

# Recursion Schemes - Why, How and More

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# Outline

Introduction

Recursive datatypes 101 - Lists

Recursive datatypes 102 - taking recursion out

On to compilers

Compilers - annotating expressions

Compilers - adding variables

Compilers - adding a *bit more* type safety

Wrapping up

# What

An FP pattern for ~~working with ASTs~~ *writing compilers*

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Get recursion out - can change it later

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Get recursion out - can change it later

Let's go, there's lot to cover. Ask questions!

# What's in a list?

List is either empty or an element consed onto another list.

-- Recursive datatype!

```
data List a =  
    Nil  
  | Cons a (List a)  
deriving (Show)
```

## Processing lists

-- Let's multiply all list elements together.

```
prodList :: List Double → Double
```

```
prodList Nil = 1
```

```
prodList (Cons x xs) = x * prodList xs
```

-- And compute length

```
lengthList :: List a → Int
```

```
lengthList Nil = 0
```

```
lengthList (Cons _ xs) = 1 + lengthList xs
```

Expected output

```
prodList (Cons 1 (Cons 2 (Cons 3 Nil))) ⇒ 6.0
```

```
lengthList (Cons 1 (Cons 2 (Cons 3 Nil))) ⇒ 3
```

## Explicit recursion leaves out without modularity

What if we want to fuse `prodList` and `lengthList`?

Why? - Say, we'd like to do only *one* traversal over a list.



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## Fusing two list functions

Let's see...

Expected output

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## Fusing two list functions

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computeBoth (Cons 1 (Cons 2 (Cons 3 Nil))) ⇒ (3,6.0)
```

No way to combine `prodList` and `lengthList`. Each function does it's own traversal and we cannot alter that.

```
computeBoth :: List Double → (Int, Double)
```

```
computeBoth Nil = (0, 1)
```

```
computeBoth (Cons x xs) =
```

```
  let (len, pr) = computeBoth xs in (len + 1, x * pr)
```

## Fusing two list functions

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computeBoth (Cons x xs) =
  let (len, pr) = computeBoth xs in (len + 1, x * pr)
```

NB Even `foldr` does not help us here (homework: convince yourself that it's the case).

## The path forward

*Key idea:* split datatypes into recursive and non-recursive part.

Let's try it with lists. I'll introduce non-recursive part first.

Just go ahead and replace all recursive occurrences with new parameter.

-- Base functor that captures the shape of our type.

```
data ListF a r =  
    NilF  
  | ConsF a r  
deriving (Show, Functor)
```

# The Base Functor

What will happen when we start consing like we did before?

-- Base functor that captures the shape of our type.

```
data ListF a r =  
    NilF  
  | ConsF a r  
deriving (Show, Functor)  
  
NilF :: ListF a r  
ConsF () NilF :: ListF () (ListF a r)  
ConsF () (ConsF () NilF) :: ListF () (ListF () (ListF a r))
```



## A way to use base functor for lists

Can use this raw functor to specify things like 'list no longer than 3'.

-- Base functor that captures the shape of our type.

```
data ListF a r =  
    NilF  
  | ConsF a r  
  deriving (Show, Functor)  
  
type List3 a = ListF a (ListF a (ListF a ()))  
  
nullList3 :: List3 a → Bool  
nullList3 NilF = True  
nullList3 _    = False
```

## We need recursion

Still, *List3* is not enough.

We can specify a list of any fixed length, but we cannot nest *ListF*'s to get infinitely-long lists - we will get infinite type!

## The missing recursion bit

Let's define a type that will add recursion to the *ListF*.

```
-- Recursive part of our datatype.  
-- NB use newtype to avoid extra layers and have the same runtime  
-- representation as we had before.
```

```
newtype Fix f = Fix (f (Fix f))
```

```
-- Unwrap one layer  
unFix :: Fix f → f (Fix f)  
unFix (Fix x) = x
```

## Recovering *List*

*Fix* (*ListF* *a*) will give us exactly the *List* *a* we had before!

```
data List a = Nil | Cons a (List a)
```

```
newtype Fix f = Fix (f (Fix f))
```

```
data ListF a r = NilF | ConsF a r
```

-- Convenient type alias that does the job

```
type List' a = Fix (ListF a)
```

## Recovering *List*

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```

-- Convenient type alias that does the job

```
type List' a = Fix (ListF a)
```

- ▶  $Nil \Leftrightarrow Fix\ NilF$
- ▶  $Cons\ 1\ Nil \Leftrightarrow Fix\ (ConsF\ 1\ (Fix\ NilF))$
- ▶  $Cons\ 1\ (Cons\ 2\ Nil) \Leftrightarrow$   
 $Fix\ (ConsF\ 1\ (Fix\ (ConsF\ 2\ (Fix\ NilF))))$

## How to work with this

Great, now we can rewrite  $List\ a$  as  $Fix\ (ListF\ a)!!$

What now??

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Great, now we can rewrite  $List\ a$  as  $Fix\ (ListF\ a)!!$

What now??

Let's actually look at recursion schemes.

# Our first recursion scheme

The most basic recursion scheme bears proud name *catamorphism*.

The name comes from from the Greek: κατά “downwards” and μορφή “form, shape”. ([Wikipedia](#)).

One cool bit is that catamorphism’s definition can be inferred from its commutative diagram (how cool is that!).



# Catamorphism from a commutative diagram

But let's write function's type first. We actually want something this:

`cata :: (f a → a) → Fix f → a`

We'll revise this a bit after looking at the diagram.

For now just note that first argument is called algebra and that catamorphism collapses possibly infinitely many layers with an algebra.

## The diagram

$\text{cata} :: (f\ a \rightarrow a) \rightarrow \text{Fix}\ f \rightarrow a$

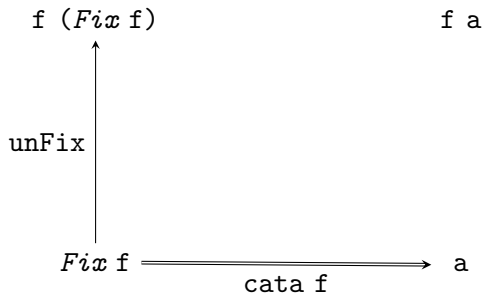
$f\ (\text{Fix}\ f)$

$f\ a$

$\text{Fix}\ f \xRightarrow{\text{cata}\ f} a$

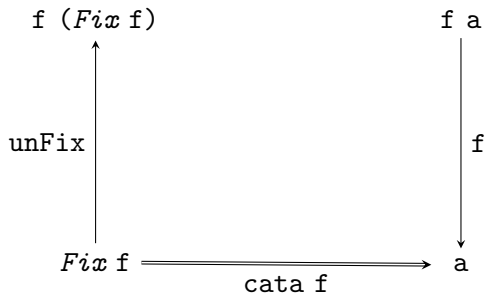
## The diagram 2

$\text{cata} :: (f\ a \rightarrow a) \rightarrow \text{Fix}\ f \rightarrow a$



## The diagram 3

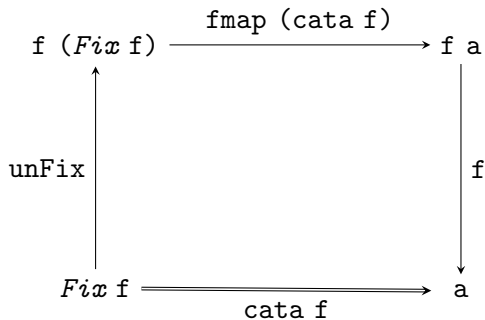
$\text{cata} :: (f\ a \rightarrow a) \rightarrow \text{Fix}\ f \rightarrow a$



# The complete diagram

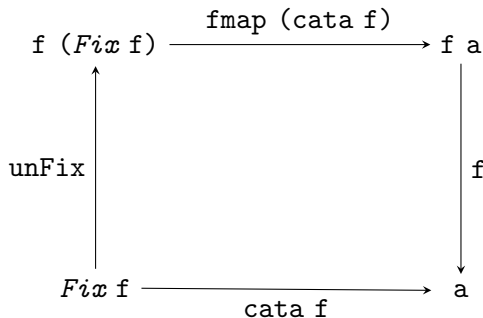
`fmap :: Functor f => (a → b) → f a → f b`

`cata :: Functor f => (f a → a) → Fix f → a`



## Read the diagram into a function

```
cata :: Functor f => (f a → a) → Fix f → a
cata alg = go
  where
    go = alg · fmap go · unFix
```



## Let's compute length with our new tool

```
cata :: Functor f => (f a → a) → Fix f → a
```

```
lenAlg :: ListF a Int → Int
```

```
lenAlg = \case  
  NilF      → 0  
  ConsF _ x → x + 1
```

```
lengthListF :: List' a → Int
```

```
lengthListF = cata lenAlg
```

Run it

```
lengthListF (Fix (ConsF 3 (Fix (ConsF 4 (Fix NilF)))))  
⇒ 2
```

## Let's compute product with our new tool

```
cata :: Functor f => (f a → a) → Fix f → a
```

```
prodAlg :: ListF Double Double → Double
```

```
prodAlg = \case
```

```
  NilF      → 1
```

```
  ConsF x y → x * y
```

```
prodListF :: List' Double → Double
```

```
prodListF = cata prodAlg
```

Run it

```
prodListF (Fix (ConsF 3 (Fix (ConsF 4 (Fix NilF)))))
```

```
⇒ 12.0
```



## On to fusion

```
cata :: Functor f => (f a → a) → Fix f → a
```

```
fmap :: Functor f => (a → b) → f a → f b
```

```
fst  :: (a, b) → a
```

```
snd  :: (a, b) → b
```

```
fuseAlgs
```

```
  :: Functor f
```

```
  => (f a → a)
```

```
  → (f b → b)
```

```
  → (f (a, b) → (a, b))
```

```
fuseAlgs f g = \x → (f (fmap fst x), g (fmap snd x))
```

```
lenWithProdListF :: List' Double → (Int, Double)
```

```
lenWithProdListF = cata (fuseAlgs lenAlg prodAlg)
```

## On to fusion

```
cata :: Functor f => (f a → a) → Fix f → a
fmap :: Functor f => (a → b) → f a → f b
fst  :: (a, b) → a
snd  :: (a, b) → b
```

```
fuseAlgs
```

```
  :: Functor f
  => (f a → a)
  → (f b → b)
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```
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```

```
lenWithProdListF :: List' Double → (Int, Double)
```

```
lenWithProdListF = cata (fuseAlgs lenAlg prodAlg)
```

```
lenWithProdListF (Fix (ConsF 3 (Fix (ConsF 4 (Fix NilF)))))
⇒ (2,12.0)
```

# Compiler datatypes

Compilers work with *abstract syntax trees*.

We need a simple tree type for illustration purposes.

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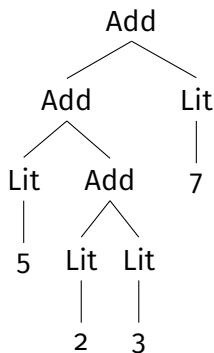
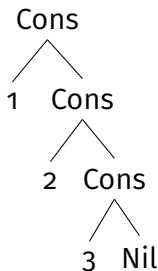
Hutton's Razor - very simple AST to try ideas on.

```
data HuttonExpr =  
    Lit Double  
  | Add HuttonExpr HuttonExpr
```

# Compiler datatypes from a visual standpoint

Trees branch, lists are linear.

*Cons 1 (Cons 2 (Cons 3 Nil))*



*Add (Add (Lit 5) (Add (Lit 2) (Lit 3))) (Lit 7)*

## What we do with expressions - Evaluate

Let's evaluate *HuttonExpr*

```
evalHutton :: HuttonExpr → Double
```

```
evalHutton (Lit n)    = n
```

```
evalHutton (Add x y) = evalHutton x + evalHutton y
```

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```

Run it

```
evalHutton (Add (Add (Lit 5) (Add (Lit 2) (Lit 3))) (Lit 7))
```

```
⇒ 17.0
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```

Run it

```
evalHutton (Add (Add (Lit 5) (Add (Lit 2) (Lit 3))) (Lit 7))
```

```
⇒ 17.0
```



## What we do with expressions - Compute height

Say, we want to place all arguments on a stack when generating code.

We'd like to know the maximum depth of the stack we'll need...

```
depthHutton :: HuttonExpr → Int
depthHutton (Lit _)    = 1
depthHutton (Add x y) =
  1 + (depthHutton x `max` depthHutton y)
```

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```

```
depthHutton (Lit _)    = 1
```

```
depthHutton (Add x y) =  
    1 + (depthHutton x `max` depthHutton y)
```

Run it

```
depthHutton (Add (Add (Lit 5) (Add (Lit 2) (Lit 3))) (Lit 7))  
⇒ 4
```

## Unfix the *HuttonExpr*

All issues that plagued `prodList` and `lengthList` will show up with `evalHutton` and `depthHutton` as well. Let's fix them

```
data HuttonExprF r =  
    LitF Double  
  | AddF r r  
  deriving (Show, Functor, Foldable)  
  
type HuttonExpr' = Fix HuttonExprF
```

# Redefine our functions

```
data HuttonExprF r =  
    LitF Double  
  | AddF r r  
deriving (Show, Functor, Foldable)
```

```
fold :: (Foldable f, Monoid a) => f a → a
```

```
depthAlg :: HuttonExprF Int → Int
```

```
depthAlg = \ case  
    LitF _    → 1  
    AddF x y  → 1 + (x 'max' y)
```

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```

# Monoids simplify algebras a lot

```
newtype SumMonoid = SumMonoid Double deriving (Show)
```

```
instance Monoid SumMonoid where  
  mempty   = SumMonoid 0  
  mappend = coerce ((+) @Double)
```

```
evalAlg :: HuttonExprF SumMonoid → SumMonoid  
evalAlg = \ case  
  LitF x → SumMonoid x  
  e      → fold e
```

## Can fuse those with function we defined before

```
fuseAlgs
  :: Functor f
  => (f a → a)
  → (f b → b)
  → (f (a, b) → (a, b))
fuseAlgs f g = \x → (f (fmap fst x), g (fmap snd x))

evalWithDepth :: HuttonExpr' → (Double, Int)
evalWithDepth = coerce (cata (fuseAlgs evalAlg depthAlg))

evalWithDepth
  (Fix (AddF
    (Fix (AddF
      (Fix (LitF 5))
      (Fix (AddF (Fix (LitF 2)) (Fix (LitF 3))))))
    (Fix (LitF 7))))
⇒ (17.0,4)
```

## Annotating all nodes with a common value

Say, we are parsing our expressions from a file.

Each expression has position that we'd like to keep around.

What do we usually do to add positions to each node?

-- Just an example

```
newtype Line      = Line Int
```

```
newtype Column    = Column Int
```

```
data    Position = Position String Line Column
```

-- Try adding annotations here

```
data HuttonExpr =
```

```
    Lit Double
```

```
  | Add HuttonExpr HuttonExpr
```



## How to add position without recursion schemes - simple solution

For one, we can just go ahead and annotate each constructor

```
data Position = ...
```

```
data HuttonExpr =  
    Lit Position Double  
    | Add Position HuttonExpr HuttonExpr
```

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Pro: very simple

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- ▶ Not really feasible if expression type has nearly 100 constructors (a real case).

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```

Pro: very simple

Cons:

- ▶ Not really feasible if expression type has nearly 100 constructors (a real case).
- ▶ When constructing expressions we must *always* some position. This leads to lots of meaningless positions

## How to add position without recursion schemes - smarter solution

Okay, we can factor out common field

```
data Position = ...
```

```
data HuttonExpr = HuttonExpr Position HuttonExprBase
```

```
data HuttonExprBase =  
    Lit Double  
    | Add HuttonExpr HuttonExpr
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- ▶ Now data type is less convenient to work with - try matching 2 or 3 levels deep in a function

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```

Pro: still pretty simple

Cons:

- ▶ Now data type is less convenient to work with - try matching 2 or 3 levels deep in a function
- ▶ Still lots of dummy positions when constructing expressions



## A solution through factored recursion

This is where *Cofree* comes in. Compare against *Fix*.

That's the cofree comonad you might've heard of. It's also helpful without *Comonad* instance.

```
newtype Fix f = Fix (f Fix)
```

```
data Cofree f a = a :< Cofree f a  
  deriving (Show, Functor, Foldable)
```

```
data HuttonExprF r =  
  LitF Double  
  | AddF r r  
  deriving (Show, Functor, Foldable)
```

```
type AnnotatedHuttonExpr = Cofree HuttonExprF Position
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Pro: can ignore all positions and get *Fix*'ed *HuttonExprF*

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```

Pro: can ignore all positions and get *Fix*'ed *HuttonExprF*

Cons: requires unfixed type

## On to functions

We want to model functions with our *HuttonExpr*.

Functions have arguments. Functions of 1 argument with currying will be enough

Quiz: where to put variables if we had old *HuttonExpr*?

-- If you thought annotations were easy, try adding variables here!!

```
data HuttonExpr =  
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    | Add HuttonExpr HuttonExpr
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```
data HuttonExpr =  
    Lit Double  
    | Add HuttonExpr HuttonExpr
```

There's simply no place to do this! We *have* to add new constructor and rewrite all our functions to handle it.

## Variables - add new constructor

```
data HuttonExprVars a =  
    Lit Double  
    | Add HuttonExpr HuttonExpr  
    | Var a
```

This is actually pretty good.

Via clever introduction of the new parameter, we can recover old expressions without variables by using *Void*, a type without constructors.

-- No constructors, ergo no values  
-- (except undefined, but it's morally correct to forget it)

```
data Void
```

```
type HuttonExpr = HuttonExprVars Void
```

## Variables - add new constructor 2

```
data HuttonExprVars a =  
    Lit Double  
  | Add HuttonExpr HuttonExpr  
  | Var a
```

```
type HuttonExpr = HuttonExprVars Void
```

Pro: may be good enough to get the job done

## Variables - add new constructor 2

```
data HuttonExprVars a =  
    Lit Double  
    | Add HuttonExpr HuttonExpr  
    | Var a
```

```
type HuttonExpr = HuttonExprVars Void
```

Pro: may be good enough to get the job done

Cons:

- ▶ Used a parameter - our type may already have a few of those (5 is not a limit in the RealWorld™)



## Variables - add new constructor 2

```
data HuttonExprVars a =  
    Lit Double  
  | Add HuttonExpr HuttonExpr  
  | Var a
```

```
type HuttonExpr = HuttonExprVars Void
```

Pro: may be good enough to get the job done

Cons:

- ▶ Used a parameter - our type may already have a few of those (5 is not a limit in the RealWorld™)
- ▶ Pattern match completeness checker will still expect us to handle new *Var* case even when working with *HuttonExprVars Void*

## Can modularized recursion help us here?

Sure it can! Meet *Free* - a categorical™ dual of *Cofree*.

That's the free monad you might've heard of. It's also helpful without *Monad* instance.

```
data Free f a =  
    Pure a  
  | Free (f (Free f a))  
deriving (Functor, Foldable)  
  
newtype DeBruijn = DeBruijn Int  
  
type HuttonExprVars = Free HuttonExprF DeBruijn
```

## More complicated ASTs may have invariants

That was fun! However, what if our `expr` can produce either an integer or a bool when evaluated?

```
data IntBoolExpr =  
    LitInt Int  
  | LitBool Bool  
  | IBAdd IntBoolExpr IntBoolExpr  
  | IBLessThan IntBoolExpr IntBoolExpr  
  | IBIF  
    IntBoolExpr -- must be a bool expr  
    IntBoolExpr -- can be any expr  
    IntBoolExpr -- can be any expr
```

## Can represent invalid expressions...

```
data IntBoolExpr =  
    LitInt Int  
  | LitBool Bool  
  | IBAdd IntBoolExpr IntBoolExpr  
  | IBLessThan IntBoolExpr IntBoolExpr  
  | IBIF  
    IntBoolExpr -- must be a bool expr  
    IntBoolExpr -- can be any expr  
    IntBoolExpr -- can be any expr
```

-- Breaches every invariant we have...

```
wat :: IntBoolExpr
```

```
wat =
```

```
  IBIF
```

```
    (LitInt 10)
```

```
    (LitBool True)
```

```
    (IBAdd (LitBool False) (LitInt 1))
```

# Let's add types so that ill-typed terms will be unrepresentable

GADTs to the rescue

**data** *Expr* **t where**

*ELitInt*     :: *Int* → *Expr Int*

*ELitBool*    :: *Bool* → *Expr Bool*

*EAdd*         :: *Expr Int* → *Expr Int* → *Expr Int*

*ELessThan*   :: *Expr Int* → *Expr Int* → *Expr Bool*

*EIf*          :: *Expr Bool* → *Expr a* → *Expr a* → *Expr a*

## It works

Does not compile

```
EIf (ELitInt 10) (ELitBool True) (EAdd (ELitBool False) (ELitInt 1))
```

```
<interactive>:1:6: error:
```

```
  * Couldn't match type 'Int' with 'Bool'
```

```
    Expected type: Expr Bool
```

```
    Actual type: Expr Int
```

```
  * In the first argument of 'EIf', namely '(ELitInt 10)'
```

```
    In the expression:
```

```
      EIf
```

```
        (ELitInt 10) (ELitBool True) (EAdd (ELitBool False) (ELitInt 1))
```

```
<interactive>:1:35: error:
```

```
  * Couldn't match type 'Int' with 'Bool'
```

```
    Expected type: Expr Bool
```

```
    Actual type: Expr Int
```

```
  * In the third argument of 'EIf', namely
```

```
    '(EAdd (ELitBool False) (ELitInt 1))'
```

```
    In the expression:
```

# But I want my recursion schemes goodness back!

We just need higher-order recursion schemes.

Observe that *Expr* has a type parameter but it is not a *Functor*. It's something different.

Let's start with a base functor, as before.

## Indexed base functor

Replace all the recursive positions, add new parameter. The only difference: parameter has to be indexed.

**data** *ExprF* h ix **where**

*ELitIntF*     :: *Int* → *ExprF* h *Int*

*ELitBoolF*    :: *Bool* → *ExprF* h *Bool*

*EAddF*         :: h *Int* → h *Int* → *ExprF* h *Int*

*ELessThanF*   :: h *Int* → h *Int* → *ExprF* h *Bool*

*EIfF*          :: h *Bool* → h a → h a → *ExprF* h a



## Indexed base functor with kind signatures

I have just added kind signatures to the parameters

```
data ExprF (h :: k → *) (ix :: k) where  
  ELitIntF    :: Int → ExprF h Int  
  ELitBoolF   :: Bool → ExprF h Bool  
  EAddF       :: h Int → h Int → ExprF h Int  
  ELessThanF  :: h Int → h Int → ExprF h Bool  
  EIfF        :: h Bool → h a → h a → ExprF h a
```

## Indexed recursion combinator

Without further ado, this is how *Fix* should look like for GADTs with a parameter (with polykinds):

-- Just ignore the kinds if they upset your senses...

```
newtype HFix (f :: (k → *) → k → *) (ix :: k) =  
    HFix (f (HFix f) ix)
```

```
unHFix :: HFix f ix → f (HFix f) ix
```

```
unHFix (HFix x) = x
```

## We still need functors

To define `cata` we needed a *Functor*. Here it's similar enough  
- our functor should preserve indices:

```
class HFunctor (f :: (k → *) → k → *) where  
  hfmap :: (∀ ix'. g ix' → h ix') → f g ix → f h ix
```

-- Can derive with TH, if you like

```
instance HFunctor ExprF where  
  hfmap h = \ case  
    ELitIntF n      → ELitIntF n  
    ELitBoolF b     → ELitBoolF b  
    EAddF x y       → EAddF (h x) (h y)  
    ELessThanF x y  → ELessThanF (h x) (h y)  
    EIfF c t f      → EIfF (h c) (h t) (h f)
```

## Find 10 differences with cata...

```
cata :: Functor f => (f a → a) → Fix f → a  
cata alg = go
```

```
  where
```

```
    go = alg · fmap go · unFix
```

```
hcata :: ∀ f g ix. HFunctor f => (∀ ix. f g ix → g ix) → HFix f g ix  
hcata alg = go
```

```
  where
```

```
    go :: ∀ ix. HFix f ix → g ix
```

```
    go = alg · hfmap go · unHFix
```

## Now we can evaluate safely

**data** *Value* *ix* **where**

*VInt* :: *Int* → *Value Int*

*VBool* :: *Bool* → *Value Bool*

**deriving instance** *Show* (*Value ix*)

*hevalAlg* :: *ExprF Value ix* → *Value ix*

*hevalAlg* = \ **case**

*ELitIntF* n → *VInt* n

*ELitBoolF* b → *VBool* b

*EAddF* (*VInt* x) (*VInt* y) → *VInt* (x + y)

*ELessThanF* (*VInt* x) (*VInt* y) → *VBool* (x < y)

*EIfF* (*VBool* c) t f → **if** c **then** t **else** f

**type** *Expr'* = *HFix ExprF*

*heval* :: *Expr'* *ix* → *Value ix*

*heval* = *hcata hevalAlg*

## Does it actually run??

Yes it does!!

**data** *Value* *ix* **where**

*VInt* :: *Int* → *Value Int*

*VBool* :: *Bool* → *Value Bool*

*heval* :: *Expr'* *ix* → *Value ix*

---

*heval*

(*HFix* (*ElifF*  
  (*HFix* (*ELitBoolF* *False*))  
  (*HFix* (*ELitIntF* 1))  
  (*HFix* (*ELitIntF* 42))))

⇒ *VInt* 42

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Comonads can also help to unify some of those.

# References

Lots of resources. In order of increasing difficulty:

- ▶ Bartosz Milewski blog post “[Understanding F-Algebras](#)”
- ▶ Tim Williams slides “[Recursion Schemes by Example](#)”
- ▶ Tim Williams blog post “[Fixing GADTs](#)”
- ▶ Wouter Swierstra [Data Types à la Carte](#)



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Questions?