

[CSE301 / Lecture 4]
Side-effects and monads

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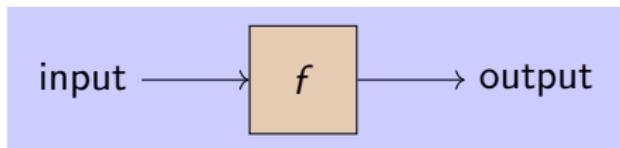
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What are side-effects?

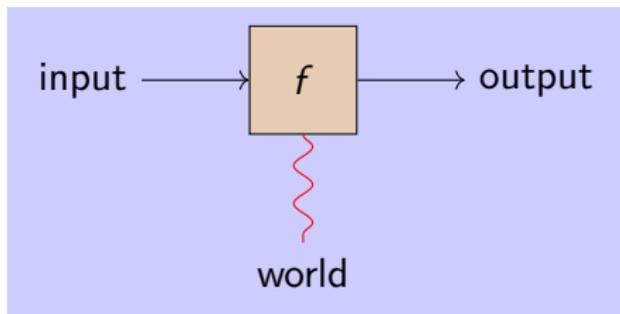
Everything that a function does besides computing a functional relation from inputs to outputs.

In other words, the difference between “functions in math” and “functions in Python”.

What are side-effects?



versus



“pure” function = no side-effects

```
def sqr(x):  
    y = x ** 2  
    return y
```

```
>>> sqr(3)
```

```
9
```

```
>>> sqr(4)
```

```
16
```

Printing debugging information

```
def sqr_debug(x):  
    y = x ** 2  
    print("Squaring {} gives {}!!".format(x, y))  
    return y
```

```
>>> sqr_debug(3)  
Squaring 3 gives 9!!  
9  
>>> sqr_debug(4)  
Squaring 4 gives 16!!  
16
```

Getting input from the user, and raising exceptions

```
def exp_by_input(x):  
    k = int(input("Enter exponent: "))  
    y = x ** k  
    return y
```

```
>>> exp_by_input(3)
```

```
Enter exponent: 2
```

```
9
```

```
>>> exp_by_input(3)
```

```
Enter exponent: two
```

```
Traceback (most recent call last):
```

```
  File "<stdin>", line 1, in <module>
```

```
  File "<string>", line 7, in exp_by_input
```

```
ValueError: invalid literal for int() with base 10: 'two'
```

Querying a random number generator

```
def exp_by_random(x):  
    k = random.randrange(0,10)  
    y = x ** k  
    return y
```

```
>>> exp_by_random(3)
```

```
2187
```

```
>>> exp_by_random(3)
```

```
243
```

Reading and writing global variables

```
k = 0
def exp_by_counter(x):
    global k
    y = x ** k
    k = k + 1
    return y
```

```
>>> exp_by_counter(3)
1
>>> exp_by_counter(3)
3
>>> exp_by_counter(3)
9
```

Non-standard control flow (e.g., nondeterminism via generators)

```
def exp_by_nondet(x):  
    for k in range(0,10):  
        y = x ** k  
        yield y
```

```
>>> exp_by_nondet(3)  
<generator object exp_by_nondet at 0x7ff77d38c830>  
>>> list(exp_by_nondet(3))  
[1, 3, 9, 27, 81, 243, 729, 2187, 6561, 19683]
```

Side-effects in Haskell

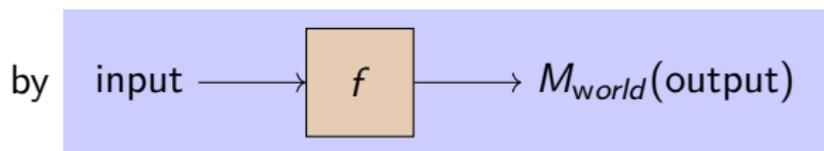
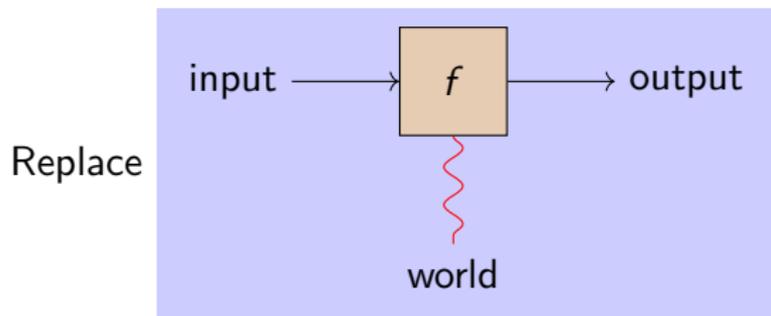
Despite claims, Haskell is not really a pure language...

1. Functions may not terminate
2. Functions may raise exceptions
3. Run-time performance can vary wildly due to laziness

Nevertheless, these effects (at least 1 & 2) are relatively “benign”.

In Haskell, most “serious” effects (like getting input from the user, or reading and writing global variables) are confined to *monads*.

The idea, very roughly



where M_{world} captures all possible interactions with the world.

We'll make this more precise, but first let's talk a bit about the principles of *referential transparency* and *compositionality*...

The principle of referential transparency

Informal principle that we can replace an expression by the value it computes without changing the behavior of a program, e.g.:

```
>>> sqr(3)
```

```
9
```

```
>>> 9 == 9
```

```
True
```

```
>>> sqr(3) == 9
```

```
True
```

```
>>> sqr(3) == sqr(3)
```

```
True
```

The principle of referential transparency

The presence of side-effects can break referential transparency!

```
>>> exp_by_counter(3)
```

```
9
```

```
>>> exp_by_counter(3) == 9
```

```
False
```

```
>>> exp_by_counter(3) == exp_by_counter(3)
```

```
False
```

Compositional semantics

More generally, a *semantics* for a programming language is a way of assigning meanings to program expressions. A desired property of a semantics is that it is *compositional*, in the sense that the meaning of an expression is built from the meanings of its subexpressions.

The presence of side-effects presents a challenge to defining a compositional semantics!¹ But we can try to surmount it...

¹Aside: this is also true for semantics of natural languages! See Chung-chieh Shan's PhD thesis, *Lingustic side effects* (2005).

Toy example:² arithmetic expressions

Consider a little language of arithmetic expressions, with constants, subtraction, and division:

$$e ::= c \mid e1 - e2 \mid e1 / e2$$

Each expression e denotes a number $\llbracket e \rrbracket \in \mathbb{R}$, defined inductively:

$$\begin{aligned}\llbracket c \rrbracket &= c \\ \llbracket e1 - e2 \rrbracket &= \llbracket e1 \rrbracket - \llbracket e2 \rrbracket \\ \llbracket e1 / e2 \rrbracket &= \llbracket e1 \rrbracket / \llbracket e2 \rrbracket\end{aligned}$$

Division by zero is undefined, so $\llbracket e \rrbracket$ is sometimes undefined.

²Inspired in part by Philip Wadler, “Monads for functional programming”, Proceedings of the Båstad Spring School, May 1995.

Toy example: arithmetic expressions

Translated to Haskell:

```
data Expr = Con Double | Sub Expr Expr | Div Expr Expr
```

```
eval :: Expr → Double
```

```
eval (Con c) = c
```

```
eval (Sub e1 e2) = eval e1 - eval e2
```

```
eval (Div e1 e2) = eval e1 / eval e2
```

Toy example: arithmetic expressions

Example expressions:

$$e1 = \text{Sub} (\text{Div} (\text{Con } 2) (\text{Con } 4)) (\text{Con } 3)$$
$$e2 = \text{Sub} (\text{Con } 1) (\text{Div} (\text{Con } 2) (\text{Con } 2))$$
$$e3 = \text{Div} (\text{Con } 1) (\text{Sub} (\text{Con } 2) (\text{Con } 2))$$

And their semantics:

$$\text{eval } e1 = -2.5 \quad \text{eval } e2 = 0 \quad \text{eval } e3 \text{ undefined}$$

Variation #1: error-handling

Modify the semantics to handle division-by-zero.

In a language with exceptions, we could simply raise an exception. Haskell has them, but let's pretend it doesn't and stay "pure"...

Idea: e no longer denotes a number, but a "number or error".

That is, $\llbracket e \rrbracket \in \mathbb{R} \uplus \{error\}$

In Haskell, we can return a Maybe type...

Variation #1: error-handling

eval1 :: *Expr* → *Maybe Double*

eval1 (*Con c*) = *Just c*

eval1 (*Sub e1 e2*) =

case (*eval1 e1*, *eval1 e2*) **of**

 (*Just x1*, *Just x2*) → *Just (x1 - x2)*

 _ → *Nothing*

eval1 (*Div e1 e2*) =

case (*eval1 e1*, *eval1 e2*) **of**

 (*Just x1*, *Just x2*)

 | $x2 \neq 0$ → *Just (x1 / x2)*

 | *otherwise* → *Nothing*

 _ → *Nothing*

Variation #1: error-handling

The example expressions:

$$e1 = \text{Sub} (\text{Div} (\text{Con } 2) (\text{Con } 4)) (\text{Con } 3)$$
$$e2 = \text{Sub} (\text{Con } 1) (\text{Div} (\text{Con } 2) (\text{Con } 2))$$
$$e3 = \text{Div} (\text{Con } 1) (\text{Sub} (\text{Con } 2) (\text{Con } 2))$$

In the new semantics:

$$\text{eval1 } e1 = \text{Just } (-2.5) \qquad \text{eval1 } e2 = \text{Just } 0.0$$
$$\text{eval1 } e3 = \text{Nothing}$$

Variation #2: global state

Modify the semantics of expressions so that every third constant is interpreted as 0. (Yeah this is a bit weird, but so is most of life.)

The meaning of a subexpression now depends on its position. E.g., $\llbracket 3 - 2 \rrbracket = \llbracket 1 \rrbracket$, but $\llbracket 6 / (3 - 2) \rrbracket = \llbracket 6 / (3 - 0) \rrbracket \neq \llbracket 6 / 1 \rrbracket$.

Can we define a compositional semantics?...

Variation #2: global state

...Yes, in state-passing style!

Idea: every subexpression e denotes a function $\llbracket e \rrbracket \in \mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \times \mathbb{N}$ taking a count of the previously seen constants, and returning a number together with an updated count.

For the top-level expression, initialize count to 0.

Variation #2: global state

```
eval2 :: Expr → Int → (Double, Int)
eval2 (Con c) n = (if n `mod` 3 ≡ 2 then 0 else c, n + 1)
eval2 (Sub e1 e2) n =
  let (x1, o) = eval2 e1 n in
  let (x2, p) = eval2 e2 o in
  (x1 - x2, p)
eval2 (Div e1 e2) n =
  let (x1, o) = eval2 e1 n in
  let (x2, p) = eval2 e2 o in
  (x1 / x2, p)
```

```
eval2Top :: Expr → Double
eval2Top e = fst (eval2 e 0)
```

Variation #2: global state

The example expressions:

$$e1 = \text{Sub} (\text{Div} (\text{Con } 2) (\text{Con } 4)) (\text{Con } 3)$$
$$e2 = \text{Sub} (\text{Con } 1) (\text{Div} (\text{Con } 2) (\text{Con } 2))$$
$$e3 = \text{Div} (\text{Con } 1) (\text{Sub} (\text{Con } 2) (\text{Con } 2))$$

In the new semantics:

$$\text{eval2Top } e1 = \text{eval2Top } e3 = 0.5 \quad \text{eval2Top } e2 \text{ undefined}$$

Variation #3: combining error-handling and state

```
eval3 :: Expr → Int → Maybe (Double, Int)
eval3 (Con c) n = Just (if n `mod` 3 ≡ 2 then 0 else c, n + 1)
eval3 (Sub e1 e2) n =
  case eval3 e1 n of
    Nothing → Nothing
    Just (x1, o) → case eval3 e2 o of
      Nothing → Nothing
      Just (x2, p) → Just (x1 - x2, p)
eval3 (Div e1 e2) n =
  case eval3 e1 n of
    Nothing → Nothing
    Just (x1, o) → case eval3 e2 o of
      Nothing → Nothing
      Just (x2, p)
        | x2 ≠ 0 → Just (x1 / x2, p)
        | otherwise → Nothing
```

Variation #3: combining error-handling and state

$eval3Top :: Expr \rightarrow Maybe Double$

$eval3Top e = \mathbf{case} \text{eval3 } e \mathbf{of}$

$Nothing \rightarrow Nothing$

$Just (x, _) \rightarrow Just x$

In this last semantics:

$eval3Top e1 = eval3Top e3 = Just 0.5$

$eval3Top e2 = Nothing$

Compare with the OCaml version...

```
type expr = Con of float
          | Sub of expr * expr | Div of expr * expr
let cnt = ref 0
let rec eval3 (e : expr) : float =
  match e with
  | Con c -> let n = !cnt in
              (cnt := n+1; if n mod 3 == 2 then 0.0 else c)
  | Sub (e1,e2) -> let x1 = eval3 e1 in
                   let x2 = eval3 e2 in
                   x1 -. x2
  | Div (e1,e2) -> let x1 = eval3 e1 in
                   let x2 = eval3 e2 in
                   if x2 <> 0.0 then x1 /. x2
                   else raise Division_by_zero
let rec eval3Top e = (cnt := 0; eval3 e)
```

Haskell version #3, rewritten using a monad and do notation

$eval3' :: Expr \rightarrow StateT Int Maybe Double$

$eval3' (Con\ c) = do$

$n \leftarrow get$

$put\ (n + 1)$

$return\ (if\ n\ 'mod'\ 3 \equiv 2\ then\ 0\ else\ c)$

$eval3' (Sub\ e1\ e2) = do$

$x1 \leftarrow eval3'\ e1$

$x2 \leftarrow eval3'\ e2$

$return\ (x1 - x2)$

$eval3' (Div\ e1\ e2) = do$

$x1 \leftarrow eval3'\ e1$

$x2 \leftarrow eval3'\ e2$

$if\ x2 \neq 0\ then\ return\ (x1 / x2)\ else\ lift\ Nothing$

$eval3' Top\ e = runStateT\ (eval3'\ e)\ 0 \gg\ return \circ fst$

What is a monad?

A mathematical concept originating in category theory.

Proposed by Eugenio Moggi as a unifying categorical model for different notions of computation.

Adapted by Phil Wadler as a way of integrating side-effects with pure functional programming, in particular in Haskell.

What is a category?

A **category** consists of the following:

- A set of objects, and a set of arrows between objects.
(Just like a directed graph.)
- For each object a , an identity arrow $a \rightarrow a$.
- For each $a \rightarrow b$ and $b \rightarrow c$, a composite arrow $a \rightarrow c$.
- Such that composition and identity are associative and unital.

What is a category?

Examples:

- Set = category whose objects are sets and whose arrows $a \rightarrow b$ are *functions* from a to b
- Rel = category whose objects are sets and whose arrows $a \rightarrow b$ are *relations* from a to b
- FG = category freely generated from a graph G , with nodes as objects and arrows $a \rightarrow b$ given by *paths* from a to b

Beyond the category of pure functions

But... we don't always want to program inside this category!

Monads give us a way of building new categories to program in.

A monad is a special kind of *functor*.

What is a functor?

A **functor** is a way of mapping one category into another (possibly the same) category:

- It should map both objects and arrows.
(Just like a graph homomorphism.)
- It should preserve identity and composition.
(Just like a monoid/group homomorphism.)

Examples:

- $F\phi : FG \rightarrow FH$ where $\phi : G \rightarrow H$ is a graph homomorphism
- the powerset functor $P : \text{Set} \rightarrow \text{Set}$

Functors in Haskell

The Functor type class:

```
class Functor f where  
    fmap :: (a → b) → f a → f b
```

Note here f is a type constructor $f :: * \rightarrow *$.

Any instance should satisfy the *functor laws*:

$$\mathit{fmap} \ \mathit{id} = \mathit{id} \quad \mathit{fmap} \ (f \circ g) = \mathit{fmap} \ f \circ \mathit{fmap} \ g$$

Example #1: the List functor

The list type constructor is a functor:

```
instance Functor [] where  
  -- fmap :: (a -> b) -> [a] -> [b]  
  fmap = map
```

(Exercise: prove the functor laws $map\ id\ xs = xs$ and $map\ (f \circ g)\ xs = map\ f\ (map\ g\ xs)$ by structural induction!)

Example #2: the Maybe functor

The *Maybe* type constructor is a functor:

instance *Functor Maybe* **where**

-- fmap :: (a -> b) -> Maybe a -> Maybe b

fmap f Nothing = Nothing

fmap f (Just x) = Just (f x)

Rough definition of a monad, in category theory

A **monad** is a functor m from a category to itself, equipped with an arrow $a \rightarrow m a$ for every object a , together with a way of transforming arrows $a \rightarrow m b$ into arrows $m a \rightarrow m b$, subject to certain equations.

For example, the powerset functor is a monad: the functions $a \rightarrow m a$ are defined by taking singletons, and any function $a \rightarrow m b$ extends to a function $m a \rightarrow m b$ by taking unions.

Rough definition of a monad, in category theory

What's important about the definition is that it allows to build a new category with the same objects, but where an arrow $a \rightarrow b$ in the new category corresponds to an arrow $a \rightarrow m b$ in the old category. This is called the “Kleisli category” construction.

For example, taking the Kleisli category of the powerset monad gives a category with sets as objects but whose arrows are *relations*.

Monads in Haskell (before 2014)

The Monad type class:

```
class Monad m where
```

```
  return :: a → m a
```

```
  (≫) :: m a → (a → m b) → m b -- pronounced "bind"
```

Subject to the *monad laws*:

```
return x ≫ f = f x
```

```
mx ≫ return = mx
```

```
(mx ≫ f) ≫ g = mx ≫ (\x → (f x ≫ g))
```

(Note that *flip* (\gg) :: (a → m b) → (m a → m b).)

The List and Maybe monads

instance *Monad* [] **where**

-- return :: a -> [a]

return x = [x]

-- (»=) :: [a] -> (a -> [b]) -> [b]

xs »= *f* = *concatMap* *f* *xs*

instance *Monad* *Maybe* **where**

-- return :: a -> Maybe a

return x = *Just* x

-- (»=) :: Maybe a -> (a -> Maybe b) -> Maybe b

Nothing »= *f* = *Nothing*

Just x »= *f* = *f* x

Monads as notions of computation

Via the Kleisli category constructions...

- List monad: category of nondeterministic functions $a \rightarrow [b]$.
- Maybe monad: category of partial functions $a \rightarrow \text{Maybe } b$.

Evaluator #1, re-expressed using the Maybe monad

$eval1' :: Expr \rightarrow Maybe Double$

$eval1' (Con\ c) = return\ c$

$eval1' (Sub\ e1\ e2) =$

$eval1'\ e1 \gg= \backslash x1 \rightarrow$

$eval1'\ e2 \gg= \backslash x2 \rightarrow$

$return\ (x1 - x2)$

$eval1' (Div\ e1\ e2) =$

$eval1'\ e1 \gg= \backslash x1 \rightarrow$

$eval1'\ e2 \gg= \backslash x2 \rightarrow$

if $x2 \neq 0$ **then** $return\ (x1 / x2)$ **else** *Nothing*

The State monad

The type constructor *State s* is defined essentially as follows:

```
newtype State s a = State { runState :: s → (a, s) }
```

It is a monad:

```
instance Monad State where  
  return x = State (\s → (x, s))  
  xt >>= f = State (\s0 →  
    let (x, s1) = runState xt s0 in  
    runState (f x) s1)
```

The State monad

Also, it supports “get” and “set” operations:

$$\text{get} :: \text{State } s \ s$$
$$\text{get} = \text{State } (\backslash s \rightarrow (s, s))$$
$$\text{put} :: s \rightarrow \text{State } s \ ()$$
$$\text{put } s' = \text{State } (\backslash s \rightarrow ((), s'))$$

Evaluator #2, redefined using the State monad

```
eval2' :: Expr → State Int Double
eval2' (Con c) =
  get >>= \n →
  put (n + 1) >>= \_ →
  return (if n `mod` 3 == 2 then 0 else c)
eval2' (Sub e1 e2) =
  eval2' e1 >>= \x1 →
  eval2' e2 >>= \x2 →
  return (x1 - x2)
eval2' (Div e1 e2) =
  eval2' e1 >>= \x1 →
  eval2' e2 >>= \x2 →
  return (x1 / x2)
eval2Top' e = fst (runState (eval2' e) 0)
```

Do notation

do $x_1 \leftarrow e_1$
 $x_2 \leftarrow e_2$
...
 $x_n \leftarrow e_n$
 $f\ x_1\ x_2\ \dots\ x_n$

is syntactic sugar for

$e_1 \gg= \backslash x_1 \rightarrow$
 $e_2 \gg= \backslash x_2 \rightarrow$
...
 $e_n \gg= \backslash x_n \rightarrow$
 $f\ x_1\ x_2\ \dots\ x_n$

Evaluator #2, equivalently expressed with do notation

$eval2' :: Expr \rightarrow State Int Double$

$eval2' (Con\ c) = \mathbf{do}$

$n \leftarrow get$

$put\ (n + 1)$

$return\ (\mathbf{if}\ n\ \text{'mod'}\ 3 \equiv 2\ \mathbf{then}\ 0\ \mathbf{else}\ c)$

$eval2' (Sub\ e1\ e2) = \mathbf{do}$

$x1 \leftarrow eval2'\ e1$

$x2 \leftarrow eval2'\ e2$

$return\ (x1 - x2)$

$eval2' (Div\ e1\ e2) =$

$x1 \leftarrow eval2'\ e1$

$x2 \leftarrow eval2'\ e2$

$return\ (x1 / x2)$

The IO monad

A built-in monad used to perform real system I/O.

Supports operations like

```
getLine :: IO String  
putStrLn :: String → IO ()
```

etc.

The use of a monad ensures proper sequentialization, as we can never “escape” the IO monad!³

³Technically, this is not true. There is a back door in the form of a function *unsafePerformIO* :: *IO a* → *a*, contained in the module *System.IO.Unsafe*. But as the name suggests, this function should be used with care...

Monads in Haskell (post 2014)

A bit more heavy since the “Functor-Applicative-Monad” hierarchy:

```
class Functor f where  
  fmap :: (a → b) → f a → f b  
class Functor f ⇒ Applicative f where  
  pure :: a → f a  
  (<*>) :: f (a → b) → f a → f b  
class Applicative m ⇒ Monad m where  
  return :: a → m a  
  (>>=) :: m a → (a → m b) → m b  
  return = pure
```

So to define an instance of Monad, you first need instances of Functor and Applicative.

Monads in Haskell (post 2014)

But instances of Functor and Applicative can always be retrofitted from a Monad instance:

instance *Functor* *M* **where**

$$\text{fmap } f \text{ } xm = xm \gg= \text{return} \circ f$$

instance *Applicative* *M* **where**

$$\text{pure} = \text{return}$$

$$\text{fm } \langle * \rangle \text{ } xm = \text{fm} \gg= \backslash f \rightarrow xm \gg= \text{return} \circ f$$

Combining monads

To define Evaluator #3, we implicitly used a *monad transformer*:

```
newtype StateT s m a = StateT { runStateT :: s → m (a, s) }
```

Given a monad m representing some notion of computation (e.g., partiality or nondeterminism), $StateT\ s\ m$ defines a new monad with s state wrapped around an m -computation.

But it is not always clear how to combine monads.

More generally, the question of how to organize and reason about programs with side-effects remains an important open problem!