






From Small-Step to Big-Step, Abstractly

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(joint work with Pouya Partow & Stelios Tsampas)

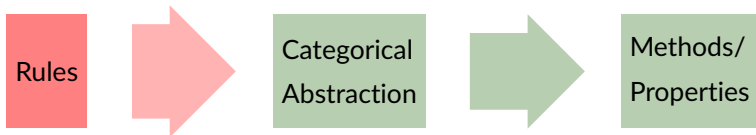
HO Mathematical Operational Semantics Project

-  Goncharov, Milius, Schröder, Tsampas, and Urbat, “Towards a Higher-Order Mathematical Operational Semantics”, 2023, POPL 2023
-  Urbat, Tsampas, Goncharov, Milius, and Schröder, “Weak Similarity in Higher-Order Mathematical Operational Semantics”, 2023, LICS 2023
-  Goncharov, Santamaria, Schröder, Tsampas, and Urbat, “Logical Predicates in Higher-Order Mathematical Operational Semantics”, 2024, FoSSaCS 2024
-  Goncharov, Milius, Tsampas, and Urbat, “Bialgebraic Reasoning on Higher-Order Program Equivalence”, 2024, LICS 2024
-  Goncharov, Tsampas, and Urbat, “Abstract Operational Methods for Call-by-Push-Value”, 2025, POPL 2025

.. and rolling

Project in Nutshell

- ▶ **Motto:** Make operational semantics more mathematical
- ▶ **Main Idea:** Given operational specification (set of O/S rules), devise methods/properties of the language
- ▶ **Main Tool:** Category theory



- ▶ **Methods:** Abstract logical relations, Abstract Howe's method
- ▶ **Properties:** Compositionality, safety, adequacy
- ▶ **Side-effect:** categorical methods \rightsquigarrow functional implementation (Haskell, Agda, Coq)

Our Hobbyhorse: (Extended) Combinatory Logic

- ▶ $I (= \lambda p. p)$ $K (= \lambda p. \lambda q. p)$ $S (= \lambda p. \lambda q. \lambda r. (p \cdot r) \cdot (q \cdot r))$
- ▶ plus S' , S'' and K' for partially reduced terms

Small-step semantics:

$$\begin{array}{l} I \xrightarrow{p} p \quad K \xrightarrow{p} K'(p) \quad K'(p) \xrightarrow{q} p \quad S \xrightarrow{p} S'(p) \\ S'(p) \xrightarrow{q} S''(p, q) \quad S''(p, q) \xrightarrow{r} (p \cdot r) \cdot (q \cdot r) \\ \frac{p \rightarrow p'}{p \cdot q \rightarrow p' \cdot q} \quad \frac{p \xrightarrow{q} p'}{p \cdot q \rightarrow p'} \end{array}$$

Example:

$$\frac{\frac{K \xrightarrow{S} K'(S)}{K \cdot S \rightarrow K'(S)}}{(K \cdot S) \cdot I \rightarrow K'(S) \cdot I} \quad \frac{K'(S) \xrightarrow{I} S}{K'(S) \cdot I \rightarrow S}, \quad \text{so } (K \cdot S) \cdot I \rightarrow^* S$$

Big-Step Semantics

- ▶ Notion of **value**: $v, w ::= I \mid K \mid S \mid K'(t) \mid S'(t) \mid S''(s, t)$
- ▶ Evaluation relation: $\Downarrow \subseteq \text{Terms} \times \text{Values}$
- ▶ Big-step rules:

$$\frac{}{v \Downarrow v} \quad \frac{s \Downarrow I \quad t \Downarrow v}{s \cdot t \Downarrow v} \quad \frac{s \Downarrow K \quad K'(t) \Downarrow v}{s \cdot t \Downarrow v}^* \quad \frac{s \Downarrow S \quad S'(t) \Downarrow v}{s \cdot t \Downarrow v}^*$$

$$\frac{s \Downarrow K'(r) \quad r \Downarrow v}{s \cdot t \Downarrow v} \quad \frac{s \Downarrow S'(r) \quad S''(r, t) \Downarrow v}{s \cdot t \Downarrow v}^* \quad \frac{s \Downarrow S''(r, q) \quad (r \cdot t)(q \cdot t) \Downarrow v}{s \cdot t \Downarrow v}$$

Equivalence Theorem: $t \Downarrow v \iff t \rightarrow^* v \wedge v \text{ is a value}$

❓ How to prove it abstractly?

How to prove

$$t \Downarrow v \iff t \rightarrow^* v \wedge v \text{ is a value}$$

abstractly?

Abstract Higher-Order GSOS

A Bit of Category Theory

From the programming perspective:

- ▶ **(Endo-)functor** is a type constructor, e.g. $FX = X \times X$
- ▶ **Natural transformation** $\alpha: F \rightarrow G$ is a polymorphic function $\alpha_X: FX \rightarrow GX$, e.g. $swap: X \times X \rightarrow X \times X$
- ▶ **Algebra** is a map $a: FX \rightarrow X$, e.g. the free algebra of Σ -terms $\iota: \Sigma(\Sigma^*X) \rightarrow \Sigma^*X$ over variables X , and $\mu\Sigma := \Sigma^*\emptyset$
- ▶ **Monad** is such a functor T that morphisms $(f: X \rightarrow TY)_{X,Y \in \mathcal{C}}$ form a category, e.g. for $T = \mathcal{P}$ we obtain the **category of relations**

Dinaturality

Given two functors $F, G: \mathcal{C}^{\text{op}} \times \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{D}$,

$\alpha = (\alpha_{X,Y}: F(X, Y) \rightarrow G(X, Y))_{X,Y \in \mathcal{C}}$ is a dinatural transformation if

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} & & F(X, X) & \xrightarrow{\alpha_{X,X}} & G(X, X) & & \\ & \nearrow^{F(f, \text{id})} & & & & \searrow^{G(\text{id}, f)} & \\ F(Y, X) & & & & & & G(X, Y) \\ & \searrow_{F(\text{id}, f)} & & & & \nearrow_{G(f, \text{id})} & \\ & & F(Y, Y) & \xrightarrow{\alpha_{Y,Y}} & G(Y, Y) & & \end{array}$$

commutes for any $f: X \rightarrow Y$

Example: evaluation transformation $\text{ev}: C^X \times X \rightarrow C$

Higher-Order Abstract GSOS

A **higher-order GSOS law** in category \mathcal{C} consists of

- ▶ **Signature functor** $\Sigma: \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$
- ▶ **Behaviour functor** $B: \mathcal{C}^{\text{op}} \times \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$
- ▶ Family of maps $\rho_{X,Y}: \Sigma(X \times B(X, Y)) \rightarrow B(X, \Sigma^*(X + Y))$ **natural** in Y and **dinatural** in X

For **combinatory logic**:

- ▶ \mathcal{C} - category of sets
- ▶ $\Sigma X = \coprod_{f \in \text{Ops}} X^{\text{arity}(f)}$, $\text{Ops} = \{S, S', S'', K, K', I, \cdot\}$
- ▶ $B(X, Y) = Y^X + Y$
- ▶ ρ is induced by rules of operational semantics

Representing Rules

For $\mathcal{C} = \text{Set}$, $\Sigma X = \coprod_{f \in \text{Ops}} X^{\text{arity}(f)}$, $B(X, Y) = Y^X + Y$, HO-GSOS precisely correspond to sets of rules of the form[†]:

$$\frac{(x_j \rightarrow y_j)_{j \in W} \quad (x_i \xrightarrow{z} y_i^z)_{i \in \overline{W}, z \in \{x_1, \dots, x_n\}}}{f(x_1, \dots, x_n) \rightarrow t}$$

or

$$\frac{(x_j \rightarrow y_j)_{j \in W} \quad (x_i \xrightarrow{z} y_i^z)_{i \in \overline{W}, z \in \{x, x_1, \dots, x_n\}}}{f(x_1, \dots, x_n) \xrightarrow{x} t}$$

($W \subseteq \{1, \dots, n\}$, $\overline{W} = \{1, \dots, n\} \setminus W$)

Proof Idea: Yoneda-style argument



Generally, HO-GSOS vastly abstract this situation

[†] Goncharov, Milius, Schröder, Tsampas, and Urbat, “Towards a Higher-Order Mathematical Operational Semantics”, 2023.

Combinatory Logic as HO-GSOS

For example,

$$\frac{p \rightarrow p'}{p \cdot q \rightarrow p' \cdot q} \qquad \frac{p \xrightarrow{q} p'}{p \cdot q \rightarrow p'}$$

correspond to

$$\rho((p, p') \cdot (q, _)) = p' \cdot q$$

$$\rho((p, f) \cdot (q, _)) = f(q)$$

$$(\rho_{X,Y}: \Sigma(X \times (Y + Y^X)) \rightarrow \Sigma^*(X + Y) + (\Sigma^*(X + Y))^X)$$

Operational Model

- ▶ Operational model $\gamma: \mu\Sigma \rightarrow B(\mu\Sigma, \mu\Sigma)$ abstracts derivability of one-step transitions $p \rightarrow p', p \xrightarrow{t} p'$
- ▶ It is a unique solution to

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \Sigma(\mu\Sigma) & \xrightarrow{\iota} & \mu\Sigma \\
 \Sigma\langle \text{id}, \gamma \rangle \downarrow & & \downarrow \gamma \\
 \Sigma(\mu\Sigma \times B(\mu\Sigma, \mu\Sigma)) & \xrightarrow{\rho} B(\mu\Sigma, \Sigma^*(\mu\Sigma + \mu\Sigma)) \xrightarrow{B(\text{id}, \nabla^\sharp)} & B(\mu\Sigma, \mu\Sigma)
 \end{array}$$

- ▶ Alternatively: $\gamma = B(\text{id}, \nabla^\sharp) \cdot \rho \cdot \Sigma\langle \text{id}, \gamma \rangle \cdot \iota^{-1}$ (recursion)
- ▶ For combinatory logic: $\gamma(p) = p'$ iff $p \rightarrow p'$
and $\gamma(p) = f$ iff $\forall x. p \xrightarrow{x} f(x)$

Separation

Strict and Lazy Arguments

Rule

$$\frac{p \rightarrow p'}{p \cdot q \rightarrow p' \cdot q}$$

really means two rules

$$\frac{p \rightarrow p' \quad q \rightarrow q'}{p \cdot q \rightarrow p' \cdot q} \quad \frac{p \rightarrow p' \quad (q \xrightarrow{r} q_r)_r}{p \cdot q \rightarrow p' \cdot q}$$

 We cannot allow such ambivalence in big-step semantics:

$$\frac{s \Downarrow K'(r) \quad r \Downarrow v}{s \cdot t \Downarrow v} \quad \text{behaves differently than} \quad \frac{s \Downarrow K'(r) \quad t \Downarrow w \quad r \Downarrow v}{s \cdot t \Downarrow v}$$

Separating example: $K'(I) \cdot \Omega$ (where $\Omega = (S \cdot I \cdot I) \cdot (S \cdot I \cdot I)$)

Solution: binary $\Sigma: \mathcal{C} \times \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$, for **strict** and **lazy arguments**

Separation

In $t \Downarrow v \iff t \rightarrow^* v \wedge v$ is a value we need to define **multistep semantics** \rightarrow^* and **values**

Solution:

- ▶ Involve ω -continuous monad T , i.e. such monad that morphisms $X \rightarrow T(Y + X)$ can be iterated. Examples $TX = X + 1$, $TX = \mathcal{P}X$, $TX = D(X + 1)$, $D =$ monad of probability distributions
- ▶ Assume separation $\Sigma(X, Y) = \Sigma^v(Y) + \Sigma^c(X, Y)$

Value signature

Computation signature

Separated Abstract HO-GSOS

Given $D: \mathcal{C}^{\text{op}} \times \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$, $\Sigma_v: \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$, $\Sigma_c: \mathcal{C} \times \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$ and a monad T , **separated abstract HO-GSOS** consists of

$$\rho_X^v: \Sigma_v X \rightarrow D(X, \Sigma^* X)$$

$$\rho_{X,Y}^c: \Sigma_c(X \times (TD(X, Y) + TY), X) \rightarrow T\Sigma^*(X + Y)$$

dinatural in X and natural in Y , and a **distributive law**

$$\chi_{X,Y}: \Sigma_c(TX, Y) \rightarrow T\Sigma_c(X, Y)$$

Abstract HO-GSOS can be recovered:

- ▶ $B(X, Y) = TD(X, Y) + TY$, $\Sigma(X, Y) = \Sigma_v Y + \Sigma_c(X, Y)$
- ▶ $\rho = \eta \cdot D(\text{id}, \Sigma^* \text{inl}) \cdot \rho^v + \rho^c$

Separated Abstract HO-GSOS: Properties

- ▶ Combinatory logic is separated (and so many others)
- ▶ Operational model $\beta: \mu\Sigma \rightarrow TD(\mu\Sigma, \mu\Sigma)$ gets separated to

$$\gamma^v: \Sigma_v \mu\Sigma \rightarrow TD(\mu\Sigma, \mu\Sigma) \quad \gamma^c: \Sigma_c(\mu\Sigma, \mu\Sigma) \rightarrow T\mu\Sigma$$

(**Slogan:** Values behave as values, computations as computations)

- ▶ We can define multi-step semantics $\beta: \mu\Sigma \rightarrow T(\Sigma^v \mu\Sigma)$ as least fixpoint:

Klesili lifting $\beta^\sharp: T\mu\Sigma \rightarrow TD(\mu\Sigma, \mu\Sigma)$

$$\beta = [\eta, \beta^\sharp \cdot \gamma^c] \cdot \iota^{-1}$$

- ▶ Monad can be used for modelling other effects, e.g. add **erratic choice** with $p + q \rightarrow p$, $p + q \rightarrow q$, and $T = \mathcal{P}$

Abstract Big-Step SOS

Abstract Big-Step SOS

Abstract big-step SOS is a natural transformation

$$\xi: \Sigma_c(\Sigma_v X, X) \rightarrow T(\Sigma^* X)$$

Assuming that $T = \text{Id}$, this captures two kinds of rules:

$$\frac{}{g(p_1, \dots, p_n) \Downarrow g(p_1, \dots, p_n)} \quad (g \in \Sigma_v)$$
$$\frac{p_1 \Downarrow g_1(p_1^1, \dots, p_{n_1}^1) \quad \dots \quad p_k \Downarrow g_k(p_1^k, \dots, p_{n_k}^k) \quad t \Downarrow v}{f(p_1, \dots, p_k, \dots, p_n) \Downarrow v} \quad (f \in \Sigma_c, g_i \in \Sigma_v)$$

where precisely k first arguments are strict

Abstract Big-Step SOS: Properties

- ▶ Big-step operational model is defined as least solution of simple recursive equation

$$\zeta = [\eta, \zeta^\# \cdot T\mu \cdot \xi^\# \cdot \chi \cdot \Sigma_c(\zeta, \text{id})] \cdot \iota^{-1}$$

- ▶ This is neither structural, nor tail recursion, and so it must, e.g.

$$\frac{s \Downarrow S''(r, q) \quad (r \cdot t)(q \cdot t) \Downarrow v}{s \cdot t \Downarrow v}$$

- ▶ There is simple translation:

Separated Abstract HO-GSOS \Rightarrow Abstract Big-Step SOS

(This is how big-step semantics of combinatory logic is obtained)

Separation isn't Enough

- ▶ Consider separated semantics

$$\frac{}{g(p) \xrightarrow{q} f(q)} \quad \frac{}{\Omega \rightarrow \Omega} \quad \frac{p \rightarrow p'}{f(p) \rightarrow g(p')} \quad \frac{p \xrightarrow{p} p'}{f(p) \rightarrow pe}$$

- ▶ Only sensible big-step semantics is

$$\frac{}{g(p) \Downarrow g(p)} \quad \frac{p \Downarrow g(q) \quad g(q) \Downarrow v}{f(p) \Downarrow v}$$

- ▶ However $t \Downarrow v \iff t \rightarrow^* v \wedge v \text{ is a value}$ fails (!):

$$f(f(g(\Omega))) \rightarrow g(g(\Omega)), \text{ but } f(f(g(\Omega))) \Downarrow g(\Omega)$$

Strong Separation

Strong separation condition (omitted) abstracts the following: if a rule has at least one premise of the form $x_k \rightarrow x'_k$ then the conclusion of the rule must be

$$f(x_1, \dots, x_n, y_1, \dots, y_m) \rightarrow f(x'_1, \dots, x'_n, y_1, \dots, y_m)$$

where either $x_i \rightarrow x'_i$ occurs in the premise, or else, the premise contains a labeled transition for x_i , in which case $x'_i = x_i$.

Example:

$$\frac{p \rightarrow p'}{p \cdot q \rightarrow p' \cdot q}$$

Non-Example:

$$\frac{p \rightarrow p'}{f(p) \rightarrow g(p')}$$

Main Result

Theorem: if (ρ^v, ρ^c, χ) is strongly separated, and abstract big-step SOS law (ξ, χ) is generated by it, then multi-step semantics and big-step operational model agree:

$$\beta = \zeta$$

Example: Call-by-Value

Call-by-value combinatory logic: combinators as before, plus

$$\frac{t \rightarrow t'}{t \cdot s \rightarrow t' \cdot s} \quad (a) \qquad \frac{t \xrightarrow{r} t' \quad s \rightarrow s'}{t \cdot s \rightarrow t \cdot s'} \quad (b) \qquad \frac{t \xrightarrow{s} t' \quad s \xrightarrow{r} s'}{t \cdot s \rightarrow t'} \quad (c)$$

But no rule

$$\frac{t \rightarrow t' \quad s \rightarrow s'}{t \cdot s \rightarrow t' \cdot s'}$$

Hence, no strong separation. Solution: replace (b)–(c) with

$$\frac{s \xrightarrow{r} s'}{s \cdot t \rightarrow s \bullet t} \qquad \frac{s \rightarrow s'}{t \bullet s \rightarrow t \bullet s'}$$
$$\frac{t \xrightarrow{r} t'}{s \bullet t \rightarrow s \bullet t} \qquad \frac{t \rightarrow t'}{t \bullet s \rightarrow t' \bullet s} \qquad \frac{t \xrightarrow{s} t'}{t \bullet s \rightarrow t'}$$

This produces “pretty-big-step semantics”[†]

[†] Charguéraud, “Pretty-Big-Step Semantics”, 2013.

Languages with Binders

- ▶ Small-step rules:

$$\frac{}{(\lambda x. p)q \rightarrow p[q/x]} \quad (\beta) \qquad \frac{p \rightarrow p'}{pq \rightarrow p'q} \quad (app)$$

- ▶ Big-step rules:

$$\frac{}{\lambda x. p \Downarrow \lambda x. p} \qquad \frac{p \Downarrow \lambda x. p' \quad p'[q/x] \Downarrow v}{pq \Downarrow v}$$

We need to decompose (β) to

$$\frac{p[q/x] = p'}{\lambda x. p \xrightarrow{q} p'} \qquad \frac{p \xrightarrow{q} p'}{pq \rightarrow p'}$$

Space of substitution actions

So, $p[q/x] = p'$ becomes new kind of transitions (!)

Solution: Upgrade ρ^v to $\rho_{X,Y}^v: \Sigma_v(X \times (X \rightarrow Y)) \rightarrow D(X, \Sigma^*(X + Y))$

use a presheave category as \mathcal{C} , for modeling languages with binders[†]

[†] Fiore, Plotkin, and Turi, "Abstract Syntax and Variable Binding", 1999.

Conclusions

- ▶ Abstract notions of small-step/big-step semantics
- ▶ A general and abstract $t \Downarrow v \iff t \rightarrow^* v \wedge v \text{ is a value}$
- ▶ Functional implementation (in Haskell)

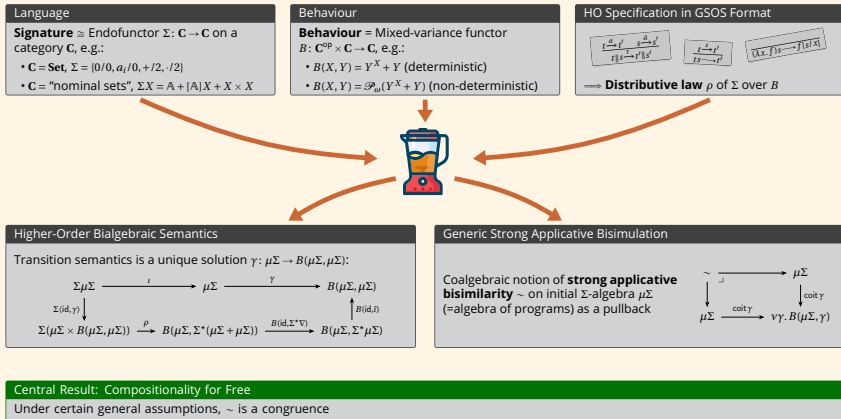
Further Work:

- ▶ Implementing proofs in proof assistant (WIP Meta-Semantics Agda Library[†])
- ▶ Cost semantics, probabilistic semantics (by varying T)
- ▶ Stateful semantics
- ▶ Other uses of (strong) separation (compositionality of observational equivalences?)

[†] <https://github.com/sergey-goncharov/agda-meta-semantics>

Thank You for Your Attention!

Higher-Order Abstract GSOS Categorical Framework for Higher-Order Operational Semantics



Separated Abstract HO-GSOS and Abstract BSSOS in Haskell

Free Functors, and Signatures

```
1 data Free s x = Res x | Cont (s (Free s x))
2 type Initial s = Free s Void
3
4 newtype Mrg s x = Mrg (s x x)
5 sigOp = Cont . Mrg
6
7 data SepSig' sv sc x y = SigV (sv y) | SigC (sc x y)
8 type SepSig sv sc      = Mrg (SepSig' sv sc)
```

Values, Computations, Behaviours

```
1 type InitialV sv sc = sv (Initial (SepSig sv sc))
2 type InitialC sv sc = sc (Initial (SepSig sv sc))
3                               (Initial (SepSig sv sc))
4
5 data SepBeh d x y = BehV (d x y) | BehC y
```

SepHOGSOS Type Class

```
1 class (MixFunctor d, Functor sv, Bifunctor sc) =>
    SepHOGSOS sv sc d where
2 rhoV :: sv x -> d x (Free (SepSig sv sc) x)
3 rhoC :: sc (x, SepBeh d x y) x
4         -> Free (SepSig sv sc) (Either x y)
```


Operational Model

```
1  gammaV :: InitialV sv sc ->
2      d (Initial (SepSig sv sc)) (Initial (SepSig sv sc))
3  gammaV t = mvmap id join $ rhoV t
4
5  gammaC :: Proxy d ->
6      InitialC sv sc -> Initial (SepSig sv sc)
7  gammaC (p :: Proxy d) t =
8      (rhoC @_ @_ @d $ first (id &&& gamma) t) >>= nabla
9      where
10         nabla = either id id
11         gamma (Cont (Mrg (SigV v))) = BehV $ gammaV v
12         gamma (Cont (Mrg (SigC c))) = BehC $ gammaC p c
```

Multi-Step Semantics

```
1  beta :: (Functor sv, Bifunctor sc, MixFunctor d,  
          SepHOGSOS sv sc d) =>  
2    Proxy d -> Initial (SepSig sv sc) -> InitialV sv sc  
3  
4  beta (p :: Proxy d) (Cont (Mrg (SigV v))) = v  
5  beta (p :: Proxy d) (Cont (Mrg (SigC c))) =  
6    beta p (gammaC p c)
```

XCL Signature

1 **data** XCLV x

2 = S

3 | K

4 | I

5 | S' x

6 | K' x

7 | S'' x x

8

9 **data** XCLC x y

10 = Comp x y

XCL as SepHOGSOS

```
1  instance SepHOGSOS XCLV XCLC (->) where
2    rhoV S = sigOp . SigV . S' . Res
3    rhoV K = sigOp . SigV . K' . Res
4    rhoV I = Res
5    rhoV (S' t) = sigOp . SigV . S'' (Res t) . Res
6    rhoV (K' t) = const (Res t)
7    rhoV (S'' t s) = \r -> sigOp $ SigC $ Comp
8      (sigOp $ SigC $ Comp (Res t) (Res r))
9      (sigOp $ SigC $ Comp (Res s) (Res r))
10
11   rhoC (Comp (_, BehC s) r) =
12     sigOp (SigC $ Comp (Res $ Right s) (Res $ Left r))
13   rhoC (Comp (_, BehV f) r) = Res (Right $ f r)
```

BSSOS Type Class

```
1 class (Functor sv, Bifunctor sc) => BSSOS d sv sc where
2   xi :: sc (sv x) x -> Free (SepSig sv sc) x
3
4   zeta' :: Initial (SepSig sv sc) -> InitialV sv sc
5   zeta' (Cont (Mrg (SigV v))) = v
6   zeta' (Cont (Mrg (SigC c))) = zeta' @d $ join $ xi @d
   $ first (zeta' @d) c
7
8   zeta :: InitialC sv sc -> InitialV sv sc
9   zeta = zeta' @d . sigOp . SigC
```


From SepHOGSOS to BSSOS

```
1 instance (SepHOGSOS sv sc d) => BSSOS d sv sc where
2   xi :: sc (sv x) x -> Free (SepSig sv sc) x
3   xi t = rhoCV (bimap ((sigOp . SigV &&&
4                       mx_second @d join . rhoV)
5                       . fmap return)
6               return t)
7   >>= nabla
8   where nabla = either id id
```

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