# Ethereum EVM illustrated

exploring some mental models and implementations

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WIP

Rev. 0.01.0

NOTE

- Please refer to the official documents in detail.
- This information is current as of Mar, 2018.
- Still work in progress.

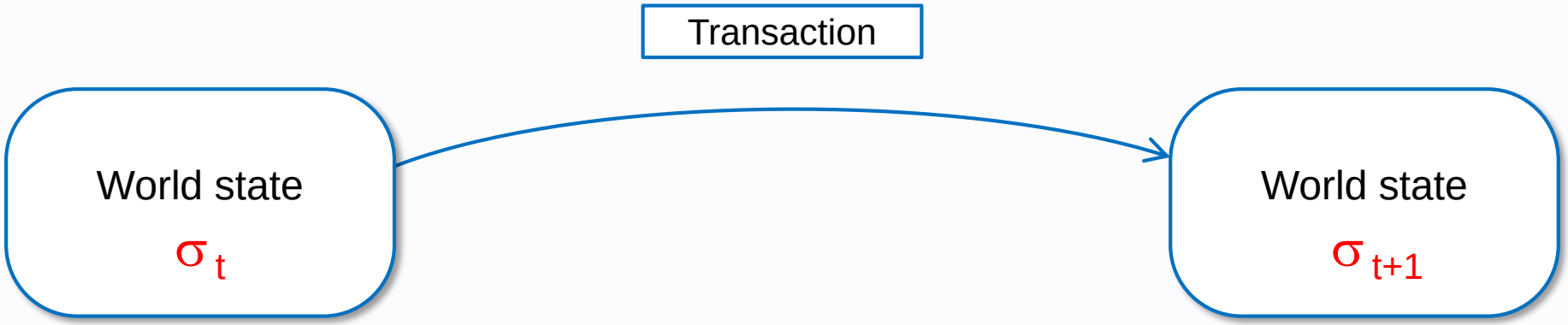
# Contents

# 1. Introduction

# 1. Introduction

Blockchain

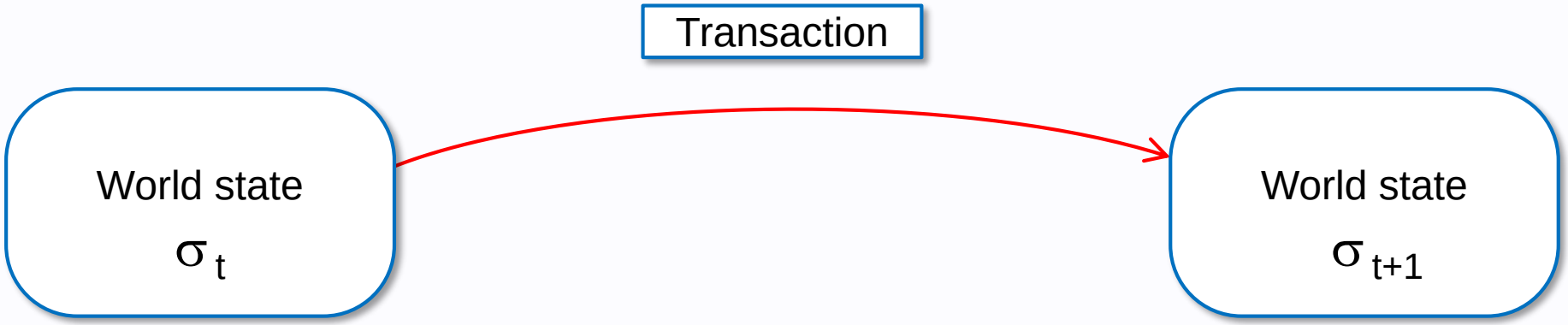
# A transaction-based state machine




Ethereum can be viewed as a transaction-based state machine.

References : [E1] Ch.2, [E3]

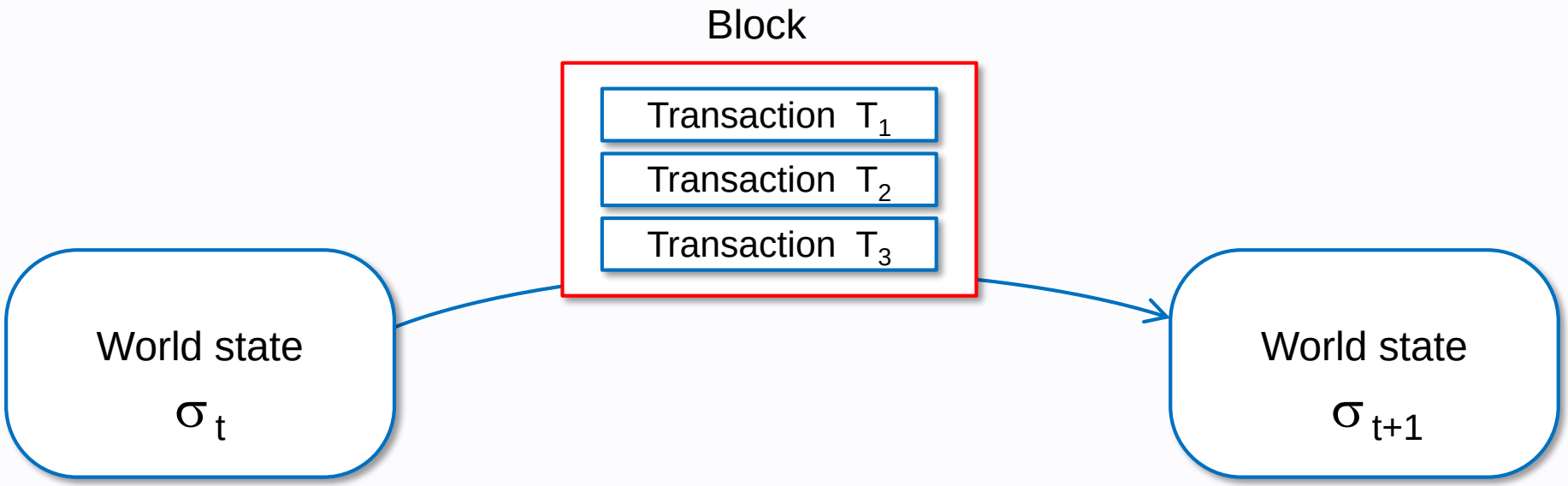
# A transaction-based state machine




A transaction represents a valid arc between two states.

References : [E1] Ch.2, [E3]

# Block and transactions

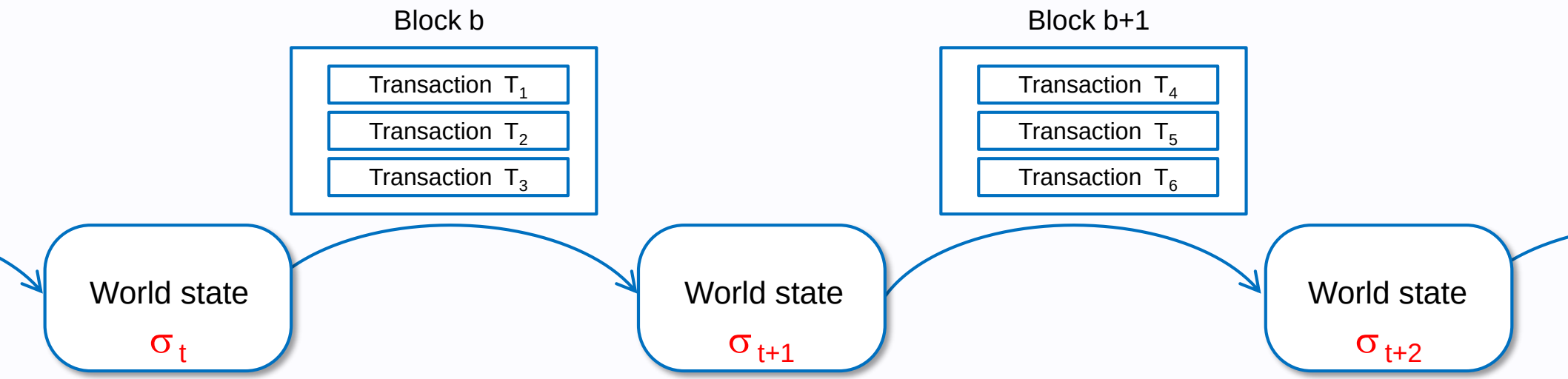



Transactions are collated into blocks.

A block is a package of data.

References : [E1] Ch.2, Ch.4, [E2], [E3]

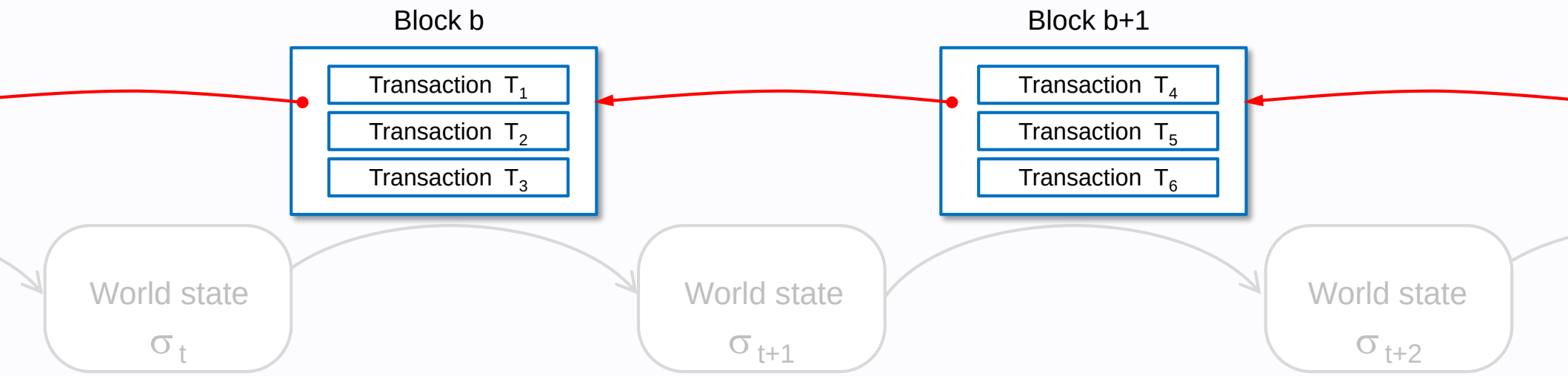
# Chain of states




From the viewpoint of the states,
Ethereum can be seen as a state chain.

References : [E1] Ch.2, Ch.4, [E2], [E3]

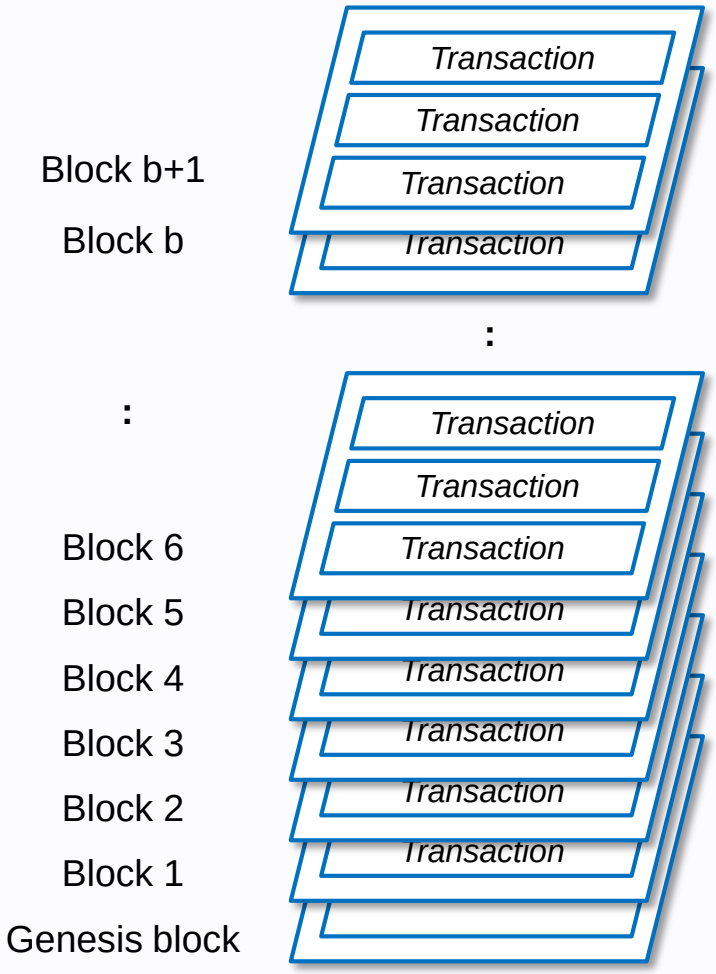
# Chain of blocks: Blockchain




From the viewpoint of the implementation,
Ethereum can also be seen as a chain of blocks, so it is `BLOCKCHAIN`.

References : [E1] Ch.2, Ch.4, [E2], [E3], [W3]

# Stack of transactions : Ledger



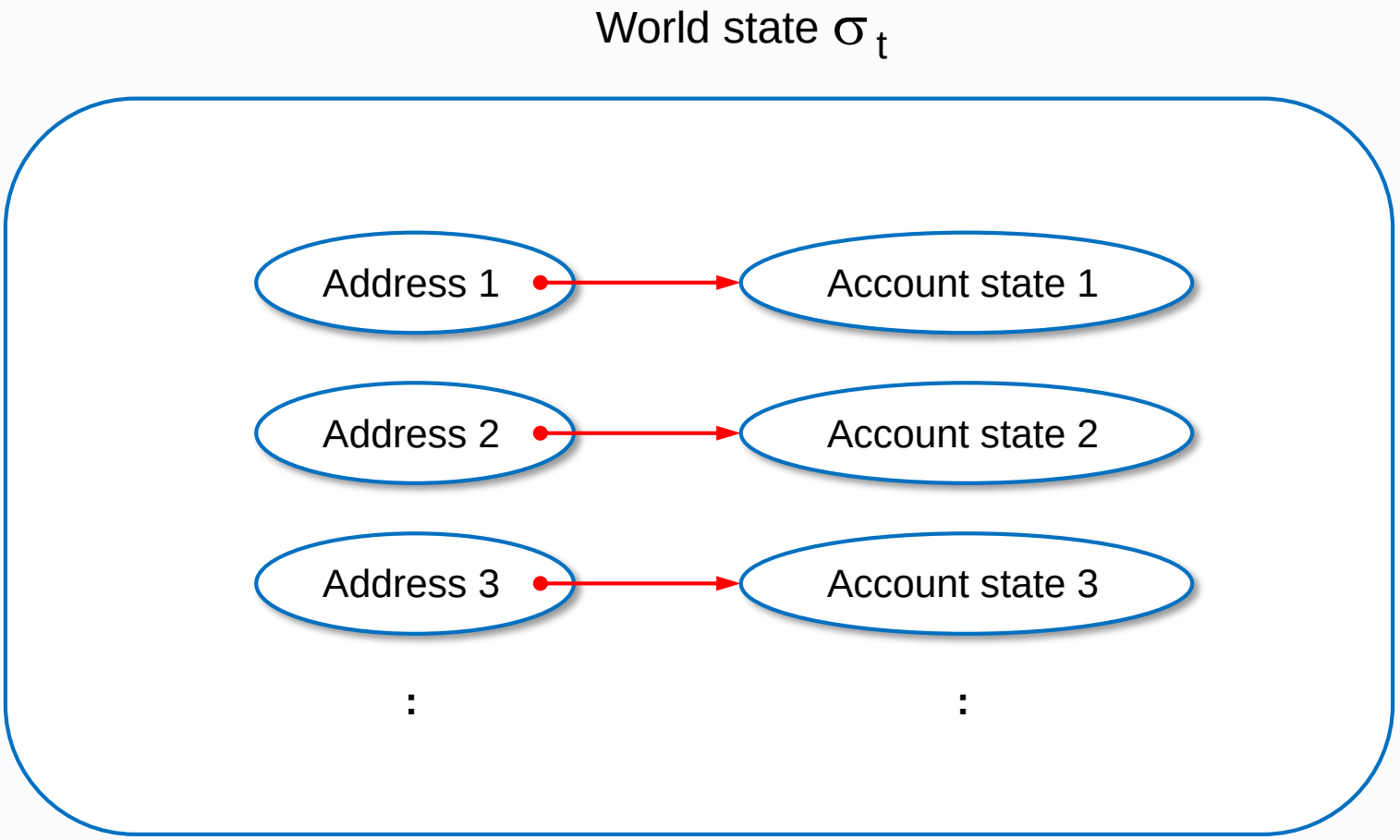

From the viewpoint of the ledger,
Ethereum can also be seen as a stack of transactions.

References : [E1] Ch.2, Ch.4, [E2], [E3], [W3]

# 1. Introduction

## World state

# World state




The world state is a mapping between address and account state.

References : [E1] Ch.4, [E2]

# Several views of world state

Mapping view

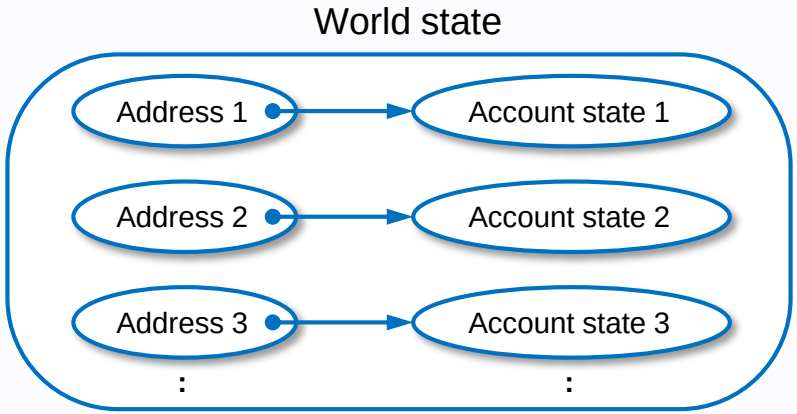
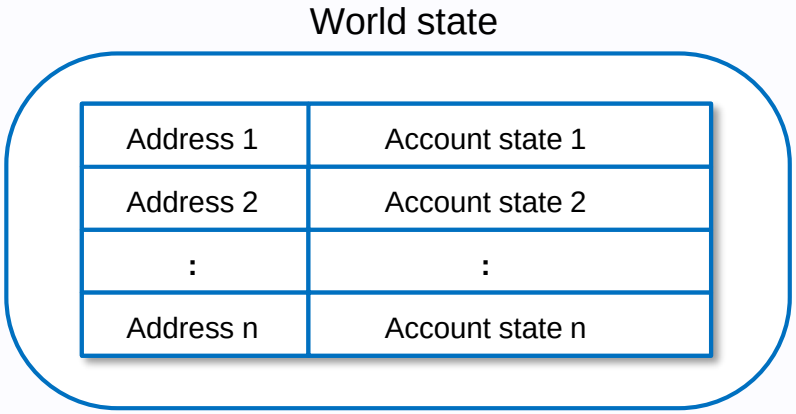
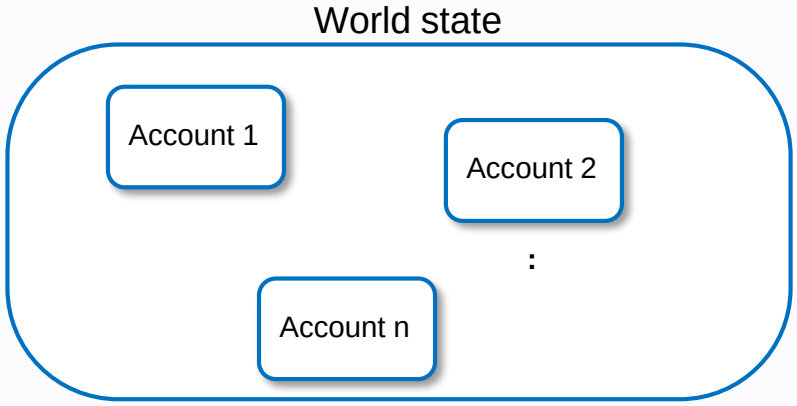



Table view




Object view

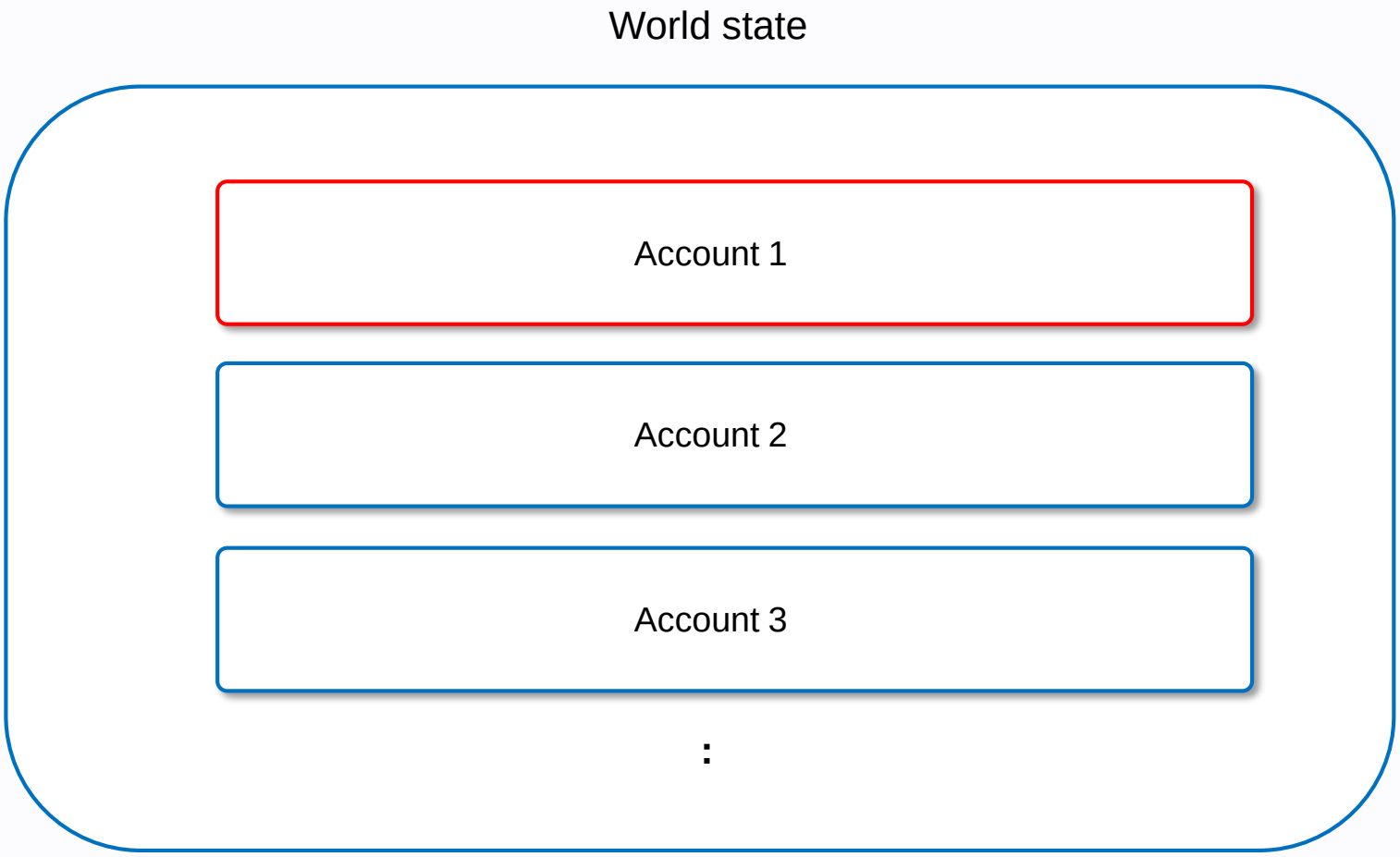



References : [E1] Ch.4

# 1. Introduction

## Account

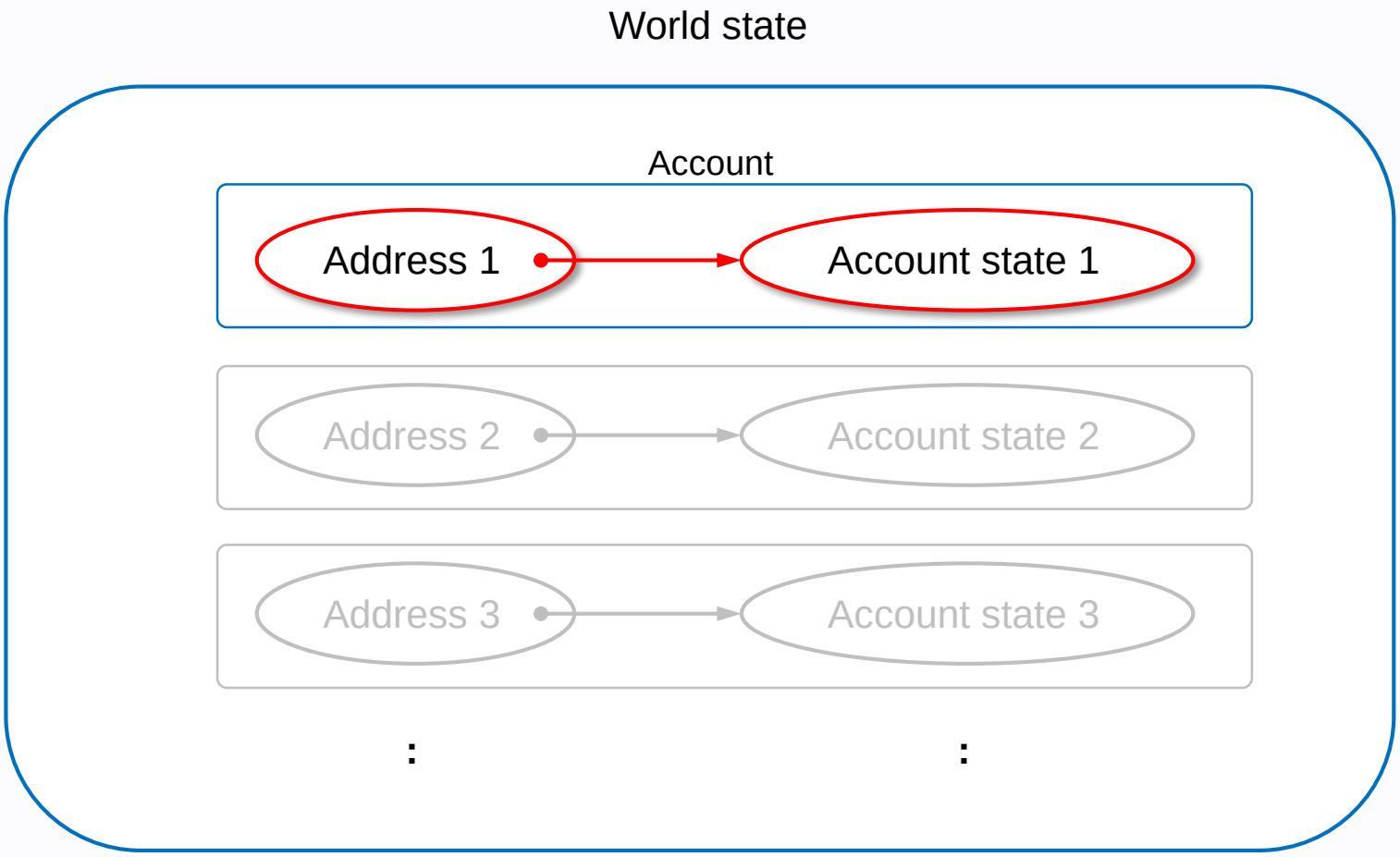
# Account




An account is an object in the world state.

References : [E1] Ch.4, [E2]

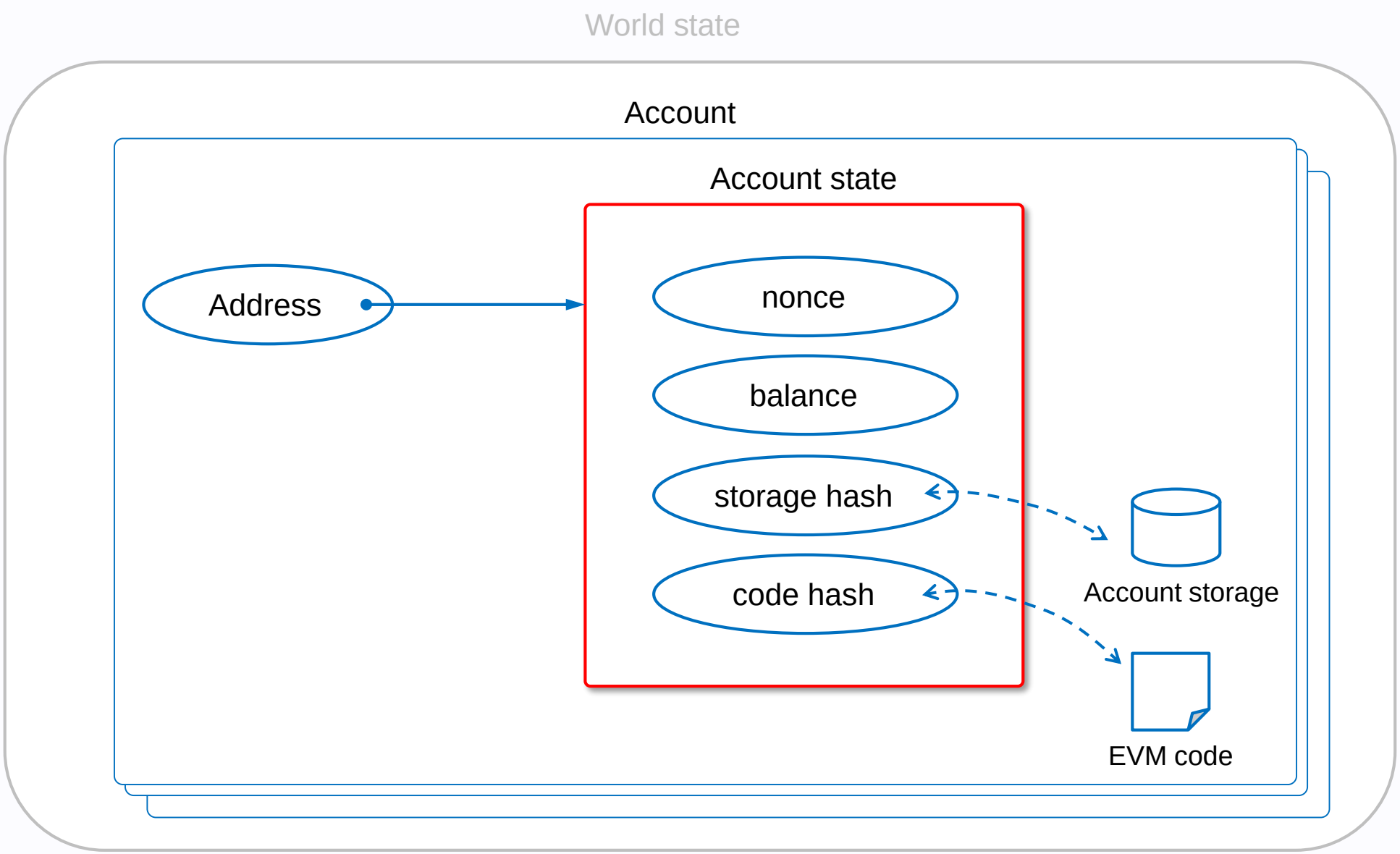
# Account




An account is a mapping between address and account state.

References : [E1] Ch.4, [E2]

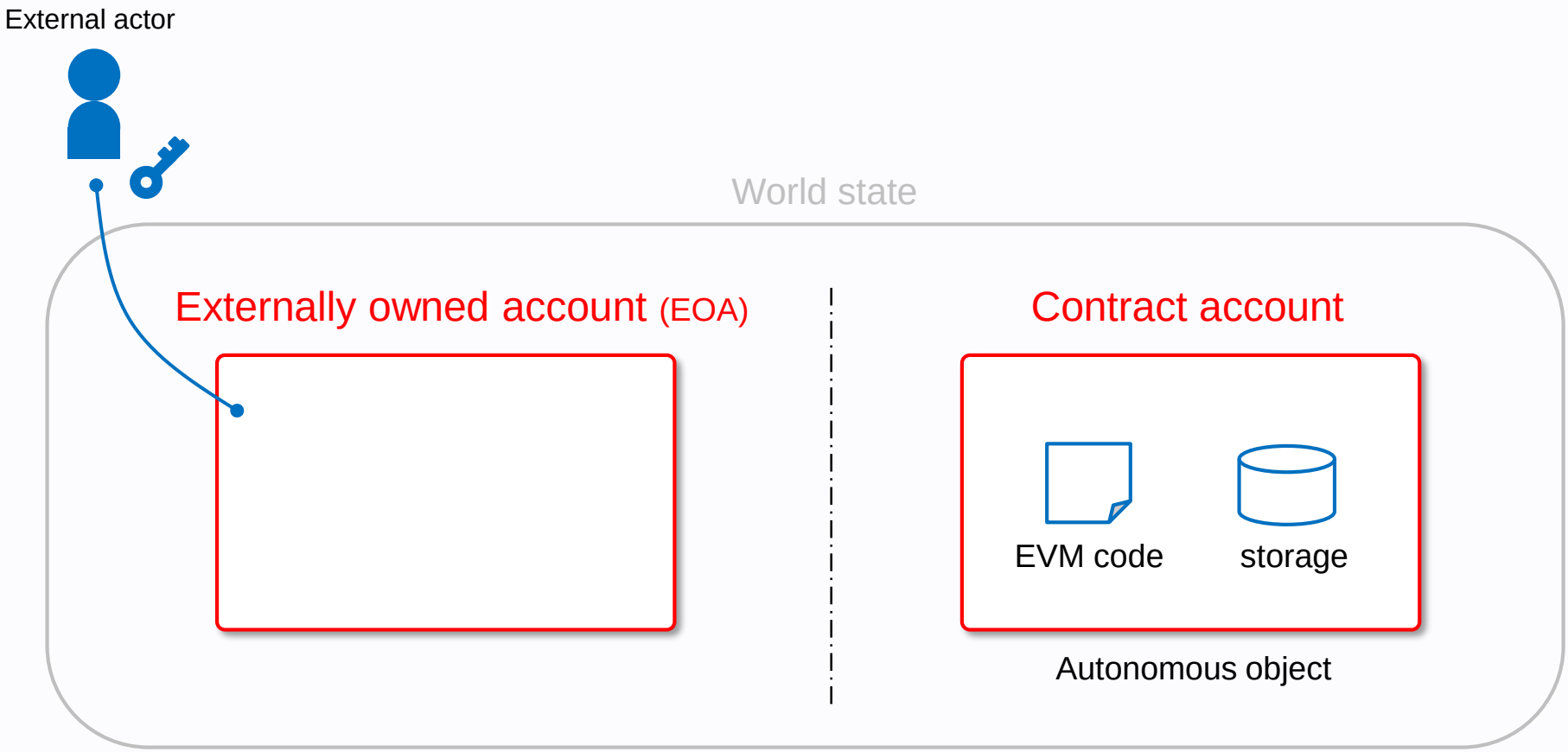
# Account state




An account state could contain EVM code and storage.

References : [E1] Ch.4

# Two practical types of account

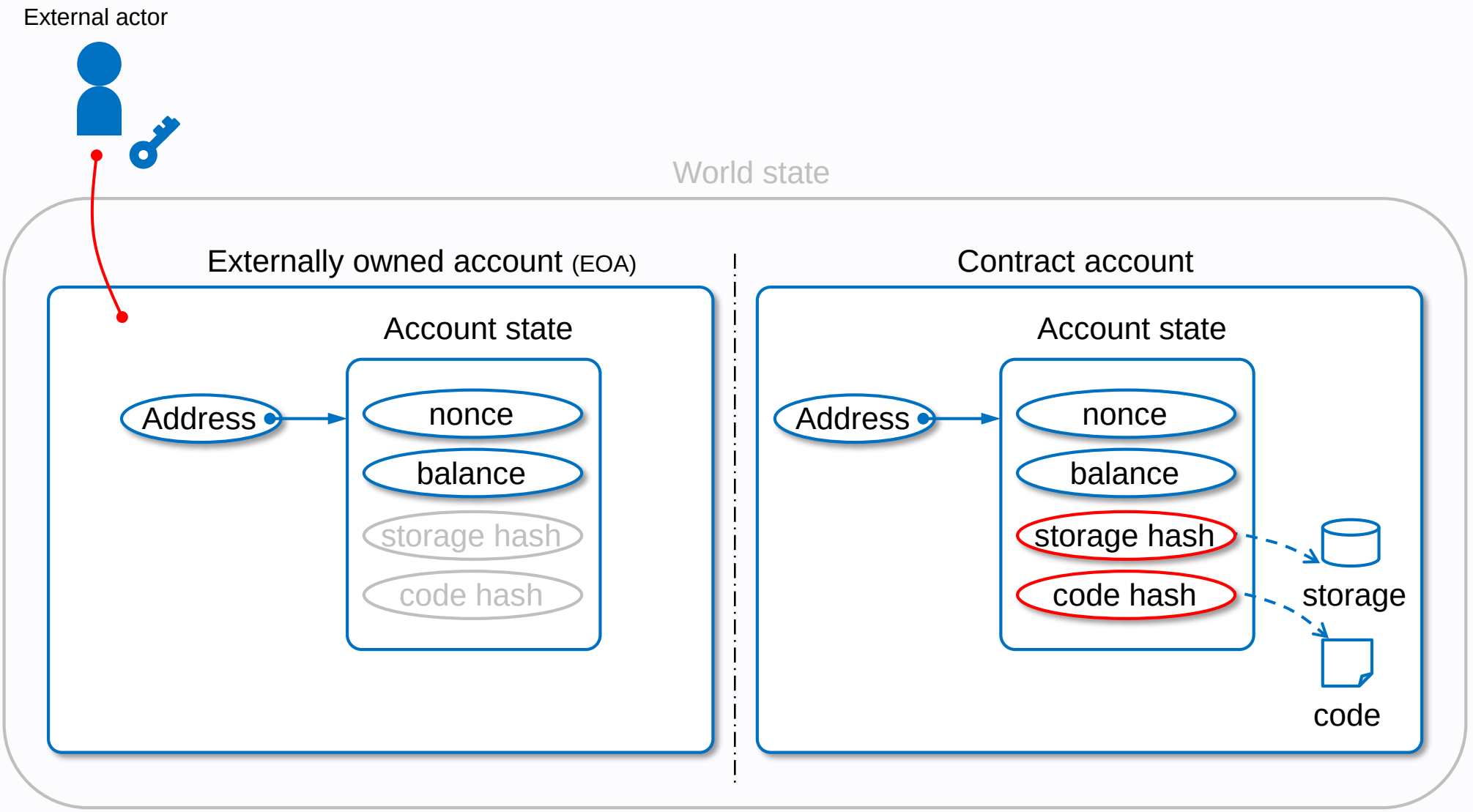



EOA is controlled by a private key.

Contract account contains EVM code.

References : [E1] Ch.4

# Two practical types of account



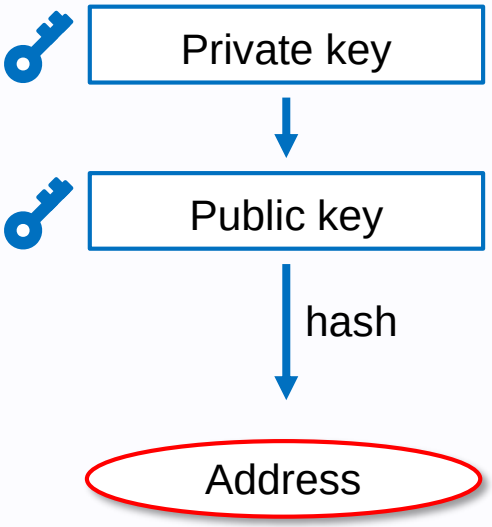

EOA is controlled by a private key.
EOA cannot contain EVM code.

Contract contains EVM code.
Contract is controlled by EVM code.

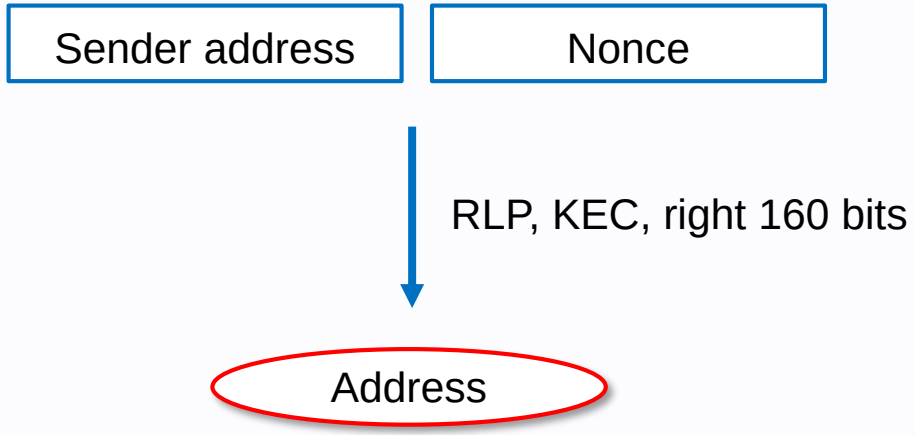
References : [E1] Ch.4

# Address of account

Externally owned account (EOA)




Contract account



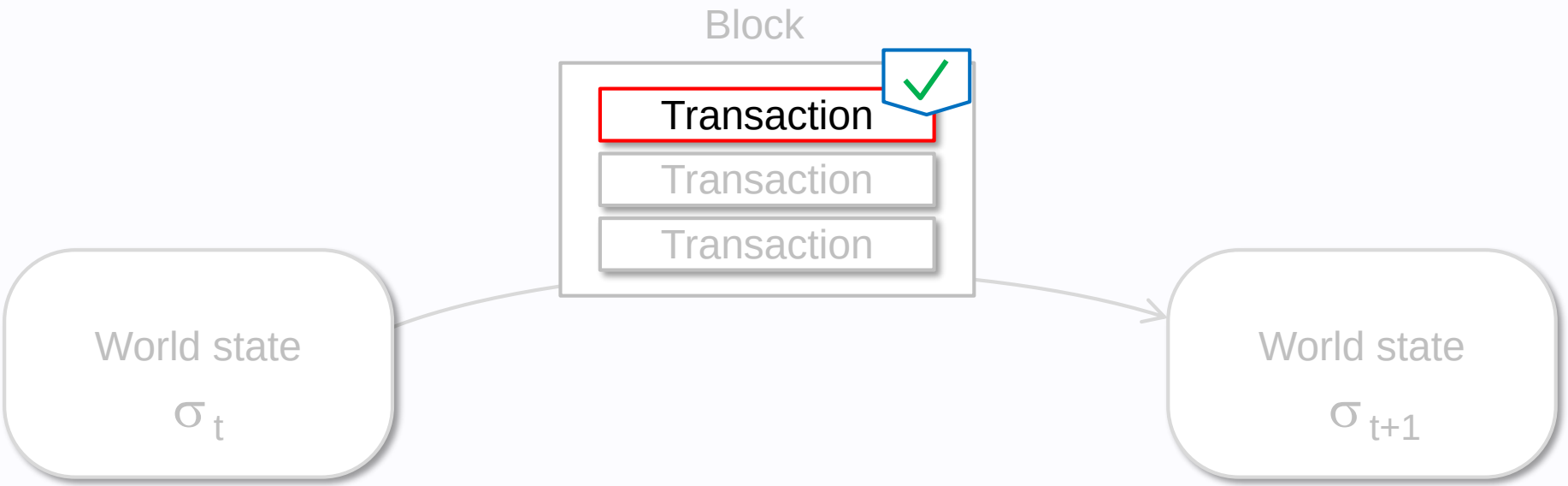

A 160-bit code used for identifying accounts.

References : [E1] Ch.4, Ch.7, [E2]

# 1. Introduction

## Transaction

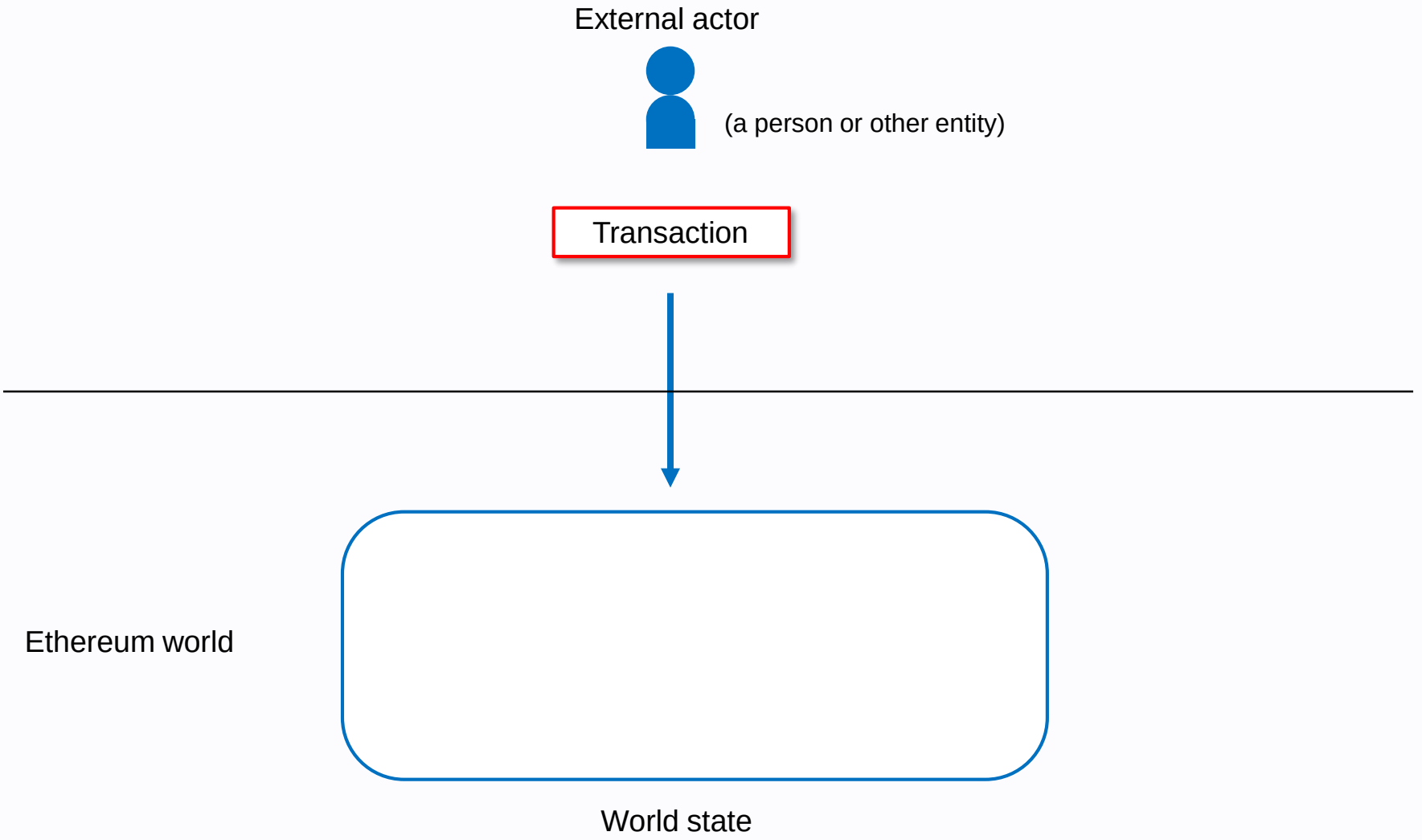
# A transaction




A transaction is a single cryptographically-signed instruction.

References : [E1] Ch.2, Ch.4, [E2]

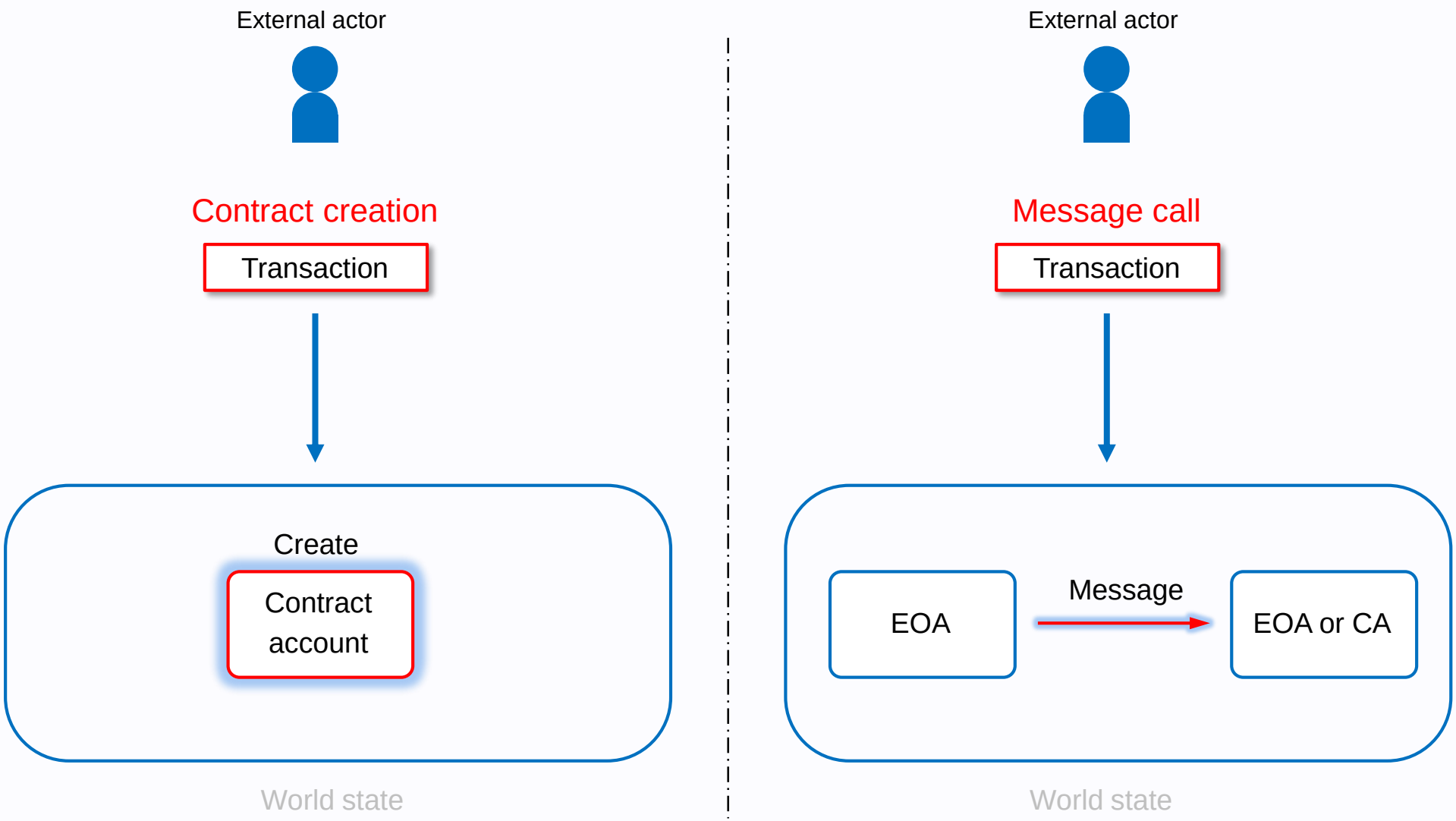
# A transaction to world state




A transaction is submitted by external actor.

References : [E1] Appendix A

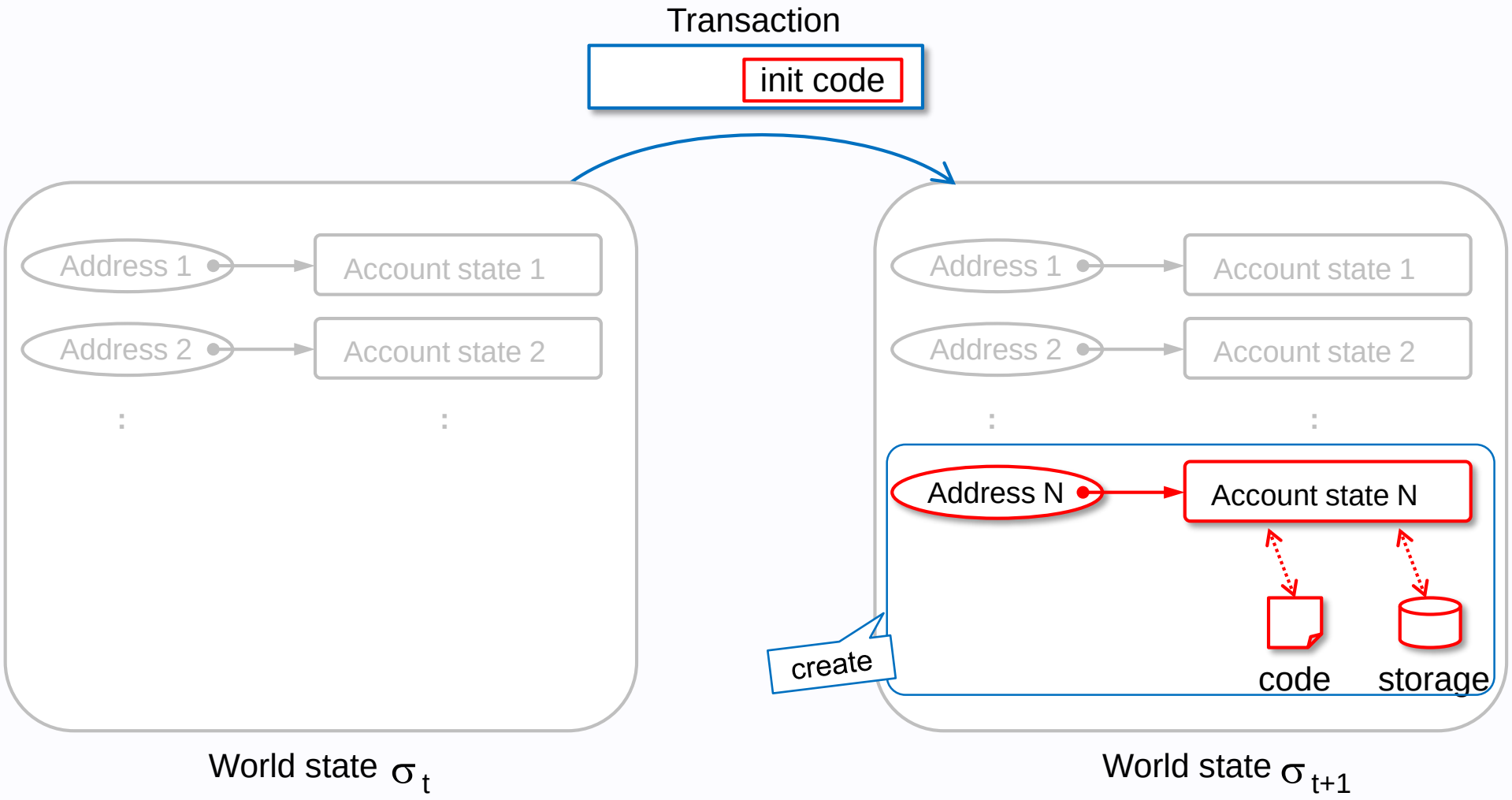
# Two practical types of transaction




There are two practical types of transaction, contract creation and message call.

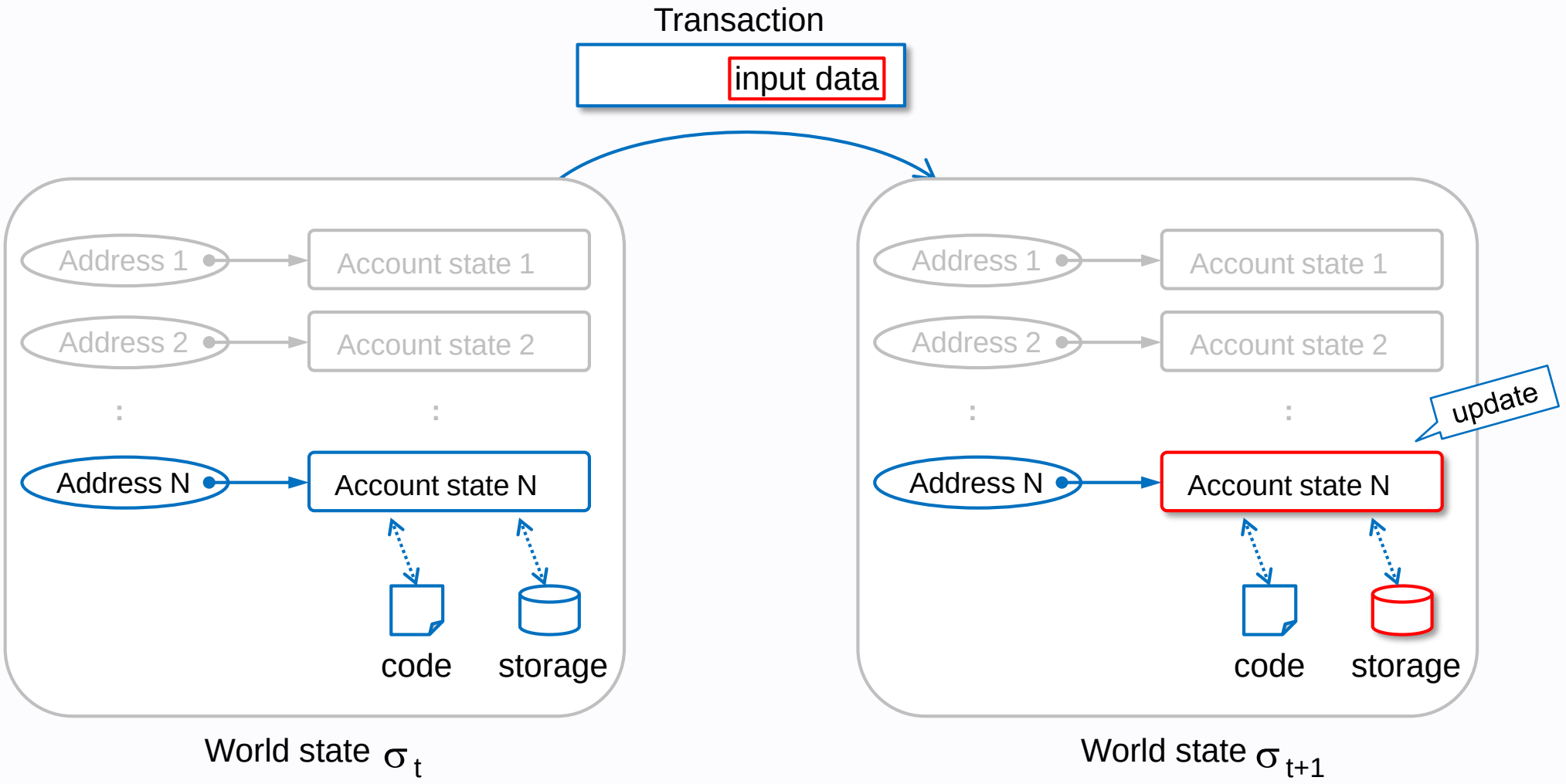
References : [E1] Ch.4

# Contract creation



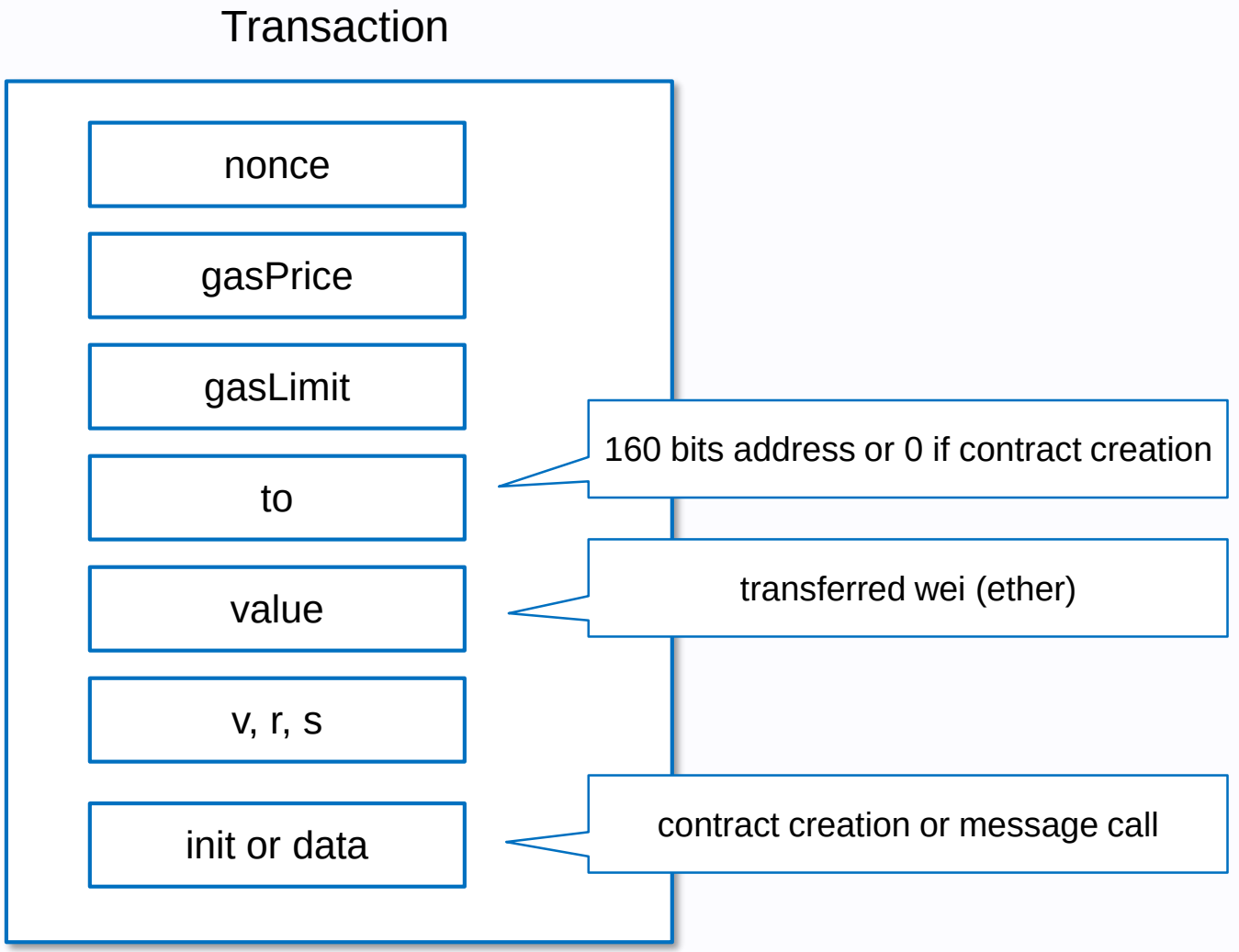

References : [E1] Ch.7

# Message call




References : [E1] Ch.7

# Field of a transaction

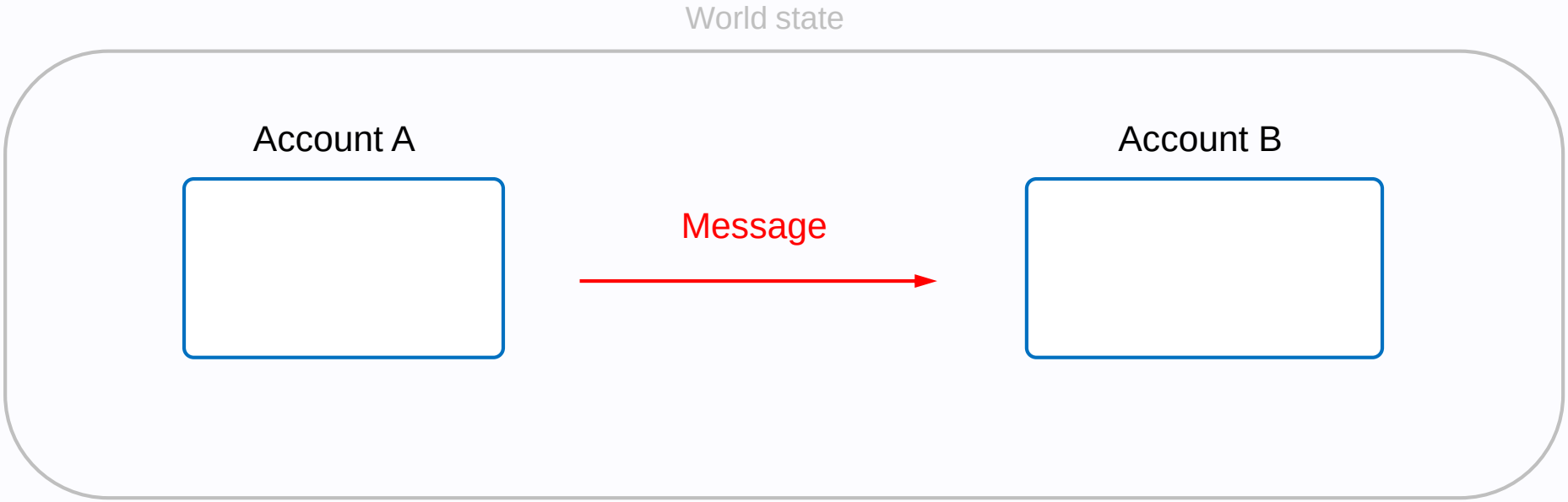



References : [E1] Ch.4

# 1. Introduction

Message

# Message



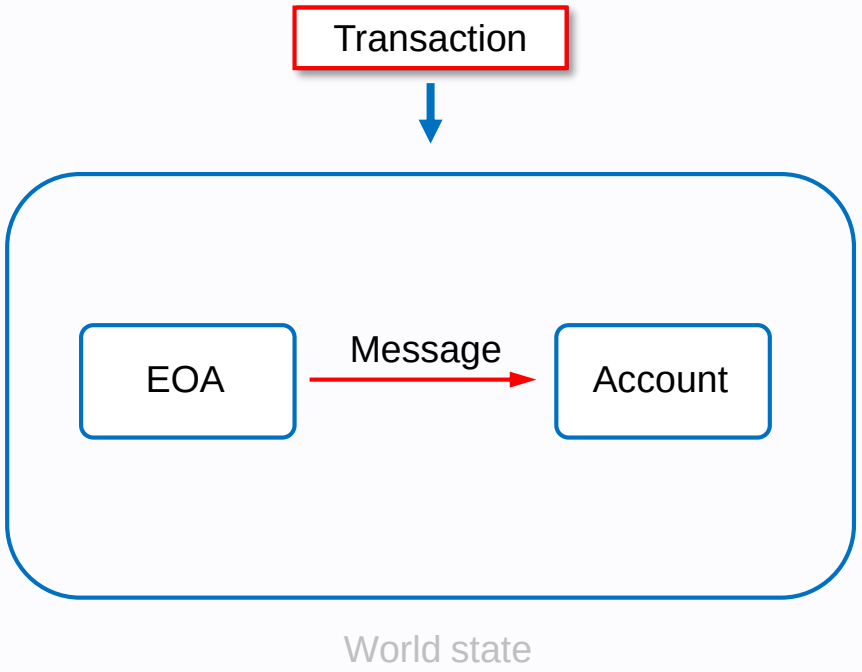

Message is passed between two Accounts.

Message is Data (as a set of bytes) and Value (specified as Ether) .

References : [E1] Ch.8, Appendix A

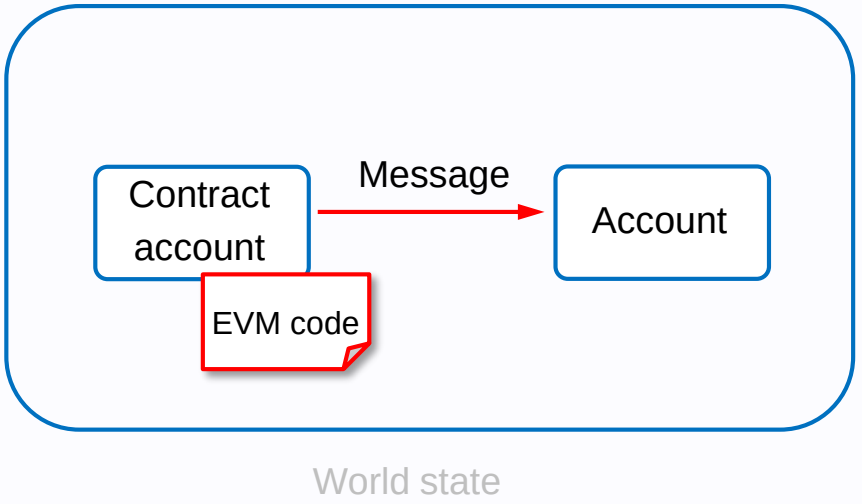
# Message

## Triggered by transaction




Transaction triggers an associated message.

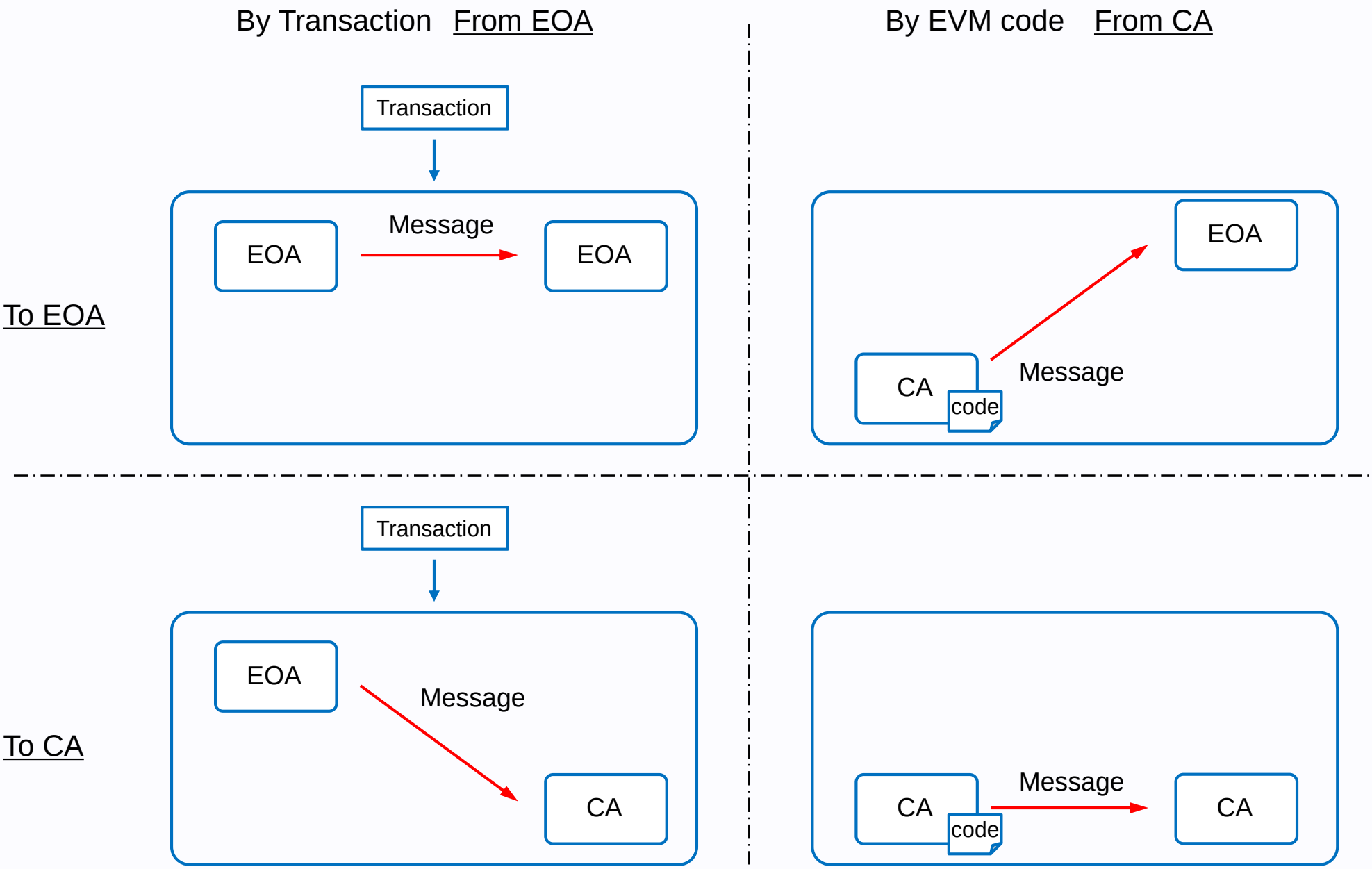
## Triggered by EVM code




EVM can also send a message.

References : [E1] Ch.8

# Four cases of message

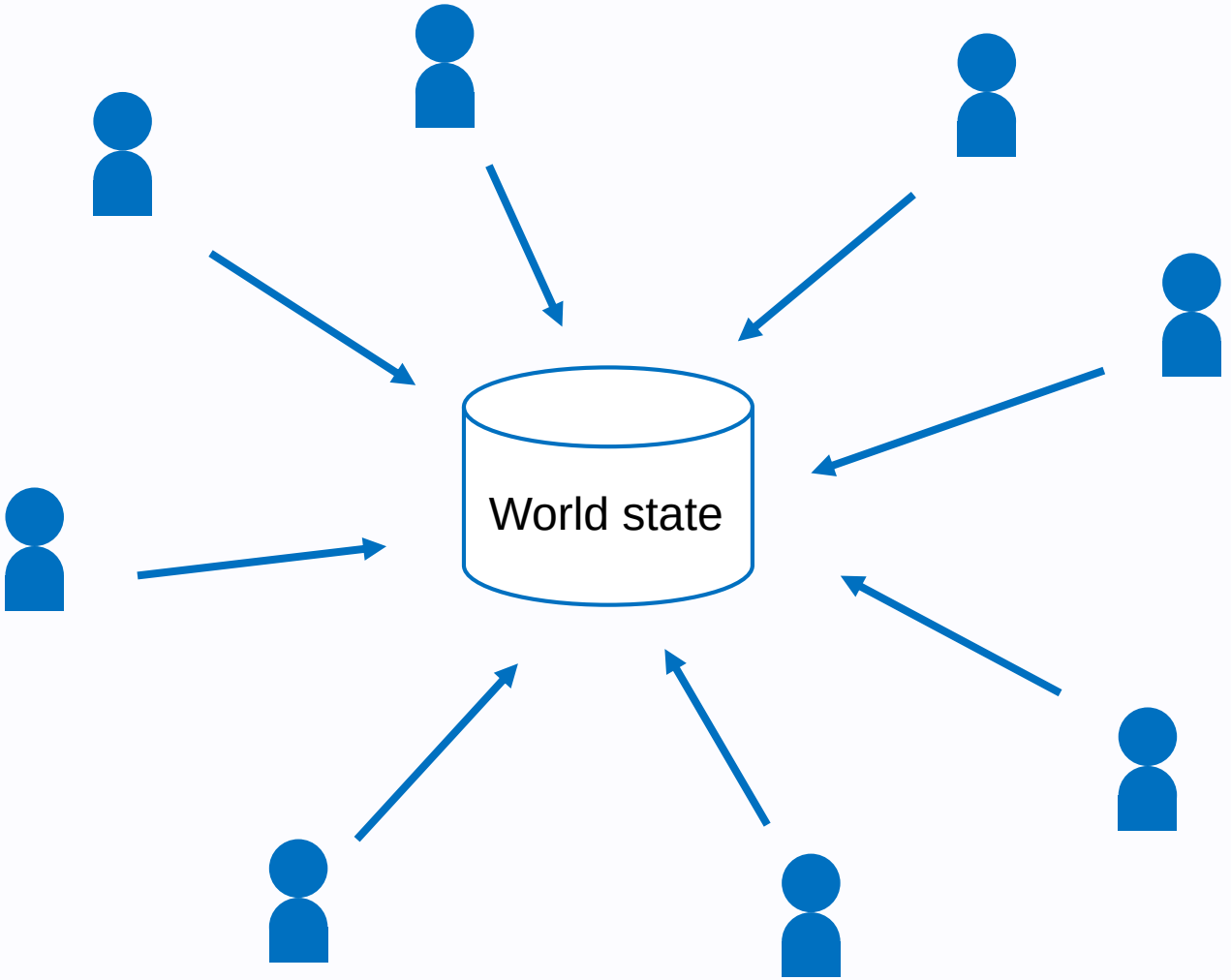



References : [E1] Ch.8

# 1. Introduction

## Decentralised database

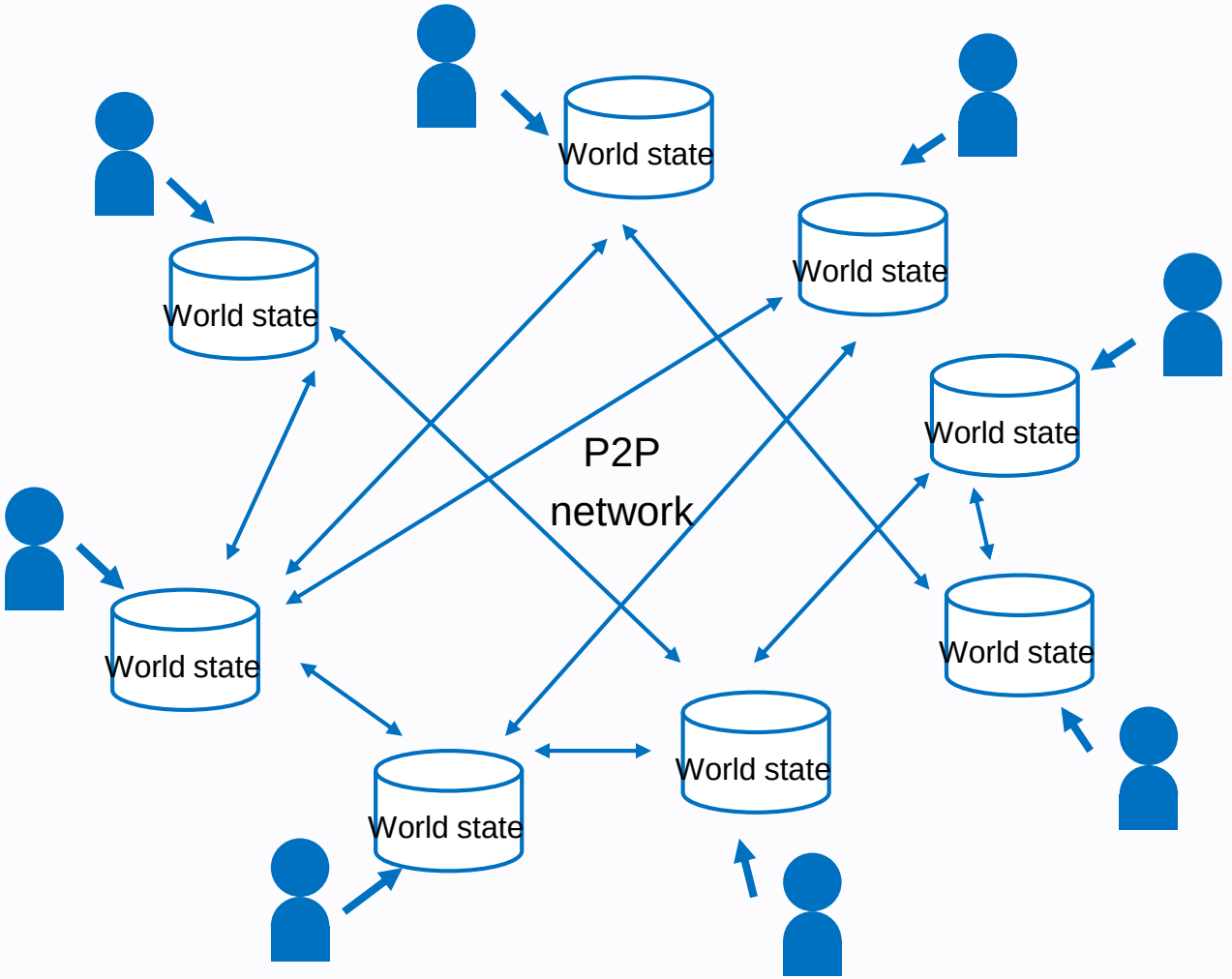
# Globally shared, transactional database




A blockchain is a globally shared, transactional database.

References : [E3], [E7] Ch.7

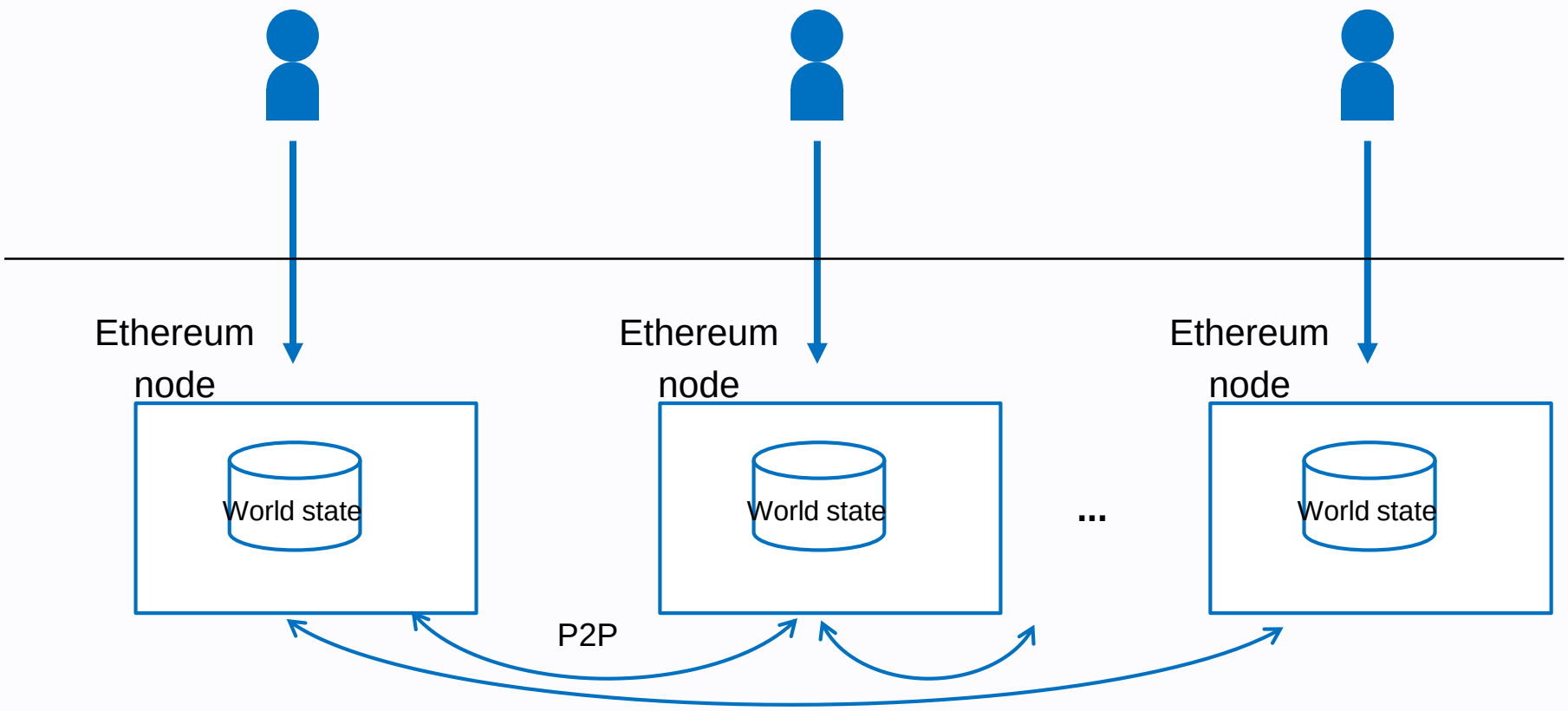
# Decentralised database




A blockchain is a globally shared, decentralised, transactional database.

References : [E3], [E7] Ch.7

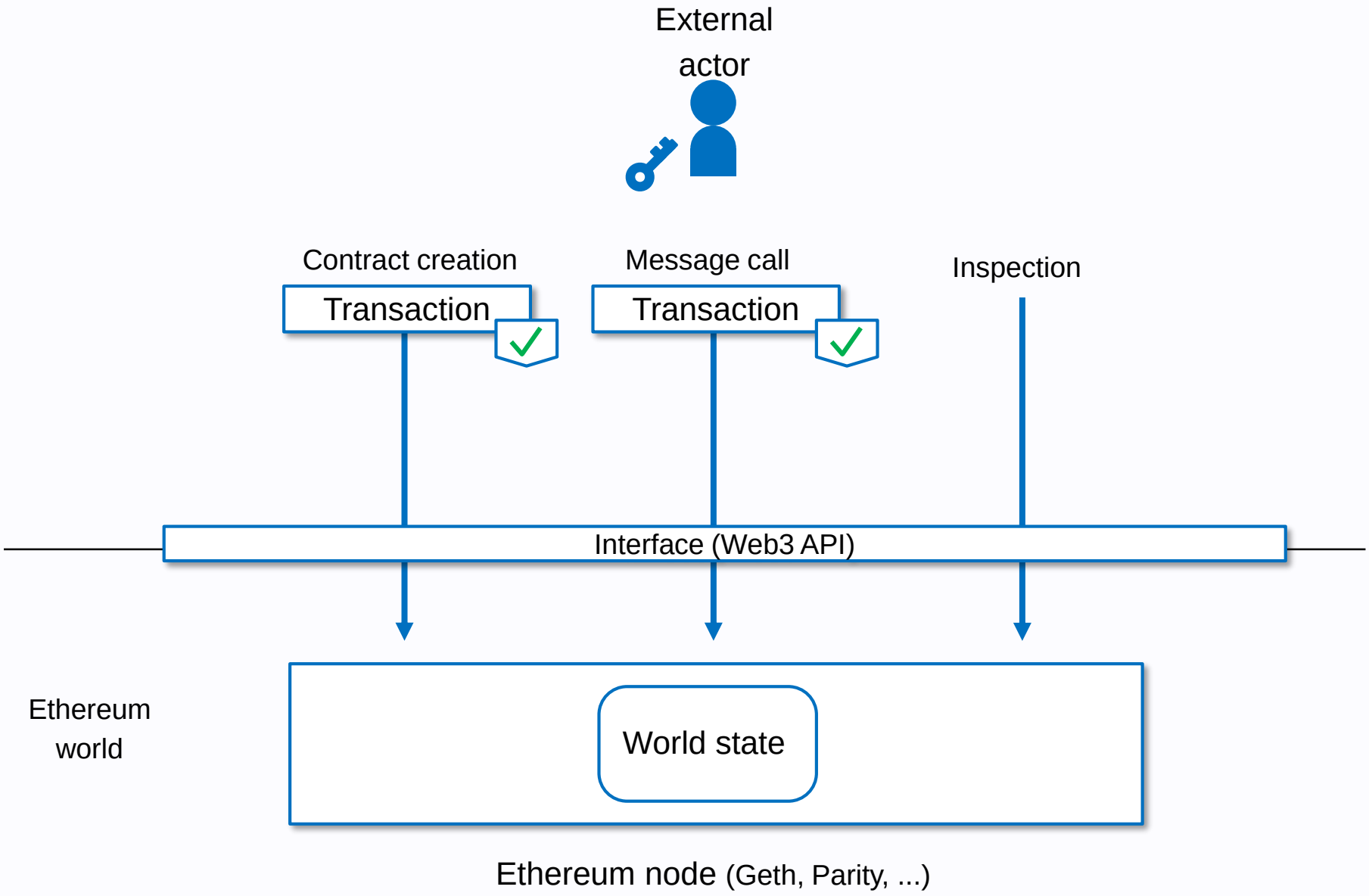
# P2P network inter nodes




Decentralised nodes constitute Ethereum P2P network.

References : [E3],

# Interface to a node



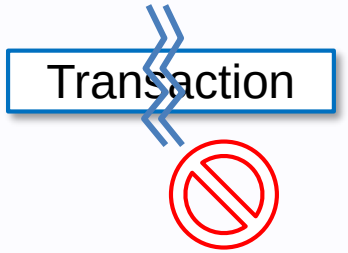

External actors access the Ethereum world through Ethereum nodes.

References : [E1] Appendix A, Ch.4, Ch.7, Ch.8

# 1. Introduction

## Atomicity and order

# Atomicity of transaction



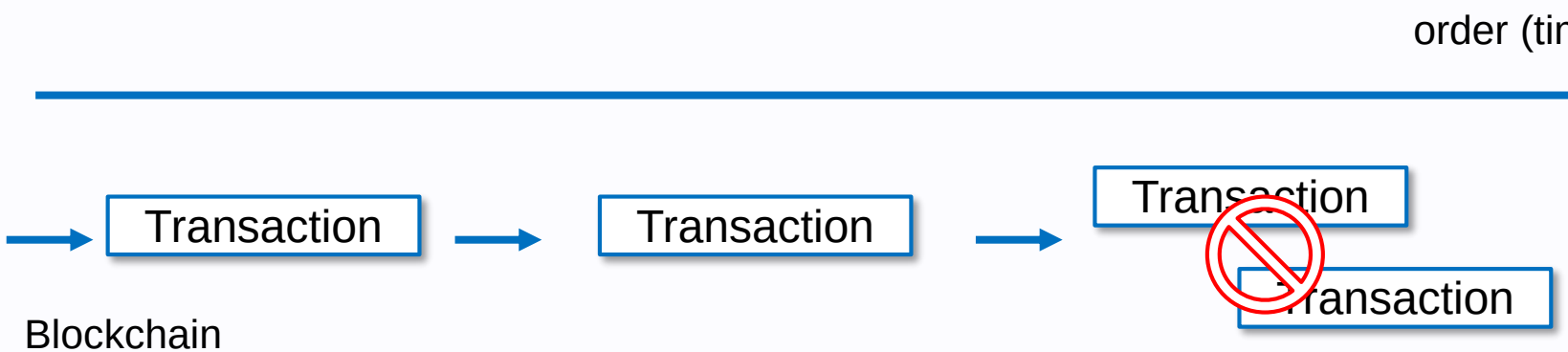

A transaction is an atomic operation. Can't divide or interrupt.

---

Transaction or Transaction

That is, All (complete done) or Nothing (zero effect).

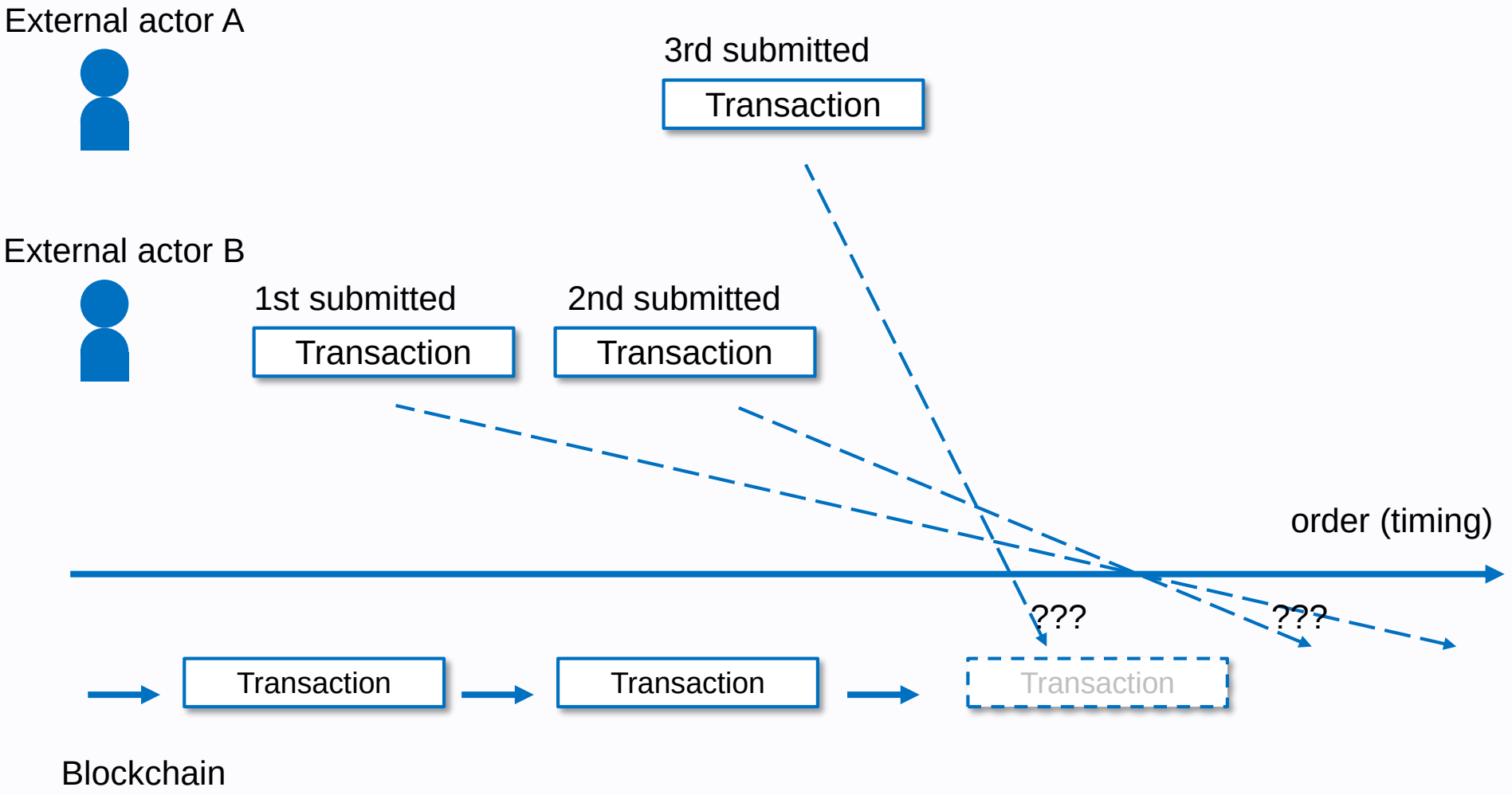
# Order of transactions




Transactions cannot be overlapped.

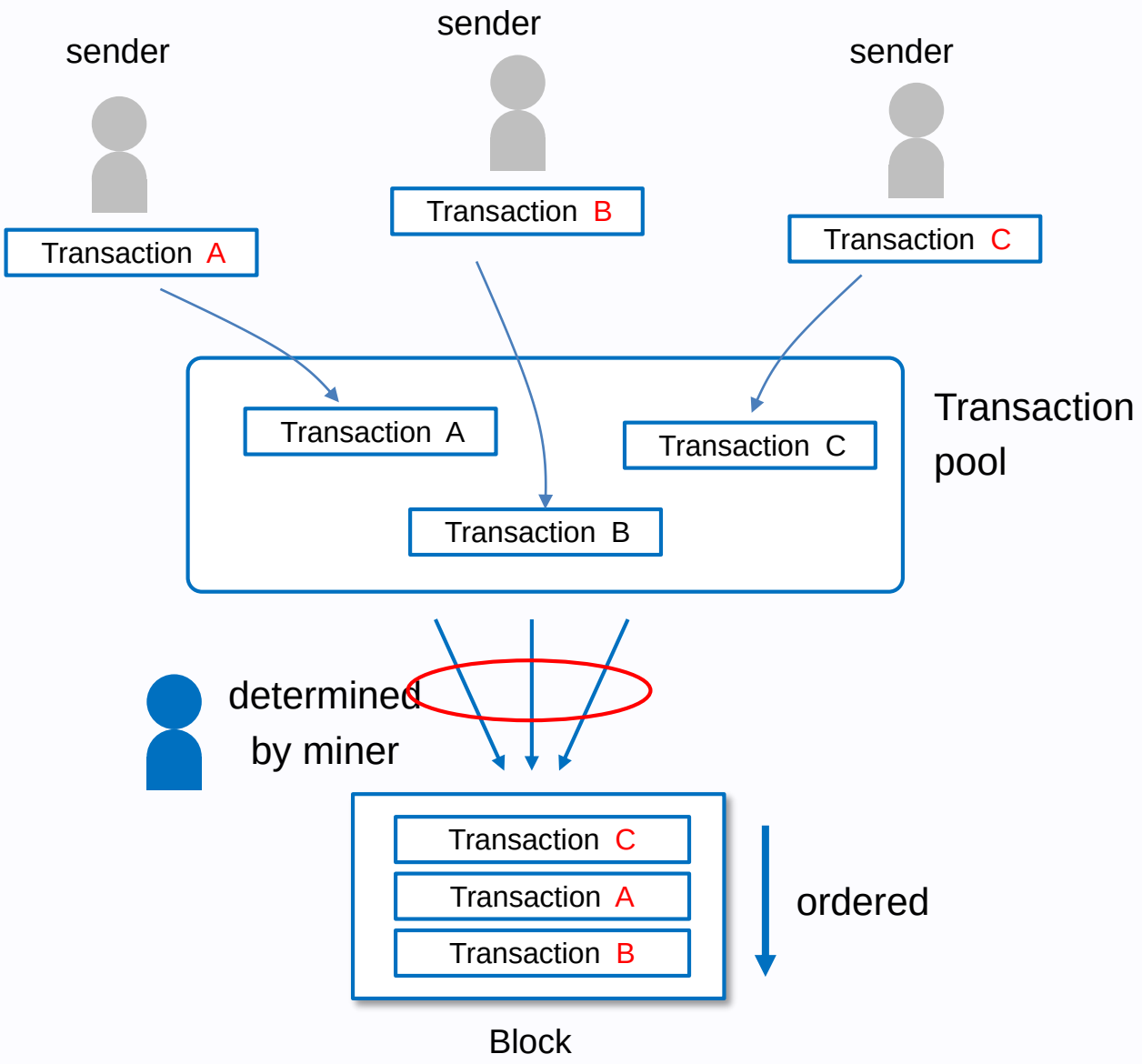
Transactions must be executed sequentially.

# Order of transactions



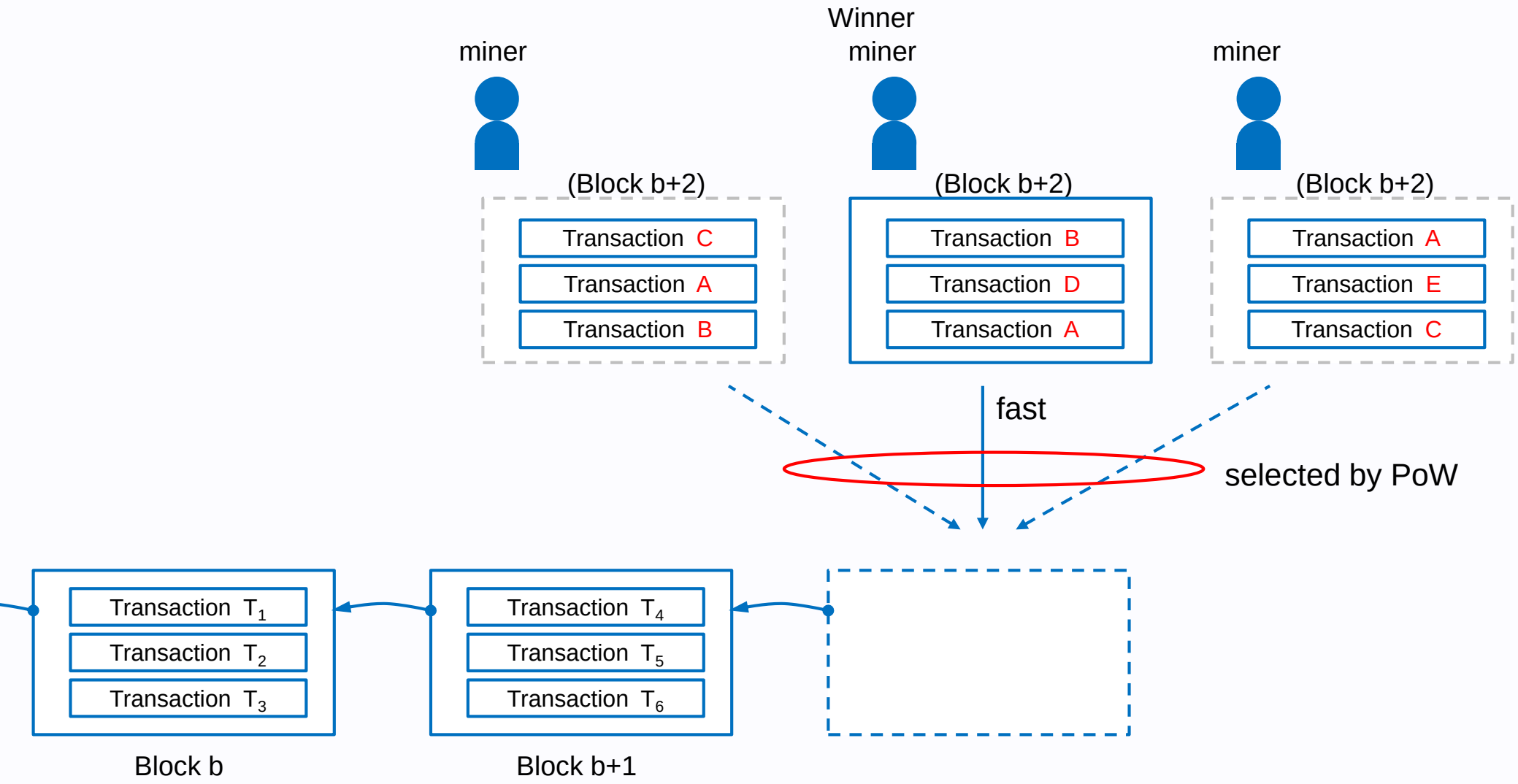

Transaction order is not guaranteed.

# Ordering inner block




Miner can determine the order of transactions in a block.

# Ordering inter blocks




The order between blocks is determined by a consensus algorithm such as PoW.

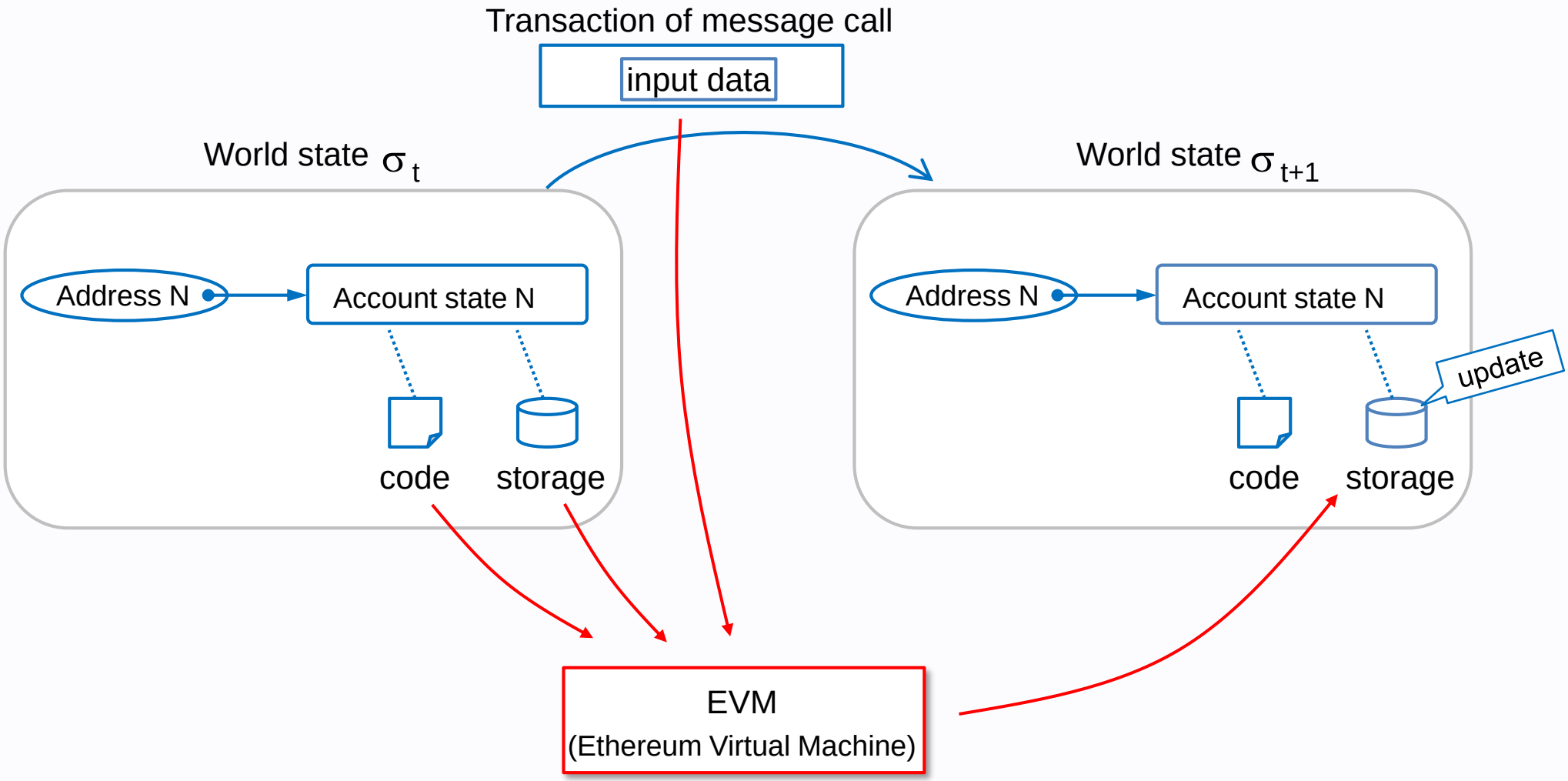
References : [E1] Ch.2, Ch.4

# 2. Virtual machine

## 2. Virtual machine

# Ethereum virtual machine (EVM)

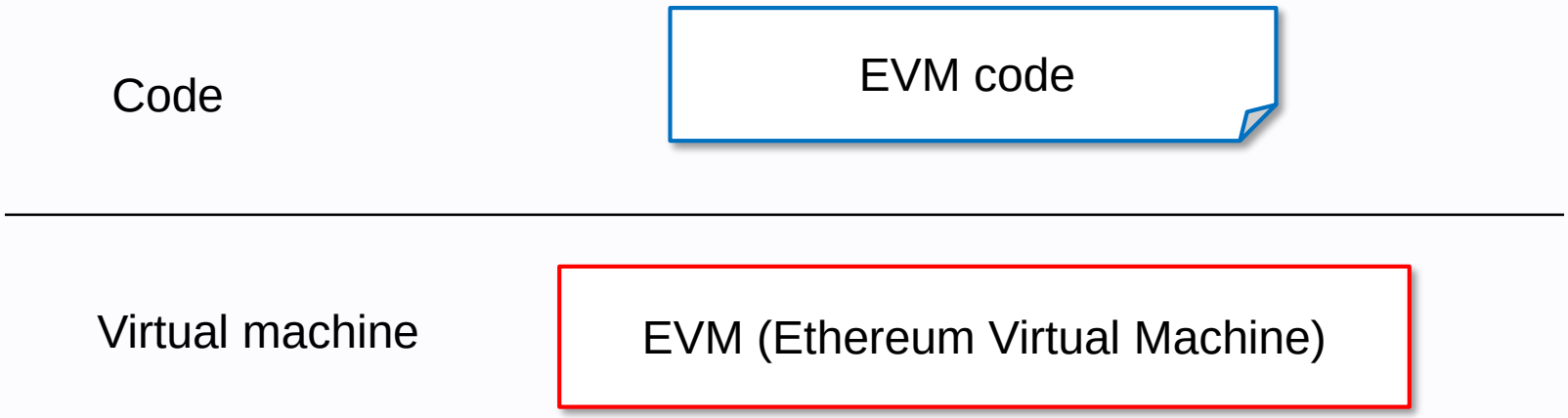
# Ethereum virtual machine




EVM code is executed on Ethereum Virtual Machine (EVM).

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H

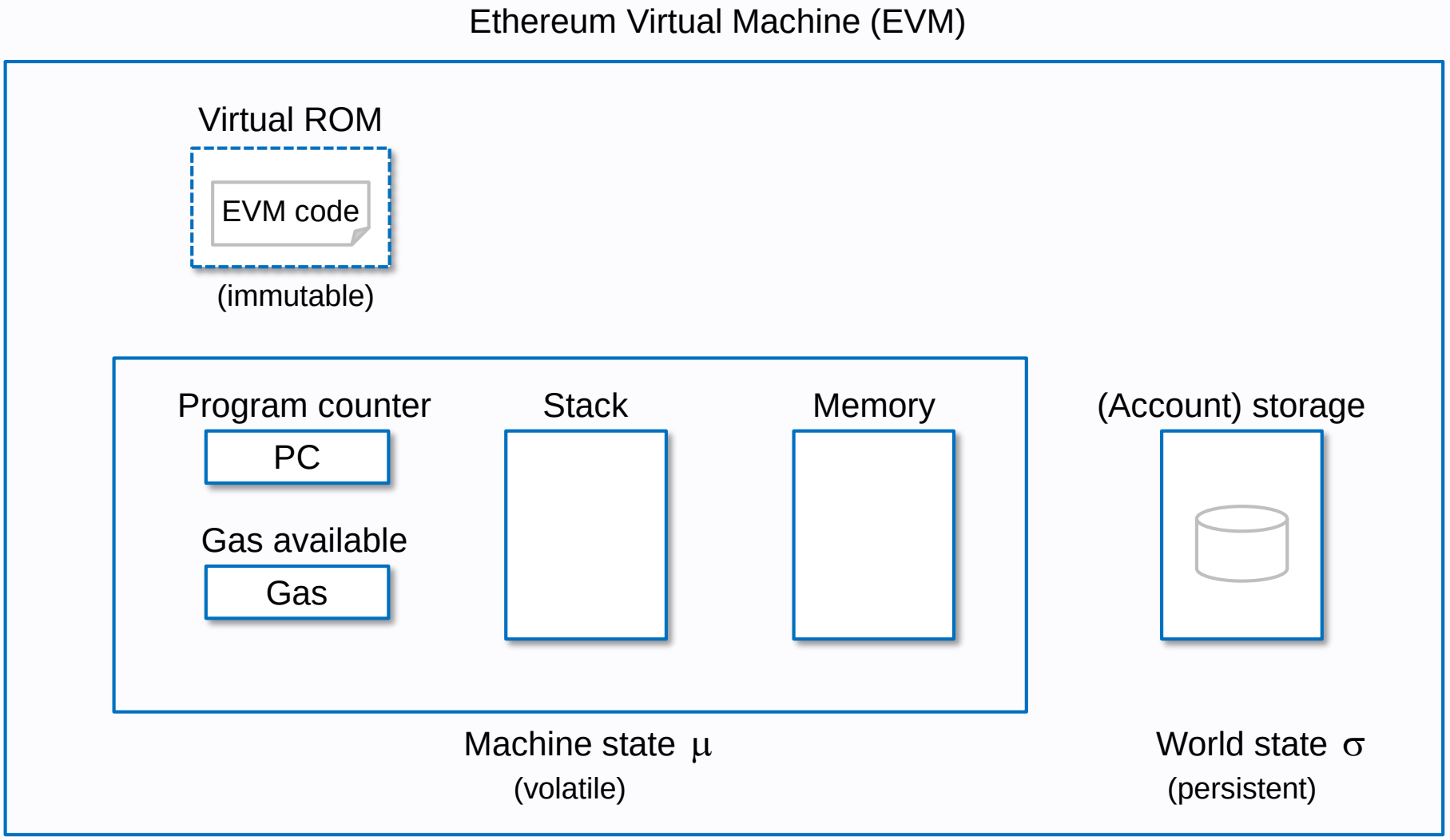
# Ethereum virtual machine




The Ethereum Virtual Machine is the runtime environment for smart contracts in Ethreum.

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E4], [W1]

# EVM architecture



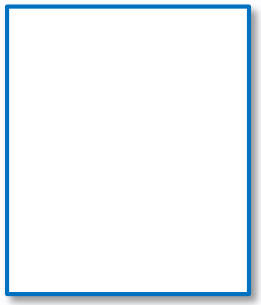

The EVM is a simple stack-based architecture.

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E4]

# Machine space of EVM

Registers

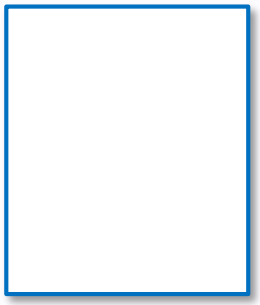
Stack



stack memory

256 bits x 1024 elements

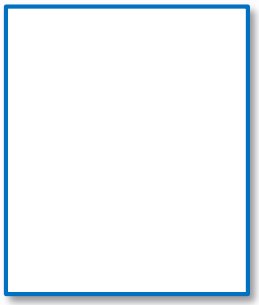
Memory



volatile memory

byte addressing
linear memory

(Account) storage



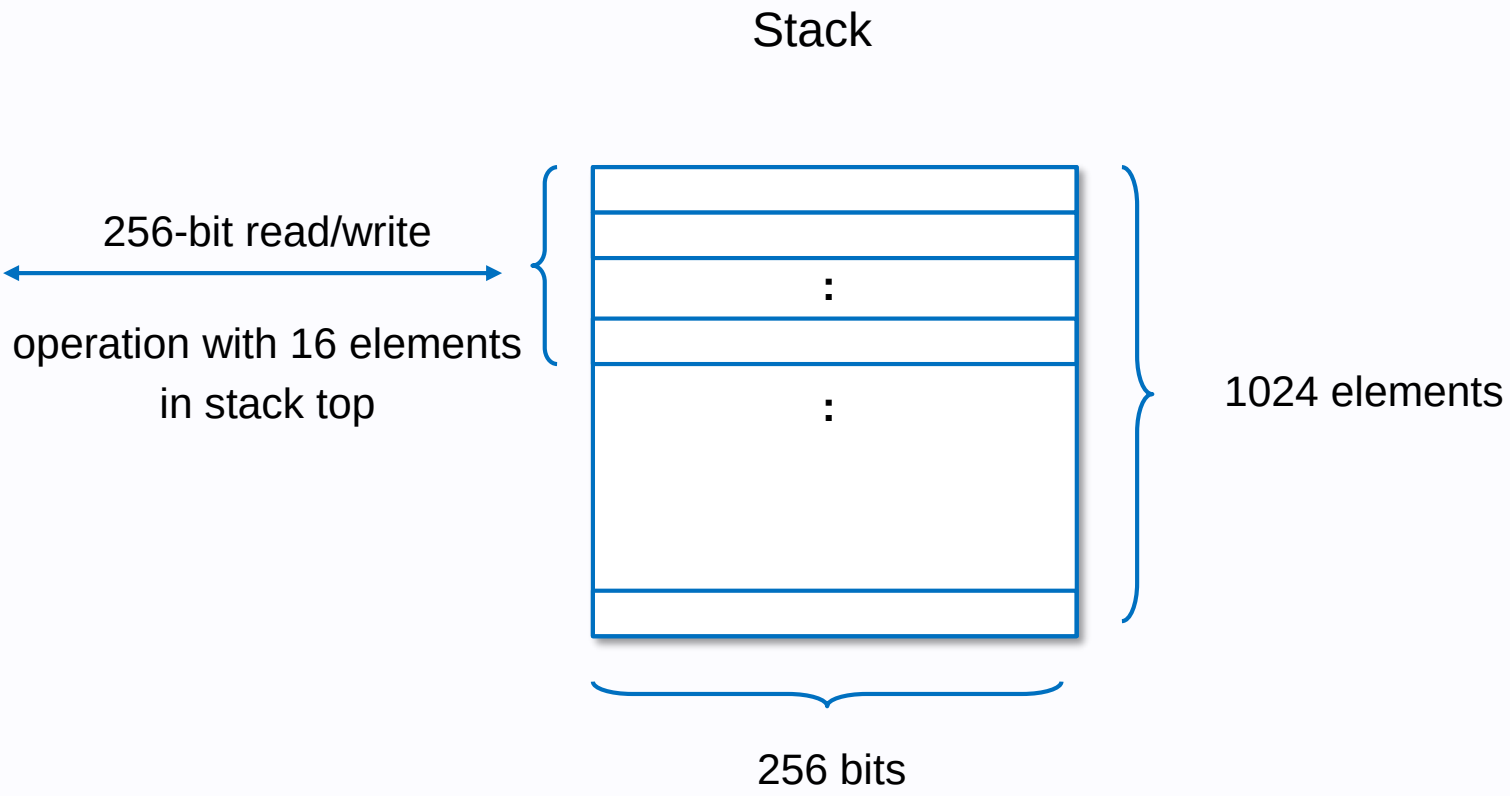
persistent memory

256 bits to 256 bits
key-value store

There are several resources as space.

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E3], [E7], [W2]

# Stack

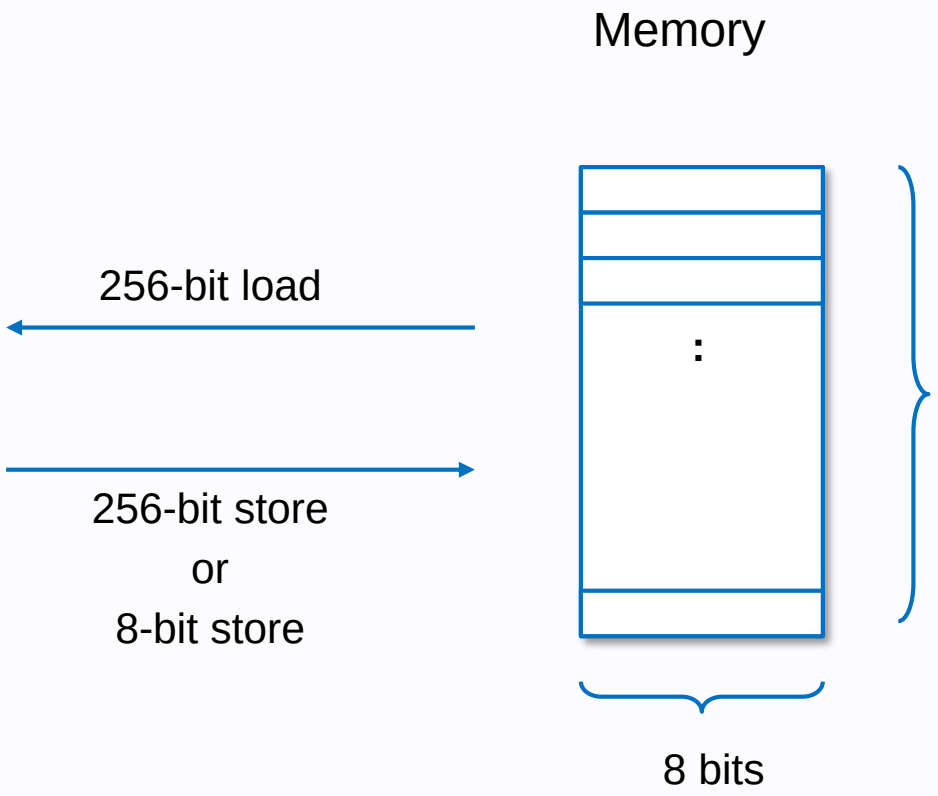



All operation are performed on the stack.

Access with many instructions such as PUSH/POP/COPY/SWAP, ...

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E7], [W2]

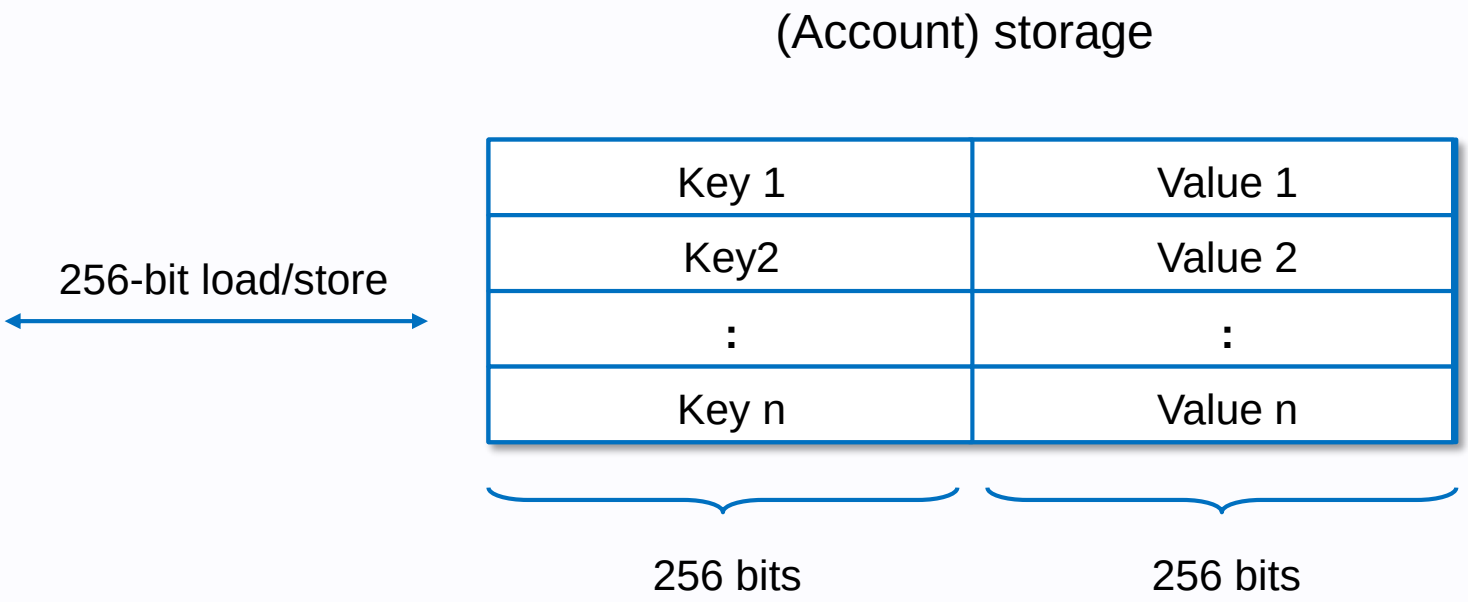
# Memory




Memory is linear and can be addressed at byte level.
Access with MSTORE/MSTORE8/MLOAD instructions.
All locations in memory are well-defined initially as zero.

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E7], [W2]

# Account storage




Storage is a key-value store that maps 256-bit words to 256-bit words.
Access with SSTORE/SLOAD instructions.
All locations in storage are well-defined initially as zero.

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E7], [W2]

# EVM code

Assembly view

```
PUSH1  e0
PUSH1  02
EXP
PUSH1  00
CALLDATALOAD
    :
```

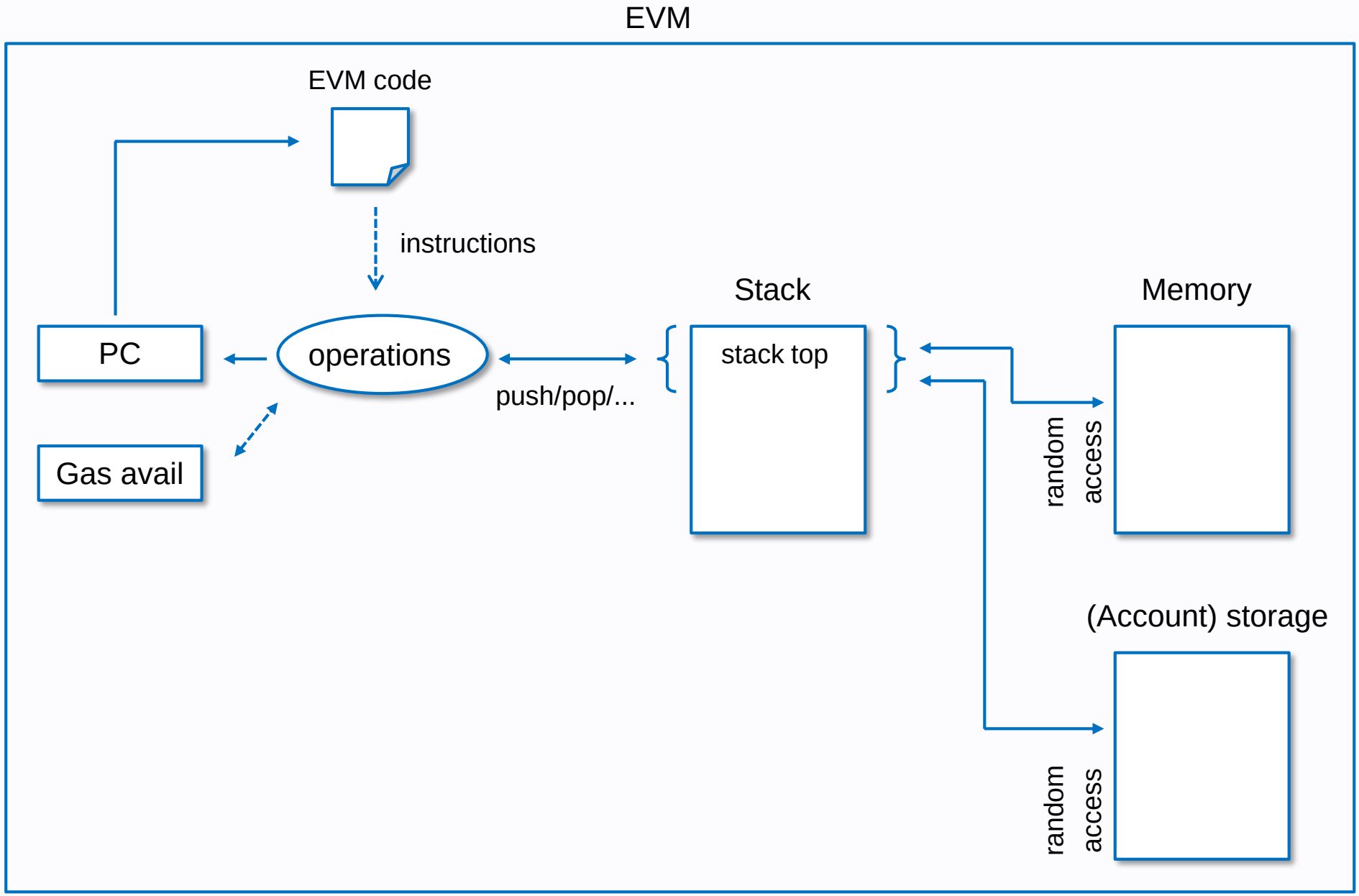
Bytecode view

```
0x60e060020a600035...
```

EVM Code is the bytecode that the EVM can natively execute.

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H

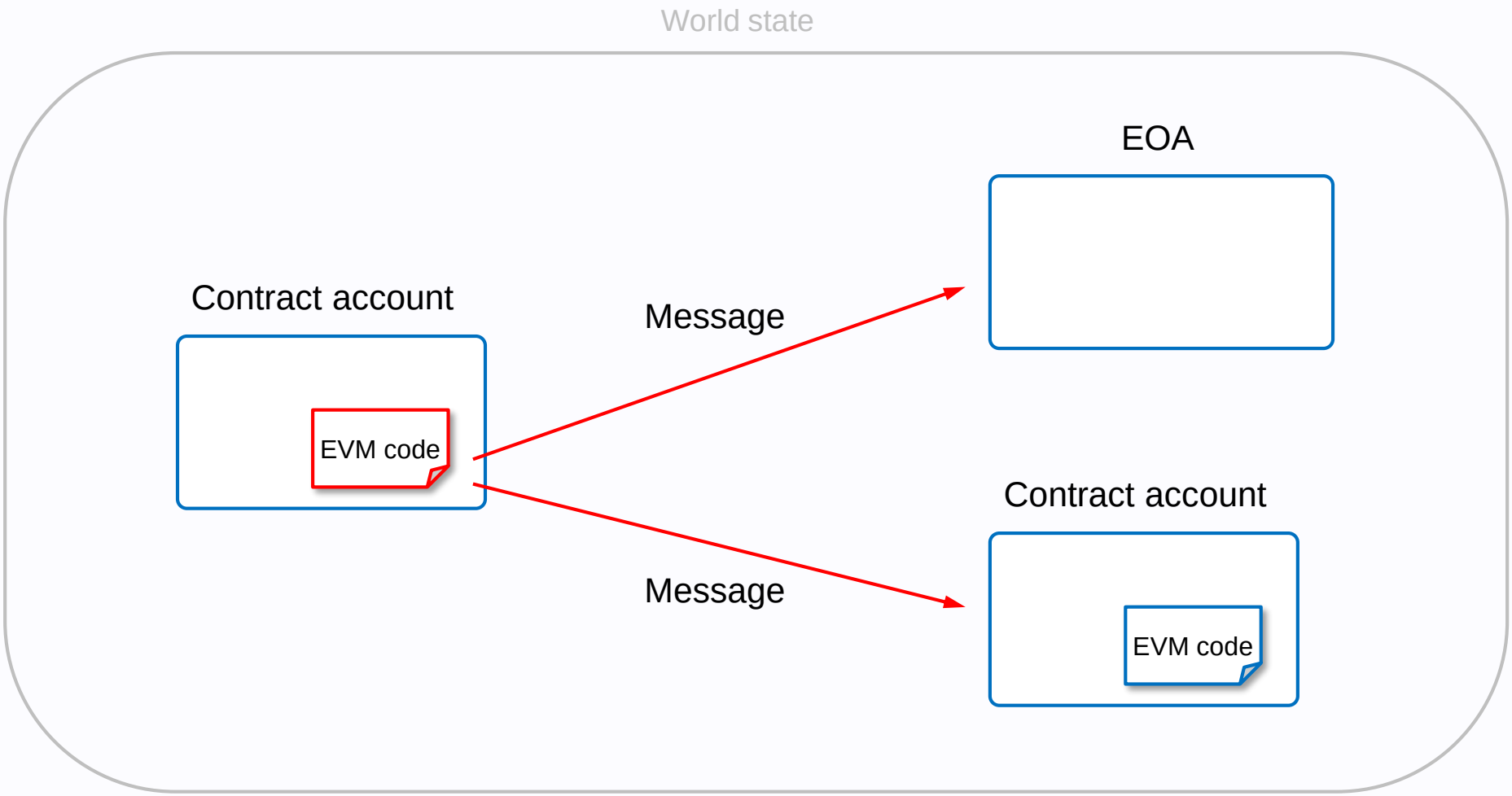
# Execution model




References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H

# Message call

# Message call

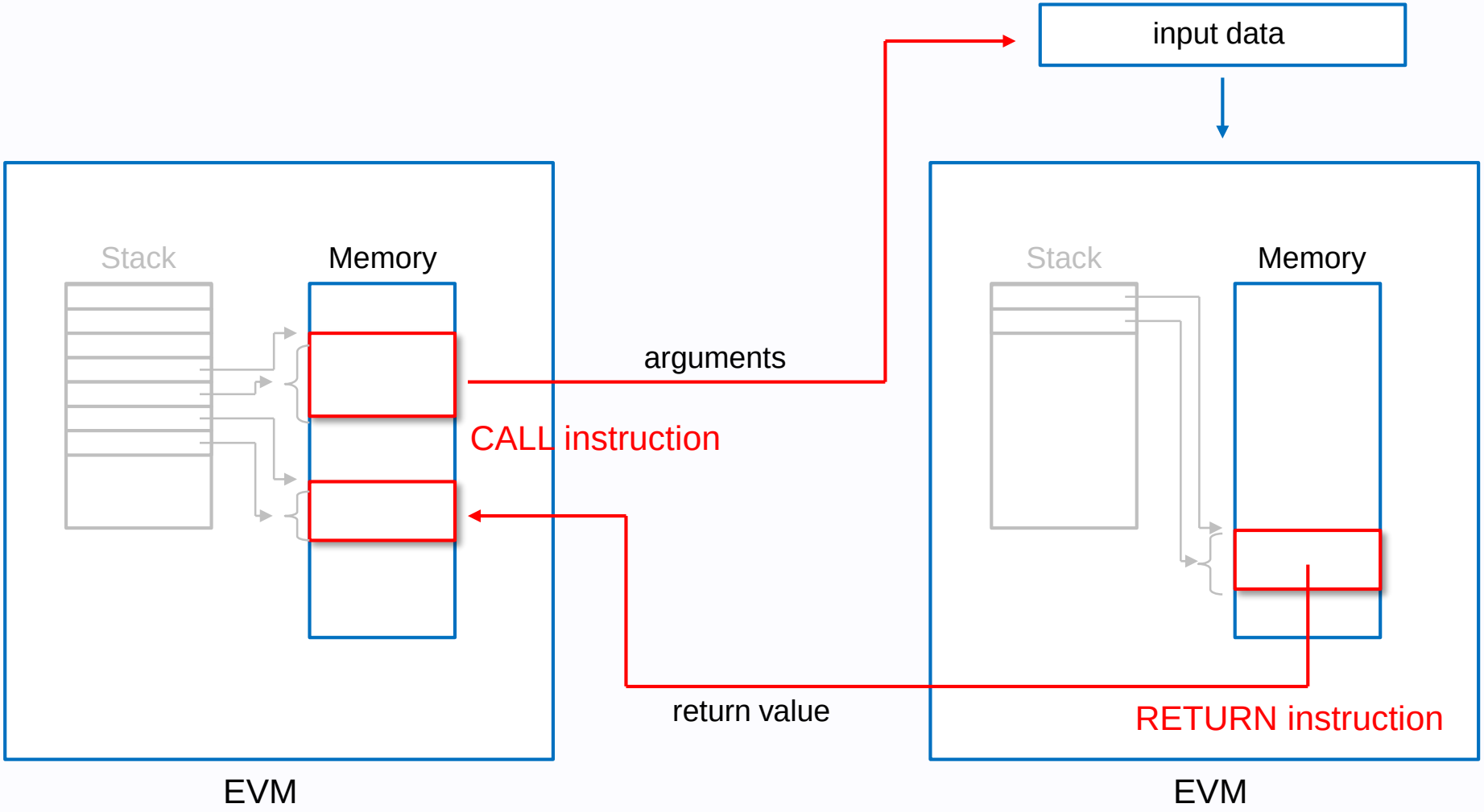



EVM can send a message to other account.

The depth of message call is limited to less than 1024 levels.

References : [E1] Ch.8, Appendix A

# Instructions for Message call




Message call is triggered by CALL instruction.

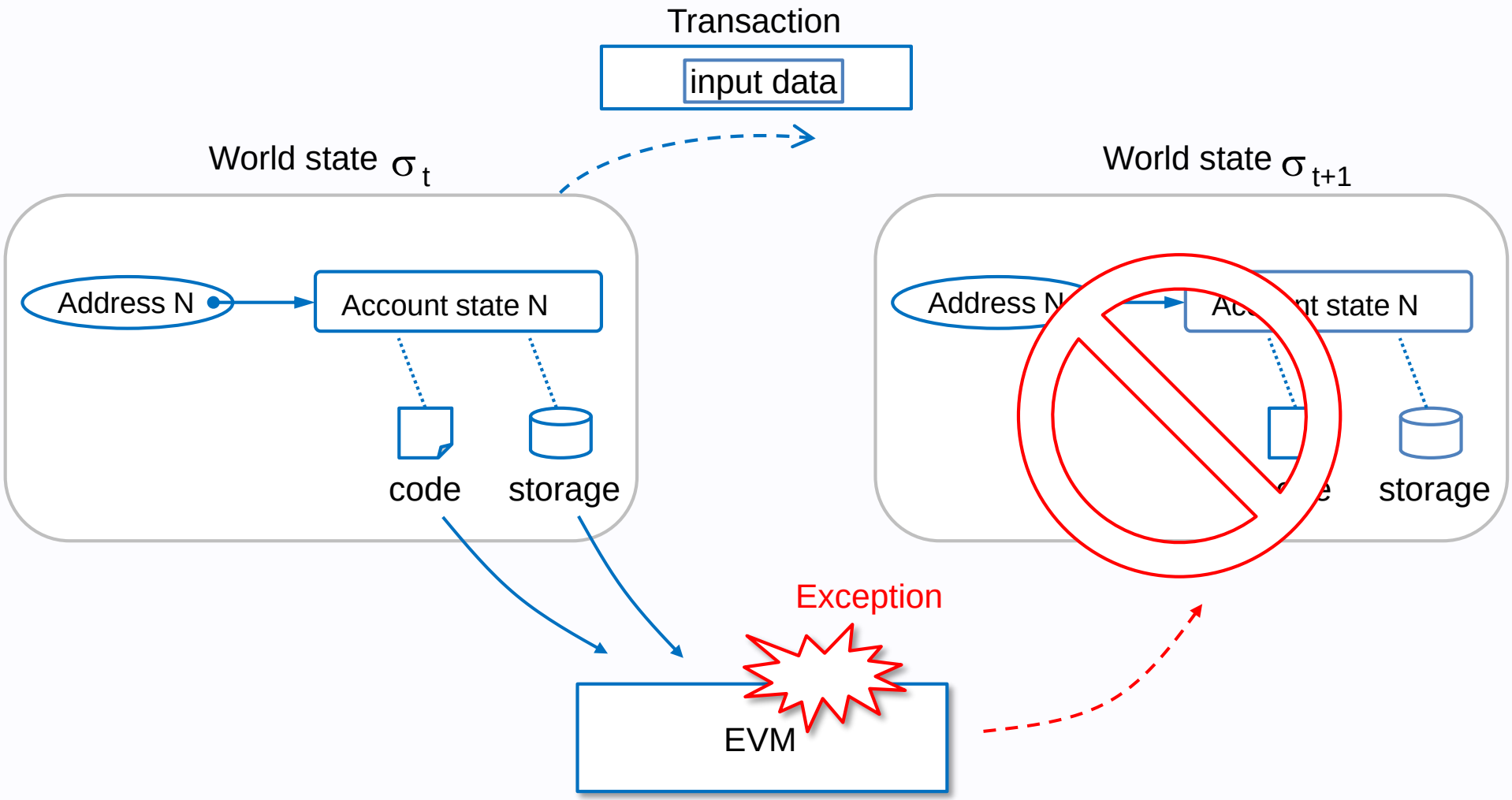
Arguments and return values are passed using memory.

References : [E1] Ch.8, Ch.9

# 2. Virtual machine

## Exception

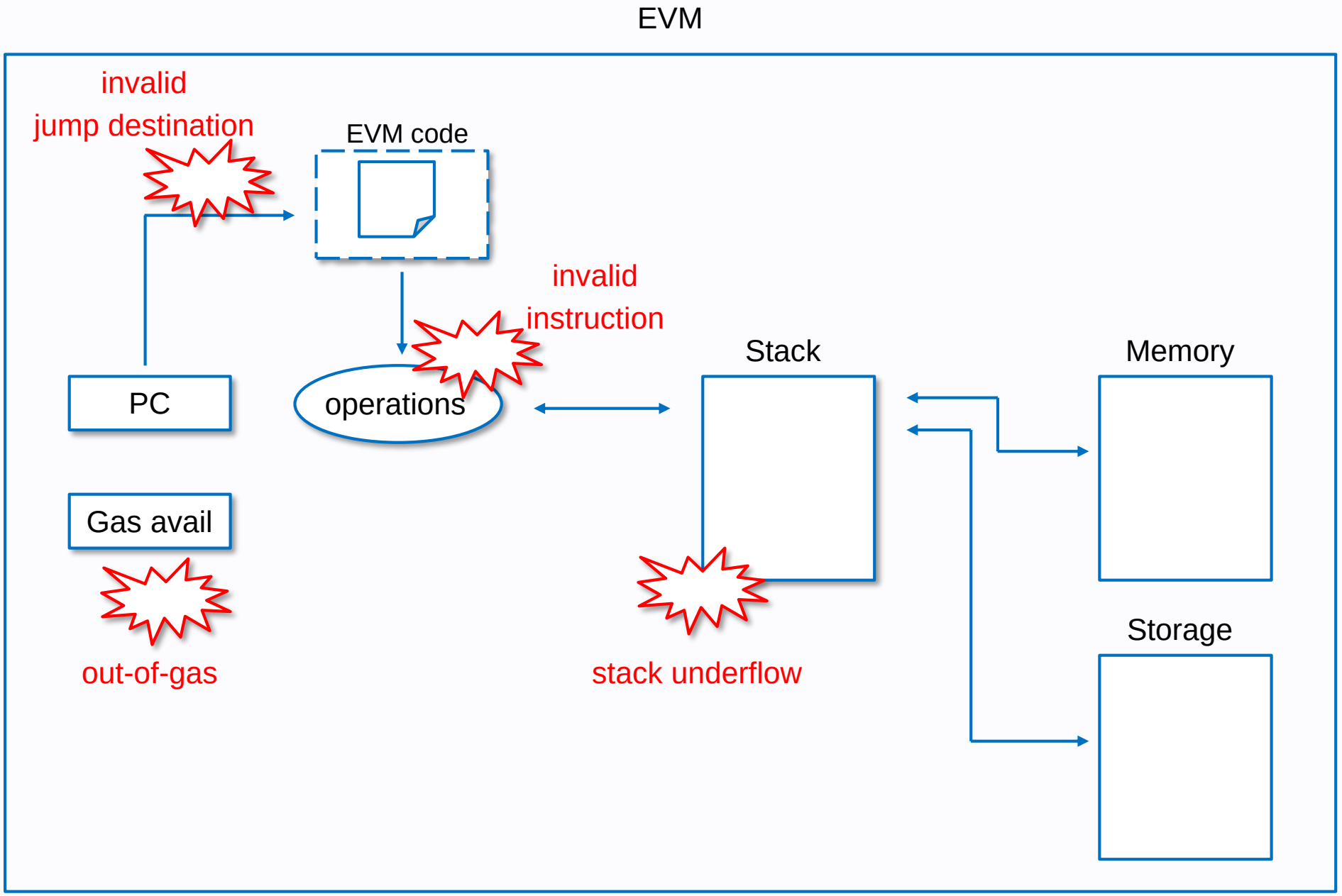
# Exception




If an exception occurs in the EVM, the state is not updated.

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H

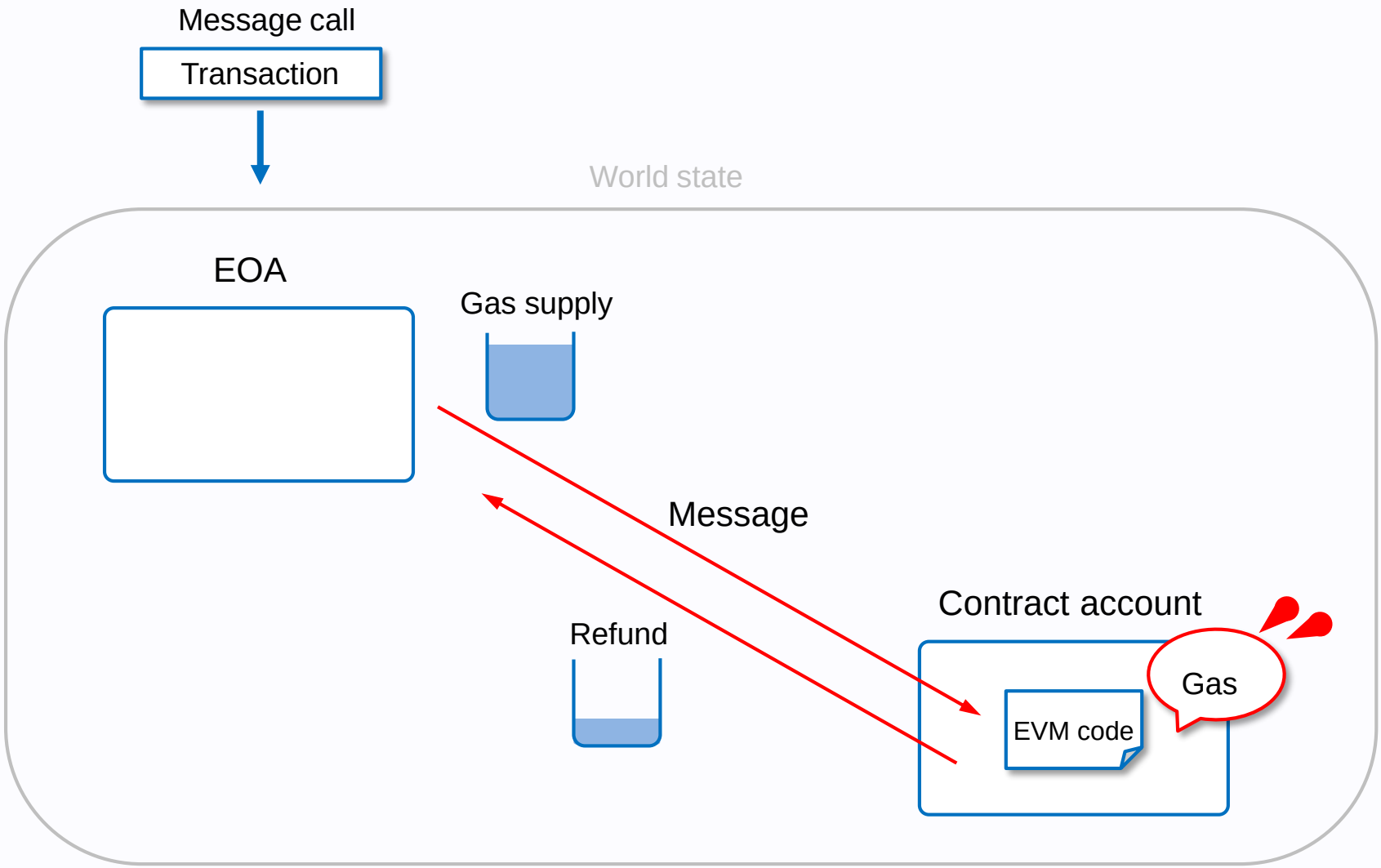
# Exception




References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H

# Gas and fee

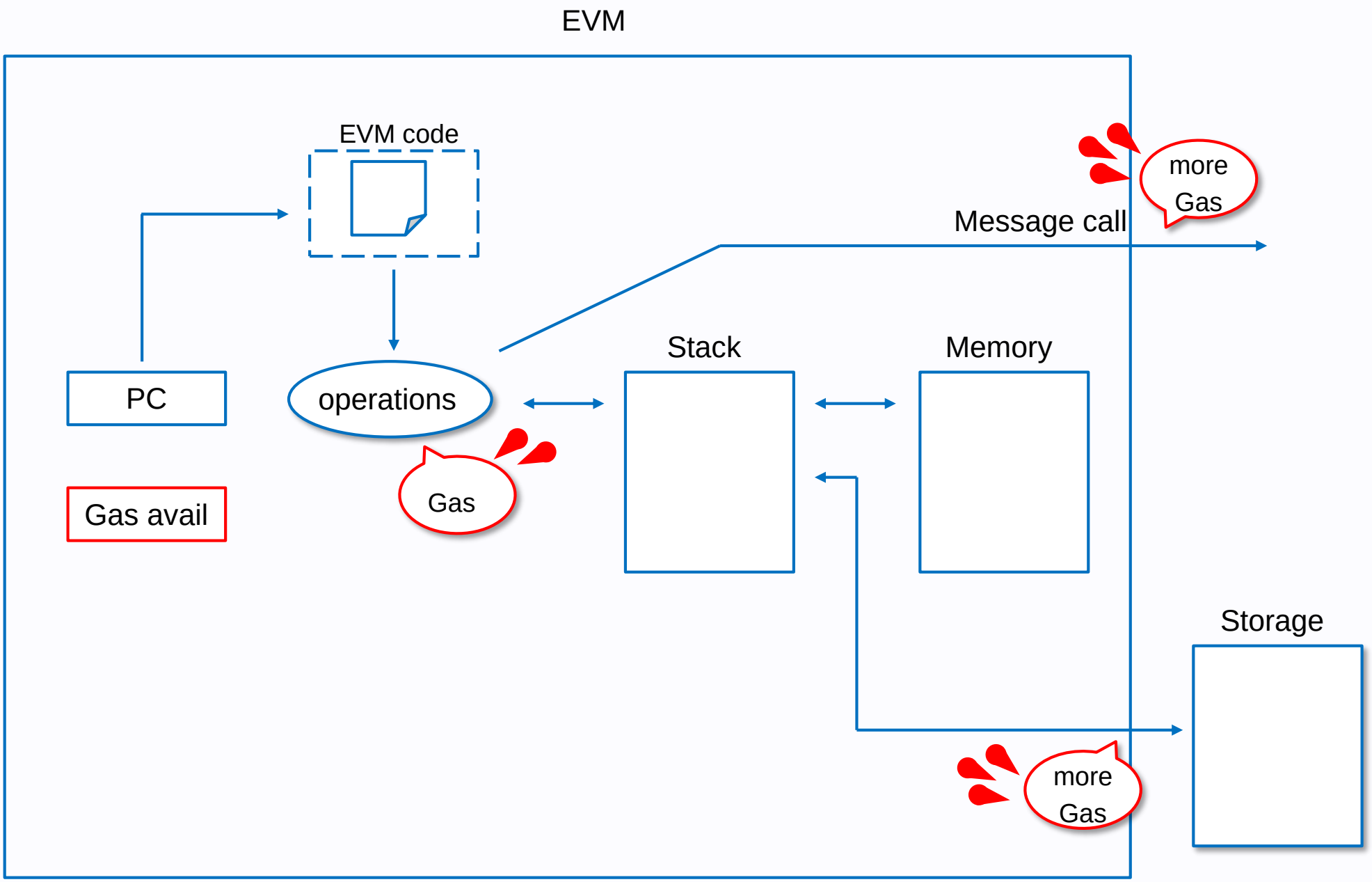
# Gas and fee




All programmable computation in Ethereum is subject to fees (denominated in gas).

References : [E1] Ch.5, Ch.9, Appendix G

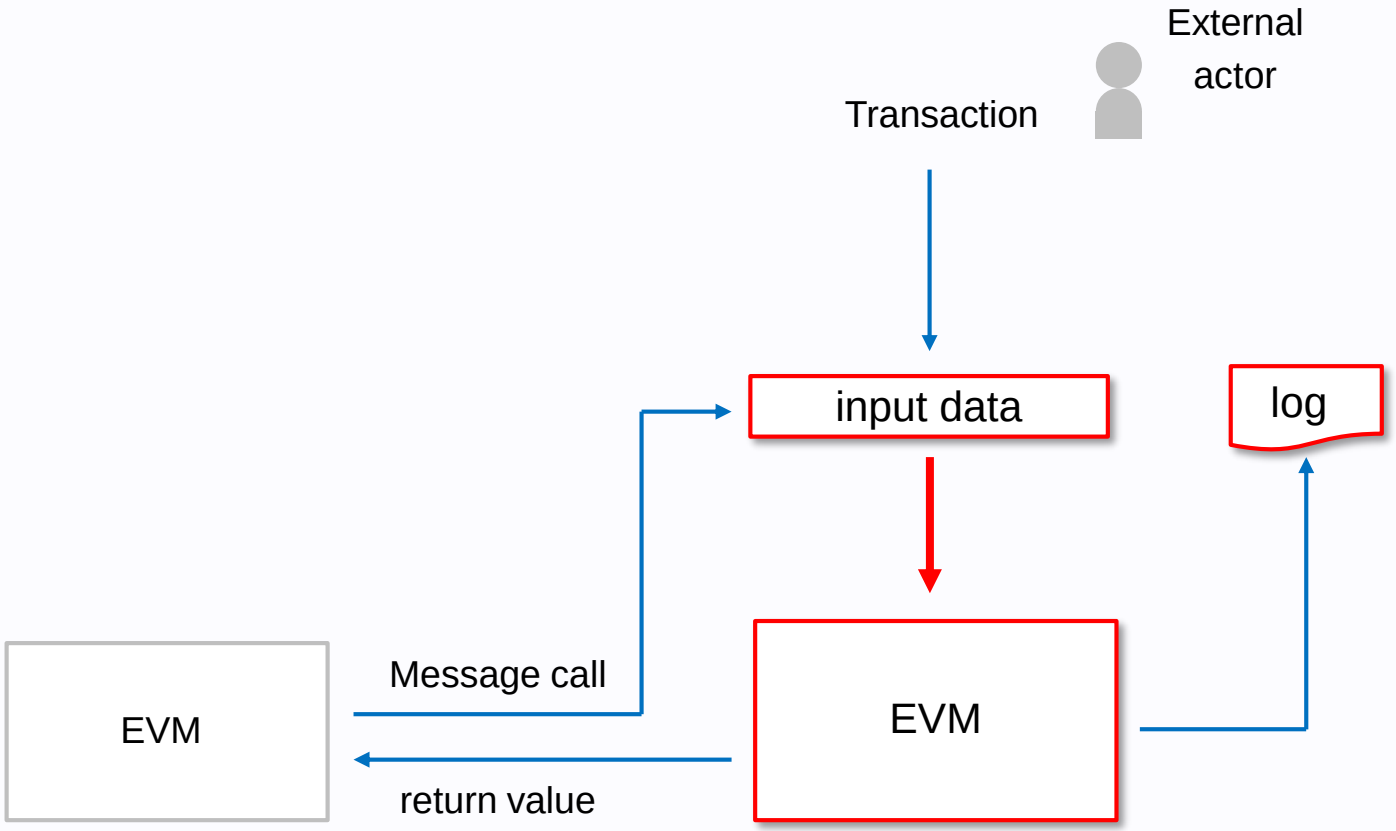
# Gas




References : [E1] Ch.5, Ch.9, Appendix G

# Input and output

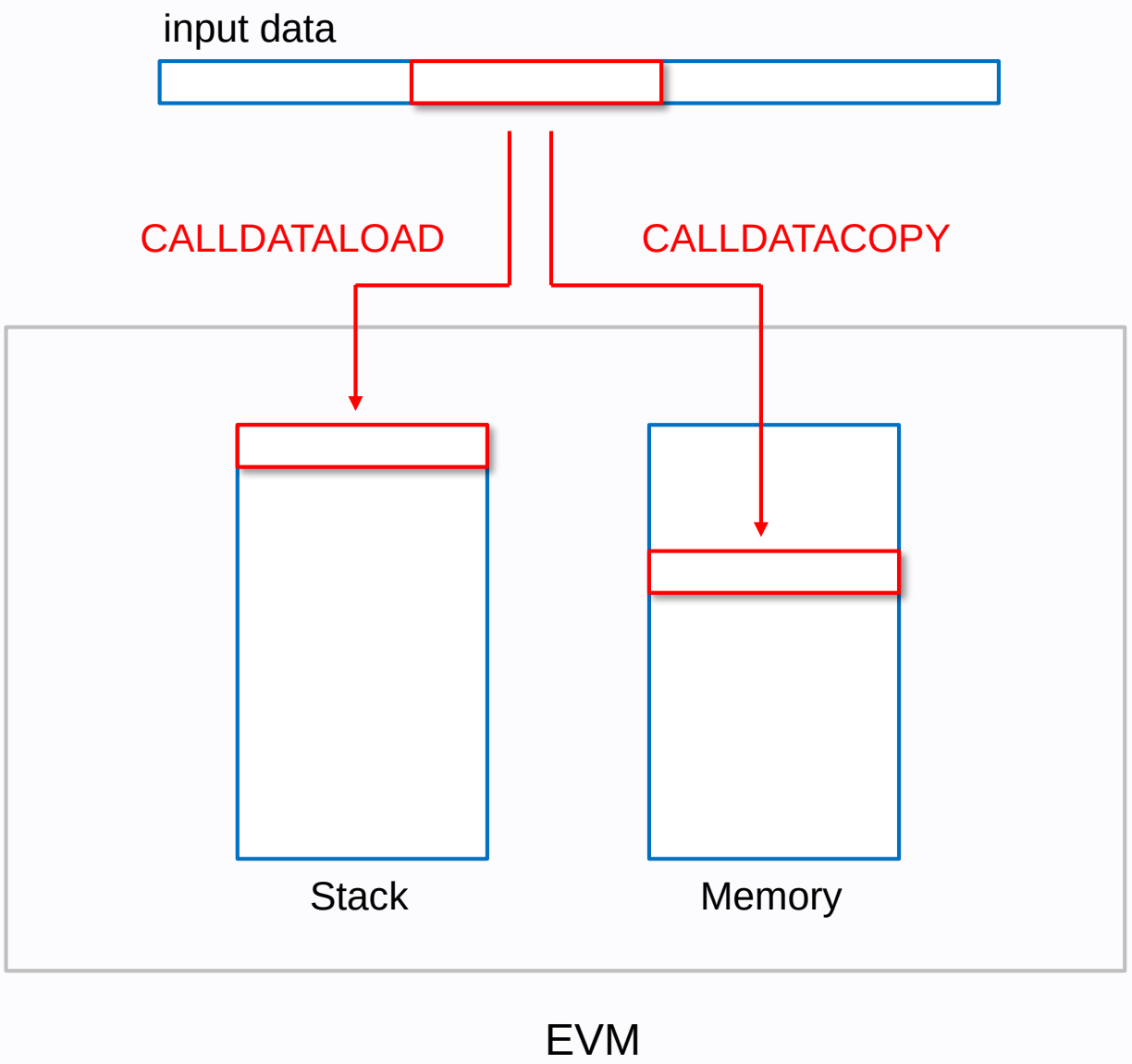
# Input and Output of EVM




EVM can input external data from a message call.
EVM can output log. EVM can also return values to Caller EVM.

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H

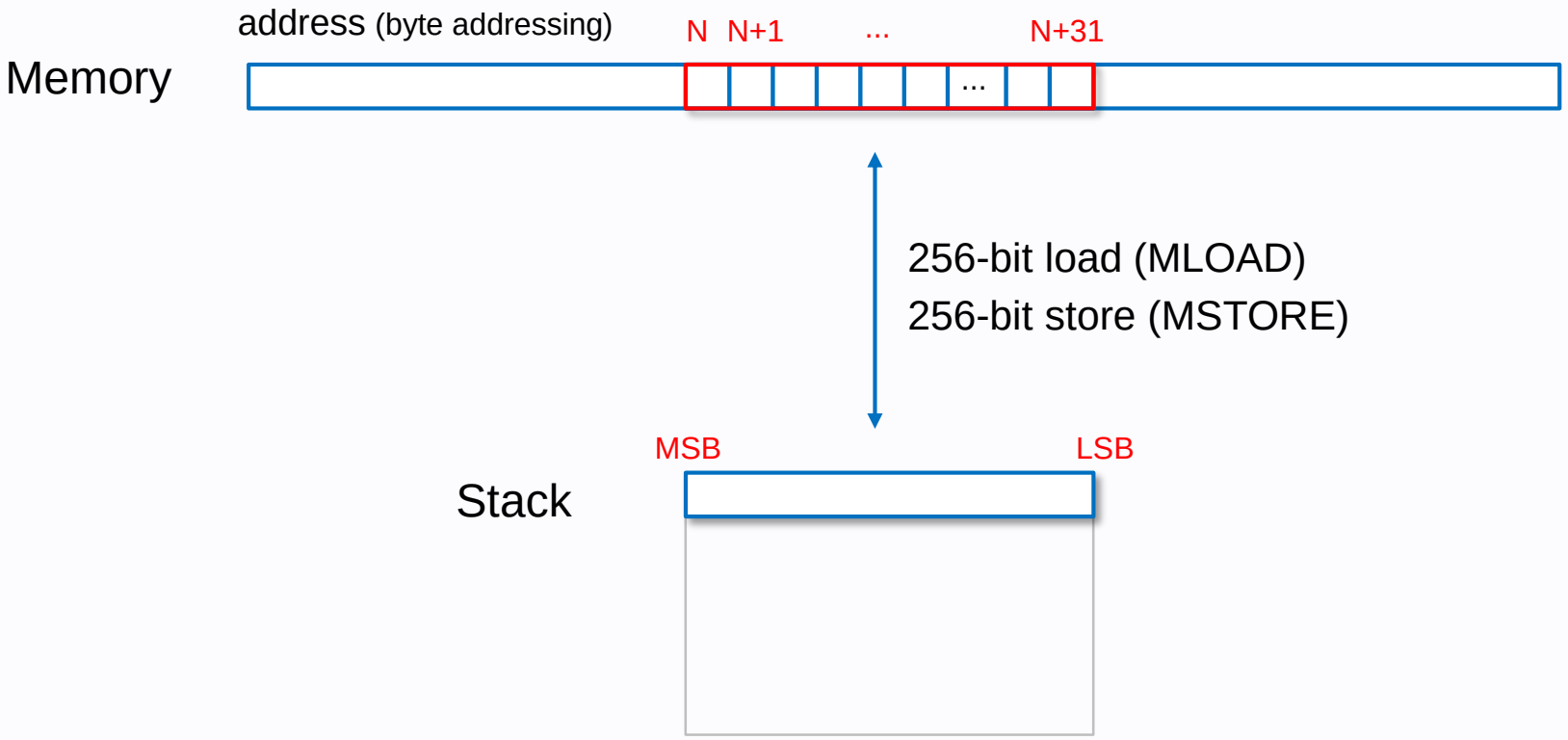
# Instructions for input data




References : [E1] Ch.7, Ch.9

# Byte order

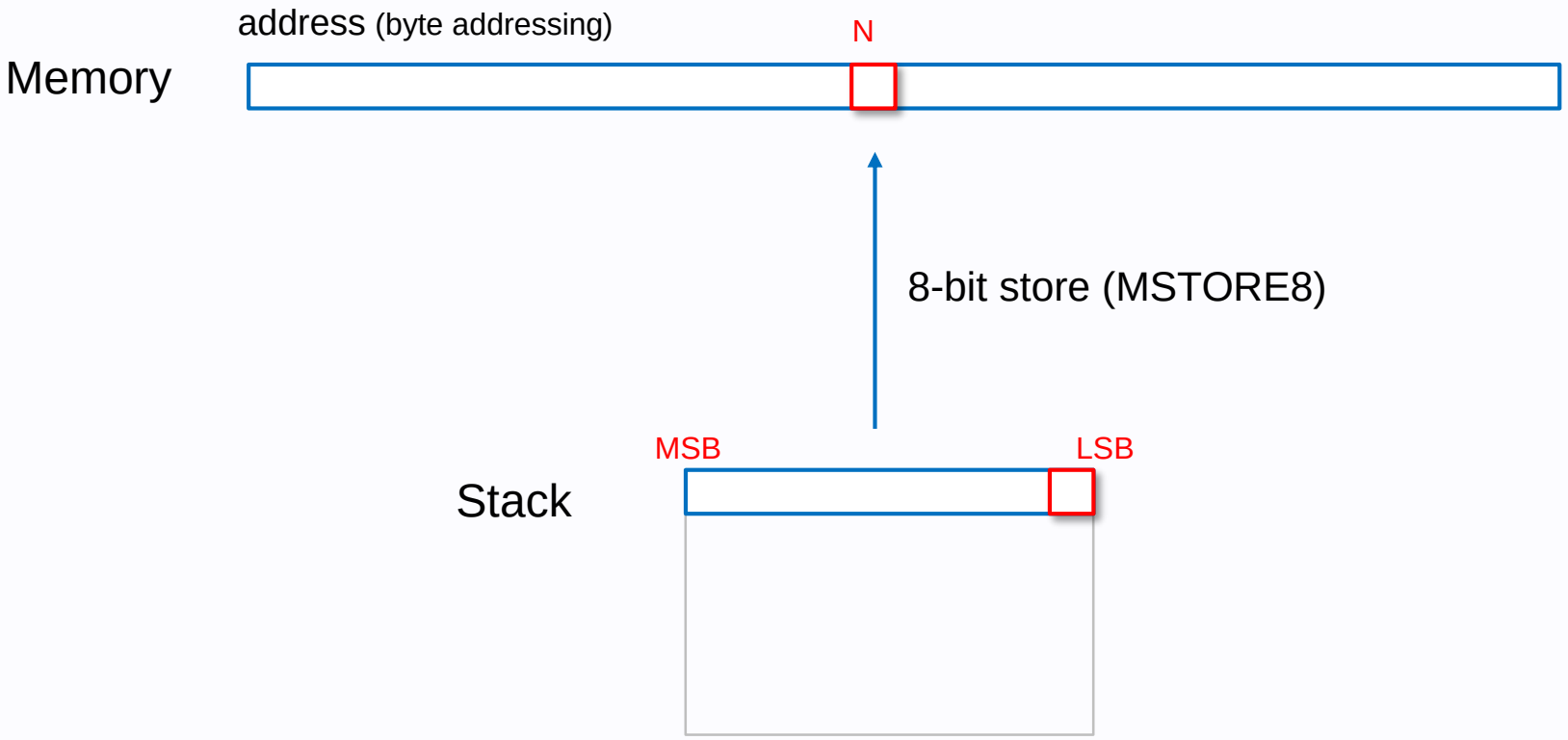
# Endian for Memory




EVM is big endian order (network byte order).

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E7], [W2]

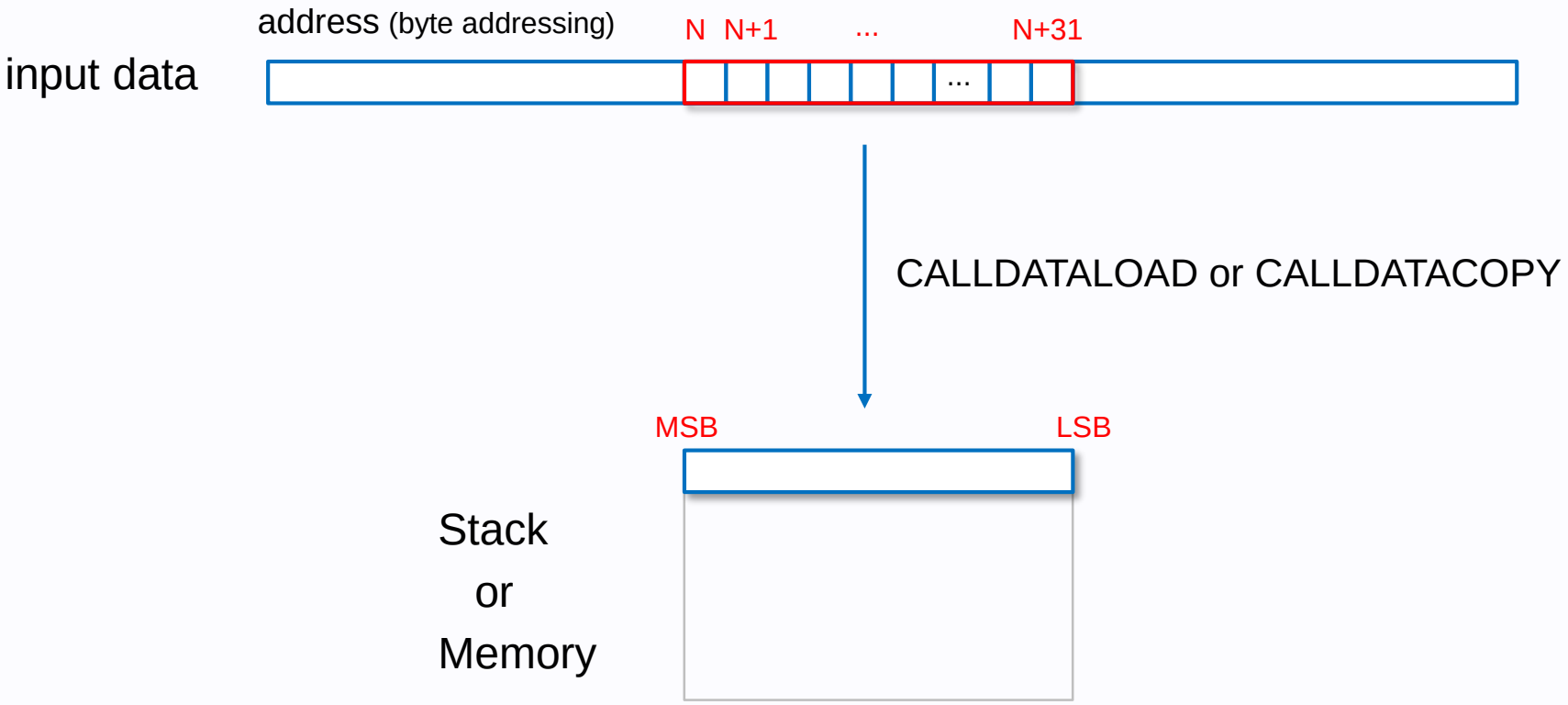
# Endian for Memory




EVM is big endian order (network byte order).

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E7], [W2]

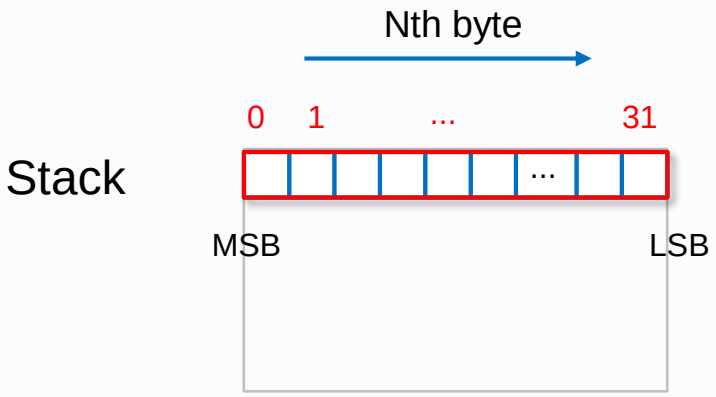
# Endian for input data




EVM is big endian order (network byte order).

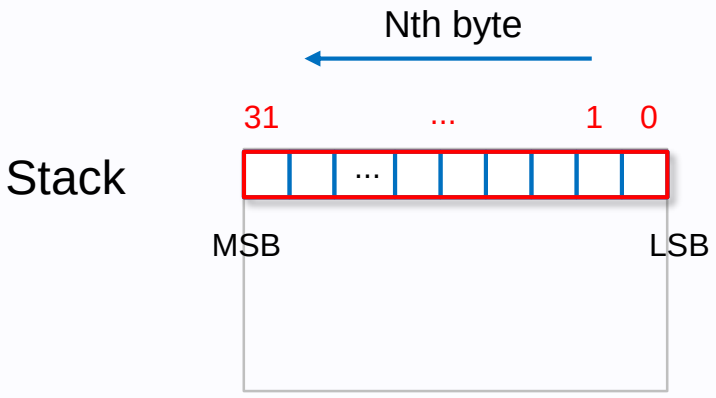
References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E7], [W2]

# Byte order of BYTE and SIGNEXTEND instruction




BYTE instruction counts from MSB.

---

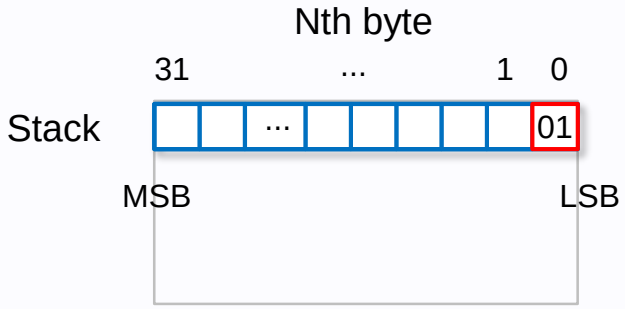



SIGNEXTEND instruction counts from LSB.

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E7], [W2]

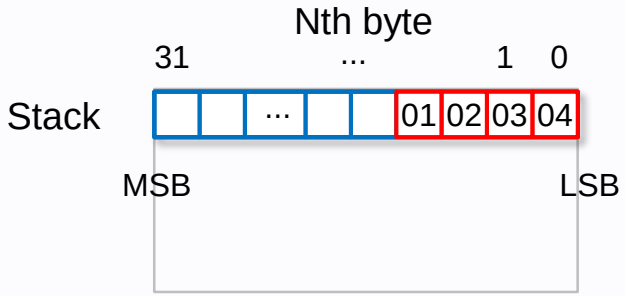
# Byte order of PUSH instructions

PUSH1 0x01



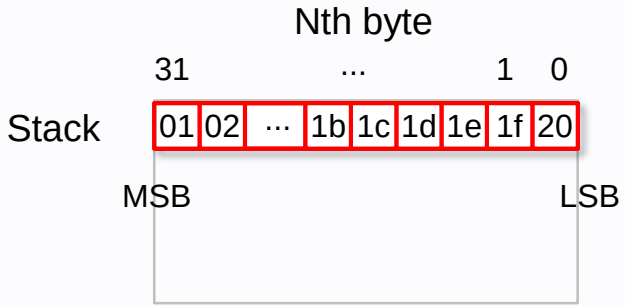

right-aligned, big endian

PUSH4 0x01020304




right-aligned, big endian

PUSH32 0x0102...1f20




right-aligned, big endian

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E7], [W2]

# 2. Virtual machine

## Instruction set

# Instruction set

* Basically, 256-bit operation.

* Contract creation and destruct
  * CREATE, DELEGATECALL

* Hash
  * SHA3

* Shift operation
  * using MUL or DIV, SDIV

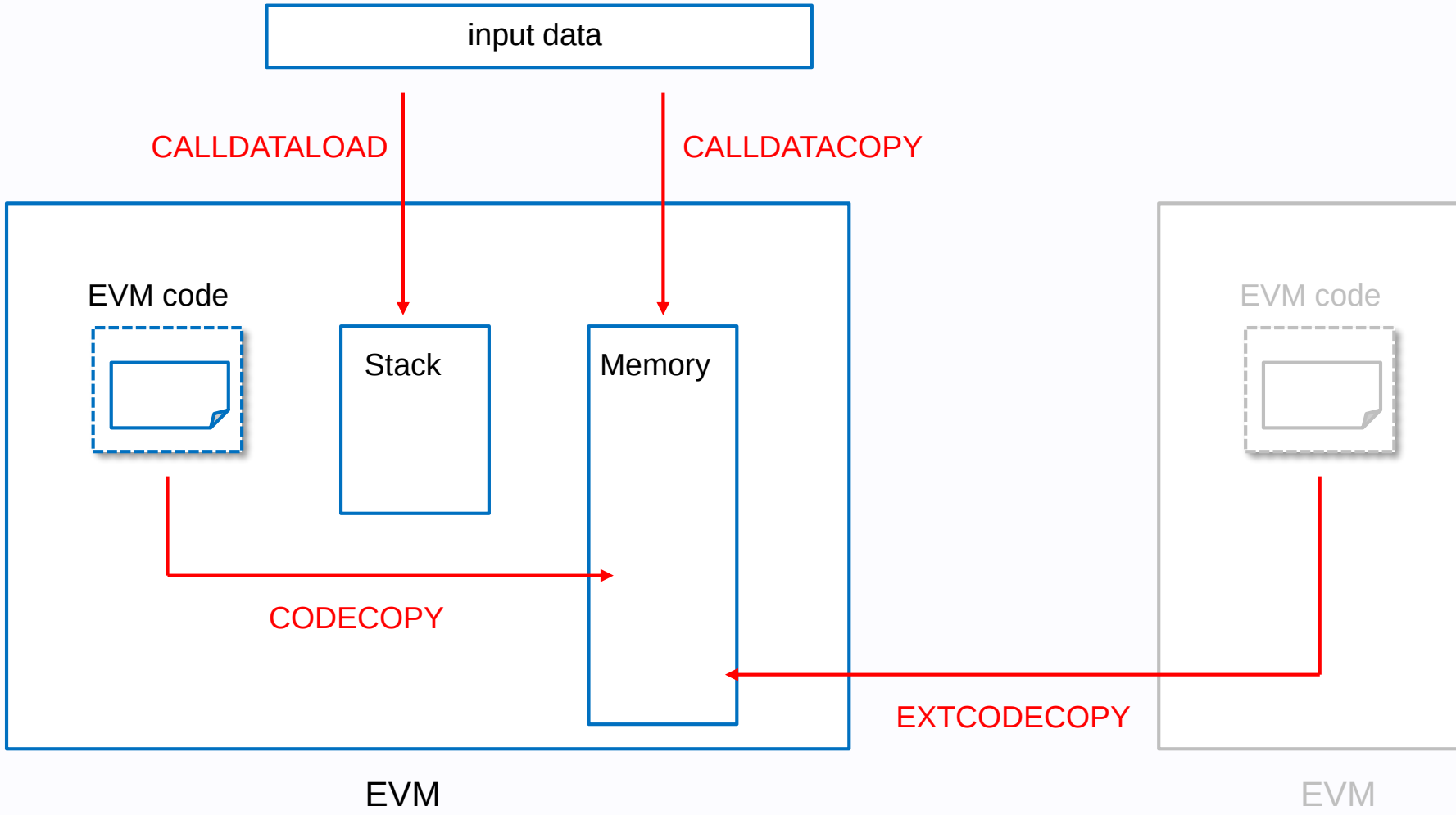
* Div operation
  * without zero divisional exception

* ...

WIP

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H

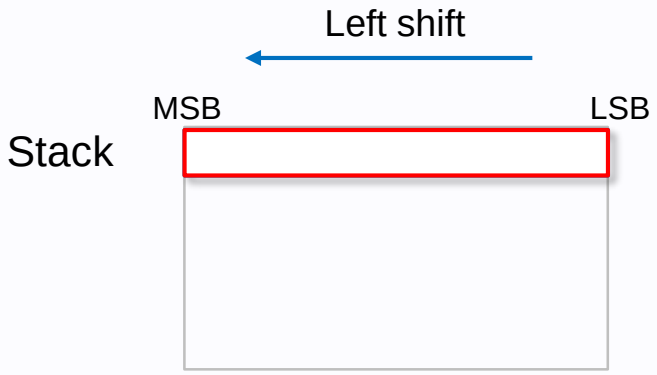
# Copy of code and input data




There are several copy instructions for inter spaces.

References : [E1] Ch.8, Ch.9

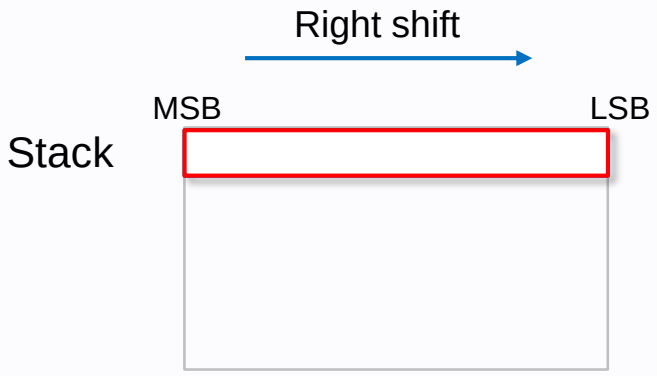
# Shift by MUL, DIV and SDIV




MUL m (2^n) == m << n

Left shift is represented by MUL instruction.

---




DIV m (2^n) == m >> n

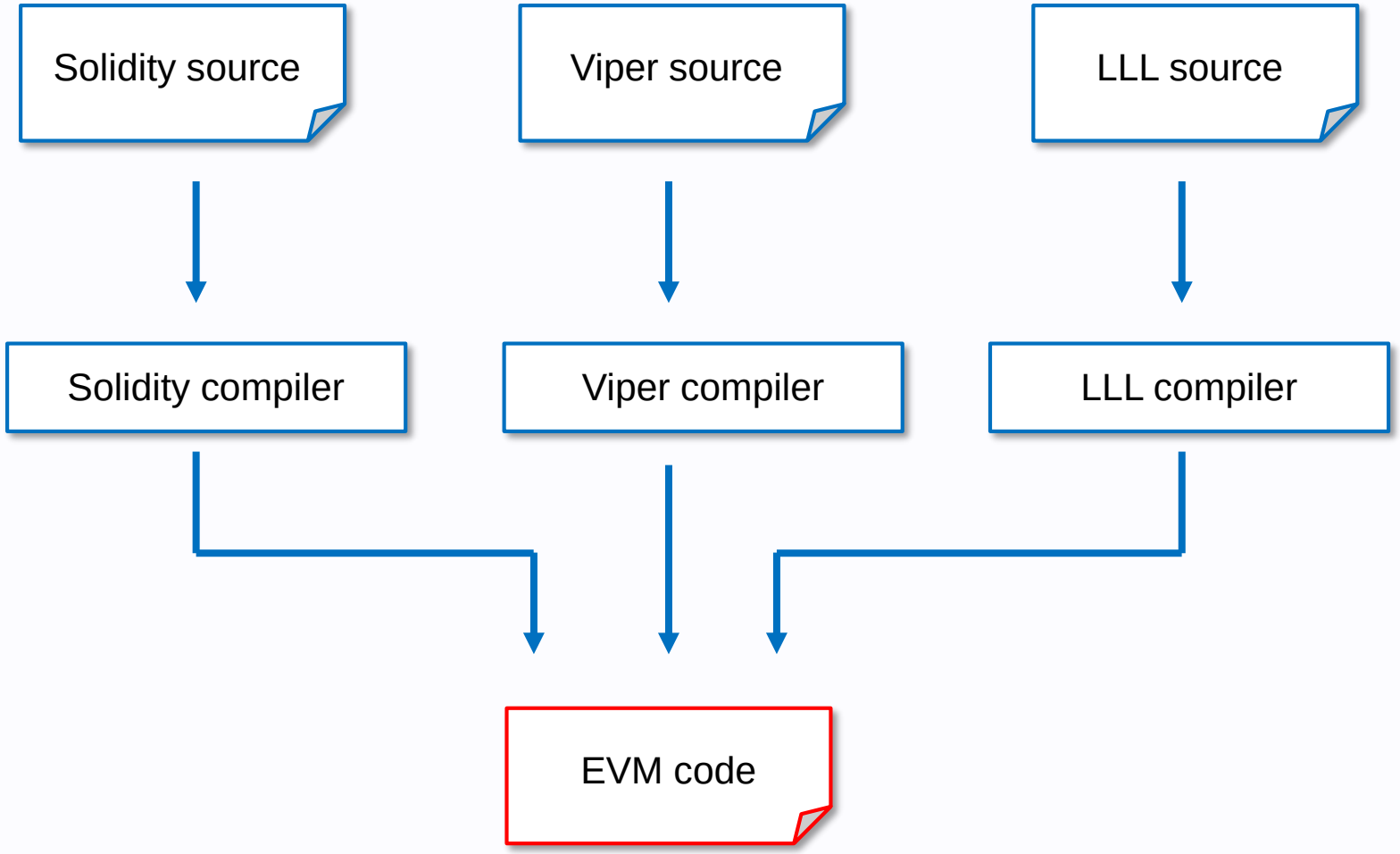
DIV for logical right shift
SDIV for arithmetic right shift

Right shift is represented by DIV and SDIV instruction.

References : [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [E7], [W2]

# Miscellaneous

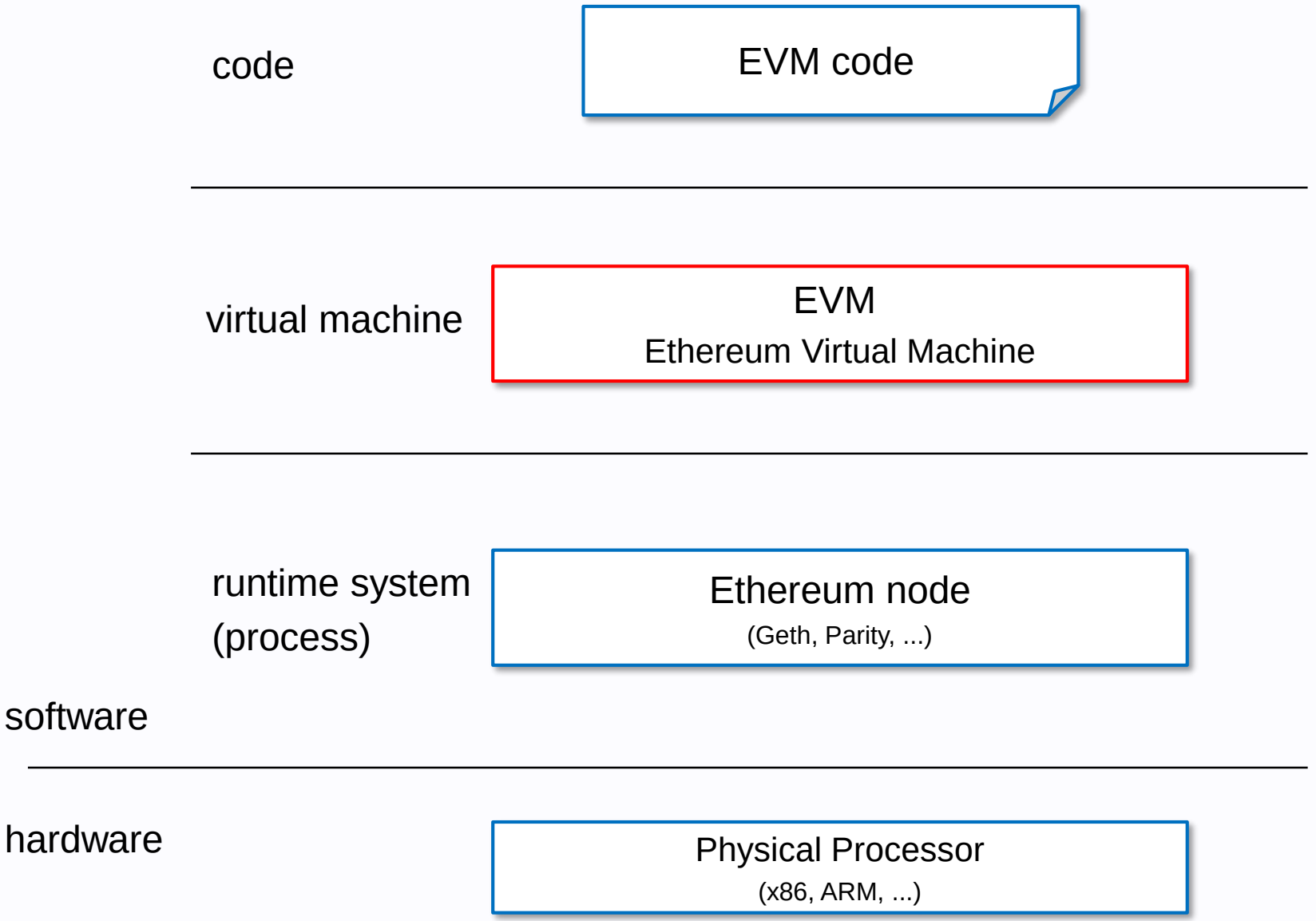
# EVM code generation




Ethereum virtual machine code

References : [E7]

# Ethereum virtual machine layer




References : [E1] Ch.9

# eWASM

The eWASM is next generation VM.

WIP

# Appendix A

# Appendix A

## Source code in Geth

# Block header

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/types/block.go]

Block header

```
type Header struct {
        ParentHash  common.Hash    `json:"parentHash"       gencodec:"required"`
        UncleHash   common.Hash    `json:"sha3Uncles"       gencodec:"required"`
        Coinbase    common.Address `json:"miner"            gencodec:"required"`
        Root        common.Hash    `json:"stateRoot"        gencodec:"required"`
        TxHash      common.Hash    `json:"transactionsRoot" gencodec:"required"`
        ReceiptHash common.Hash    `json:"receiptsRoot"     gencodec:"required"`
        Bloom       Bloom           `json:"logsBloom"        gencodec:"required"`
        Difficulty  *big.Int       `json:"difficulty"       gencodec:"required"`
        Number      *big.Int       `json:"number"           gencodec:"required"`
        GasLimit    uint64          `json:"gasLimit"         gencodec:"required"`
        GasUsed     uint64          `json:"gasUsed"          gencodec:"required"`
        Time        *big.Int       `json:"timestamp"        gencodec:"required"`
        Extra       []byte          `json:"extraData"        gencodec:"required"`
        MixDigest   common.Hash    `json:"mixHash"          gencodec:"required"`
        Nonce       BlockNonce      `json:"nonce"            gencodec:"required"`
}
```

Root of State

Root of Transaction

References : [C1]

# Transaction

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/types/transaction.go]

Transaction

```
type txdata struct {
        AccountNonce uint64          `json:"nonce"    gencodec:"required"`
        Price        *big.Int        `json:"gasPrice" gencodec:"required"`
        GasLimit     uint64          `json:"gas"      gencodec:"required"`
        Recipient    *common.Address `json:"to"       rlp:"nil"`
                                                      // nil means contract creation
        Amount       *big.Int        `json:"value"    gencodec:"required"`
        Payload      []byte          `json:"input"    gencodec:"required"`

        // Signature values
        V *big.Int `json:"v" gencodec:"required"`
        R *big.Int `json:"r" gencodec:"required"`
        S *big.Int `json:"s" gencodec:"required"`

        // This is only used when marshaling to JSON.
        Hash *common.Hash `json:"hash" rlp:"-"`
}
```

to address

value (Wei)

input data

References : [C1]

# World state

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/state/statedb.go]

```
type StateDB struct {
        db   Database
        trie Trie

        stateObjects      map[common.Address]*stateObject
        stateObjectsDirty map[common.Address]struct{}

        dbErr error

        refund uint64

        thash, bhash common.Hash
        txIndex      int
        logs         map[common.Hash][]*types.Log
        logSize      uint

        preimages map[common.Hash][]byte

          :
```

World state

Mapping for
Address to Account state

References : [C1]

# Account object (state object)

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/state/state_object.go]

```
type stateObject struct {
        address  common.Address
        addrHash common.Hash
        data     Account
        db       *StateDB

        dbErr error

        trie Trie // storage trie, which becomes non-nil on first access
        code Code // contract bytecode, which gets set when code is loaded

        cachedStorage Storage // Storage entry cache to avoid duplicate reads
        dirtyStorage  Storage // Storage entries that need to be flushed to disk

        dirtyCode bool // true if the code was updated
        suicided  bool
        touched   bool
        deleted   bool
        onDirty   func(addr common.Address)
}
```

Address

Account state

References : [C1]

# Account state, Code and Storage

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/state/state_object.go]

```
type Account struct {
        Nonce    uint64
        Balance  *big.Int
        Root     common.Hash // merkle root of the storage trie
        CodeHash []byte
}



type Code []byte


type Storage map[common.Hash]common.Hash
```

Account state

EVM code

Account storage

References : [C1]

# Stack and Memory

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/vm/stack.go]

```
type Stack struct {
        data []*big.Int
}

func newstack() *Stack {
        return &Stack{data: make([]*big.Int, 0, 1024)}
}
```

Stack

[core/vm/memory.go]

```
type Memory struct {
        store       []byte
        lastGasCost uint64
}

func NewMemory() *Memory {
        return &Memory{}
}
```

Memory

References : [C1]

# Instruction operation (arithmetic and stack)

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/vm/instruction.go]

Arithmetic operation

```
func opAdd(pc *uint64, evm *EVM, contract *Contract, memory *Memory, stack *Stack)
([]byte, error) {
        x, y := stack.pop(), stack.pop()
        stack.push(math.U256(x.Add(x, y)))

        evm.interpreter.intPool.put(y)

        return nil, nil
}
```

Stack operation

```
func opPop(pc *uint64, evm *EVM, contract *Contract, memory *Memory, stack *Stack)
([]byte, error) {
        evm.interpreter.intPool.put(stack.pop())
        return nil, nil
}
```

References : [C1]

# Instruction operation (memory and storage)

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/vm/instruction.go]

Memory operation

```
func opMload(pc *uint64, evm *EVM, contract *Contract, memory *Memory, stack
*Stack) ([]byte, error) {
        offset := stack.pop()
        val := new(big.Int).SetBytes(memory.Get(offset.Int64(), 32))
        stack.push(val)

        evm.interpreter.intPool.put(offset)
        return nil, nil
}
```

Storage operation

```
func opSload(pc *uint64, evm *EVM, contract *Contract, memory *Memory, stack
*Stack) ([]byte, error) {
        loc := common.BigToHash(stack.pop())
        val := evm.StateDB.GetState(contract.Address(), loc).Big()
        stack.push(val)
        return nil, nil
}
```

References : [C1]

# Instruction operation (call)

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/vm/instruction.go]

Flow operation

```
func opCall(pc *uint64, evm *EVM, contract *Contract, memory *Memory, stack *Stack)
([]byte, error) {
        // Pop gas. The actual gas in in evm.callGasTemp.
        evm.interpreter.intPool.put(stack.pop())
        gas := evm.callGasTemp
        // Pop other call parameters.
        addr, value, inOffset, inSize, retOffset, retSize := stack.pop(),
            stack.pop(), stack.pop(), stack.pop(), stack.pop(), stack.pop()
        toAddr := common.BigToAddress(addr)
        value = math.U256(value)
        // Get the arguments from the memory.
        args := memory.Get(inOffset.Int64(), inSize.Int64())

        if value.Sign() != 0 {
                gas += params.CallStipend
        }
        ret, returnGas, err := evm.Call(contract, toAddr, args, gas, value)
        if err != nil {
            :
```

References : [C1]

# Gas

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/vm/gas.go]

```
const (
        GasQuickStep   uint64 = 2
        GasFastestStep uint64 = 3
        GasFastStep    uint64 = 5
        GasMidStep     uint64 = 8
        GasSlowStep    uint64 = 10
        GasExtStep     uint64 = 20

        GasReturn       uint64 = 0
        GasStop         uint64 = 0
        GasContractByte uint64 = 200
)
```

$G_{base}$

$G_{verylow}$

[core/vm/gas_table.go]

```
func gasSStore(gt params.GasTable, evm *EVM, contract *Contract, stack *Stack, mem
*Memory, memorySize uint64) (uint64, error) {
        var (
                y, x = stack.Back(1), stack.Back(0)
                val  = evm.StateDB.GetState(contract.Address(),
         :
```

References : [C1]

# Interpreter

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/vm/interpreter.go]

```
func (in *Interpreter) Run(contract *Contract, input []byte) (ret []byte, err
error) {
        // Increment the call depth which is restricted to 1024
        in.evm.depth++
        defer func() { in.evm.depth-- }()

        in.returnData = nil

        if len(contract.Code) == 0 {
                return nil, nil
        }

        codehash := contract.CodeHash // codehash is used when doing jump dest caching
        if codehash == (common.Hash{}) {
                codehash = crypto.Keccak256Hash(contract.Code)
        }

        var (
                op    OpCode        // current opcode
                mem   = NewMemory() // bound memory
                stack = newstack()  // local stack
         :
```

increment call depth

create Memory

create Stack

References : [C1]

# ApplyTransaction

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/state_processor.go]

```
func ApplyTransaction(config *params.ChainConfig, bc *BlockChain, author
*common.Address, gp *GasPool, statedb *state.StateDB, header *types.Header, tx
*types.Transaction, usedGas *uint64, cfg vm.Config) (*types.Receipt, uint64, error)
{
        msg, err := tx.AsMessage(types.MakeSigner(config, header.Number))
        if err != nil {
                return nil, 0, err
        }
        // Create a new context to be used in the EVM environment
        context := NewEVMContext(msg, header, bc, author)
        // Create a new environment which holds all relevant information
        // about the transaction and calling mechanisms.
        vmenv := vm.NewEVM(context, statedb, config, cfg)
        // Apply the transaction to the current state (included in the env)
        _, gas, failed, err := ApplyMessage(vmenv, msg, gp)
        if err != nil {
                return nil, 0, err
        }
        // Update the state with pending changes
        var root []byte
        if config.IsByzantium(header.Number) {
           :
```

create EVM

References : [C1]

# Version of EVM instruction set

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

[core/vm/interpreter.go]

```
func NewInterpreter(evm *EVM, cfg Config) *Interpreter {
if !cfg.JumpTable[STOP].valid {
                switch {
                case evm.ChainConfig().IsByzantium(evm.BlockNumber):
                        cfg.JumpTable = byzantiumInstructionSet
                case evm.ChainConfig().IsHomestead(evm.BlockNumber):
                        cfg.JumpTable = homesteadInstructionSet
                default:
                        cfg.JumpTable = frontierInstructionSet
                  :
```

added instructions:
STATICCALL, RETURNDATASIZE, RETURNDATACOPY and REVERT

added instruction:
DELEGATECALL

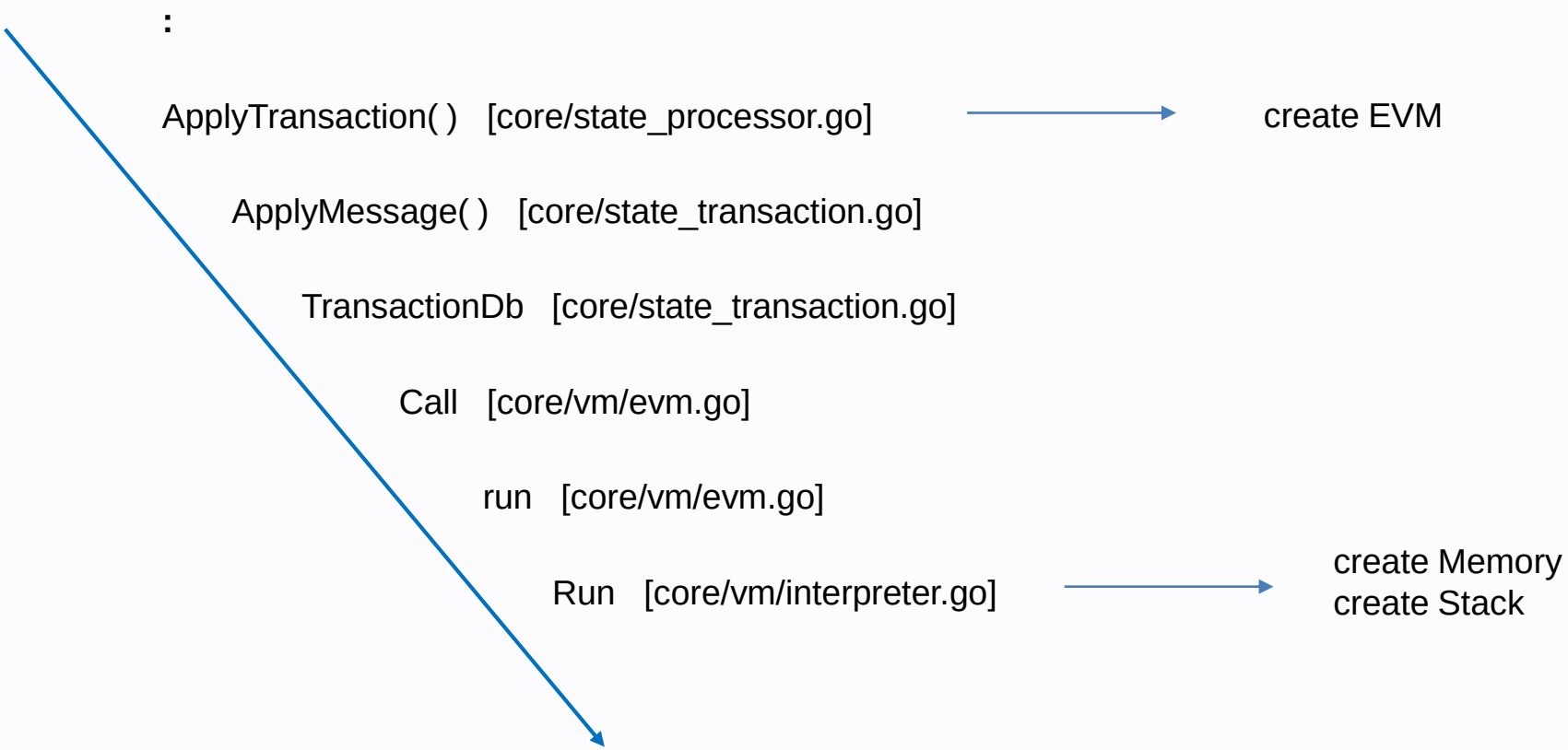
[core/config.go]

```
var (
 MainnetChainConfig = &ChainConfig{
                ChainId:         big.NewInt(1),
                HomesteadBlock: big.NewInt(1150000),
                DAOForkBlock:   big.NewInt(1920000),
                DAOForkSupport: true,
                EIP150Block:    big.NewInt(2463000),
                EIP150Hash: common.HexToHash("0x2086799aeebeae135c246c65021c82b4e15a2c451340993a
                EIP155Block:    big.NewInt(2675000),
                EIP158Block:    big.NewInt(2675000),
                ByzantiumBlock: big.NewInt(4370000),
                   :
```

References : [C1]

# Bootstrap of EVM in Geth

(go-ethereum version 1.8)




References : [C1]

# Appendix A

# EVM developer utility

# Example of evm command

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

The go-ethereum project provides evm utility command.

Compile EVM assembly code

```
$ cat sample.asm
push 0x1
push 0x2
add

$ evm compile sample.asm
6001600201
```

Disassemble EVM bytecode

```
$ cat sample.bin
6001600201

$ evm disasm sample.bin
000000: PUSH1 0x01
000002: PUSH1 0x02
000004: ADD
```

References : [C1]

# Example of evm command

(go-ethereum version 1.8)

Run EVM assembly code

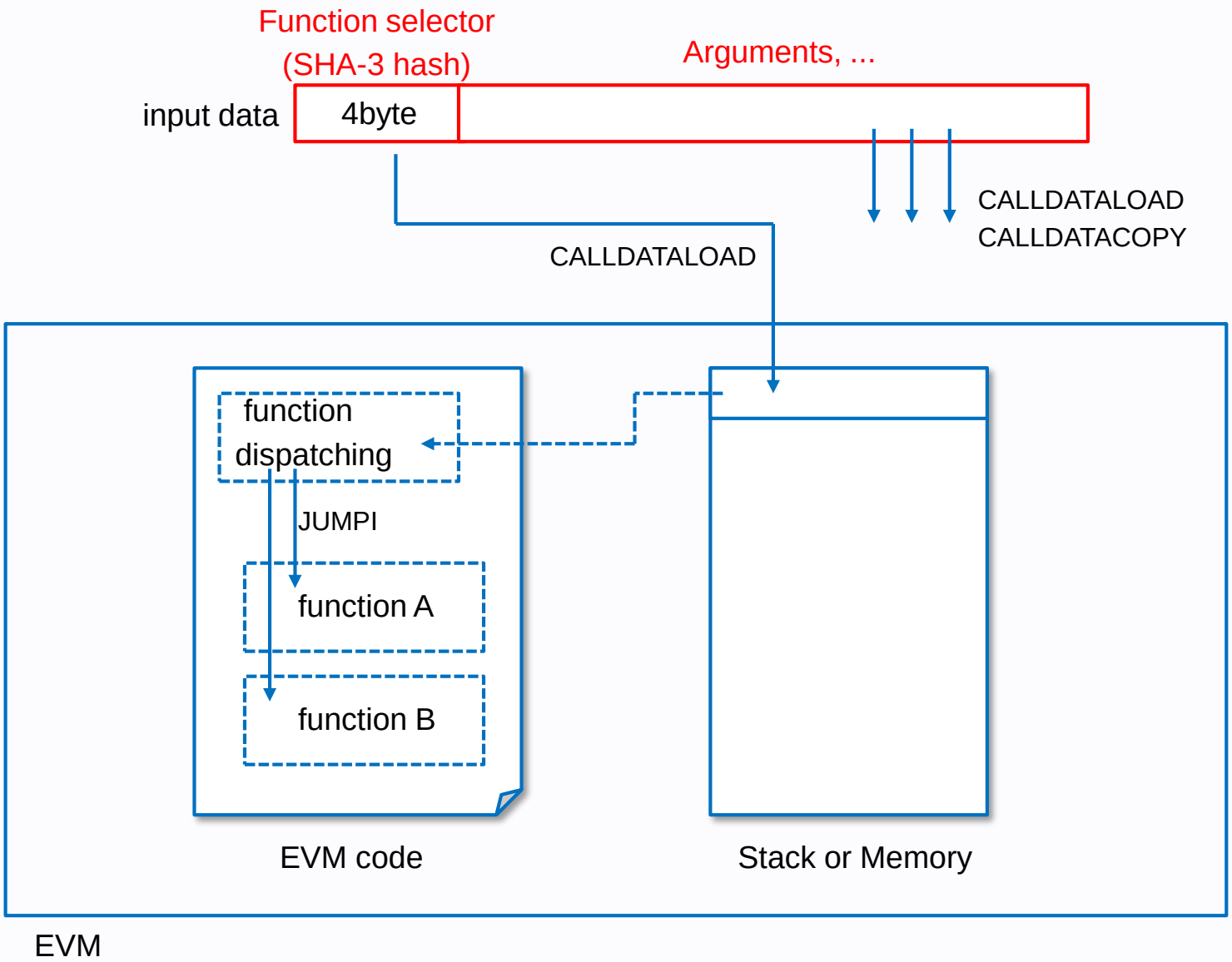
```
$ evm --debug run sample.asm

#### TRACE ####
PUSH1           pc=00000000 gas=10000000000 cost=3

PUSH1           pc=00000002 gas=9999999997 cost=3
Stack:
00000000  0000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000001

ADD             pc=00000004 gas=9999999994 cost=3
Stack:
00000000  0000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000002
00000001  0000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000001

STOP            pc=00000005 gas=9999999991 cost=0
Stack:
00000000  0000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000003

#### LOGS ####
```

References : [C1]

# Appendix A

# Solidity ABI

# Solidity Application Binary Interface



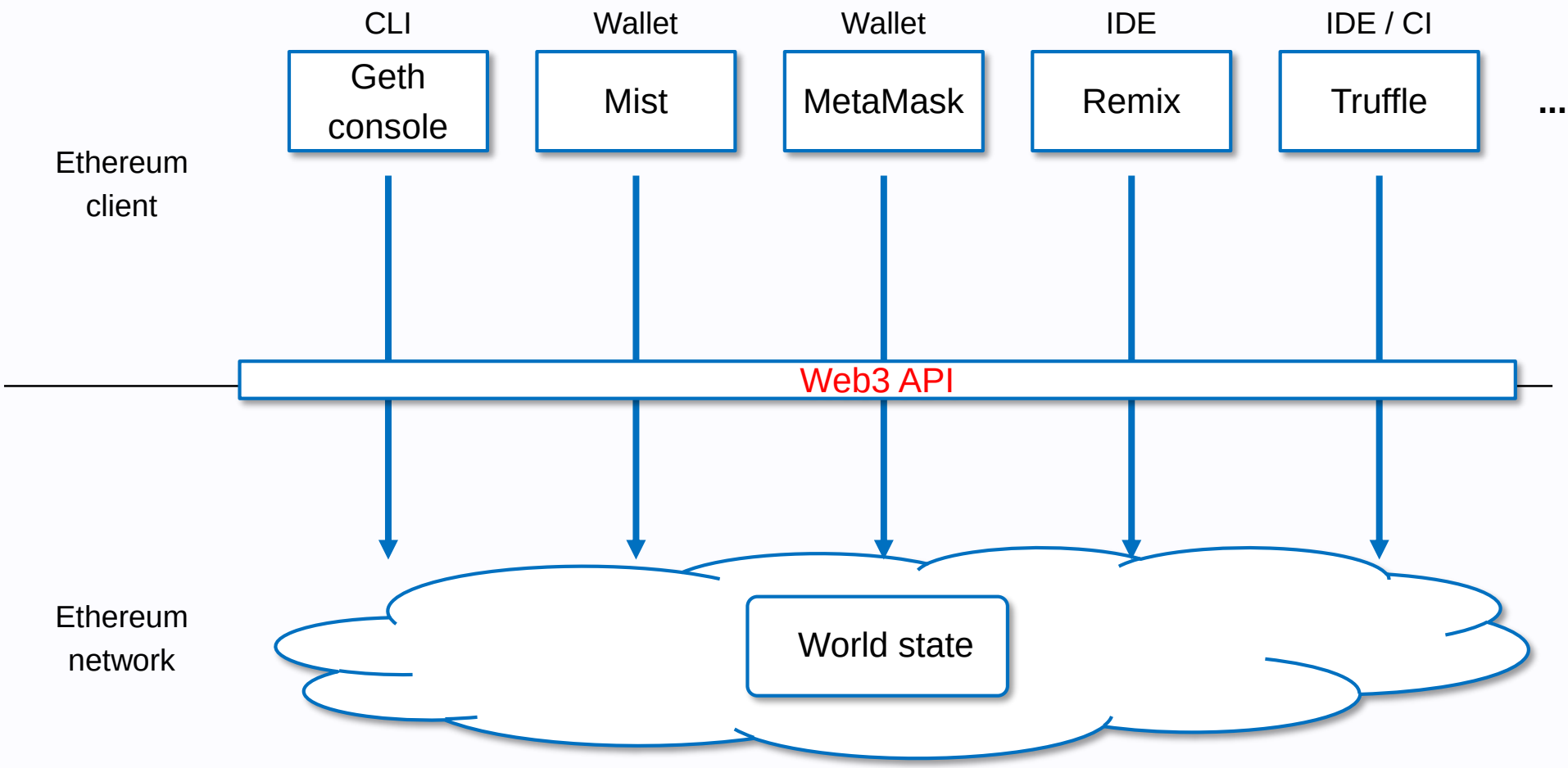

References : [E7]. Ch.7, [E1] Ch.9, Appendix H, [W4], [W2]

# Appendix B

# Appendix B

# Web3 API

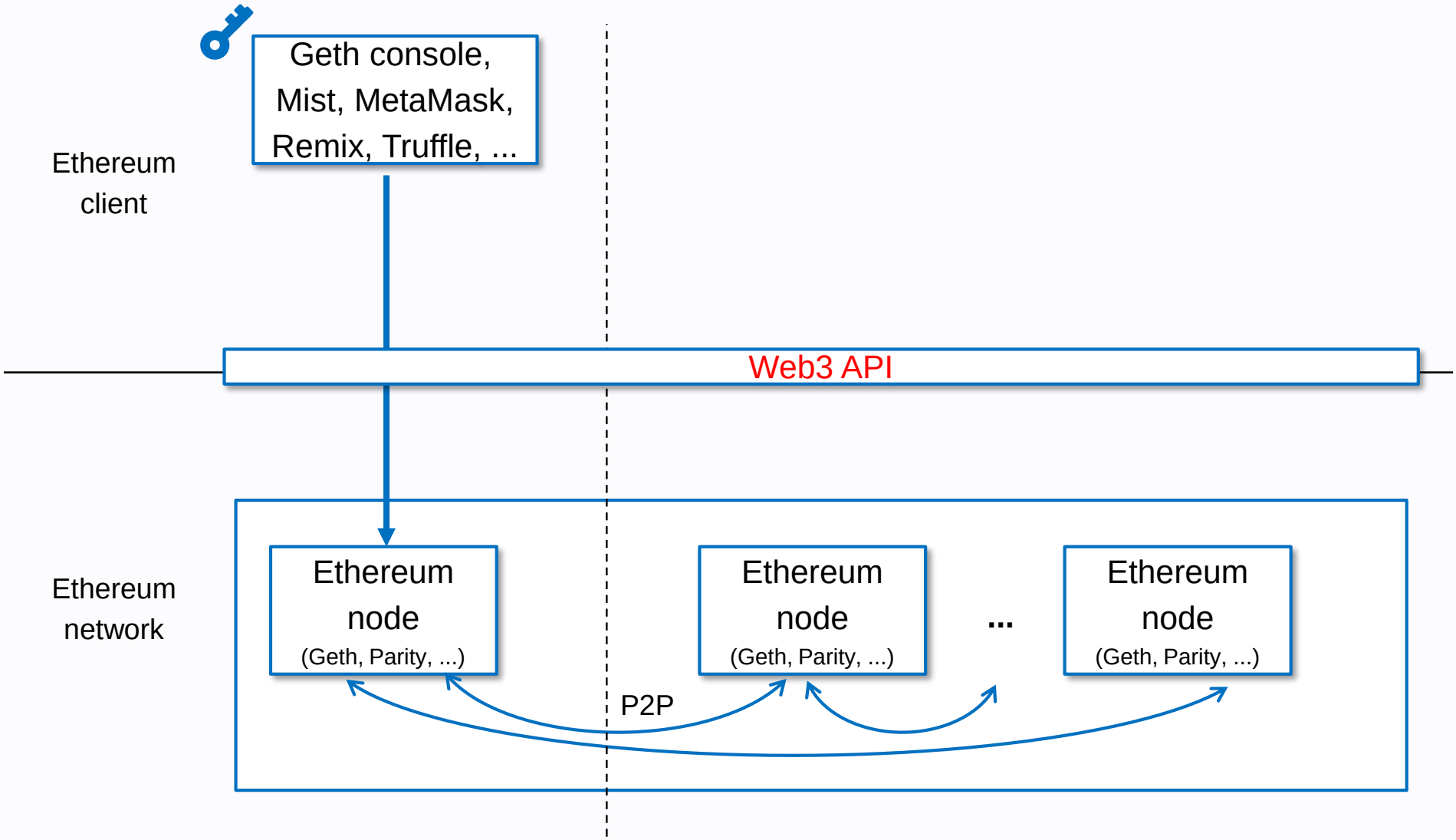
# Web3 API and client




Ethereum clients access to Ethereum network via Web3 API.

References : [E8], [C1], [C3], [C4], [C5], [C6]

# Web3 API and client



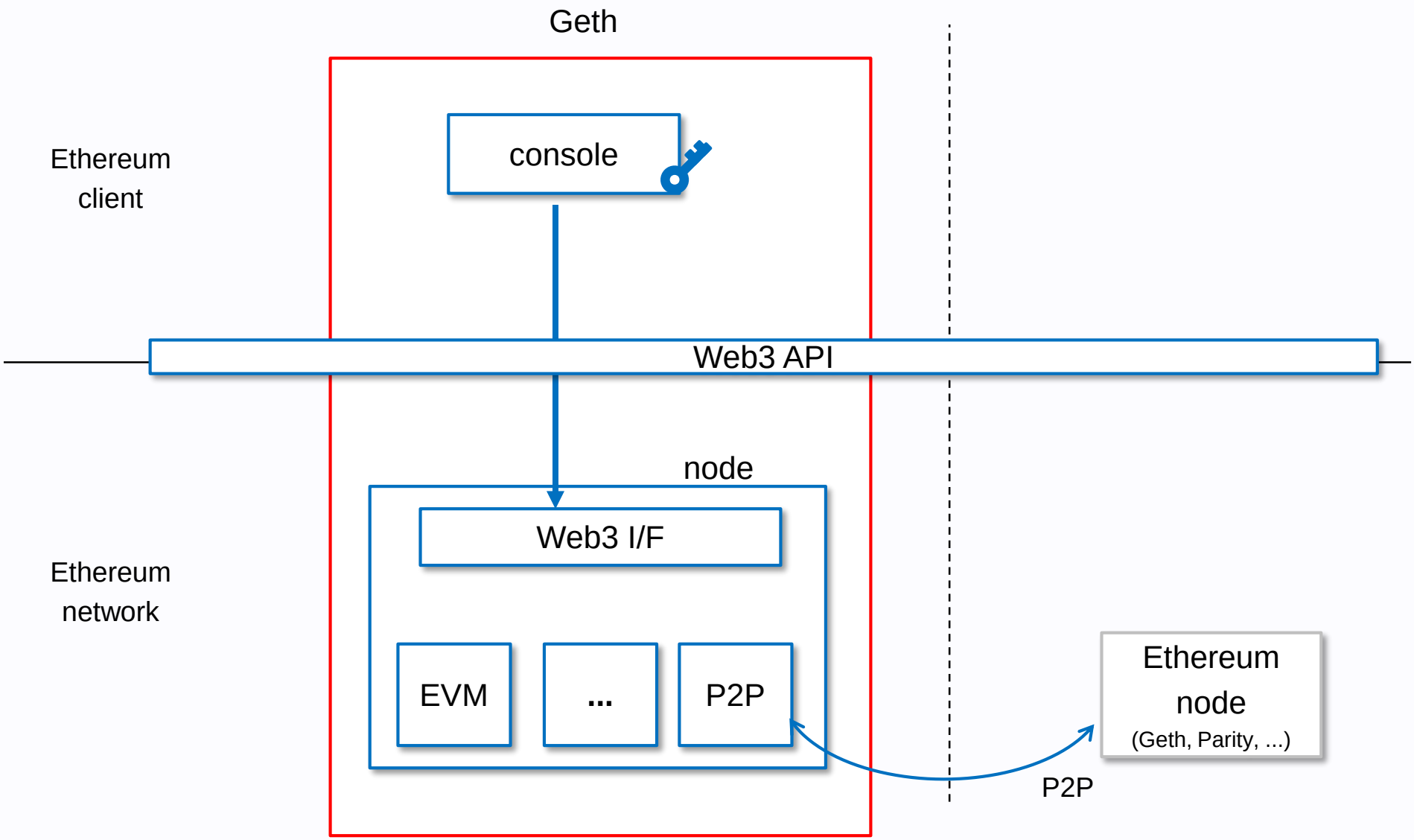

Ethereum clients access to Ethereum network via Web3 API.

References : [E8], [C1], [C3], [C4], [C5], [C6]

# Appendix B

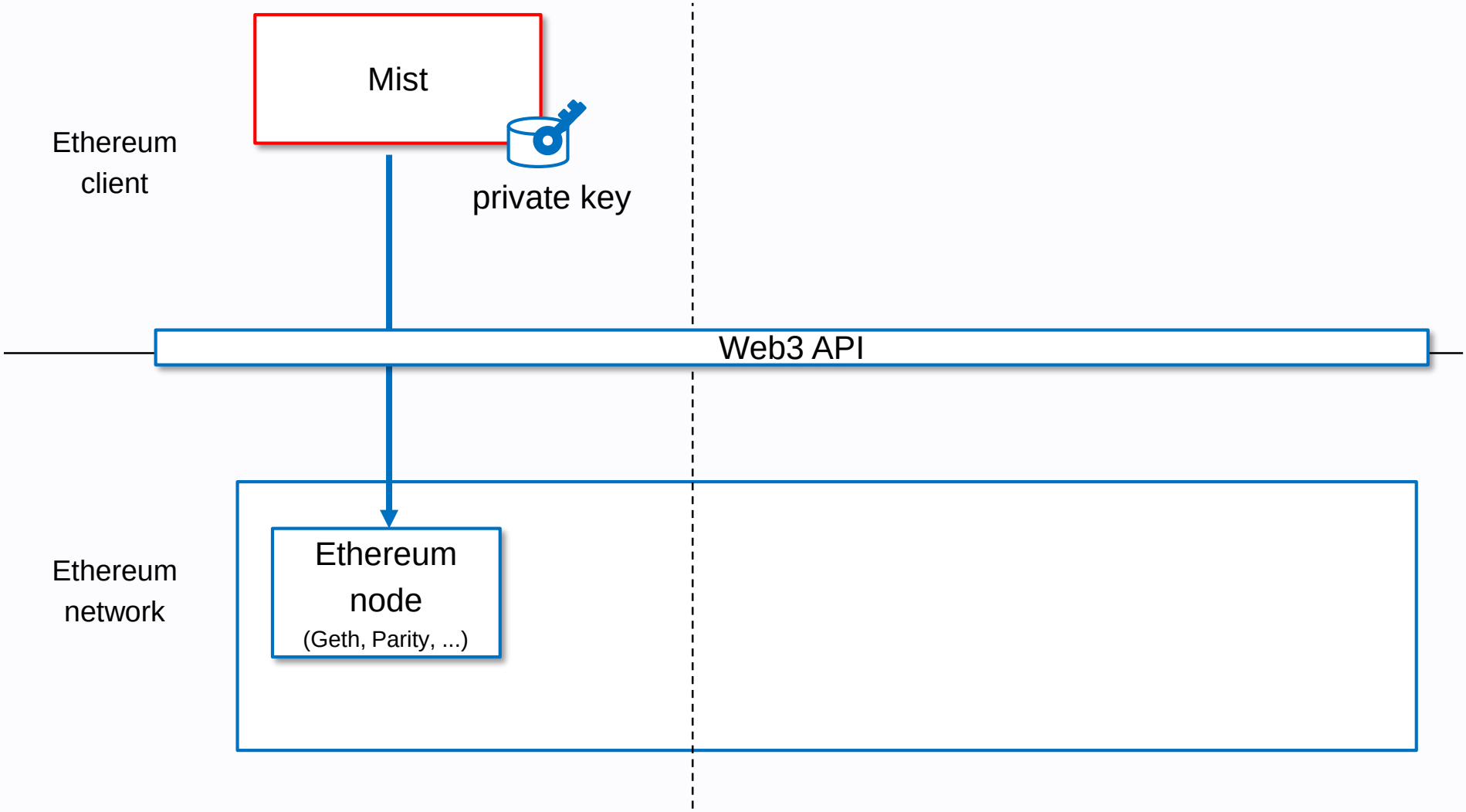
Geth, Mist, Solc, Remix, Truffle, ...

# Geth



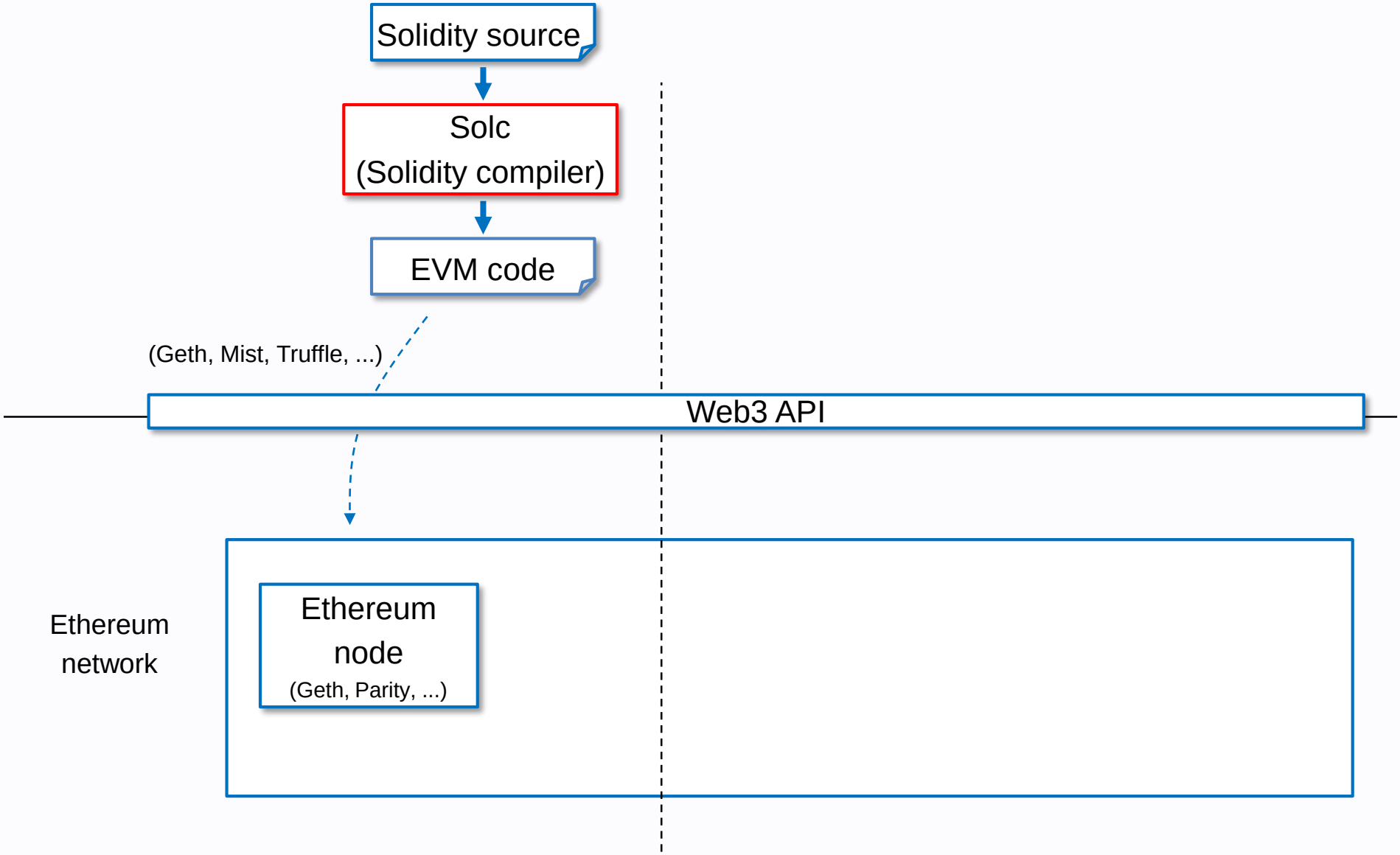

References : [C1]

# Mist



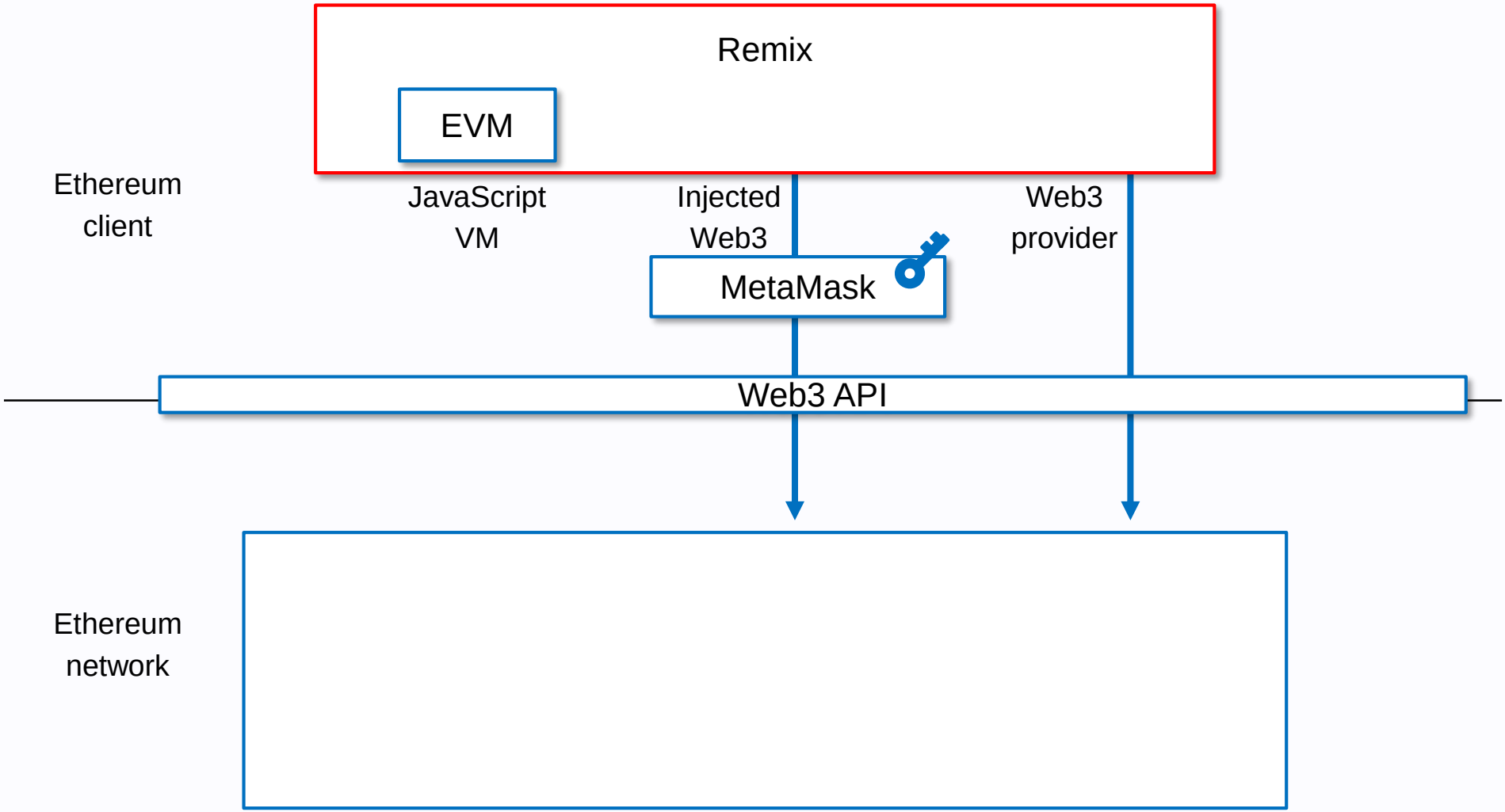

References : [C3]

# Solc



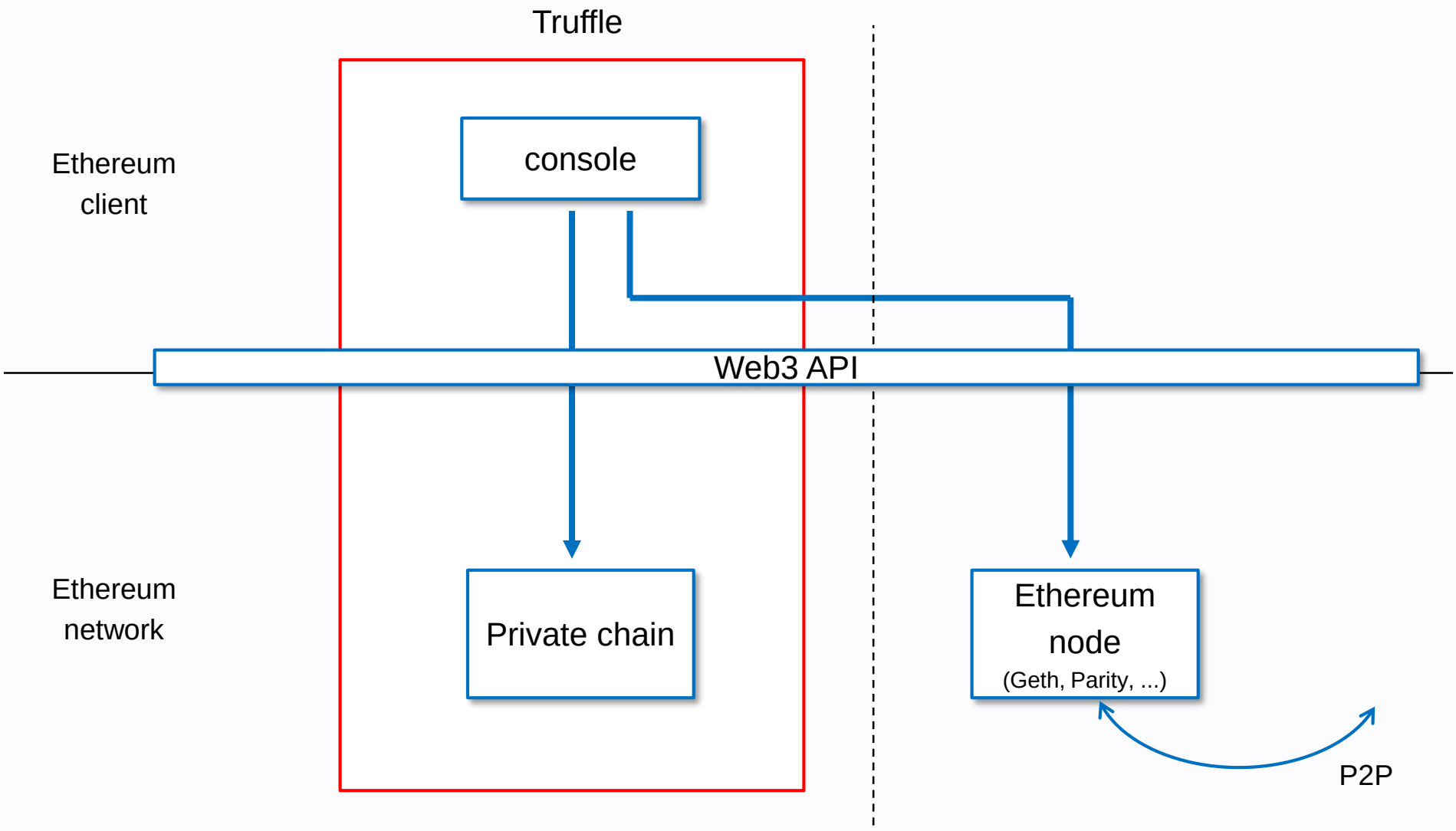

References : [C2]

# Remix




References : [C5]

# Truffle

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