
                                           -- unwrapping
makePair "a" 'b' = Pair $ \f -> f "a" 'b'
runPair makePair "a" 'b' = \f -> f "a" 'b'
                                             :: Pair [Char] Char
pair = makePair
runPair pair (\langle x, y \rangle - \langle x \rangle) = (\langle x, y \rangle - \langle x \rangle) "a" 'b'
runPair pair (x y -> y) = (x y -> y) "a" 'b'
```

Pair \$ \f -> f a b :: Pair a b



```
makePair "a" 'b'

Pair $ \f -> f "a" 'b' :: Pair a b
```

#### Pair type example (6)

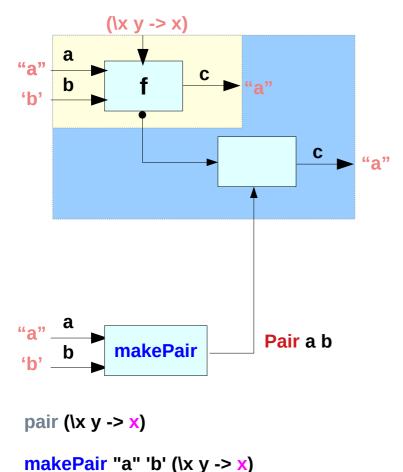
```
runPair pair (\x y -> x) = (\x y -> x) "a" 'b'
runPair pair (\x y -> y) = (\x y -> y) "a" 'b'

runPair makePair "a" 'b' (\x y -> x)
(\x y -> x) "a" 'b'
"a"

runPair makePair "a" 'b' (\x y -> y)
(\x y -> y) "a" 'b'
'b'
'b'
```

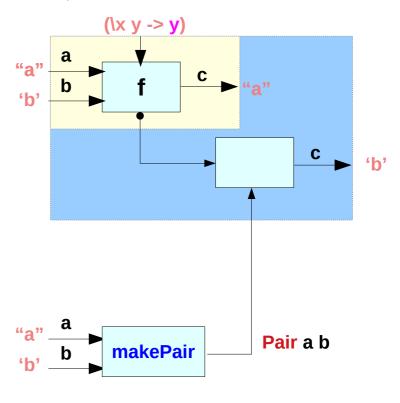
## Pair type example (6)

#### Pair \$ \f -> f a b :: Pair a b



https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Haskell/Existentially\_quantified\_types

#### Pair \$ \f -> f a b :: Pair a b



pair (x y -> y)

makePair "a" 'b' (\x y -> y)

#### References

- [1] ftp://ftp.geoinfo.tuwien.ac.at/navratil/HaskellTutorial.pdf
- [2] https://www.umiacs.umd.edu/~hal/docs/daume02yaht.pdf