An Intuition for Propagators

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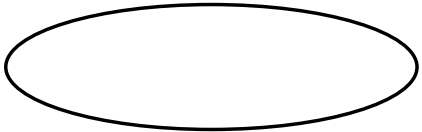
1970s, MIT

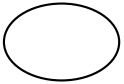
a model of computation for **highly parallel** machines

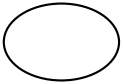


```
do
  c <- cell
```

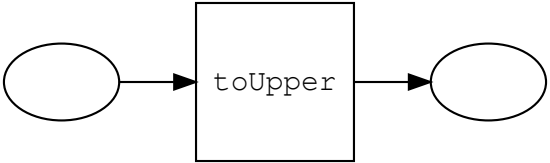

```
do
  c <- cell
  write c "Hello"
```


```
do
  c <- cell
  write c "Hello"
  write c "Compose"
```

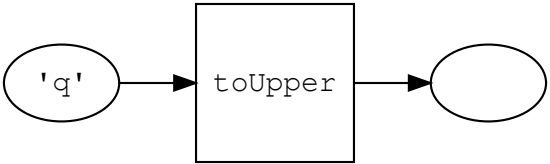




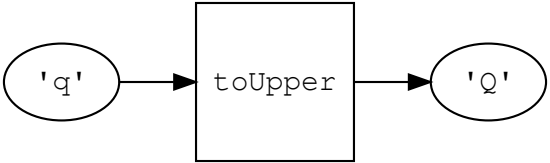
```
do
  input  <- cell
  output <- cell
```



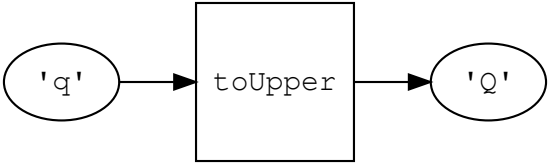

```
do
  input  <- cell
  output <- cell
  lift toUpper input output
```




```haskell
do
  input  <- cell
  output <- cell
  lift toUpper input output

  -- run the network
  write input 'q'
```



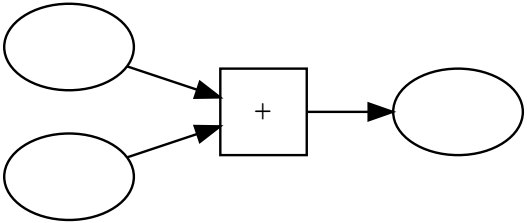

```haskell
do
  input  <- cell
  output <- cell
  lift toUpper input output

  -- run the network
  write input 'q'
```




```haskell
do
  input  <- cell
  output <- cell
  lift toUpper input output

  -- run the network
  write input 'q'
  content output   -- Just 'Q'
```

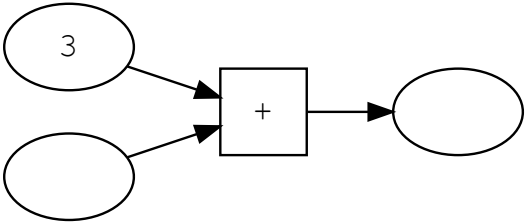
```
do
  inL  <- cell
  inR  <- cell
  out  <- cell
```




```
do
  inL  <- cell
  inR  <- cell
  out  <- cell

  adder inL inR out

    where
      adder l r o = do
        lift2 (+) l r o
```

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do
  inL  <- cell
  inR  <- cell
  out  <- cell

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    where
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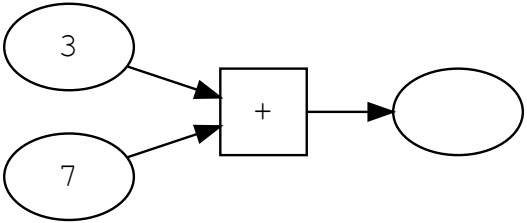
```

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  adder inL inR out

    where
      adder l r o = do
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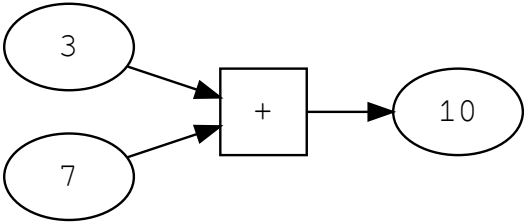



```haskell
do
  inL  <- cell
  inR  <- cell
  out  <- cell

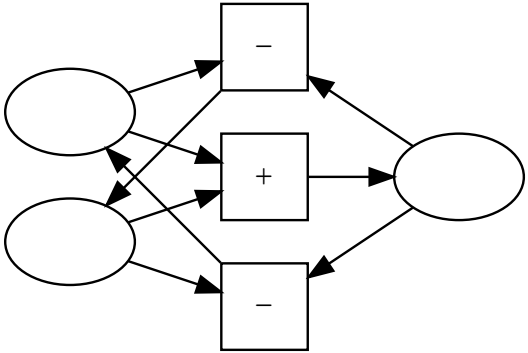
  adder inL inR out

    where
      adder l r o = do
        lift2 (+) l r o
```

$$z = x + y$$

$$z \leftarrow x + y$$

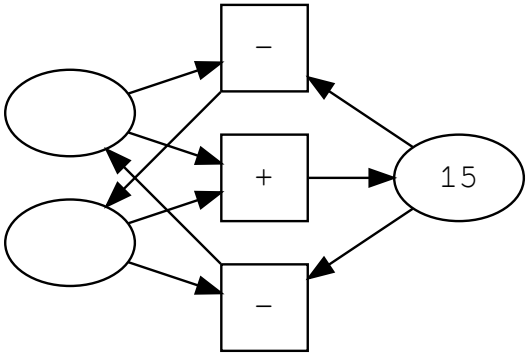
$$
\begin{aligned}
z &\leftarrow x + y \\
x &\leftarrow z - y \\
y &\leftarrow z - x
\end{aligned}
$$




```
do
  inL  <- cell
  inR  <- cell
  out  <- cell

  adder inL inR out

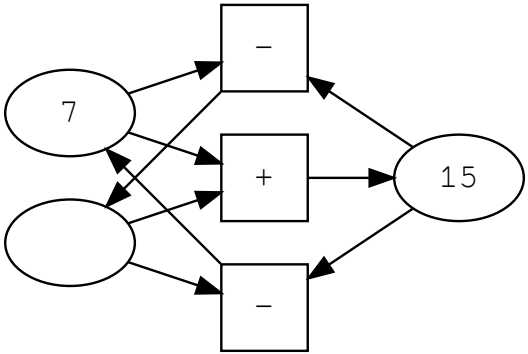
    where
      adder l r o = do
        lift2 (+) l r o
        lift2 (-) o l r
        lift2 (-) o r l
```




```
do
  inL  <- cell
  inR  <- cell
  out  <- cell

  adder inL inR out

    where
      adder l r o = do
        lift2 (+) l r o
        lift2 (−) o l r
        lift2 (−) o r l
```

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  out  <- cell

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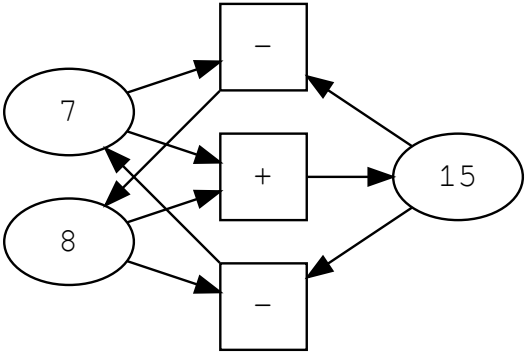
    where
      adder l r o = do
        lift2 (+) l r o
        lift2 (−) o l r
        lift2 (−) o r l
```



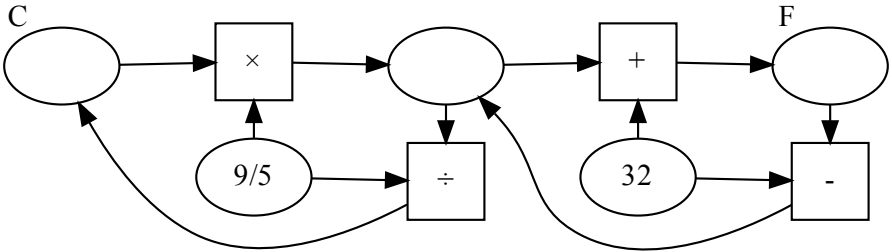

```
do
  inL  <- cell
  inR  <- cell
  out  <- cell

  adder inL inR out

    where
      adder l r o = do
        lift2 (+) l r o
        lift2 (-) o l r
        lift2 (-) o r l
```

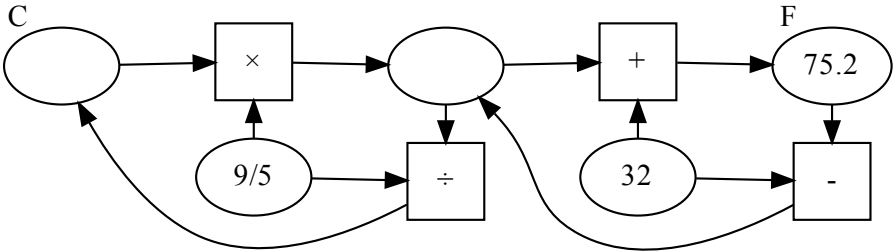
$$^\circ F = {}^\circ C \times \frac{9}{5} + 32$$

$$^\circ C = ({}^\circ F - 32) \div \frac{9}{5}$$



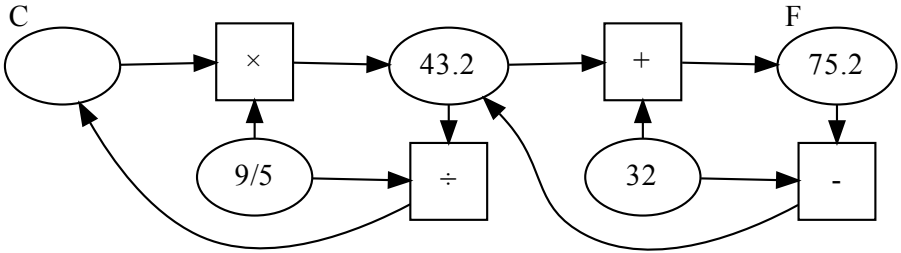
$$^\circ F = {}^\circ C \times \frac{9}{5} + 32$$

$$^\circ C = ({}^\circ F - 32) \div \frac{9}{5}$$



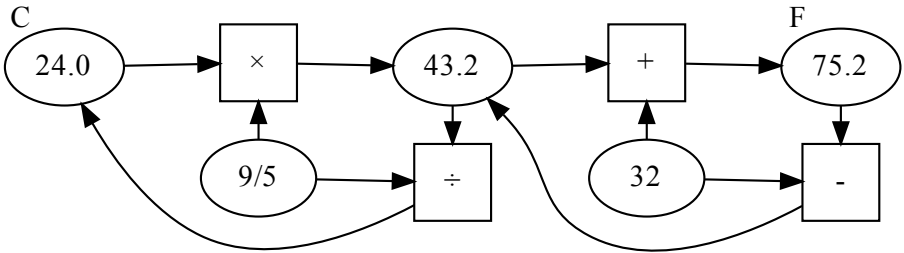
$$^\circ F = {}^\circ C \times \frac{9}{5} + 32$$

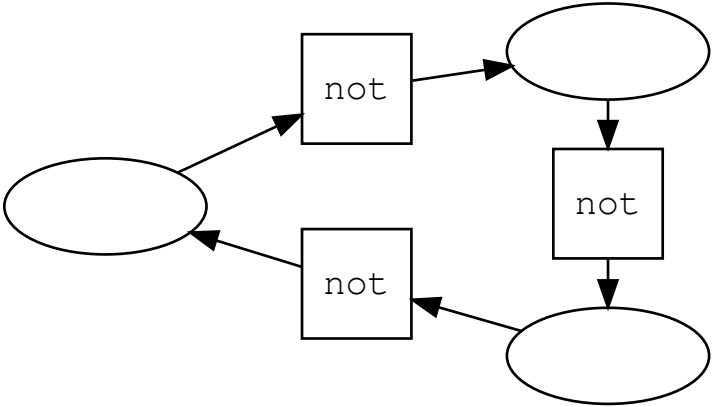
$$^\circ C = ({}^\circ F - 32) \div \frac{9}{5}$$

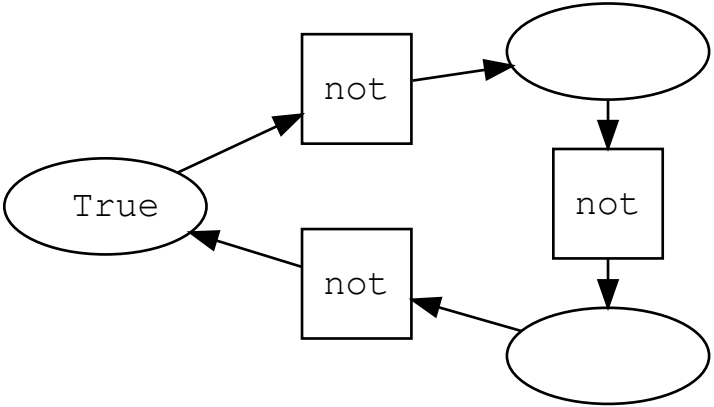


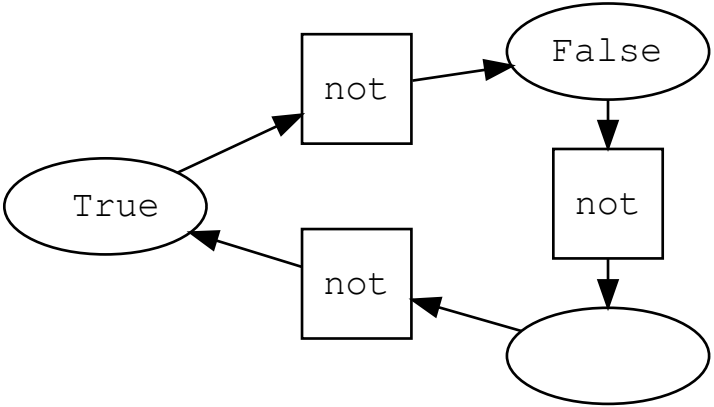
$$^\circ F = {}^\circ C \times \frac{9}{5} + 32$$

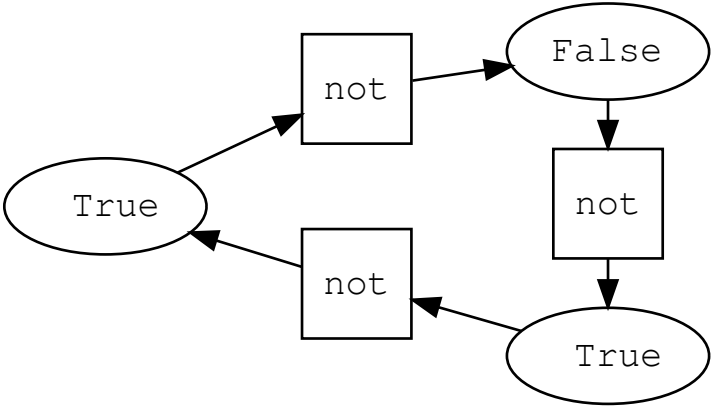
$$^\circ C = ({}^\circ F - 32) \div \frac{9}{5}$$

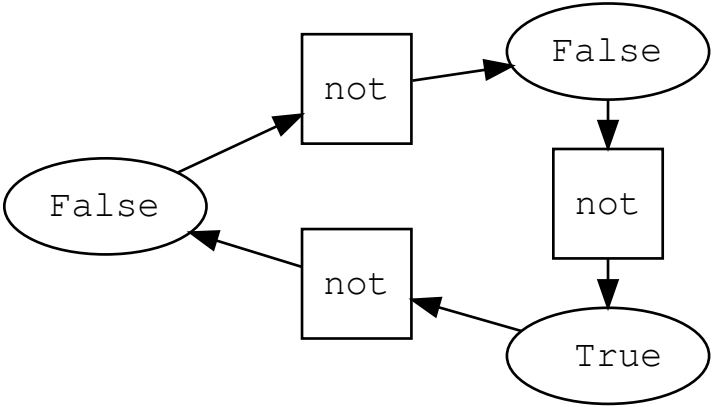


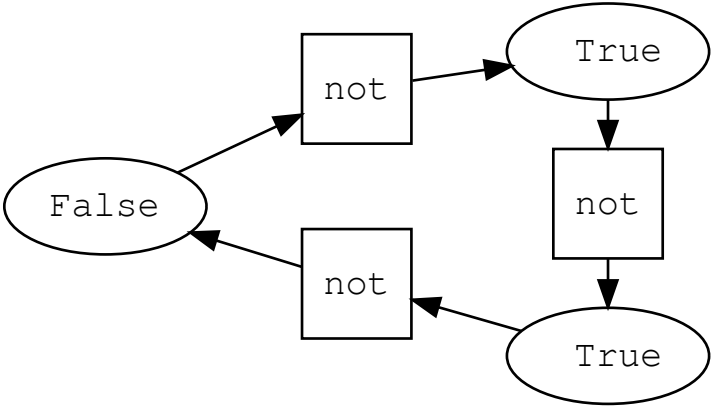

not
not
not

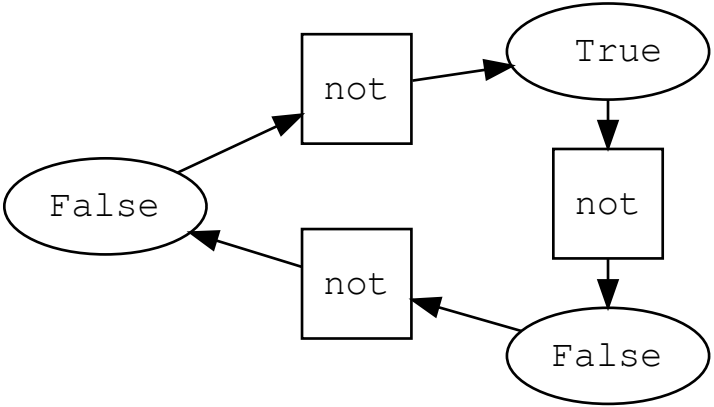

not
not
True
not

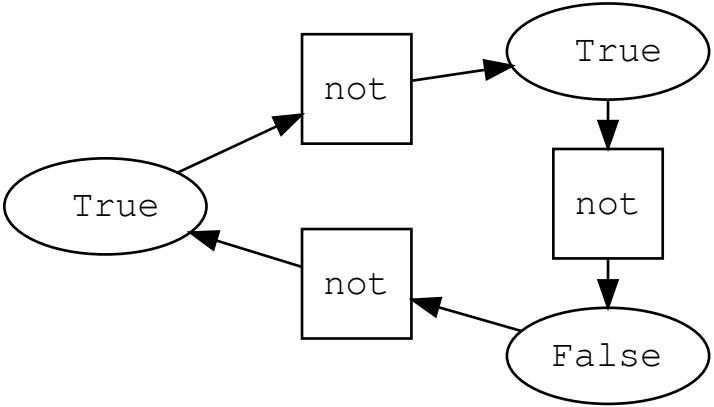

False
not
not
True
not

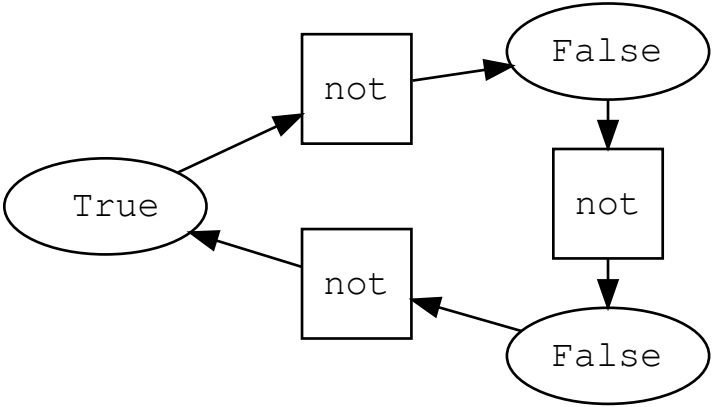

False
not
not
True
not
True


False
not
False
not
not
True


True
not
not
False
not
True


True
not
not
False
not
False


True
not
True
not
False
not
True

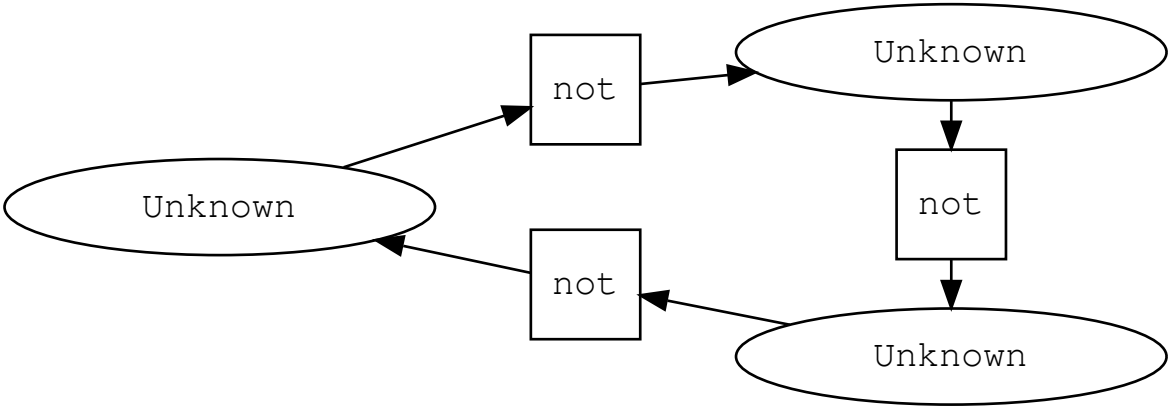

False
not
not
True
not
False

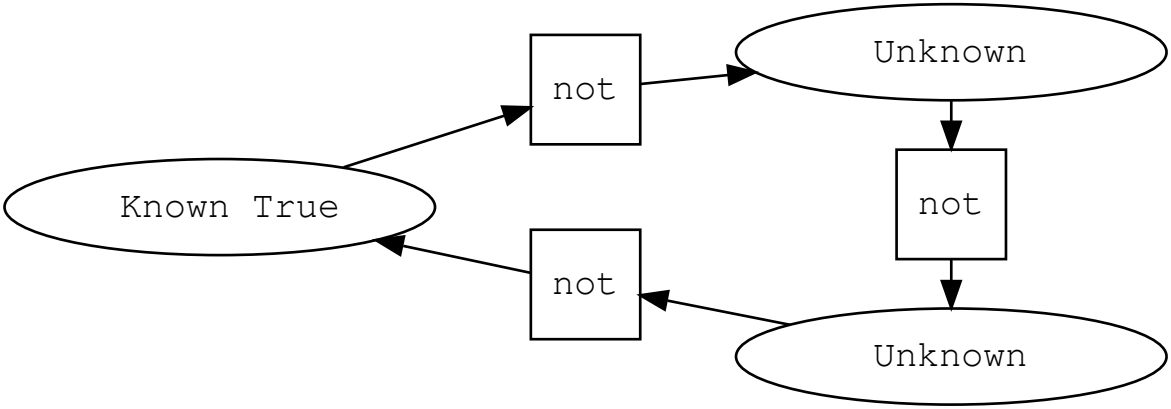
?!

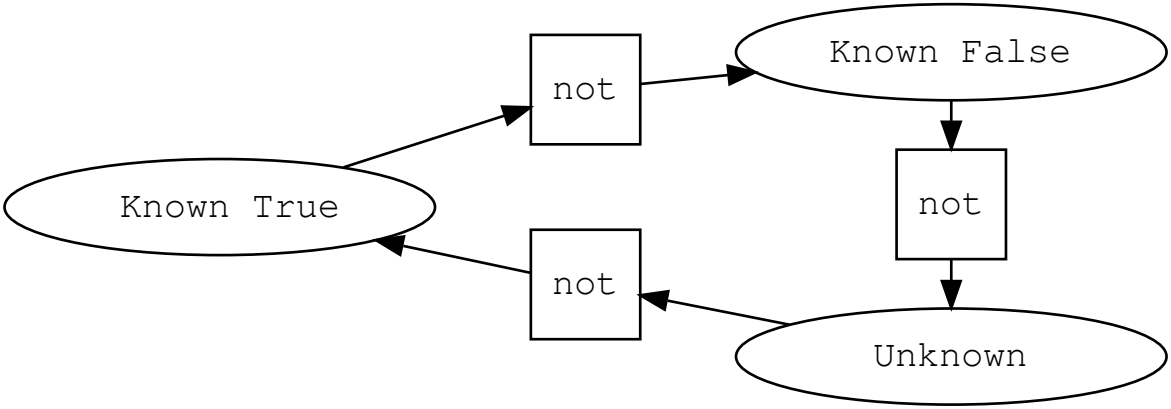
How can we fix this?

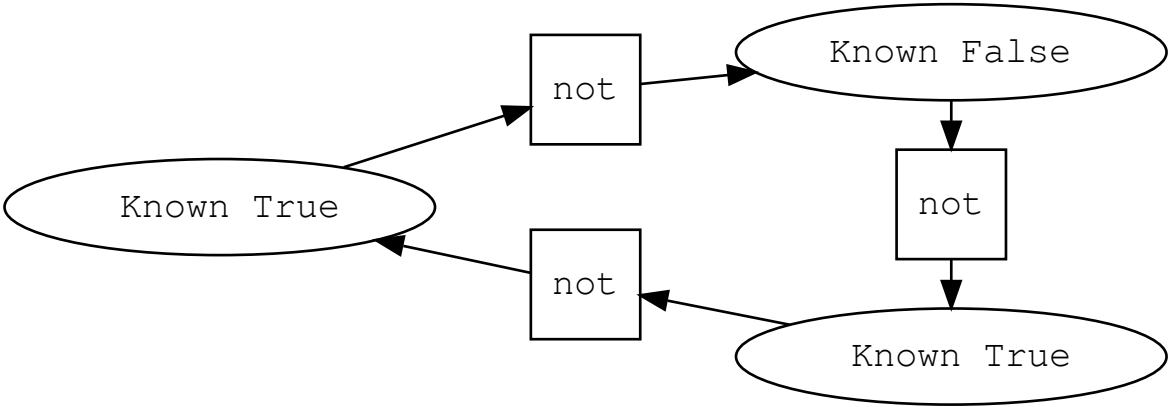
```haskell
data Perhaps a
  = Unknown
  | Known a
  | Contradiction
```

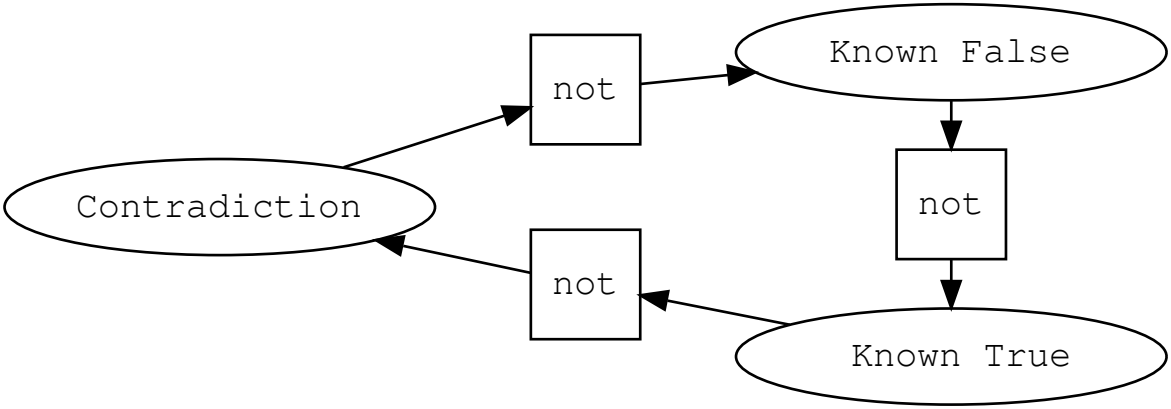
```haskell
data Perhaps a
  = Unknown
  | Known a
  | Contradiction

tryWrite :: (Eq a) => a -> Perhaps a -> Perhaps a
tryWrite a p = case p of
  Unknown -> Known a
  Known b -> if a == b then Known b else Contradiction
  Contradiction -> Contradiction
```

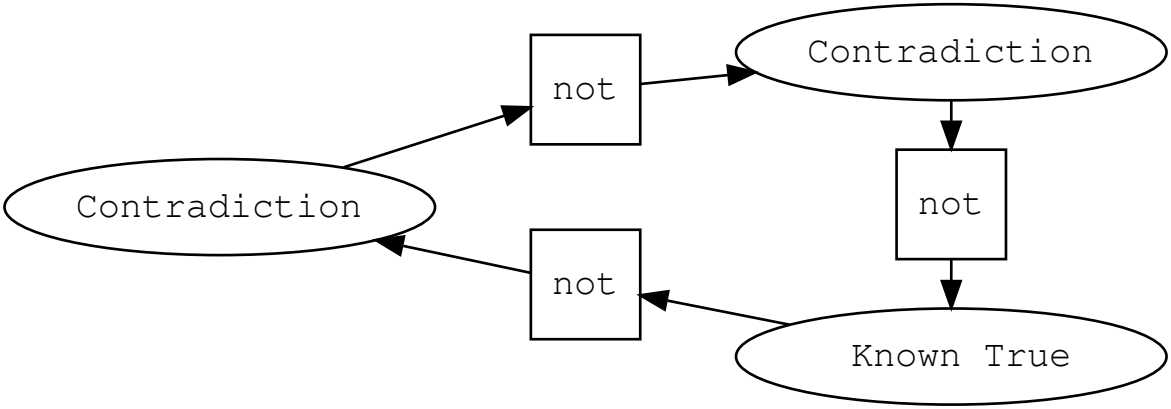

not
Unknown
Unknown
not
not
Unknown

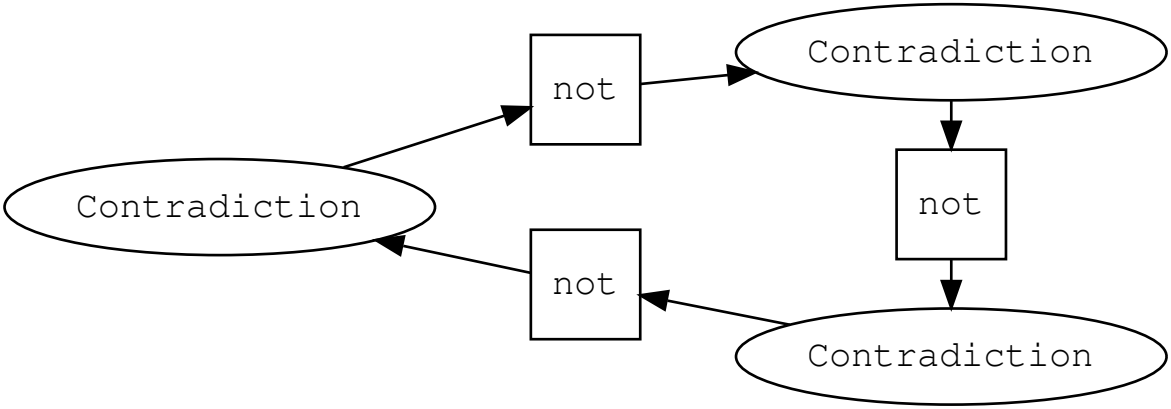

Unknown
not
Known True
not
not
Unknown


Known True
not
Known False
not
Unknown
not


Known False
not
Known True
not
not
Known True


Known False
not
Contradiction
not
not
Known True


Contradiction
not
Contradiction
not
not
Known True


Contradiction
not
Contradiction
not
not
Contradiction

Accumulate information about a value

3			2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1

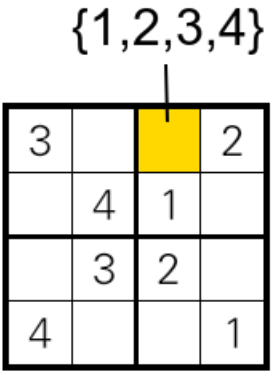
3			2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1

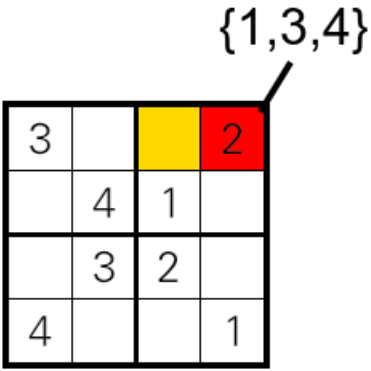
3			2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1

3			2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1

3			2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1

3			2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1


{1,2,3,4}
3
2
4
1
3
2
4
1


{1,3,4}
3
2
4
1
3
2
4
1

3			2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1

{2,3,4}

{1,2,4}

3			2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1

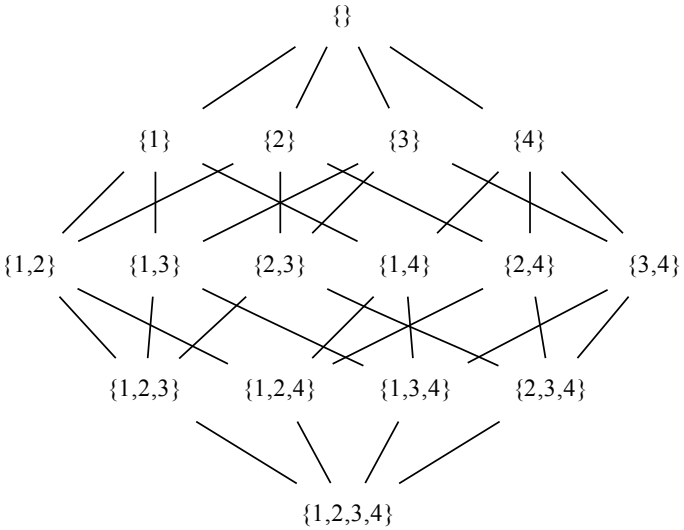
$$\{2,3,4\} \cap \{1,3,4\} \cap \{1,2,4\} \cap \{1,2,3,4\}$$

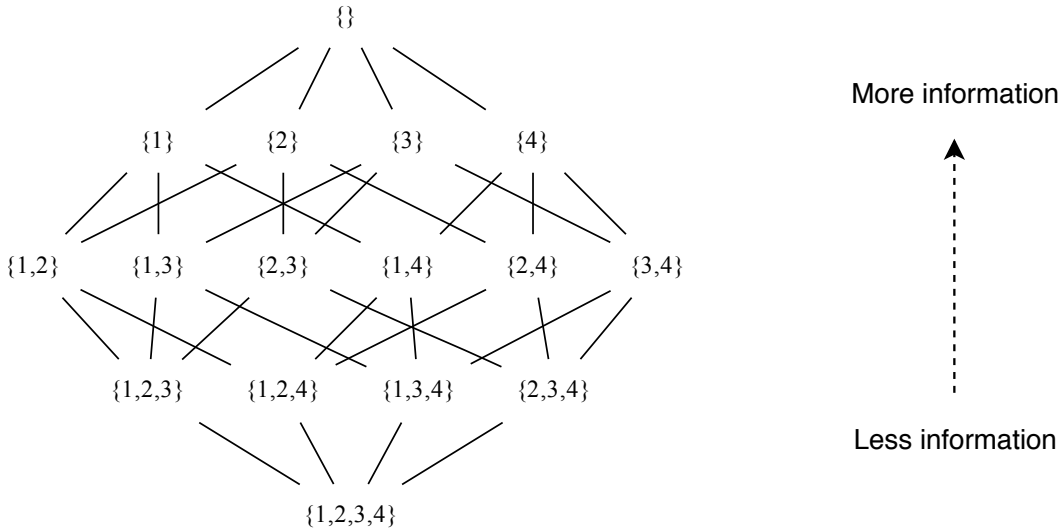
3			2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1

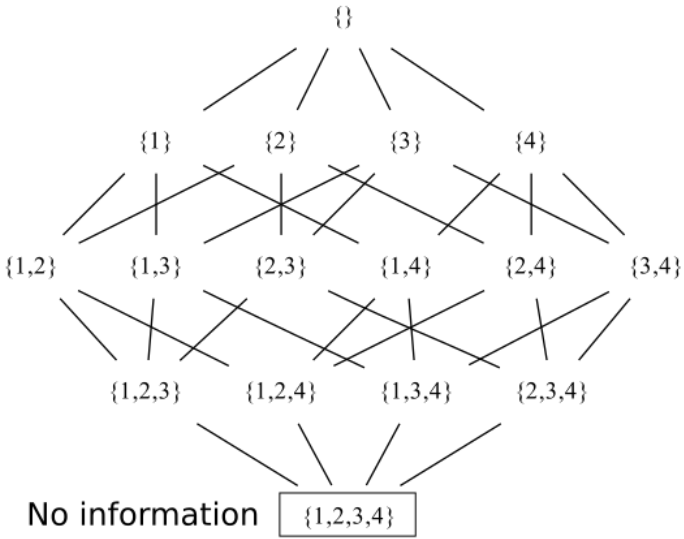
{4}

3			2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1

3		4	2
	4	1	
	3	2	
4			1

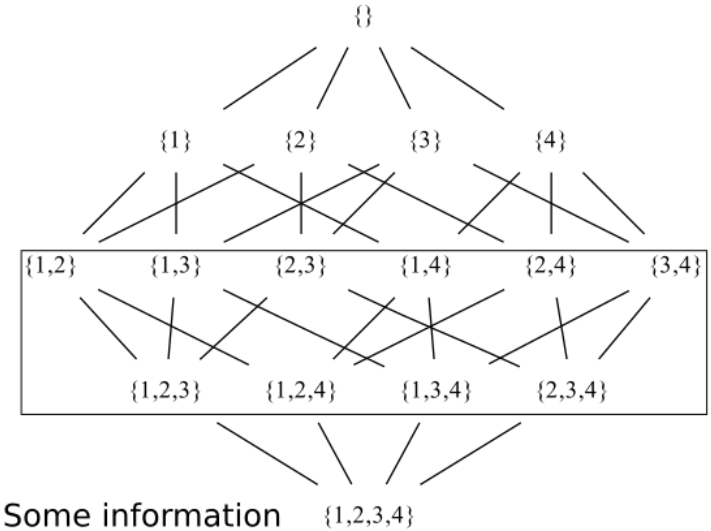

{}
{1}
{2}
{3}
{4}
{1,2}
{1,3}
{2,3}
{1,4}
{2,4}
{3,4}
{1,2,3}
{1,2,4}
{1,3,4}
{2,3,4}
{1,2,3,4}


{}
{1}
{2}
{3}
{4}
{1,2}
{1,3}
{2,3}
{1,4}
{2,4}
{3,4}
{1,2,3}
{1,2,4}
{1,3,4}
{2,3,4}
{1,2,3,4}
More information
Less information



More information

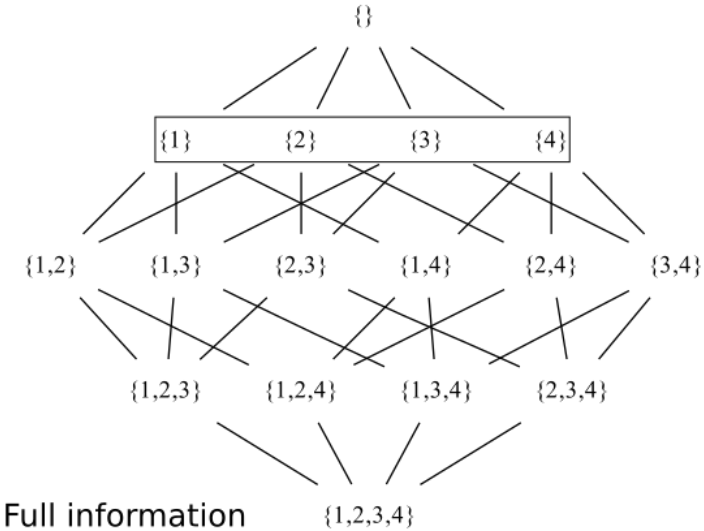
Less information



Some information

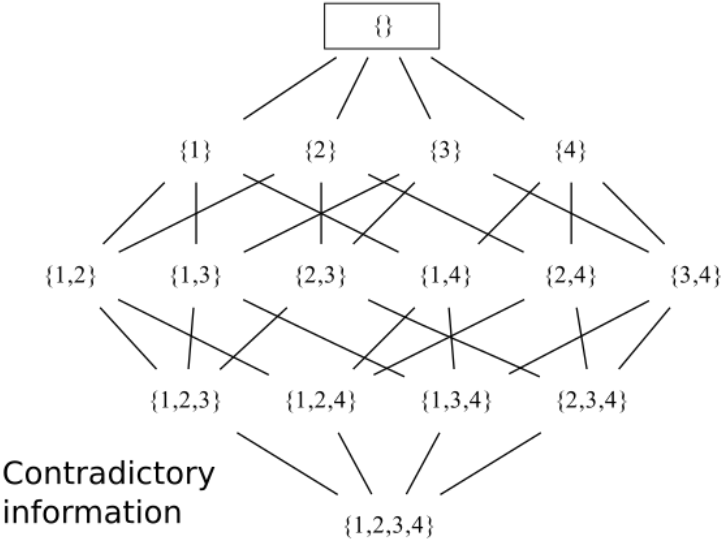
More information

Less information



More information

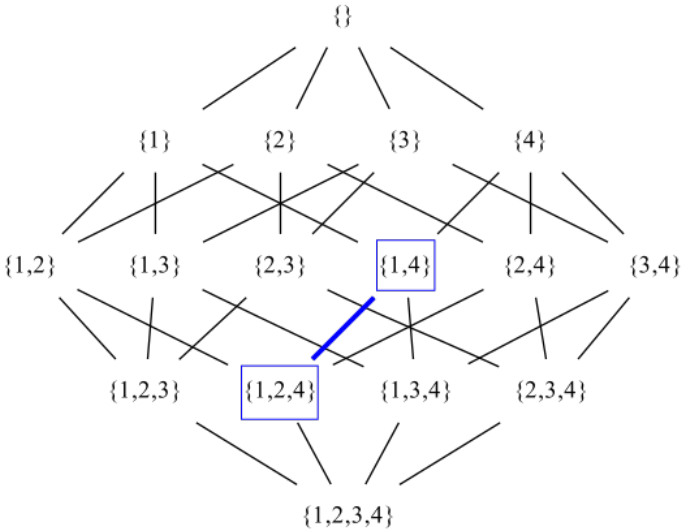
Less information



Contradictory information

More information

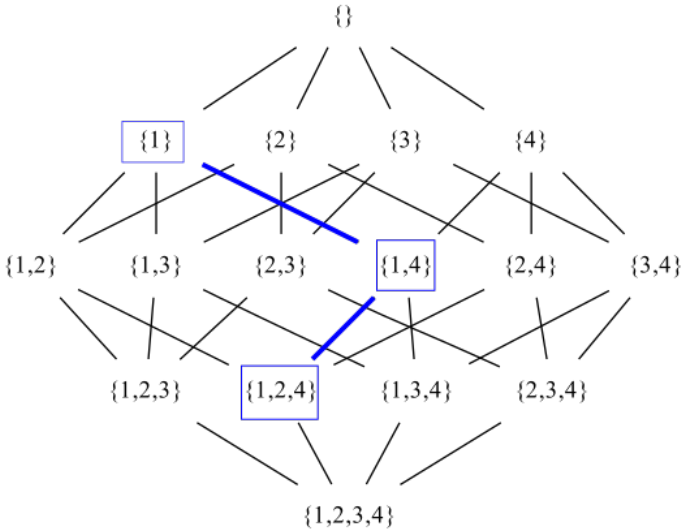
Less information



More information

Less information

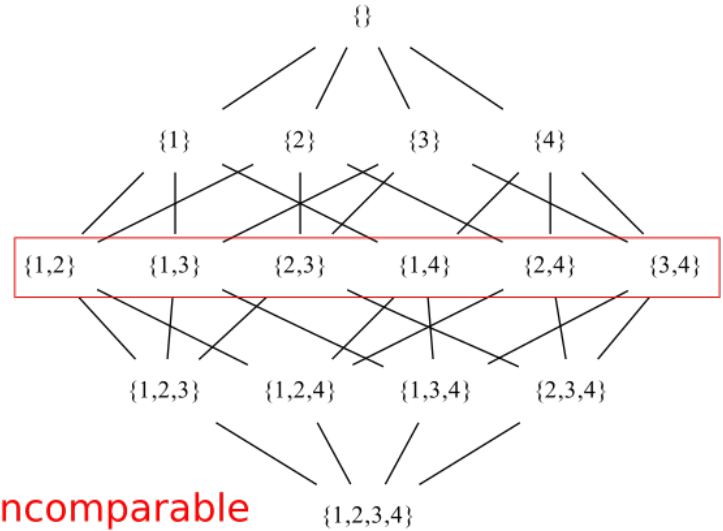
$\{1,2,4\} < \{1,4\}$



More information

Less information

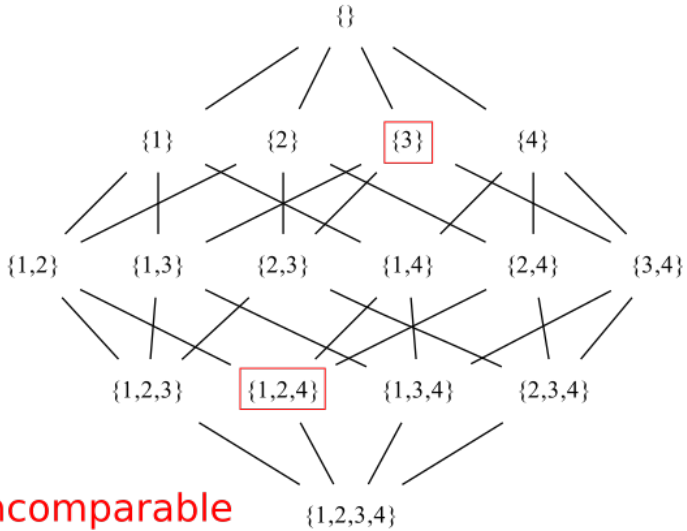
$\{1,2,4\} < \{1,4\} < \{1\}$



Incomparable

More information

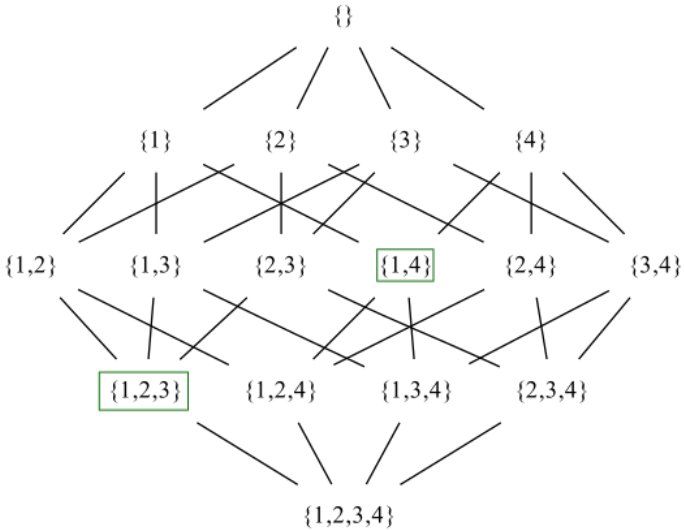
Less information



Incomparable

More information

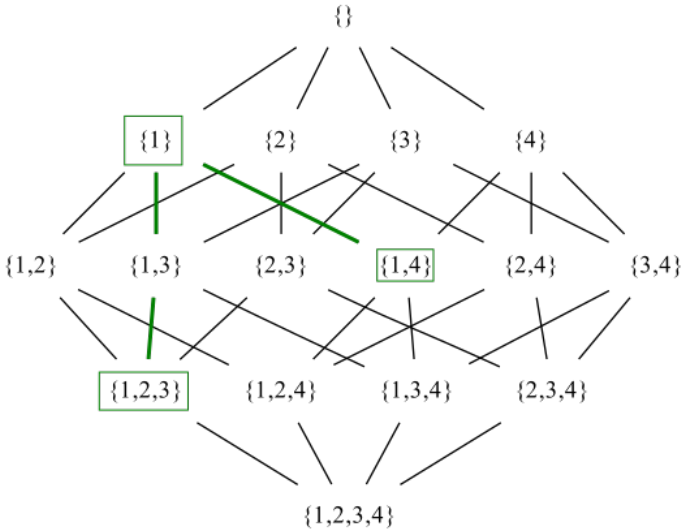
Less information



More information

Less information

$\{1,2,3\} \vee \{1,4\}$



More information

Less information

$\{1,2,3\} \vee \{1,4\} = \{1\}$

Bounded join semilattice

Identity:

$$x \vee bottom = bottom = bottom \vee x$$

Associative:

$$x \vee (y \vee z) = (x \vee y) \vee z$$

Commutative:

$$x \vee y = y \vee x$$

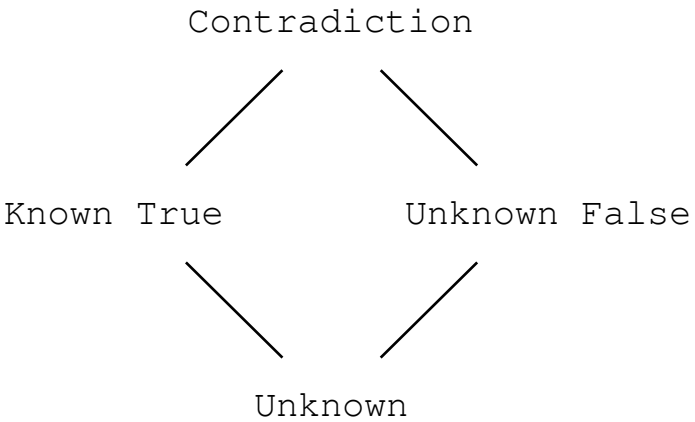
Idempotent:

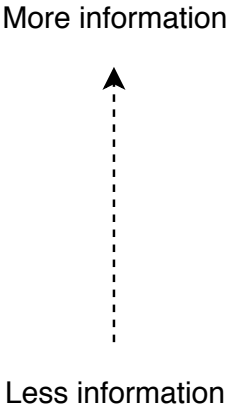
$$x \vee x = x$$

```haskell
class SemiLattice a where
  (\/)   :: a -> a -> a
  bottom :: a
```

```haskell
class SemiLattice a where
  (\/)   :: a -> a -> a
  bottom :: a

data SudokuVal = One | Two | Three | Four
  deriving (Eq, Ord)

data Possibilities = P (Set SudokuVal)
```

```haskell
class SemiLattice a where
  (\/)   :: a -> a -> a
  bottom :: a

data SudokuVal = One | Two | Three | Four
  deriving (Eq, Ord)

data Possibilities = P (Set SudokuVal)

instance Semilattice Possibilities where
  P p \/ P q = P (Set.intersection p q)
  bottom = P (Set.fromList [One,Two,Three,Four])
```


Contradiction
Known True
Unknown False
Unknown


More information
Less information

Cells hold semilattices
Propagators join information in

Perhaps

Sets (intersection or union)

Intervals

Bidirectional equations

many more

There's a lot more to say

Even more laziness

Search

Unification

Integer linear programming

SAT solving

many many more

Finding **principled abstractions**
didn't just solve our problems

Thanks for listening!

Working code for all these examples and more:
`https://github.com/qfpl/propagator-examples`

References

Art of the propagator:

https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/44215

Alexey Radul's PhD Thesis:

https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/54635

Edward Kmett at Boston Haskell:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyPzPeOPgUE

George Wilson on semi-lattices:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXl0EEd8IcU

Implementations

Fancy experimental implementation:

https://github.com/ekmett/guanxi

Propagators in Haskell

https://github.com/ekmett/propagators

Propagators in Clojure:

https://github.com/tgk/propaganda