Simulating Primitive Recursion

Now we can show that definition by primitive recursion can be “simulated” by regular minimization using the beta function. Suppose we have \( f(\vec{x}) \) and \( g(\vec{x}, y, z) \). Then the function \( h(x, \vec{z}) \) defined from \( f \) and \( g \) by primitive recursion is

\[
\begin{align*}
  h(x, \vec{y}) &= f(\vec{z}) \\
  h(x, y + 1) &= g(x, y, h(x, y)).
\end{align*}
\]

We need to show that \( h \) can be defined from \( f \) and \( g \) using just composition and regular minimization, using the basic functions and functions defined from them using composition and regular minimization (such as \( \beta \)).

**Lemma 1.** If \( h \) can be defined from \( f \) and \( g \) using primitive recursion, it can be defined from \( f, g, \) the functions zero, succ, \( P^n \), add, mult, \( \chi \), using composition and regular minimization.

**Proof.** First, define an auxiliary function \( \hat{h}(\vec{x}, y) \) which returns the least number \( d \) such that

1. \( (d)_0 = f(\vec{x}) \), and
2. for each \( i < y \), \( (d)_{i+1} = g(\vec{x}, i, (d)_i) \),

where now \( (d)_i \) is short for \( \beta(d, i) \). In other words, \( \hat{h} \) returns the sequence \( \langle h(\vec{x}, 0), h(\vec{x}, 1), \ldots, h(\vec{x}, y) \rangle \). We can write \( \hat{h} \) as

\[
\hat{h}(\vec{x}, y) = \mu d \ (\beta(d, 0) = f(\vec{x}) \land (\forall i < y) \beta(d, i + 1) = g(\vec{x}, i, \beta(d, i))).
\]

Note: no primitive recursion is needed here, just minimization. The function we minimize is regular because of the beta function lemma.

But now we have

\[
h(\vec{x}, y) = \beta(\hat{h}(\vec{x}, y), y),
\]

so \( h \) can be defined from the basic functions using just composition and regular minimization.

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Bibliography