

Class 16: Implementing LISP

Held: Monday, February 26, 2007

Summary: Today we continue to explore the techniques used to implement Lisp.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Reading: Paul Graham - The Roots of LISP.

Overview:

- `eval`, continued.
- Flaws in `eval`.
- Graham's Claims.
- Implementing Lisp.
- Garbage Collection.

Eval, Continued

- We'll continue our translation of `eval` into Scheme.
- Some tests of `lambda`.
- An improved "debugging" (well, observing) system.
- A few more basic procedures.
- The legendary `label`.

Flaws

- Graham mentions two significant flaws in McCarthy's definition.
- What are they?
- How hard will they be to resolve?

Detour: Graham's Claims

- Graham claims that other languages ("median languages") are getting closer to Lisp.
- Graham also claims that `eval` is central to what makes Lisp Lisp.
- What does he mean by these claims.

Implementing Lisp

- What does all of this say about the ease or difficulty of implementing Lisp?
- In particular, what do you need to write?

Garbage Collection

- How does it work?
- What are its possible flaws?