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Monoids, Functors and Monads

Monoids, Functors and Monads

- These terms come from category theory. But really, their definitions as far as Scala is concerned are quite simple:
  - for instance, a **monoid** is just the type of thing we were getting at with our *List.x2* method (a.k.a *sum*)—where List's underlying type must be a *monoid*:
    - something that can be operated on dyadic-ally and something which has a "zero" (identity) value:

```
def sum: A = {
    @tailrec def inner(as: List[A], x: A): A = as match {
      case Nil => x
      case Cons(hd,tl) => internal(tl,x++hd)
    }
    inner(this,0)
  }
```

- You don't really need to remember all this stuff. I will review what's important at the end.

Monoids

- A **monoid** consists of the following:
  - a type *A*
  - an associative binary operation, *op*, that takes two values of type *A* and combines them into one such that:

    `op(op(x,y),z) == op(x,op(y,z))`

    for any `x: A, y: A, z: A`.
  - an "identity" value: `zero: A` that is an identity for *op,* i.e.

    `op(x,zero) == x` for any `x: A`.
- For example:

```
trait Monoid[A] {
  def op(a1: A, a2: A): A
  def zero: A
}
object Monoid {
  val stringMonoid = new Monoid[String] {
    def op(a1: String, a2: String) = a1 + a2
    val zero = ""
  }
  def listMonoid[A] = new Monoid[List[A]] {
    def op(a1: List[A], a2: List[A]) = a1 ++ a2
    val zero = Nil
  }
}
```

Monoids (2)

- There are two important functions on collections that we met briefly in Recursion: *foldRight* and *foldLeft*:

```
def foldLeft[A,B](z: B)(fl: (B, A) => B): B
def foldRight[A,B](z: B)(fr: (A, B) => B): B
```

- These methods are equivalent providing that *fl* and *fr* are associative—they simply work through a container in different directions—but only *foldLeft* is tail-recursive for *List* so we'll concentrate on that.
- Here's *foldLeft* implemented for our own *List* class from week 2:

```
def foldLeft[B](z: B)(f: (B,A)=>B): B = this match {
  case Nil => z
  case Cons(hd,tl) => tl.foldLeft(f(z,hd))(f)
}
```

- Let's reimplement *sum* on *List* in terms of *foldLeft*…

```
def sum[B]: B = foldLeft(B.zero)(B.plus(_,_))
```

- Just one snag: *B.zero* and *B.plus* are not defined. But if, for any *B*, *zero* and *plus* were defined we'd be all set.

Monoids (3)

- Let's go back to our *stringMonoid* and create an *intMonoid* too (we'll also make *op* explicit as *plus*):

```
object Monoid {
  val stringMonoid = new Monoid[String] {
    def plus(a1: String, a2: String) = a1 + a2
    val zero = ""
  }
  def intMonoid[A] = new Monoid[Int] {
    def plus(a1: Int, a2: Int) = a1 + a2
    val zero = 0
  }
}
```

- So we would have:

```
def sum[B]: B = foldLeft(intMonoid.zero)(intMonoid.plus(_,_))
```

- Therefore, in general, a *Monoid* is something that is *foldable*. We could make this explicit by defining the following type constructor:

```
trait Foldable[F[_]] extends Functor[F] {
  def foldLeft[A,B](z: B)(f: (B, A) => B): B
  def foldRight[A,B](z: B)(f: (A, B) => B): B
}
def foldableList[A] = new Foldable[List] {
  def map[A,B](as: List[A])(f: A => B): List[B] = as map f
  def foldLeft[A,B](z: B)(f: (B, A) => B): B = ??? // tail recursive
  def foldRight[A,B](z: B)(f: (A, B) => B): B = ??? //  NOT tail recursive
}
```

Functor defines *map*—we'll meet it next. "F[_]" is a type constructor that takes an argument of a type, i.e. a higher-kinded type.

Functors

- Functor is another term from category theory:
  - a *functor* is just a mapping between two categories (or types in Scala):

```
trait List[+A] { def map[B](f: A=>B): List[B] }
trait Option[+A] { def map[B](f: A=>B): Option[B] }
trait Stream[+A] { def map[B](f: A=>B): Stream[B] }
  etc. etc. etc.
```

  - Notice anything?
    - All the definitions are identical—only the implementations differ.
    - Repetitive code like this is anathema to functional programmers!
    - Let's define a functor trait:

```
trait Functor[F[_]] {
   def map[A, B](fa: F[A])(f: A => B): F[B]
}
object Functor {
    def listFunctor = new Functor[List] {
      def map[A,B](as: List[A])(f: A => B): List[B] = as map f
    }
}
```

Monads

- Monad also comes from category theory. You've heard me mention monads already:
  - A *Monad* isa *Functor* (i.e. it implements *map*):

```
trait List[+A] { def map[B](f: A=>B): List[B] }
trait Option[+A] { def map[B](f: A=>B): Option[B] }
trait Stream[+A] { def map[B](f: A=>B): Stream[B] }
  etc. etc. etc.
```

  - Remember how *map2* was basically identical for several different container types? These were all *monads*! So let's define *map2* once and for all…

```
trait Monad[F[_]] extends Functor[F] {
  def map2[A,B,C](ma: F[A], mb: F[B])(f: (A,B)=>C): F[C] =
    flatMap(ma)(a => map(mb)(b => f(a,b)))
}
```

  - But *flatMap* isn't defined :(Except that since this definition is the canonical definition of *map2* and we are essentially defining monad as things which support *map2*, ergo *Monad* must define *flatMap* too:

```
trait Monad[F[_]] extends Functor[F] {
  def flatMap[A,B](ma: F[A])(f: A=>F[B]): F[B]
  def map2[A,B,C](ma: F[A], mb: F[B])(f: (A,B)=>C): F[C] =
    flatMap(ma)(a => map(mb)(b => f(a,b)))
}
```

Monads (2)

- Actually, there's a certain flexibility in exactly how we define the primitive methods of *Monad*. Let's think about *map.* If we had a method *unit* which took a value and simply wrapped it (like a single-element *List*) then we could actually write *map* in terms of *flatMap*:

```
trait Monad[F[_]] extends Functor[F] {
  def unit[A](a: => A): F[A] // abstract
  def flatMap[A,B](ma: F[A])(f: A=>F[B]): F[B] // abstract
  def map[A,B](ma: F[A])(f: A=>B): F[B] = flatMap(ma)(a => unit(f(a)))
  def map2[A,B,C](ma: F[A], mb: F[B])(f: (A,B)=>C): F[C] =
       flatMap(ma)(a => map(mb)(b => f(a,b)))
}
```

In this definition of *Monad*, *unit* and *flatMap* are abstract methods—they must be defined by implementers of *Monad*. The other two methods are concrete methods defined in terms of the first two.

- So, *unit+flatMap* is one possible form.
- But why do we care about all this stuff? Because of composability.

Monads (3)

- Articles which explain monads:
    - https://medium.com/@sinisalouc/demystifying-the-monad-in-scala-cc716bb6f534

Review: what do you need to remember?

- A type that implements *map* is a **functor**.
- A **monad** is a functor but not all functors are monads.
- For-comprehensions work on *monads.*
- The *reduce* method works only for **monoids**.