

# Type classes over parametrized types: Foldables, Functors, Applicatives, Monads

In this section we discuss a number of important type classes that pertain to container types (that's just another name for a *parametrized type*: A parametrized type contains some kinds of values). Each of these type classes expresses a key idea:

- Foldables express the idea that we can fold over the container's values, conceptually just like `foldr` works for lists.
- Functors express the idea that we can map a function over a container type, by applying the function to its contents.
- Applicatives express the idea of mapping a function over possibly multiple arguments.
- Monads express the idea of sequencing effectful operations.

## Container Types and the State “Monad”

Before we start exploring functors, let us consider three important container types that share certain features. All three types express the idea of “producing a value of a given type”, but they do so in different ways:

**Maybe a** The Maybe type expresses the idea that the operation we performed may or may not have produced a value (i.e. it may have failed).

**[a]** The list type expresses the idea that the operation we performed may have returned more than one possible values (but all of the same type). A good example is the list comprehensions we discussed earlier in the course. A list is a convenient way to represent these possibly multiple results.

**IO a** The IO type expresses the idea that our operation interacts with the world in some way, and produces a value of type `a`.

**ST s a** The State “monad” (we will discuss what that means later) is another example. It is meant to somehow maintain and update some “state” `s`, and also return a value of type `a`. We will discuss this type now in some more detail.

## Functors

We will now begin our investigation of key operations that all the aforementioned “container types” have in common. The first of these is the idea of a functor.

The container/polymorphic type `f a` is a **functor** if it comes equipped with a function:

```
fmap :: (a -> b) -> f a -> f b
```

In other words, functors come equipped with a natural way to transform the contained values, is provided with an appropriate function. There are certain “naturality” conditions that such a function must obey, often described via a set of “properties”:

```
fmap id      = id
fmap (g . h) = fmap g . fmap h
```

These look complicated, but basically they say that functors behave in a reasonable way:

- If the function we use on the functor is the identity function `id :: a -> a` (defined by `id a = a`), then the resulting transformation `fmap id :: f a -> f a` is just the identity function `id :: f a -> f a`.
- If we have functions `h :: a -> b` and `g :: b -> c`, then we have two different ways to produce a function `f a -> f c`:
  - The first is to first compute the composition `g . h :: a -> c` and feed that into `fmap`.
  - The other is to compute `fmap h :: f a -> f b` and `fmap g :: f b -> f c`, then to compose them.

And the result is the same whichever way we do it. It does not matter if you compose first, or if you apply `fmap` first.

These two properties allow Haskell to simplify some functor operations. But we will not concern ourselves with them very much right now.

The key insight is that very many container types are naturally functor types. This is captured via the `Functor` class:

```
class Functor f where
    fmap :: (a -> b) -> f a -> f b
```

We can now see how each of the types we have defined earlier become instances of `Functor`, by transforming their contained value:

```
instance Functor [] where
    fmap f xs = [f x | x <- xs]    — could also have written fmap = map
```

```
instance Functor Maybe where
    fmap _ Nothing = Nothing
    fmap f (Just x) = Just (f x)
```

```
instance Functor IO where
    fmap f action = do
        x <- action
        return $ f x
```

```
instance Functor (ST s) where
    fmap f (S trans) = S trans'
    where trans' st = let (x, st') = trans st
                  in (f x, st')
```

The Functor provides us for free with a number of standard functions<sup>1</sup>:

```
void    :: Functor f => f a -> f ()
(<$)    :: Functor f => a -> f b -> f a
($>)    :: Functor f => f a -> b -> f b
(<$>)   :: Functor f => (a -> b) -> f a -> f b
```

The last function is simply a synonym for fmap. Note that it is very similar to (\$>) :: (a -> b) -> a -> b. So whereas to apply a function to a value we would do f \$ x, if it is a container value we would use <\$>:

```
(+ 2) <$> Just 3      — Results in Just 5
(+ 1) <$> [2, 3, 4] — Results in Just [3, 4, 5]
```

## Applicatives

The Applicative class is an extension of the Functor class. It essentially allows us to map functions as Functor does, but works with functions of possibly more than one parameter. We can think of it as providing for us a “tower” of functions:

```
fmap0 :: a -> f a
fmap1 :: (a -> b) -> f a -> f b
fmap2 :: (a -> b -> c) -> f a -> f b -> f c
fmap3 :: (a -> b -> c -> d) -> f a -> f b -> f c -> f d
```

It does so by requiring two functions:

```
class Functor f => Applicative f where
  pure  :: a -> f a
  (<*>) :: f (a -> b) -> f a -> f b
```

If we compare <\*> to the Functor class’ fmap, the main difference is that in the Applicative case we allow the function itself to be in the container type.

Before we see some examples, let us see what these type signatures have to do with the functions described above.

```
fmap0 g      = pure g
fmap1 g x    = pure g <*> x
fmap2 g x y  = pure g <*> x <*> y
fmap3 g x y z = pure g <*> x <*> y <*> z
```

Let us take a closer look at the types for fmap2:

```
g :: a -> b -> c
x :: f a
y :: f b
pure g :: f (a -> (b -> c))
(<*>) :: f (a -> (b -> c)) -> f a -> f (b -> c)
pure g <*> x :: f (b -> c)
(<*>) :: f (b -> c) -> f b -> f c
(pure g <*> x) <*> y :: f c
```

---

<sup>1</sup><http://hackage.haskell.org/package/base-4.10.0.0/docs/Data-Functor.html#t:Functor>

Now let us discuss how our earlier types are instances of Applicative. For the Maybe type, if we have a function and we have a value, then we apply the function to the value. Otherwise we return Nothing. For lists, we have a list of functions and a list of values, and we apply all functions to all values.

```
instance Applicative Maybe where
  pure x = Just x
  Just f  <*> Just x  = Just $ f x
  Nothing <*> _       = Nothing
  _       <*> Nothing = Nothing
```

```
instance Applicative [] where
  pure x = [x]
  gs <*> xs = [g x | g <- gs, x <- xs]
```

```
instance Applicative IO where
  pure x = return x
  actionf <*> actionx = do
    f <- actionf
    x <- actionx
    return $ f x
```

```
instance Applicative (ST s) where
  pure x = S (\st -> (x, st))
  actf <*> actl = S trans
    where trans st = let (f, st') = runState actf st
                      (x, st'') = runState actl st'
                      in (f x, st'')
```

As a fun example, try this:

```
[(+), (*), (-)] <*> [1, 2, 3] <*> [4, 5]
```

There are rules for the Applicative class similar to the rules for Functor. we list them here for completeness, but will not discuss them further.

```
pure id <*> x      = x
pure g <*> pure x = pure (g x)
h <*> pure y      = pure (\g -> g y) <*> h
x <*> (y <*> z)     = (pure (.) <*> x <*> y) <*> z
```

## Monads

The Monad class is the last step in this hierarchy of classes.

- Functor allowed us to apply “pure” functions ( $a \rightarrow b$ ) to our effectful values  $f\ a$ .
- Applicative allowed us to apply effectful function values  $f\ (a \rightarrow b)$  to our effectful values  $f\ a$ .
- Monad will allow us to combine functions that result in effectful values  $a \rightarrow f\ b$  with effectful values  $f\ a$  to produce a result  $f\ b$ .

Here is the definition of the Monad class:

```
class Applicative m => Monad m where
  return :: a -> m a
  (>>=) :: m a -> (a -> m b) -> m b

  return = pure  — default implementation via Applicative
```

The most common way to use monads is via the “do” notation. For example, when we wrote earlier something like

```
evalStmt PrintMem = do
  mem <- getState
  return $ printMemory mem
```

Haskell would convert that program code into:

```
evalStmt PrintMem = getState >>= (\mem -> return $ printMemory mem)
```

In other words, each subsequent statement in a “do” block is behind the scenes a function of the variables stored during previous statements. You will agree surely that the “do” notation simplifies things quite a lot.

Let us see how the various classes we have seen earlier can be thought of as instances of Monad:

```
instance Monad Maybe where
  return x = Just x
  Nothing >>= f = Nothing
  Just x >>= f  = f x
```

```
instance Monad [] where
  return x = [x]
  xs >= f  = [y | x <- xs, y <- f x]
```

```
instance Monad ST where
  return x = S (\st -> (x, st))
  act1 >>= f = S trans
  where trans st = let (x, st') = runState act1 st
                   act2      = f x
                   in runState act2 st'
```

The definition for lists is particularly interesting: If we have a list of elements, and for each element we can produce a list of result elements via the function *f*, we can then iterate over each resulting list and concatenate all the results together. This is close to what list comprehensions are doing.

Similar to the other two classes, instances of Monad are expected to further satisfy certain rules, that we will not explore in detail:

```
return x >>= f      = f x
mx >>= return      = mx
(mx >>= f) >>= g    = mx >>= (\x -> (f x >> g))
```

## Monadic operations

Having a monad structure provides a number of functions for us, for a host of common operations. Most of these functions can be found in the `Control.Monad`<sup>2</sup> module. Most use the `Traversable` class, which in turn extends the `Foldable` class. The former provides a `traverse` function and the latter `foldr` and `foldMap` functions. For simplicity you can assume that `t a` in these is just `[a]`, and to illustrate this we write both type declarations:

```
mapM :: (Traversable t, Monad m) => (a -> m b) -> t a -> m (t b)
mapM :: Monad m => (a -> m b) -> [a] -> m [b]
filterM :: Applicative m => (a -> m Bool) -> [a] -> m [a]
zipWithM :: Applicative m => (a -> b -> m c) -> [a] -> [b] -> m [c]
foldM :: (Foldable t, Monad m) => (b -> a -> m b) -> b -> t a -> m b
foldM :: Monad m => (b -> a -> m b) -> b -> [a] -> m b
sequence :: (Traversable t, Monad m) => t (m a) -> m (t a)
sequence :: Monad m => [m a] -> m [a]
sequence_ :: (Foldable t, Monad m) => t (m a) -> m ()
sequence_ :: Monad m => [m a] -> m ()
join :: Monad m => m (m a) -> m a
```

---

<sup>2</sup><http://hackage.haskell.org/package/base-4.10.0.0/docs/Control-Monad.html#t:Monad>