

Class 37: Pairs and Pair Structures

Held: Monday, April 12, 2010

Summary: We consider *pairs*, the basic data type used to build lists and other structures in Scheme. We also consider why it is useful to understand about pairs.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Lab: Pairs and Pair Structures.
- Reading: Pairs and Pair Structures.

Notes:

- Reading for Tuesday: Trees and Tree Structures.
- Are there questions on assignment 7?
- Shall we try for a “quiet Sam” day?

Overview:

- Pairs and cons cells.
- Why care?
- Lab.

Cons Cells

- One set of interesting values in Scheme are the things that `cons` creates. We often call these *cons cells* or *pairs*.
- The first value of a pair is a reference to the first parameter to `cons`. The second value is a reference to the second parameter.
- I'll also draw some pictures of these things in class.

Dotted Pairs

- Although we've used lists as the second parts of each cons cell, you can use other values. If the second part of a cons cell is not a list, you get what is called a *dotted pair*.
- The shorthand for a dotted pair is $(x . y)$.
- You'll also see the dot at the end of a long sequence of cons cells.
- Why is the dot there?
 - To distinguish things close to lists from lists.
- Why is it right before the last element, and not earlier?
 - Because we don't know until we hit the end that it's not a list.

Why Care?

- *Why should we care about the underlying structure used for lists?*
- Because it helps explain why Scheme does some things the way it does.
- Because it helps us understand the hidden costs associated with some operations.
- Because it helps us better understand recursion over lists.
- Because it provides background for future discussions.

Lab

- Any questions?
- Do the lab (preferably in pairs :-).
- Be prepared to reflect.

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