

Another ping-pong argument from Leibniz's principle

Here is - see EWD1186 - another very simple proof in which our obligation to use Leibniz's principle leads to a ping-pong argument. The proof comes from the beginning of lattice theory.

Of infix operators \uparrow ("up") and \downarrow ("down") and x and y , we are given

$$(0) \quad x \uparrow (y \downarrow x) = x$$

$$(1) \quad y \downarrow (x \uparrow y) = y$$

The reader is more or less supposed to recognize the Absorption Laws. Please note that (0) and (1) are transformed into each other by the interchange $x, \uparrow \leftrightarrow y, \downarrow$.

We are asked to prove

$$(2) \quad x \uparrow y = x \equiv y \downarrow x = y$$

Please note that the two sides of this equivalence are transformed into each other by that same interchange $x, \uparrow \leftrightarrow y, \downarrow$.

Ping - i.e. $x \uparrow y = x \Rightarrow y \downarrow x = y$ - is proved by observing

$$\begin{aligned}
 & y \downarrow x \\
 = & \{ \text{LHS, i.e. } x \uparrow y = x \} \\
 & y \downarrow (x \uparrow y) \\
 = & \{ (1) \} \\
 & y \quad ,
 \end{aligned}$$

and pong now follows from the symmetries observed.

The ping-pong argument is forced upon us since (0) and (1) do not provide the tools for a (boolean!) value-preserving transformation of $x \uparrow y = x$ into $y \downarrow x = y$. We have to use the semantics of these two equality signs, i.e. we have to apply Leibniz's principle.

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