CS 3110

Interpreters

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Fall 2017

Today's music: *Step by Step* by New Kids on the Block

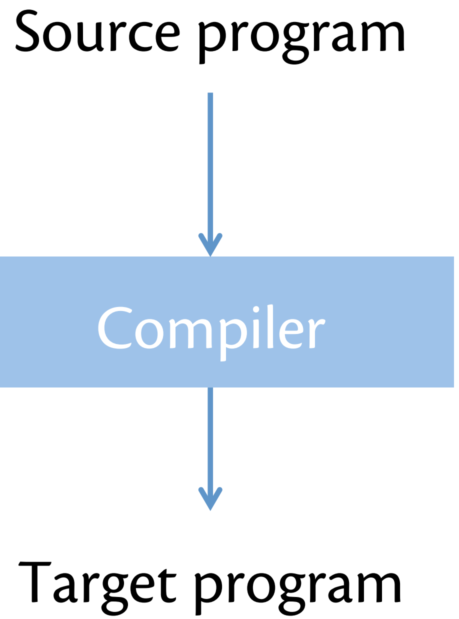
Review

Previously in 3110:
- functional programming
- modular programming
- data structures

Today:
- new unit of course: interpreters
- small-step interpreter for tiny language

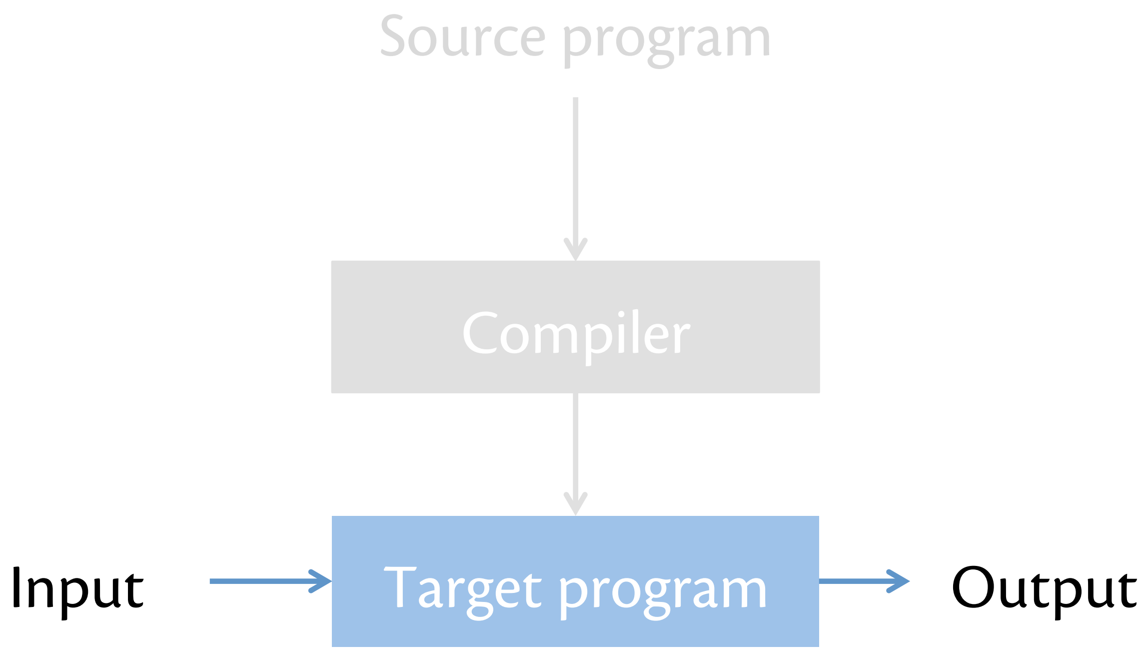
COMPILERS AND INTERPRETERS

Compilation



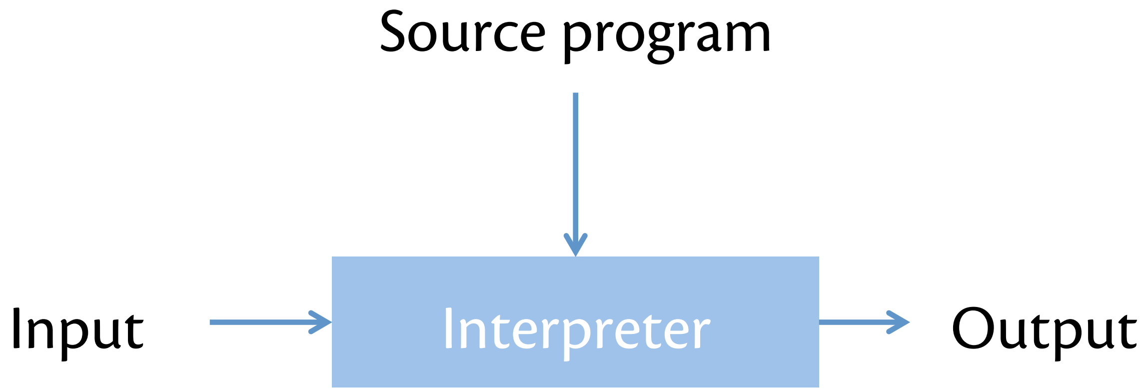
code as data: the compiler is code that operates on data; that data is itself code

Compilation



the compiler goes away; not needed to run the program

Interpretation

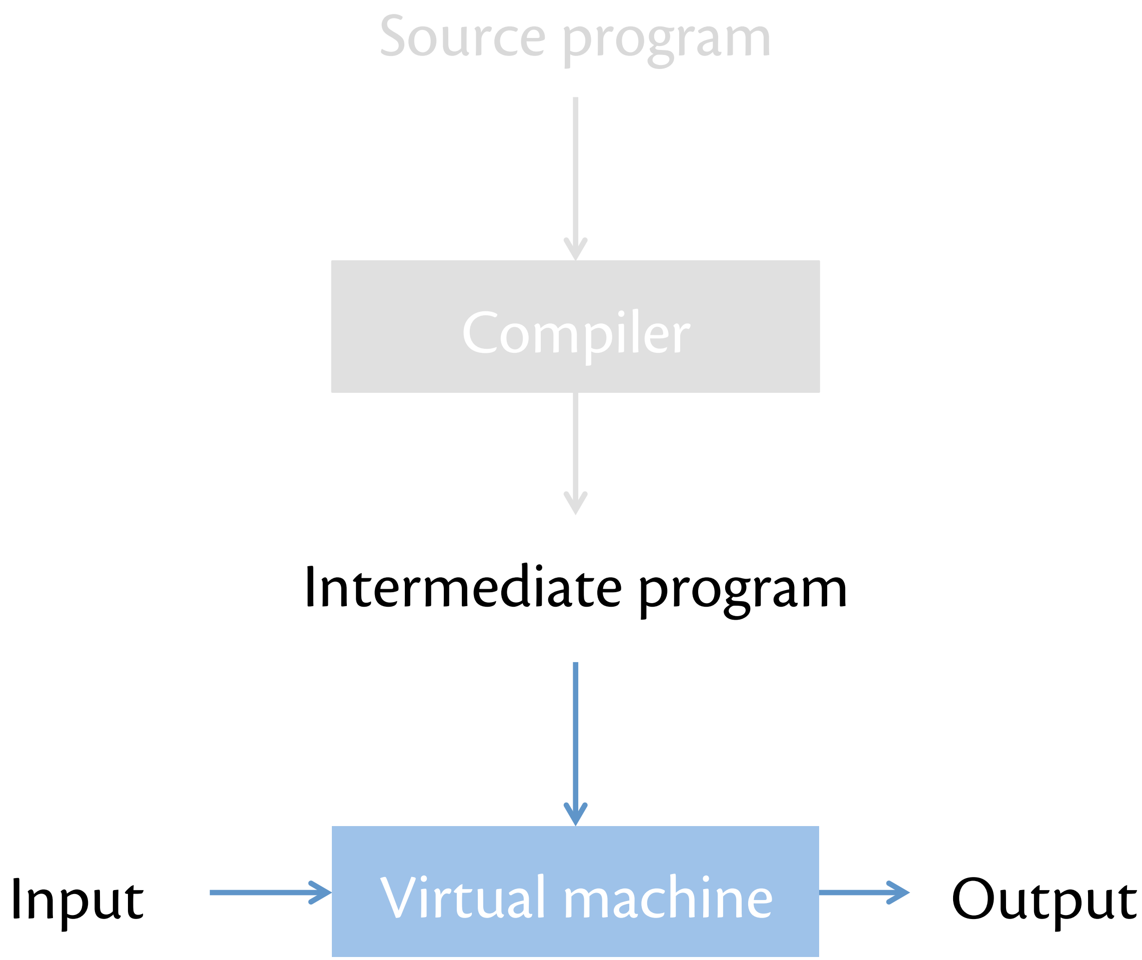


the interpreter stays; needed to run the program

Compilation vs. interpretation

- Compilers:
  - primary job is *translation*
  - typically lead to better performance of program
- Interpreters:
  - primary job is *execution*
  - typically lead to easier implementation of language
    - maybe better error messages and better debuggers

Mixed compilation and interpretation



the VM is the interpreter; needed to run the program; Java and OCaml can both work this way

Architecture

Two phases:

- **Front end:** translate source code into *abstract syntax tree* (AST)
- **Back end:** translate AST into machine code

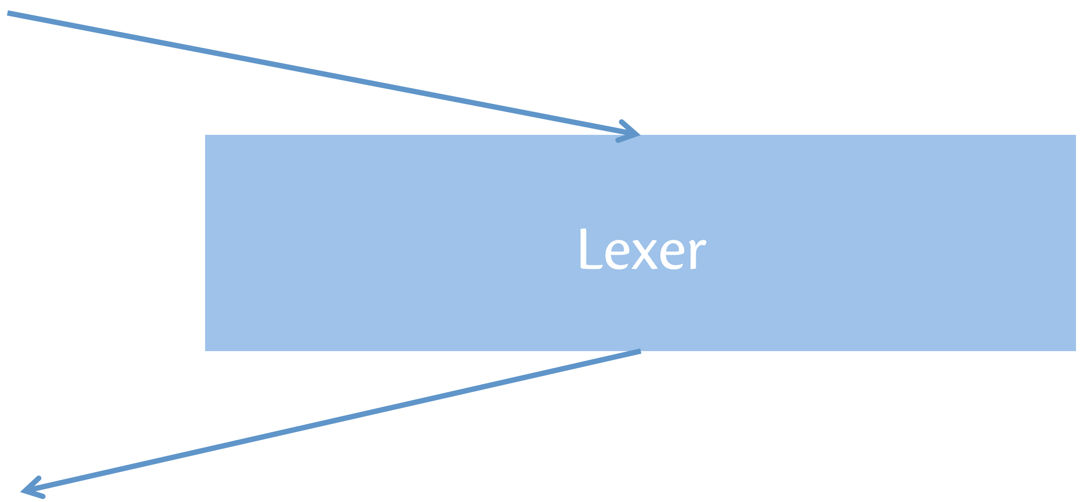
Front end of compilers and interpreters largely the same:

- *Lexical analysis* with lexer
- *Syntactic analysis* with parser
- *Semantic analysis*

Front end

Character stream:

```
if x=0 then 1 else fact(x-1)
```



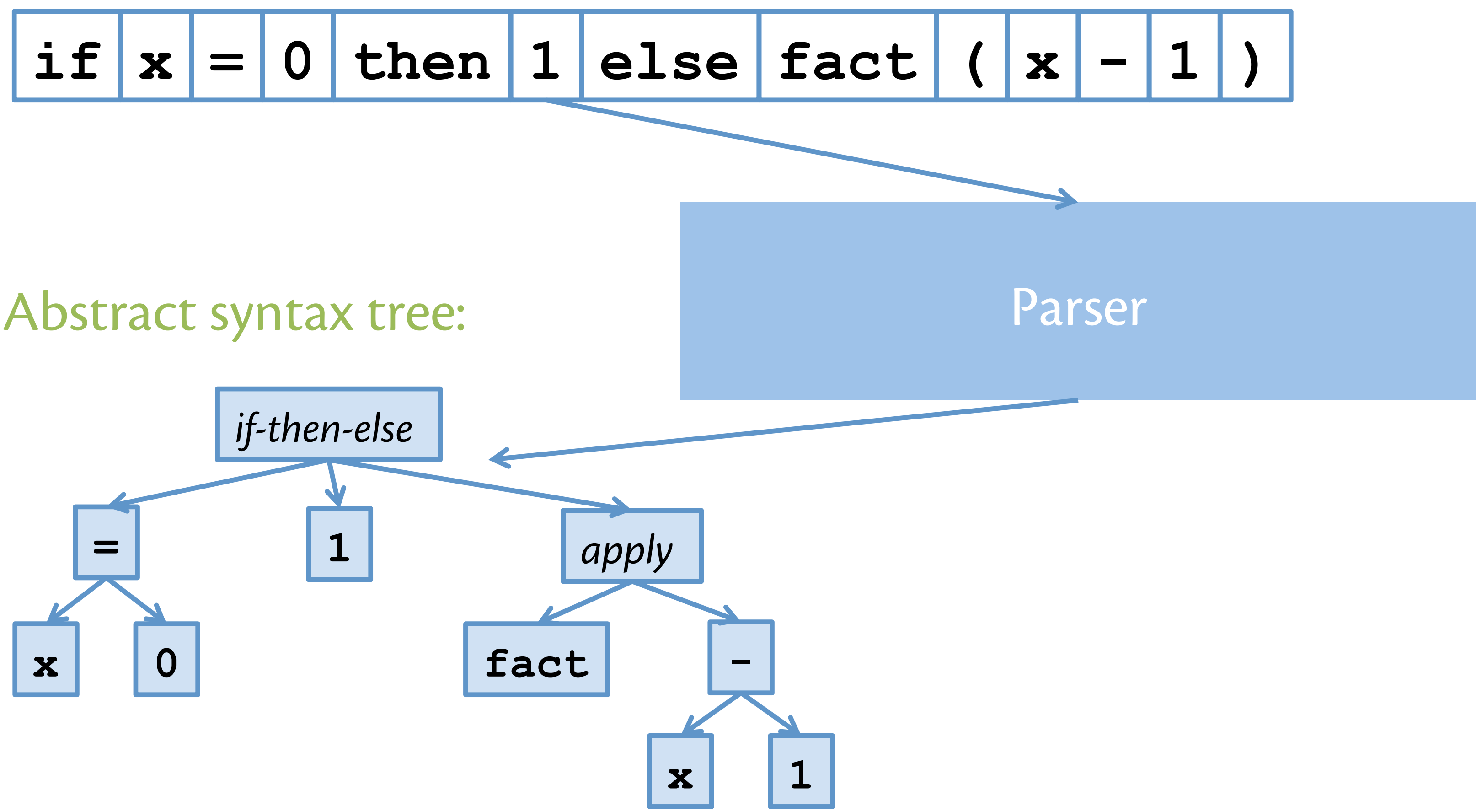
Token stream:

`if`	`x`	`=`	`0`	`then`	`1`	`else`	`fact`	`(`	`x`	`-`	`1`	`)`

Front end

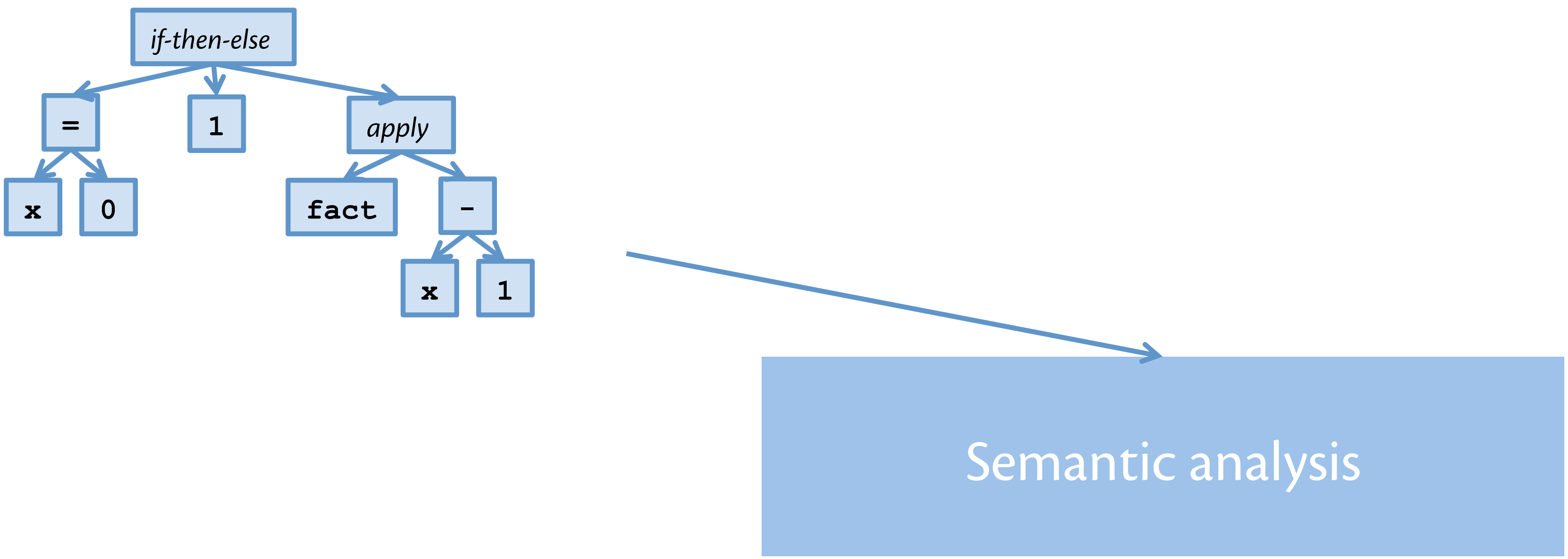
Token stream:

Abstract syntax tree:



Front end

Abstract syntax tree:



- accept or reject program
- *decorate* AST with types
- etc.

After the front end

- **Interpreter** begins executing code using the abstract syntax tree (AST)
- **Compiler** begins translating code into machine language
  - Might involve translating AST into a simpler *intermediate representation* (IR)
  - Eventually produce *object code*

Implementation

Functional languages are well-suited to implement compilers and interpreters

- **Code** easily represented by tree data types
- **Compilation** passes easily defined pattern matching on trees
- **Semantics** naturally implemented with language constructs

EXPRESSION INTERPRETER

Arithmetic expressions

Goal: write an interpreter for expressions involving integers and addition

Path to solution:

- let's assume lexing and parsing is already done
- need to take in AST and interpret it
- intuition:
  - an expression e takes a single *step* to a new expression e'
  - expression keeps stepping until it reaches a *value*

AST

```
type expr =
    | Int of int
    | Add of expr * expr
```

e.g.

- `Int 5` represents the source expression 5
- `Add (Int 5)`
  `      (Add (Int 6) (Int 7))`

  represents 5+(6+7)

Evaluation by stepping

```
(* A single step of evaluation:
 * exactly 1 step *)
val step : expr -> expr

(* Take as many steps as possible until
 * a value is reached.  Could be 0
 * or more steps. *)
val eval : expr -> expr
```

Eval

```
let rec eval e =
  if is_value e
  then e
  else eval (step e)

(* [is_value e] is whether
 * [e] is a syntactic value *)
let is_value = function
  | Int _ -> true
  | Add _ -> false
```

Question

Given (4+5)+(6+7), what *should* the first step be?

A. 9+(6+7)

B. (4+5)+13

Question

Given (4+5)+(6+7), what *should* the first step be?

A. 9+(6+7)
B. (4+5)+13

Answer: It doesn't matter!

(especially in the absence of side effects)

But we have to make an implementation choice...

Step, Choice A

```
let rec step = function
   | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
   | Add(e1, e2) -> Add(step e1, e2)
```

Step, Choice A

```
let rec step = function
  | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
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  | Add(Int n1, e2) -> Add(Int n1, step e2)
```

Step, Choice A

```
let rec step = function
    | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
    | Add(e1, e2) -> Add(step e1, e2)
    | Add(Int n1, e2) -> Add(Int n1, step e2)
```

Stop: we already have a bug

How will 5+(6+7) step?

Step, Choice A

```
let rec step = function
   | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
   | Add(Int n1, e2) -> Add(Int n1, step e2)
   | Add(e1, e2) -> Add(step e1, e2)
```

Step, Choice A

```
let rec step = function
   | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
   | Add(Int n1, Int n2) -> Int (n1+n2)
   | Add(Int n1, e2) -> Add(Int n1, step e2)
   | Add(e1, e2) -> Add(step e1, e2)
```

Step, Choice A

```
let rec step = function
  | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
  | Add(Int n1, Int n2) -> Int (n1+n2)
  | Add(Int n1, e2) -> Add(Int n1, step e2)
  | Add(e1, e2) -> Add(step e1, e2)
```

Finished!

Step, Choice B

```
let rec step = function
  | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
  | Add(Int n1, Int n2) -> Int (n1+n2)
  | Add(e1, Int n2) -> Add(step e1, Int n2)
  | Add(e1, e2) -> Add(e1, step e2)
```

EXTENDED EXPRESSION INTERPRETER

Arithmetic expressions

Goal: extend interpreter to **`let`** expressions

Path to solution:

- extend AST with a variant for **`let`** and for variables
- add branches to **`step`** to handle those
- that requires *substitution*...

`let` expressions [from lec 4]

```
let x = e1 in e2
```

Evaluation:

- Evaluate **`e1`** to a value **`v1`**
- **Substitute `v1`** for **`x`** in **`e2`**, yielding a new expression **`e2'`**
- Evaluate **`e2'`** to **`v`**
- Result of evaluation is **`v`**

Substitution

- Notation: e{v/x} means e with v substituted for x
  - e.g., (x+5){4/x} means (x+5) with 4 substituted for x
  - which would be (4+5)
- In **`let`** semantics:
  - Instead of: "Substitute **`v1`** for **`x`** in **`e2`**, yielding a new expression **`e2'`**; Evaluate **`e2'`** to **`v`**"
  - Could now write: "Evaluate **`e2{v1/x}`** to **`v`**"

Extended AST

```
type expr =
    | Int of int
    | Add of expr * expr
    | Var of string
    | Let of string * expr * expr
```

e.g.

- `Var "x"` represents the source expression **`x`**
- `Let "x" (Int 5)`
  `(Add (Var "x") (Int 1))`
  represents **`let x = 5 in x+1`**

Eval

```
let rec eval e =
  if is_value e
  then e
  else eval (step e)

let is_value = function
  | Int _ -> true
  | Add _ | Var _ | Let _ -> false
```

Step

```
let rec step = function
  | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
  | Add(Int n1, Int n2) -> Int (n1 + n2)
  | Add(Int n1, e2) -> Add (Int n1, step e2)
  | Add(e1, e2) -> Add (step e1, e2)
```

Step

```
let rec step = function
  | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
  | Add(Int n1, Int n2) -> Int (n1 + n2)
  | Add(Int n1, e2) -> Add (Int n1, step e2)
  | Add(e1, e2) -> Add (step e1, e2)
  | Var _ -> failwith "Unbound variable"
```

Why? Equivalent to just typing "**`x;;`**" into fresh utop session

Step

```
let rec step = function
  | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
  | Add(Int n1, Int n2) -> Int (n1 + n2)
  | Add(Int n1, e2) -> Add (Int n1, step e2)
  | Add(e1, e2) -> Add (step e1, e2)
  | Var _ -> failwith "Unbound variable"
  | Let(x, e1, e2) -> Let (x, step e1, e2)
```

Step

```
let rec step = function
  | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
  | Add(Int n1, Int n2) -> Int (n1 + n2)
  | Add(Int n1, e2) -> Add (Int n1, step e2)
  | Add(e1, e2) -> Add (step e1, e2)
  | Var _ -> failwith "Unbound variable"
  | Let(x, Int n, e2) -> e2{(Int n)/x}
  | Let(x, e1, e2) -> Let (x, step e1, e2)
```

Substitution

```
(* [subst e v x] is e{v/x}, that is,
 * [e] with [v] substituted for [x]. *)
let rec subst e v x = match e with
   | Var y -> if x=y then v else e
   | Int n -> Int n
   | Add(el,er) ->
       Add(subst el v x, subst er v x)
   | Let(y,ebind,ebody) ->
       let ebind' = subst ebind v x in
       if x=y
       then Let(y, ebind', ebody)
       else Let(y, ebind', subst ebody v x)
```

Step

```
let rec step = function
  | Int n -> failwith "Does not step"
  | Add(Int n1, Int n2) -> Int (n1 + n2)
  | Add(Int n1, e2) -> Add (Int n1, step e2)
  | Add(e1, e2) -> Add (step e1, e2)
  | Var _ -> failwith "Unbound variable"
  | Let(x, Int n, e2) -> subst e2 (Int n) x
  | Let(x, e1, e2) -> Let (x, step e1, e2)
```

Upcoming events

- [Mon] MS0 due
- [Wed] A3 due

This is open to interpretation.

THIS IS 3110