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# A DENOTATIONAL APPROACH TO RELEASE/ACQUIRE CONCURRENCY

# GOAL

**RELEASE/AQUIRE**

**For weak,  
shared-  
memory model**

**Using Brookes-style [1996],  
totally-ordered traces**

**Design a standard, monad-based  
denotational semantics à la Moggi [1991]**

# WHY RELEASE/ACQUIRE?



**RA is an important fragment of C11, enables decentralized architectures (POWER)**

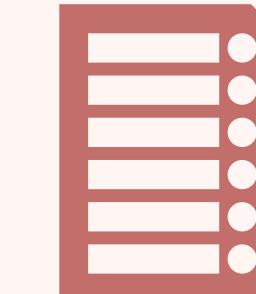


**First adaptation of Brookes's traces to a relaxed-memory software model**

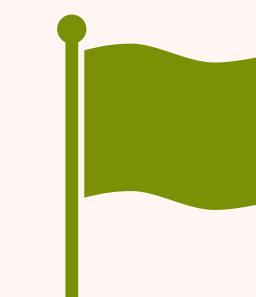


**Intricate causal semantics, not overwhelmingly detailed**

**acyclic  $(po \cup rf)^+ \mid_{loc} \cup mo \cup rb$**



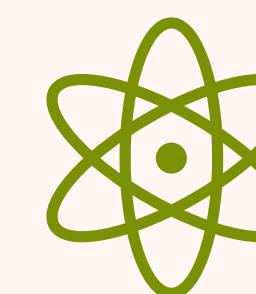
**Threads can disagree about the order of writes (non-multi-copy-atomic)**



**Supports flag-based synchronization (e.g. for signaling a data structure is ready)**

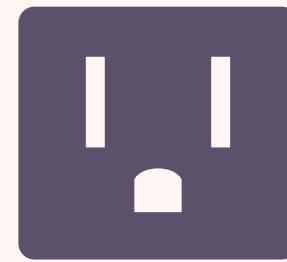


**Supports important transformations (e.g. thread sequencing, write-read-reorder)**



**Supports read-modify-write atomicity (e.g. atomic compare-and-swap)**

# WHY MONAD-BASED?



**Standard**



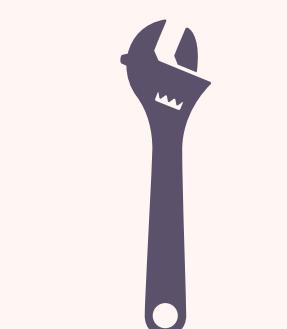
**Program effects added  
modularly**



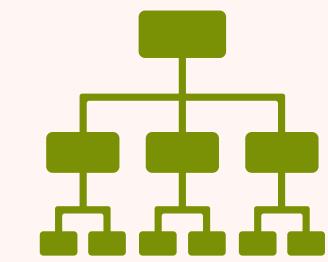
**The core language remains  
exactly the same**



**Higher-order programming  
built-in**

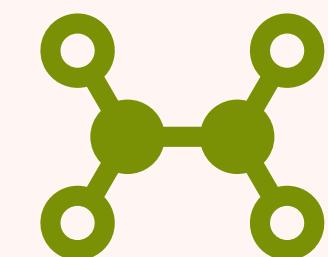


**Rich toolkit of definitions,  
theorems, and techniques**



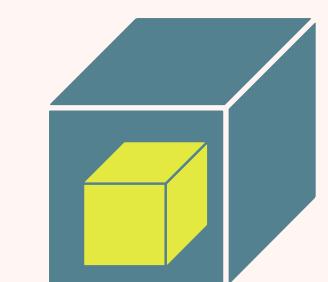
**Structural transformations**

$\text{if } K_{\text{pure}} \text{ then } M; P_1 \text{ else } M; P_2$   
 $\cong M; \text{if } K_{\text{pure}} \text{ then } P_1 \text{ else } P_2$



**Logical relations**

**“related inputs go to related outputs”**



**Substitution lemma**

**syntax substitution ~ semantic context**

etc  
etc  
etc

# DENOTATIONAL SEMANTICS

$\llbracket - \rrbracket : \text{Term} \rightarrow \text{Deno}$

compose from subterms' denotations

For example:

$$\llbracket \text{let } x = M_1 \text{ in } M_2 \rrbracket \triangleq \llbracket M_1 \rrbracket \textcolor{yellow}{\triangleright}= \lambda x . \llbracket M_2 \rrbracket$$

Monadic bind

$$\llbracket M_1 \parallel M_2 \rrbracket \triangleq \llbracket M_1 \rrbracket \textcolor{yellow}{|||} \llbracket M_2 \rrbracket$$

A modular effect extension

# ADEQUACY

## Abstraction:

We want this to hold  
as much as possible

$$\llbracket - \rrbracket : \text{Term} \rightarrow \text{Deno}$$

$$\llbracket M \rrbracket \geq \llbracket K \rrbracket \implies M \twoheadrightarrow K$$

**$K$  denotationally refines  $M$**

**$K$  contextually refines  $M$**   
**safe to replace within any context**



# ADEQUACY

With non-determinism as sets

**Abstraction:**  
We want this to hold  
as much as possible

$$\text{Deno} = \mathcal{P}(\text{Behavior})$$

$$[\![M]\!] \supseteq [\![K]\!] \implies M \twoheadrightarrow K$$

**Every possible behavior of  $K$   
is a possible behavior of  $M$**

**$K$  contextually refines  $M$   
safe to replace within any context**



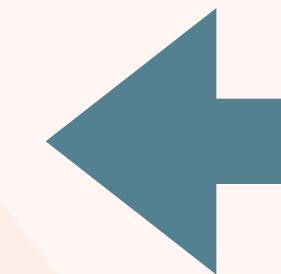
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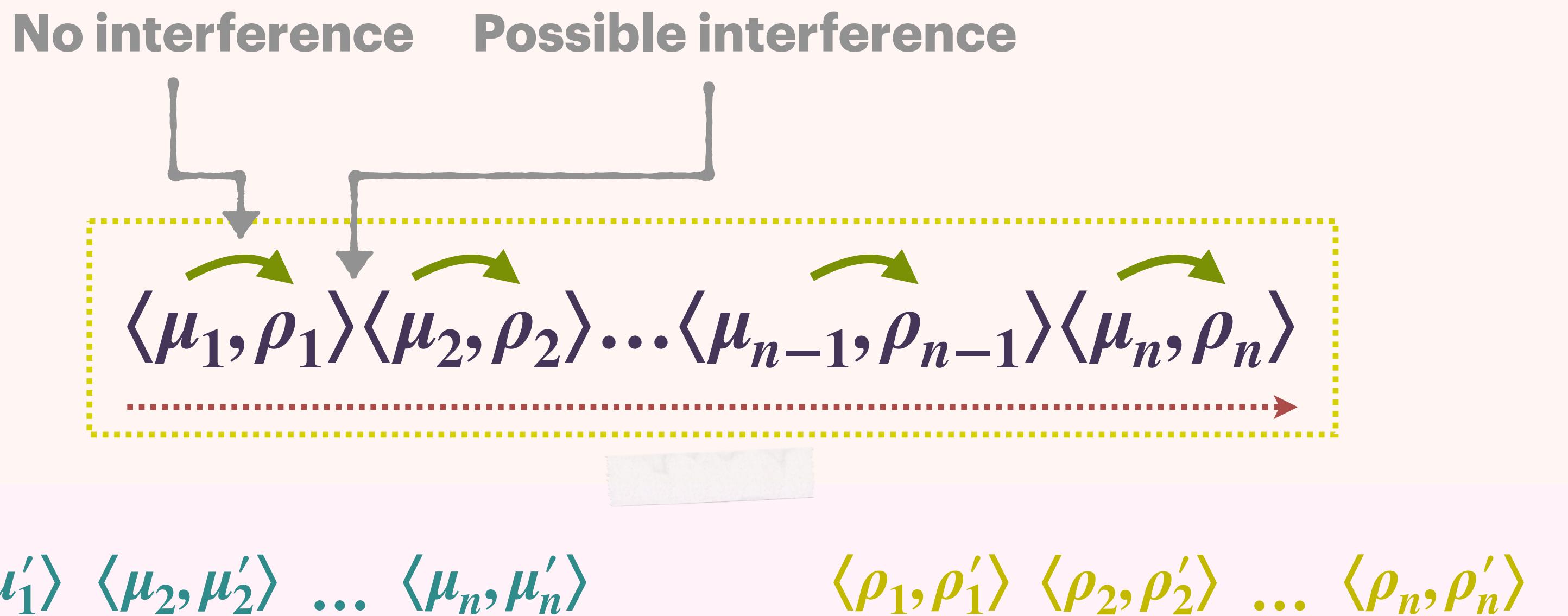


# TRACE-BASED SEMANTICS

Brookes [1996]

## Main ingredient:

- **linearly-ordered traces**
- **of local state-transitions**
- **that sequence and interleave**

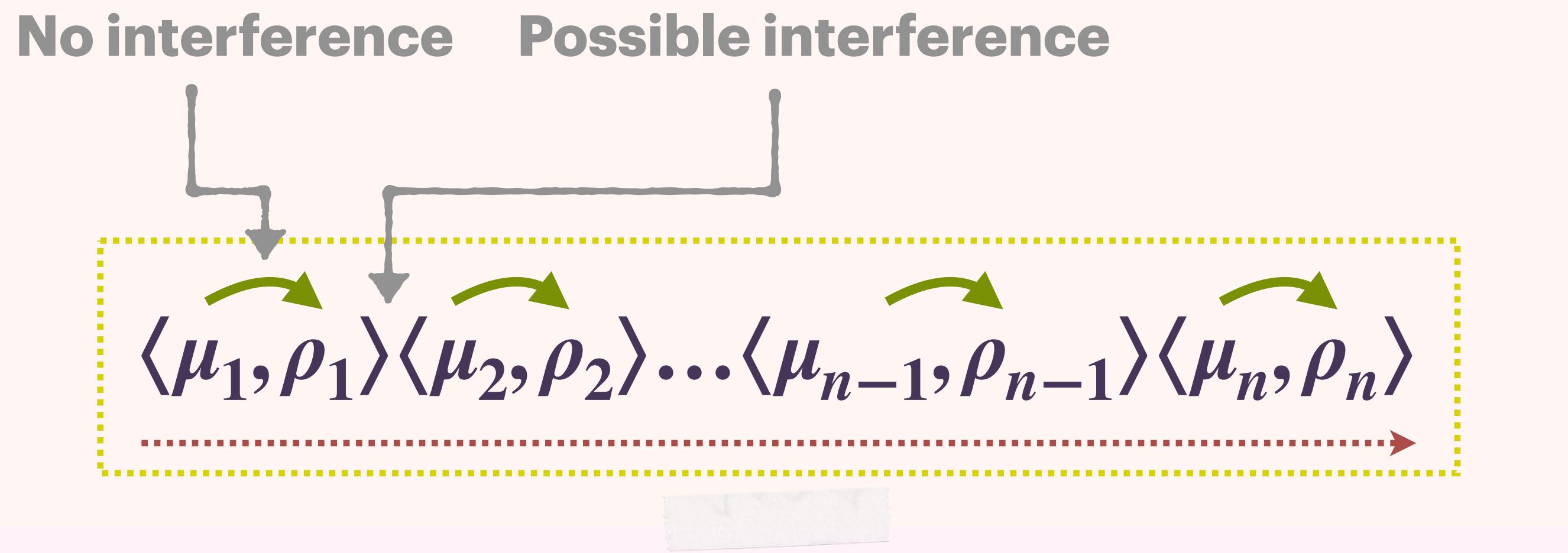


# TRACE-BASED SEMANTICS

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## Main ingredient:

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$\langle \mu_1, \mu'_1 \rangle \langle \mu_2, \mu'_2 \rangle \dots \langle \mu_n, \mu'_n \rangle \langle \rho_1, \rho'_1 \rangle \langle \rho_2, \rho'_2 \rangle \dots \langle \rho_n, \rho'_n \rangle$

**SEQUENCE**

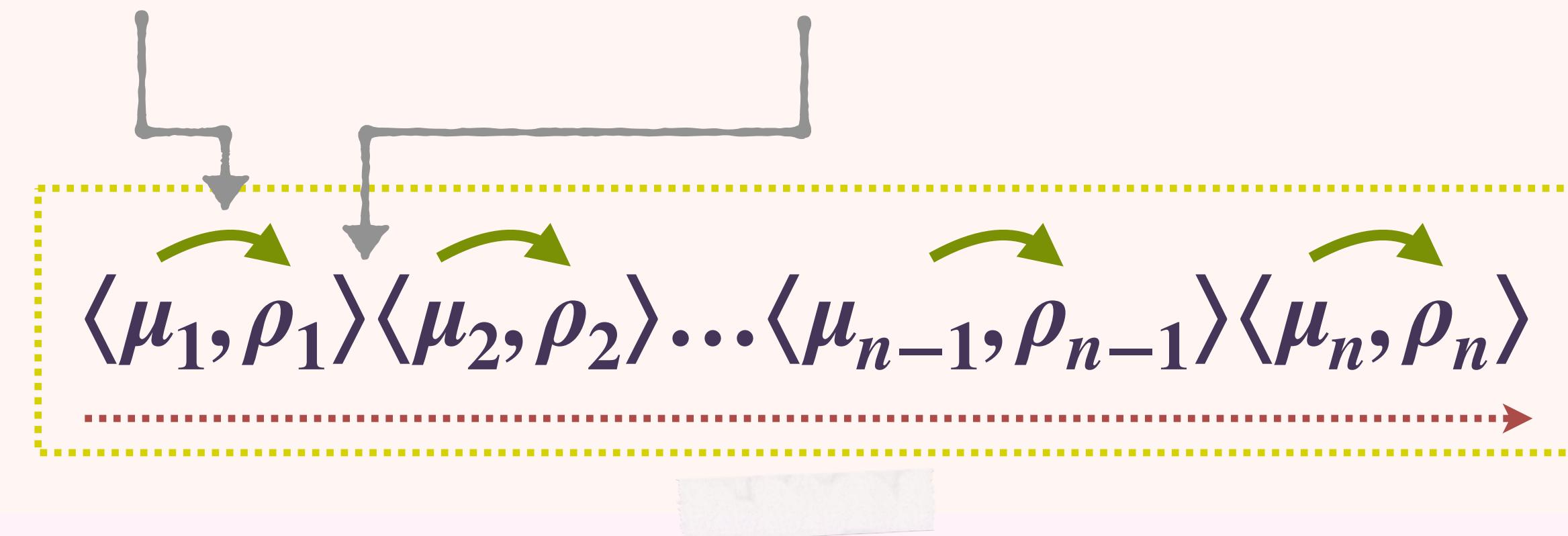
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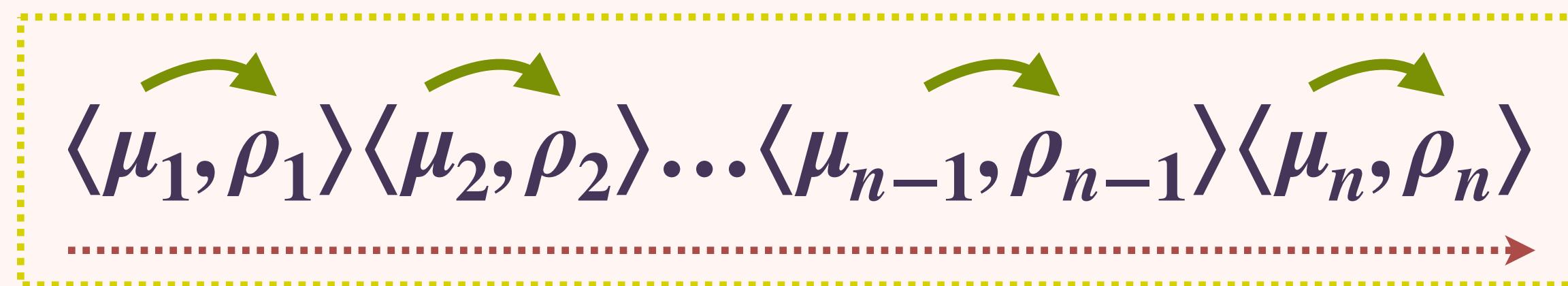
No interference      Possible interference



**INTERLEAVE**

# CONTRIBUTION

- **Standard denotational semantics**
- **Adequate for Release/Acquire**
- **Abstract enough to verify every known RA-valid transformation in the literature (but no full-abstraction theorem)**
- **Subtlety: Rely/Guarantee interpretation of traces  
(our traces do not correspond directly to interrupted executions)**



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# **RELEASE/ACQUIRE**

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# INTUITION VIA LITMUS TESTS

## Store Buffering

$$\begin{array}{c} x := 0; y := 0; \\ x := 1; \parallel y := 1; \\ y? \quad \quad \quad x? \end{array}$$

## Message Passing

$$\begin{array}{c} x := 0; y := 0; \\ x := 1; \parallel y?; \\ y := 1 \quad \quad \quad x? \end{array}$$

# INTUITION VIA LITMUS TESTS

## Store Buffering

*Propagation is  
not instant*

$$\begin{array}{c} x := 0; y := 0; \\ x := 1; \quad || \quad y := 1; \\ y? \quad //0 \quad \uparrow \quad \downarrow \quad x? \quad //0 \end{array}$$


## Message Passing

$$\begin{array}{c} x := 0; y := 0; \\ x := 1; \quad || \quad y?; \\ y := 1 \quad \quad \quad || \quad x? \end{array}$$

# INTUITION VIA LITMUS TESTS

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$$\begin{array}{c} x := 0; y := 0; \\ x := 1; \quad \parallel \quad y := 1; \\ y? \quad //0 \quad \uparrow \quad \uparrow \quad \downarrow \quad \downarrow \quad x? \quad //0 \end{array}$$


## Message Pass

*Propagation  
respects causality*

$$\begin{array}{c} x := 0; y := 0; \\ x := 1; \quad \parallel \quad y?; //1 \\ y := 1 \quad \downarrow \quad \uparrow \quad \downarrow \quad x? \quad //0 \end{array}$$

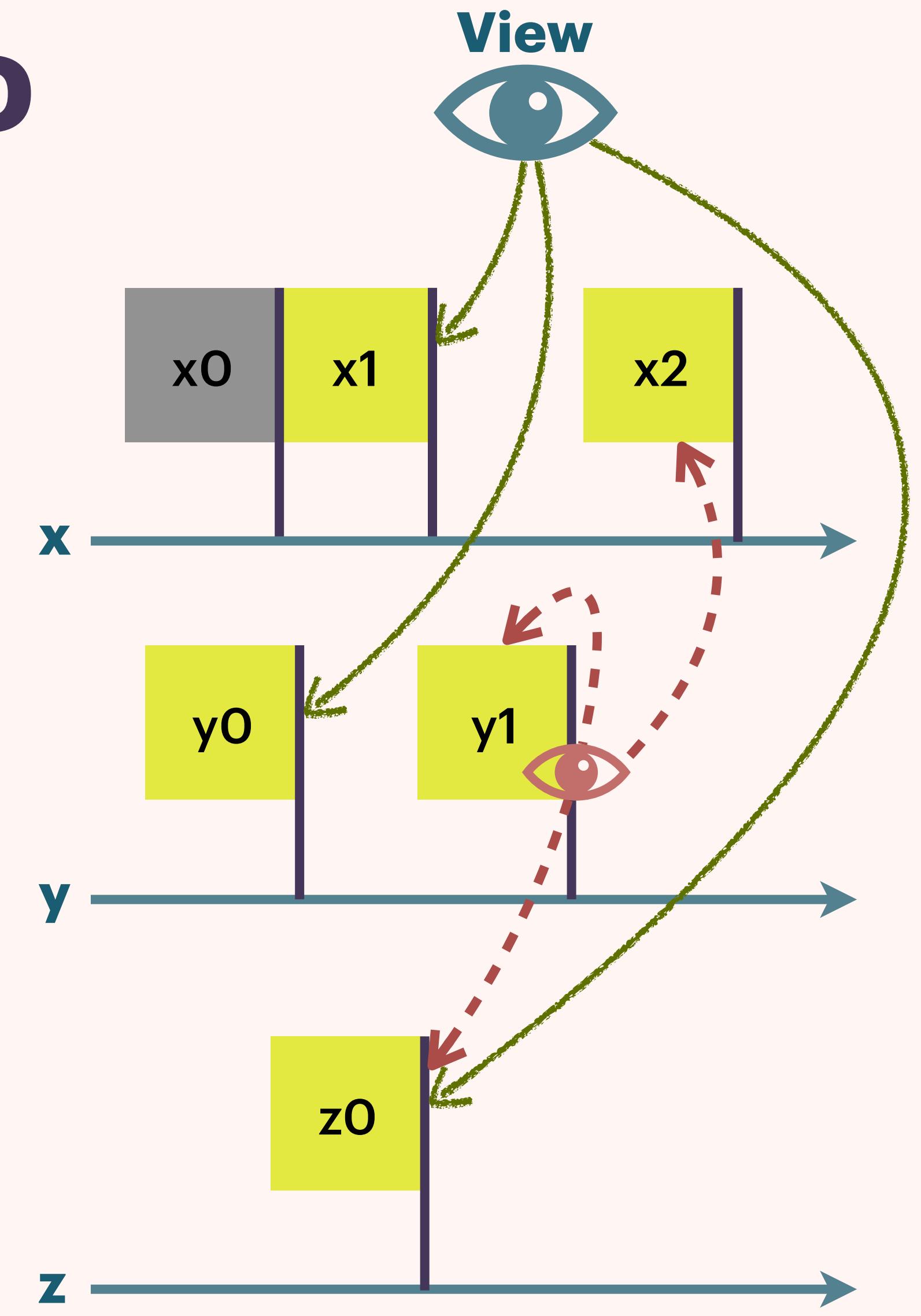

# RELEASE/ACQUIRE VIEW-BASED OPERATIONAL SEMANTICS

Kang et al. [2017]

- **Memory:** Timeline per location
- Populated with immutable messages holding values
- Each view points to msgs on each timeline
- Threads have views — cannot read from “the past”
- Msgs have views for enforcing causal propagation

*Propagation is  
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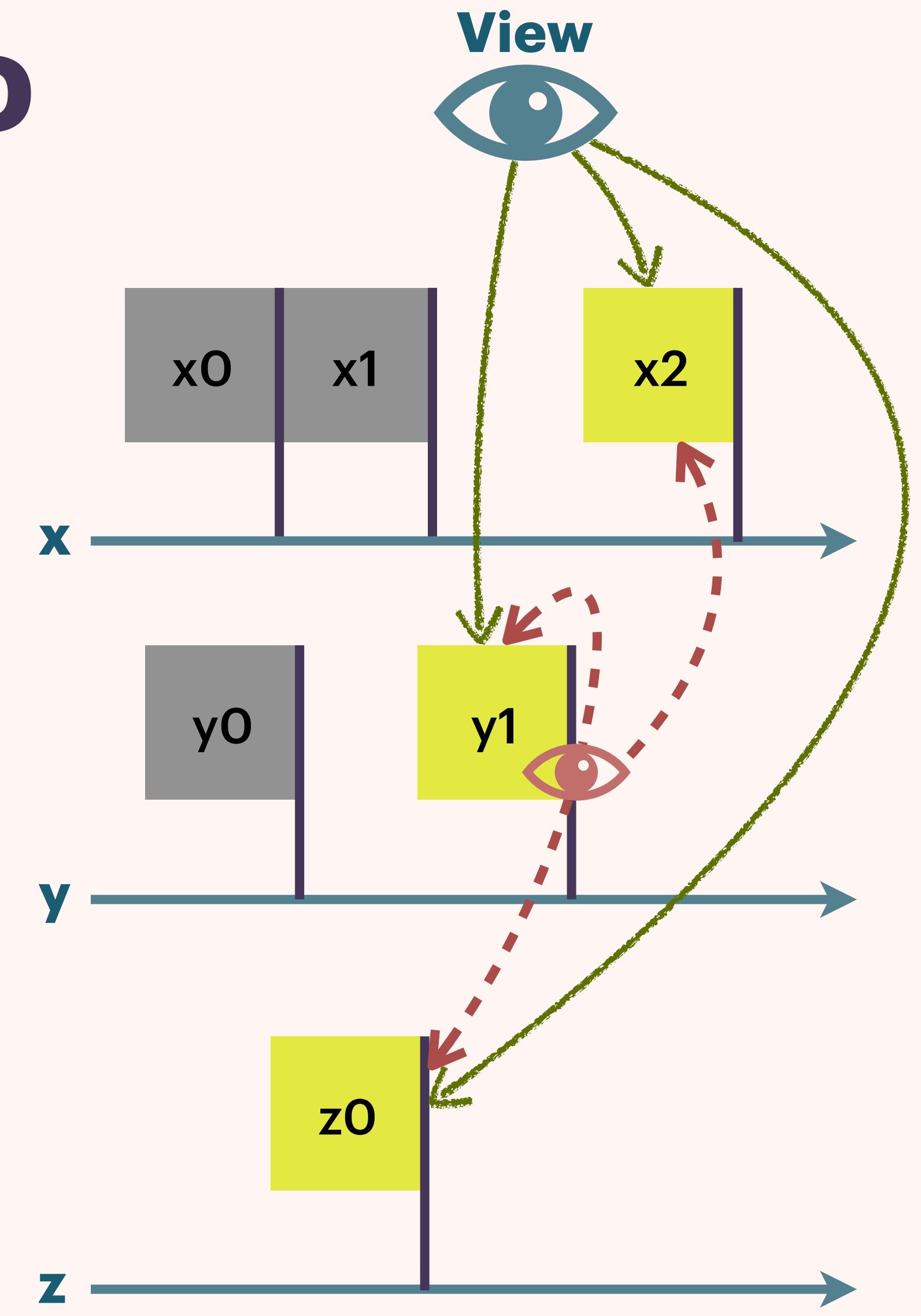
# RELEASE/ACQUIRE VIEW-BASED OPERATIONAL SEMANTICS

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*Propagation is  
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# SUPPORTING FIRST-CLASS PARALLELISM

In the operational semantics

**Traditional op-sem: static view-array**

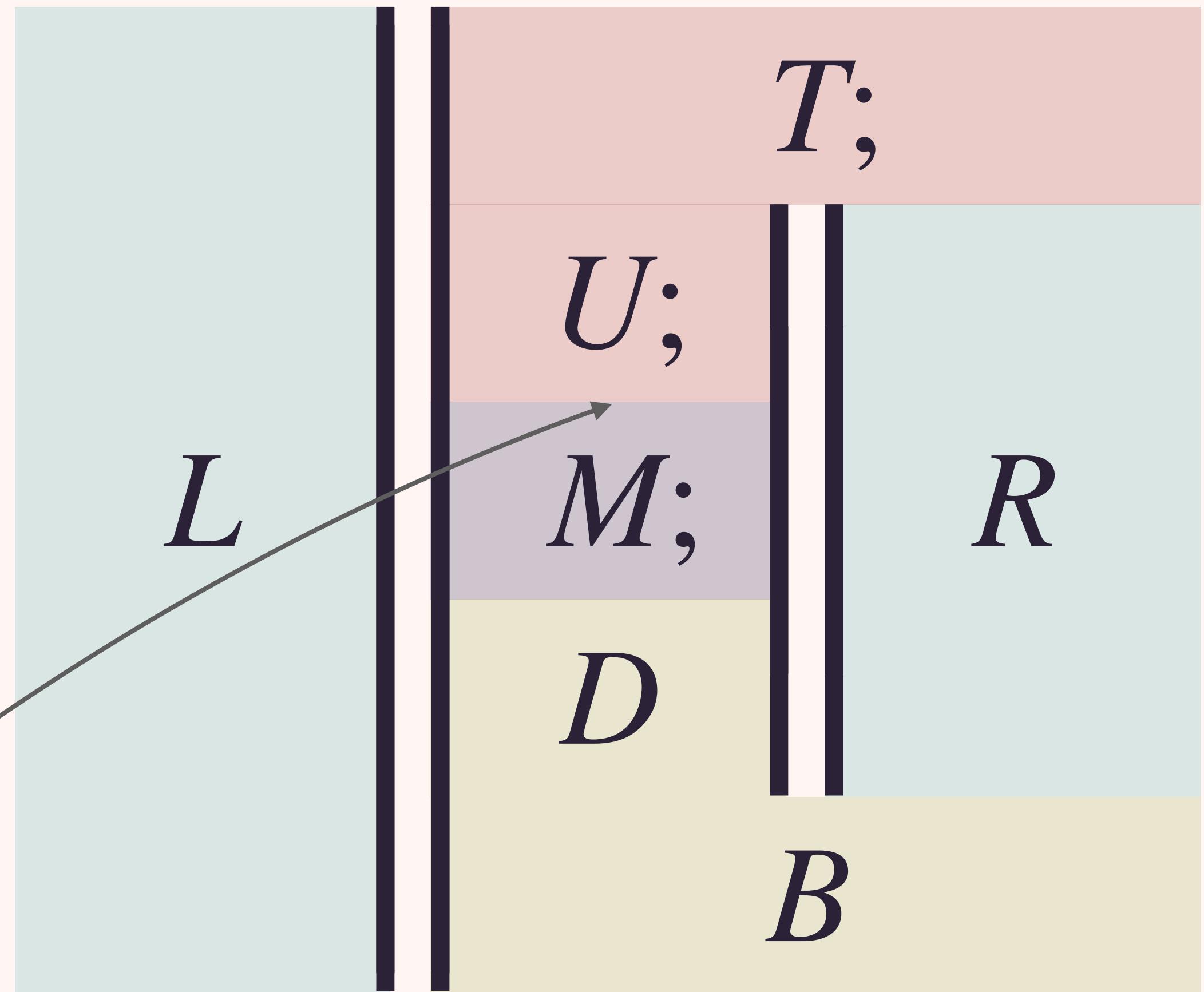
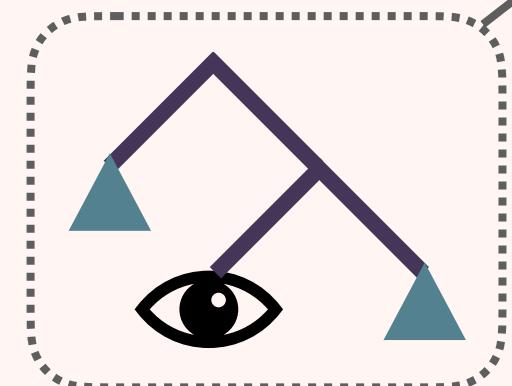
**Laws of Parallel Programming, e.g. Left Neutrality**

$$\llbracket M \rrbracket = \llbracket (\langle \rangle \parallel M). \text{snd} \rrbracket$$

**Write-Read Deorder (Crucial RA refinement)**

$$\llbracket x := 1; y? \rrbracket \supseteq \llbracket (x := 1 \parallel y?). \text{snd} \rrbracket$$

**Extended op-sem: dynamic view-tree**

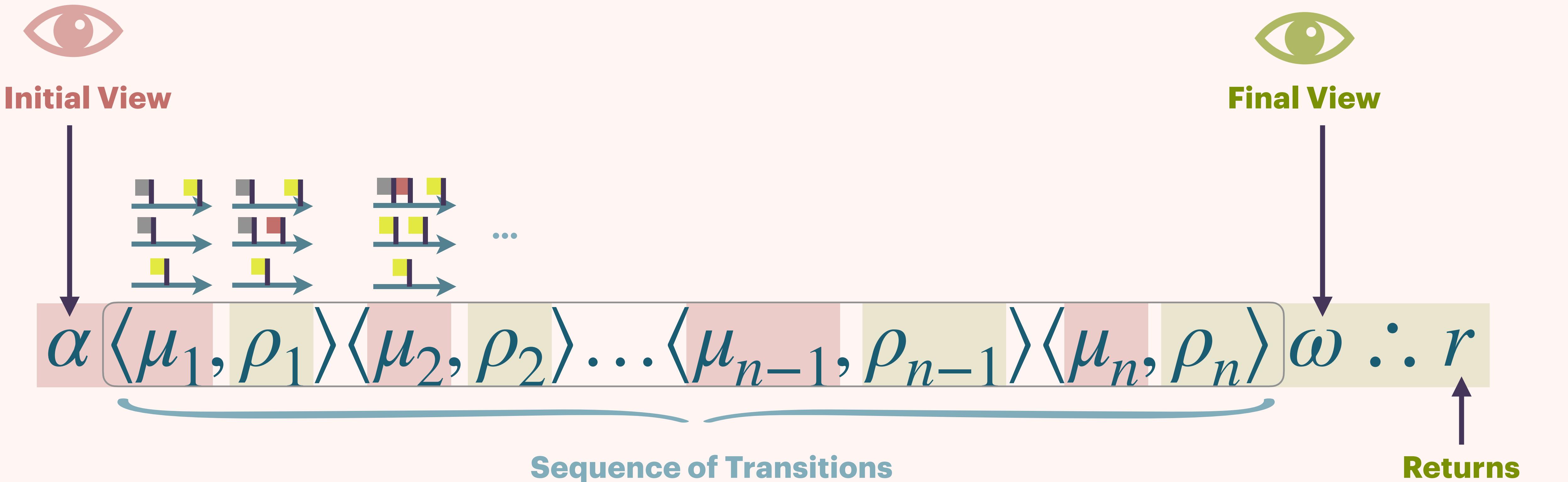


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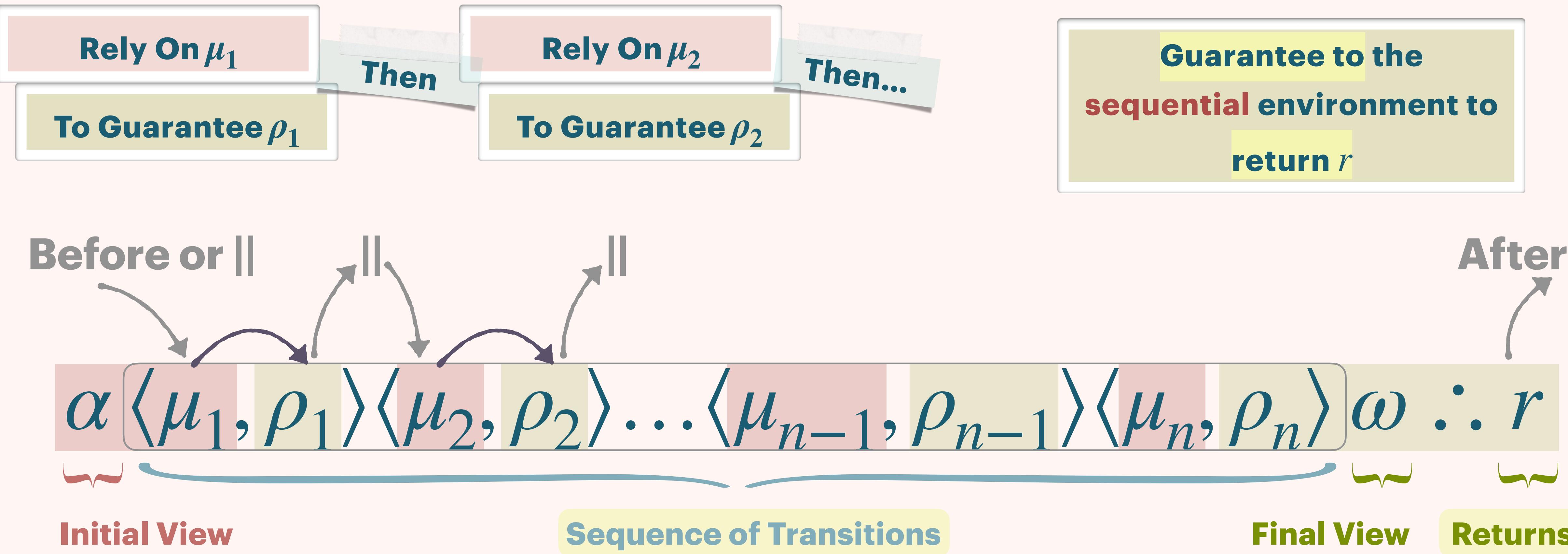
# **RELEASE/ACQUIRE TRACES**



# TRACE-BASED SEMANTICS IN RA



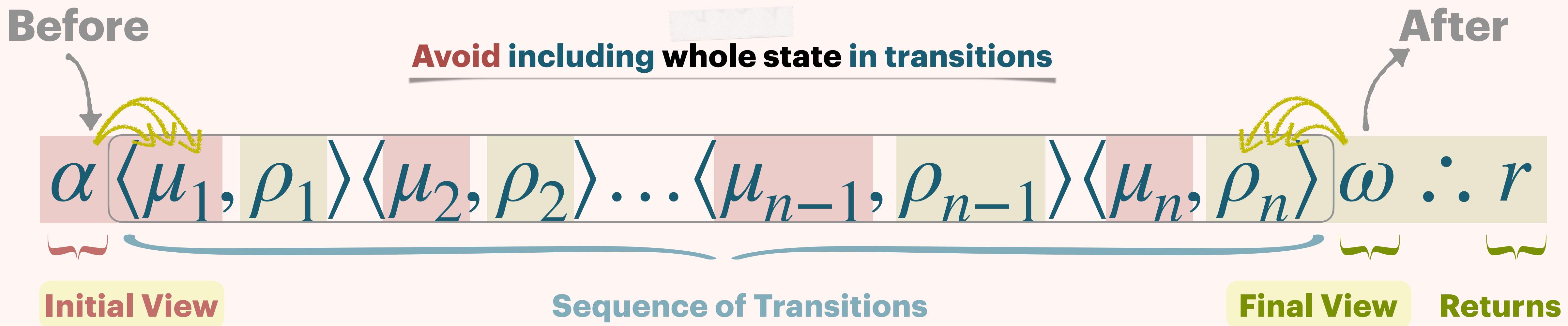
# TRACE-BASED SEMANTICS IN RA



# TRACE-BASED SEMANTICS IN RA

Rely on the  
sequential environment to  
reveal messages

Guarantee to the  
sequential environment to  
reveal messages



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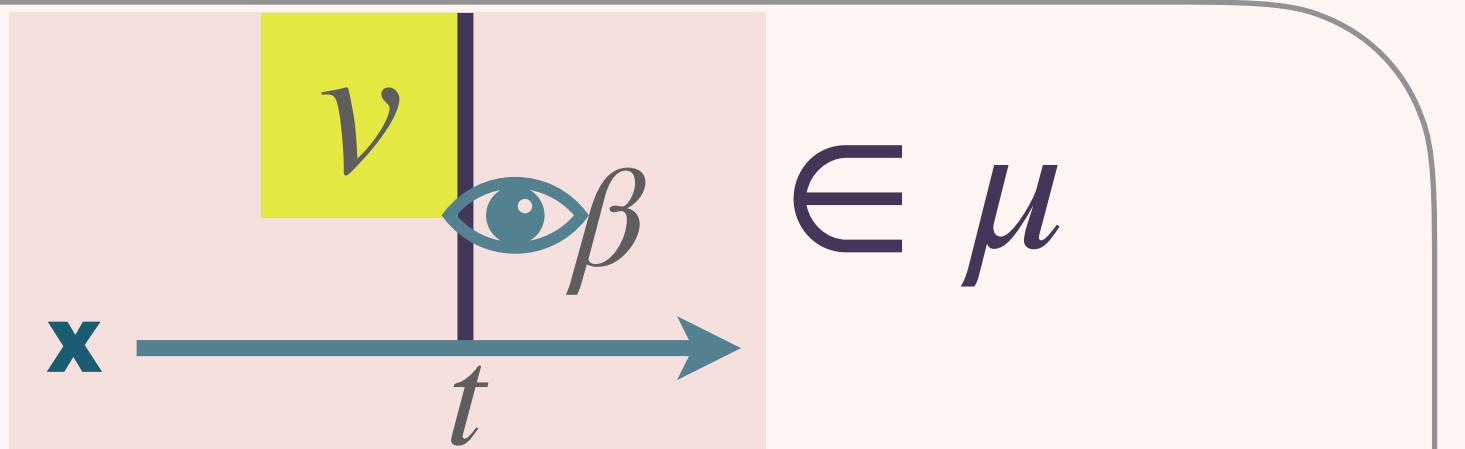
# RA DENOTATIONS

$\llbracket - \rrbracket : \text{Term} \rightarrow \text{Deno}$

# MEMORY ACCESS

**Read**

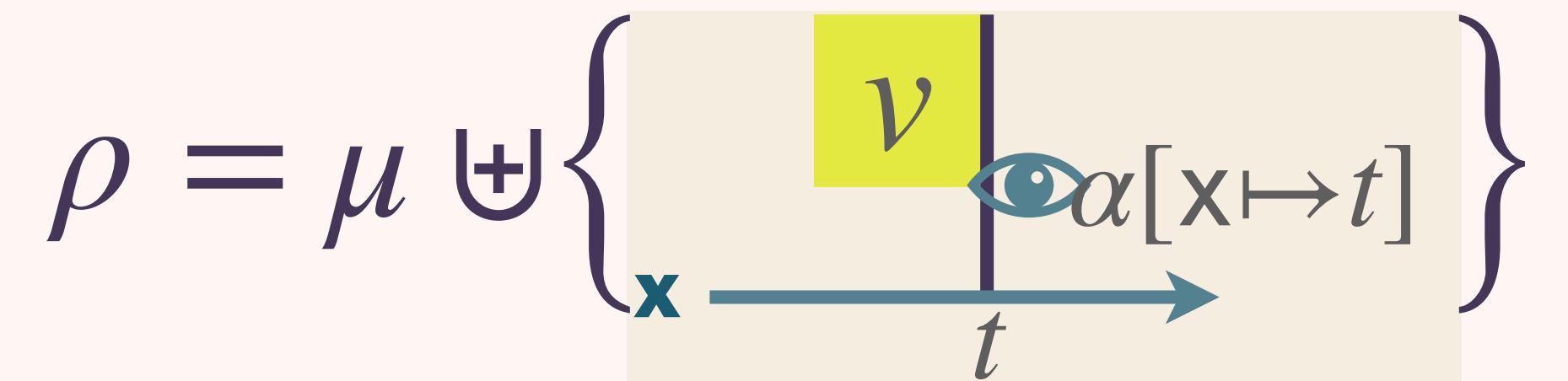
$$\alpha(x) \leq t$$



$$\frac{}{\alpha \langle \mu, \mu \rangle \alpha \sqcup \beta \therefore v \in \llbracket x? \rrbracket}$$

**Write**

$$\alpha(x) < t$$



$$\frac{}{\alpha \langle \mu, \rho \rangle \alpha[x \mapsto t] \therefore \langle \rangle \in \llbracket x := v \rrbracket}$$

**RMW**

**Read the extended paper**

↗(^‿^)↗

# COMPOSITION

## Sequential

$$\frac{\alpha[\xi_1]\kappa \doteq r_1 \in \llbracket M_1 \rrbracket \quad \kappa[\xi_2]\omega \doteq r_2 \in \llbracket M_2 \rrbracket[x \mapsto r_1]}{\alpha[\xi_1\xi_2]\omega \doteq r_2 \in \llbracket \text{let } x = M_1 \text{ in } M_2 \rrbracket}$$

SEQUENCING TRANSITIONS

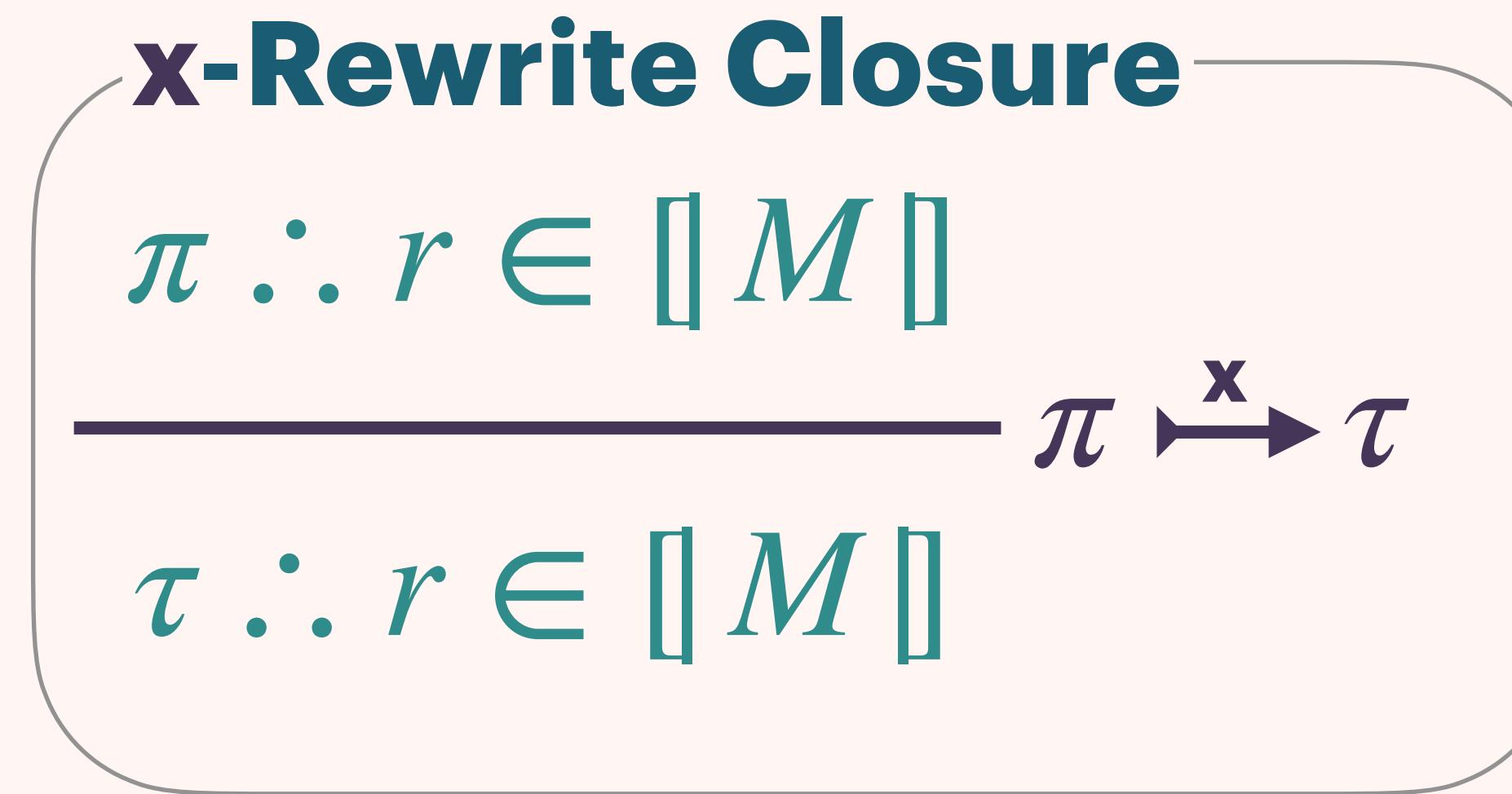
## Parallel

$$\frac{\forall i \in \{1,2\} . \alpha[\xi_i]\omega \doteq r_i \in \llbracket M_i \rrbracket \quad \xi \in \xi_1 \parallel \xi_2}{\alpha[\xi]\omega \doteq \langle r_1, r_2 \rangle \in \llbracket M_1 \parallel M_2 \rrbracket}$$

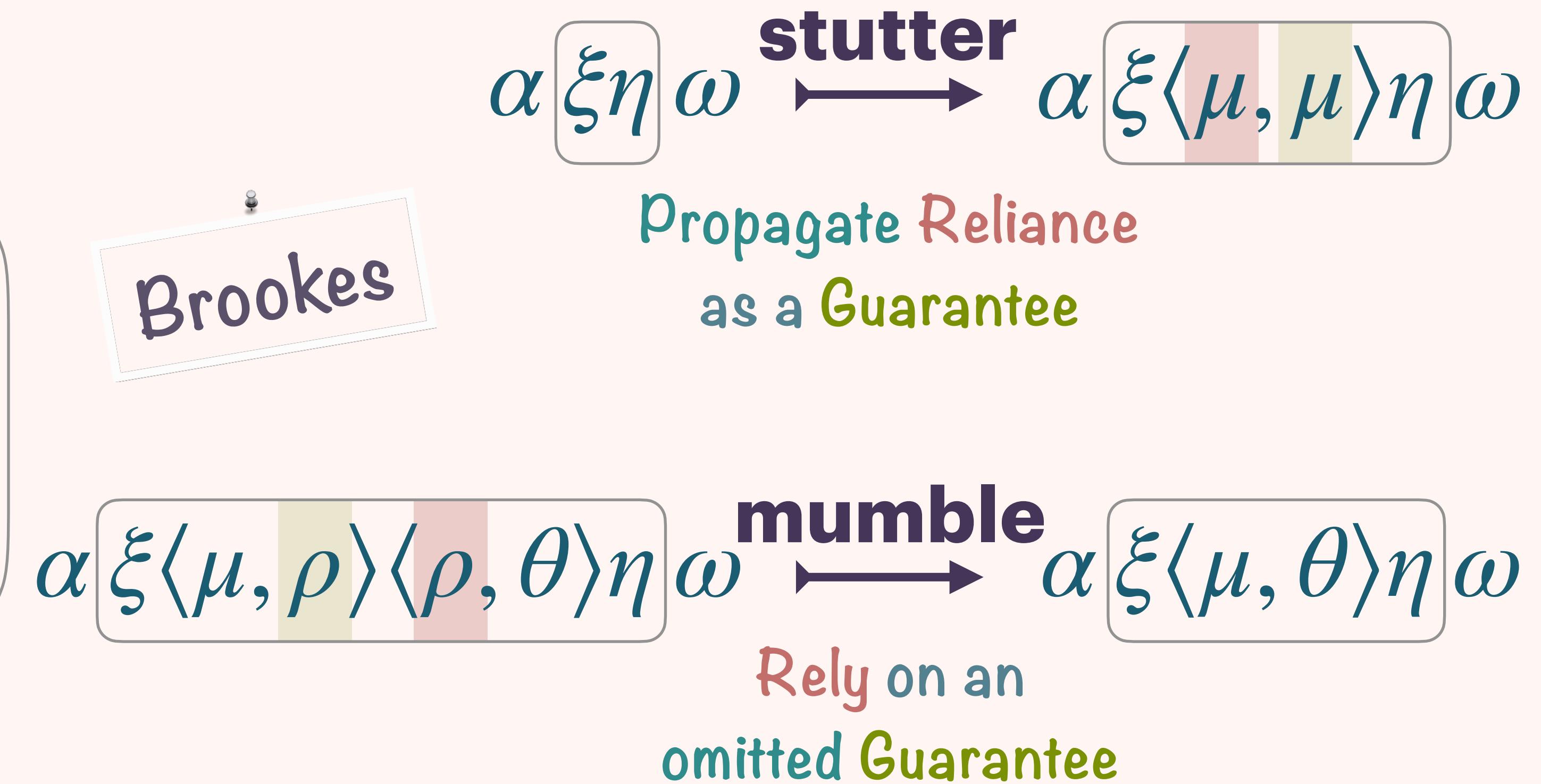
INTERLEAVING TRANSITIONS

# REWRITE CLOSURE RULES

- Close denotations under rewrite rules



- Never introduced externally observable behavior



# REWRITE CLOSURE RULES

- Close denotations under rewrite rules

$$\alpha' \leq \alpha$$

$$\alpha[\xi]\omega \xrightarrow{\text{rewind}} \alpha'[\xi]\omega$$

Relying on more  
being revealed

## x-Rewrite Closure

$$\pi :. r \in \llbracket M \rrbracket$$

$$\pi \xrightarrow{x} \tau$$

$$\tau :. r \in \llbracket M \rrbracket$$



$$\omega \leq \omega'$$

$$\alpha[\xi]\omega \xrightarrow{\text{forward}} \alpha[\xi]\omega'$$

Guaranteeing less  
being revealed

- Never introduced externally observable behavior

---

# STRUCTURAL AND PARALLEL LAWS

**Monad laws — structural equivalences for free, e.g. Hoisting**

$$[\![ \text{if } K_{\text{pure}} \text{ then } M; P_1 \text{ else } M; P_2 ]\!] = [\![ M; \text{if } K_{\text{pure}} \text{ then } P_1 \text{ else } P_2 ]\!]$$

**Interleaving — properties of parallel composition, e.g. generalized sequencing**

$$[\!(M_1; M_2) \parallel (K_1; K_2)\!] \supseteq [\!(M_1 \parallel K_1); (M_2 \parallel K_2)\!]$$



# ABSTRACTION

# SOPHISTICATION REQUIRED

**Some transformations are valid due to more complicated reasons, e.g.:**

## Redundant Read Elimination

$$y?; M \rightarrow M$$

**holds due to  
delicate semantic invariants**

## Overwritten Write Elimination

$$x := 0; x := 1 \rightarrow x := 1$$

**holds even though  
state diverges**

# DELICATE SEMANTIC INVARIANTS

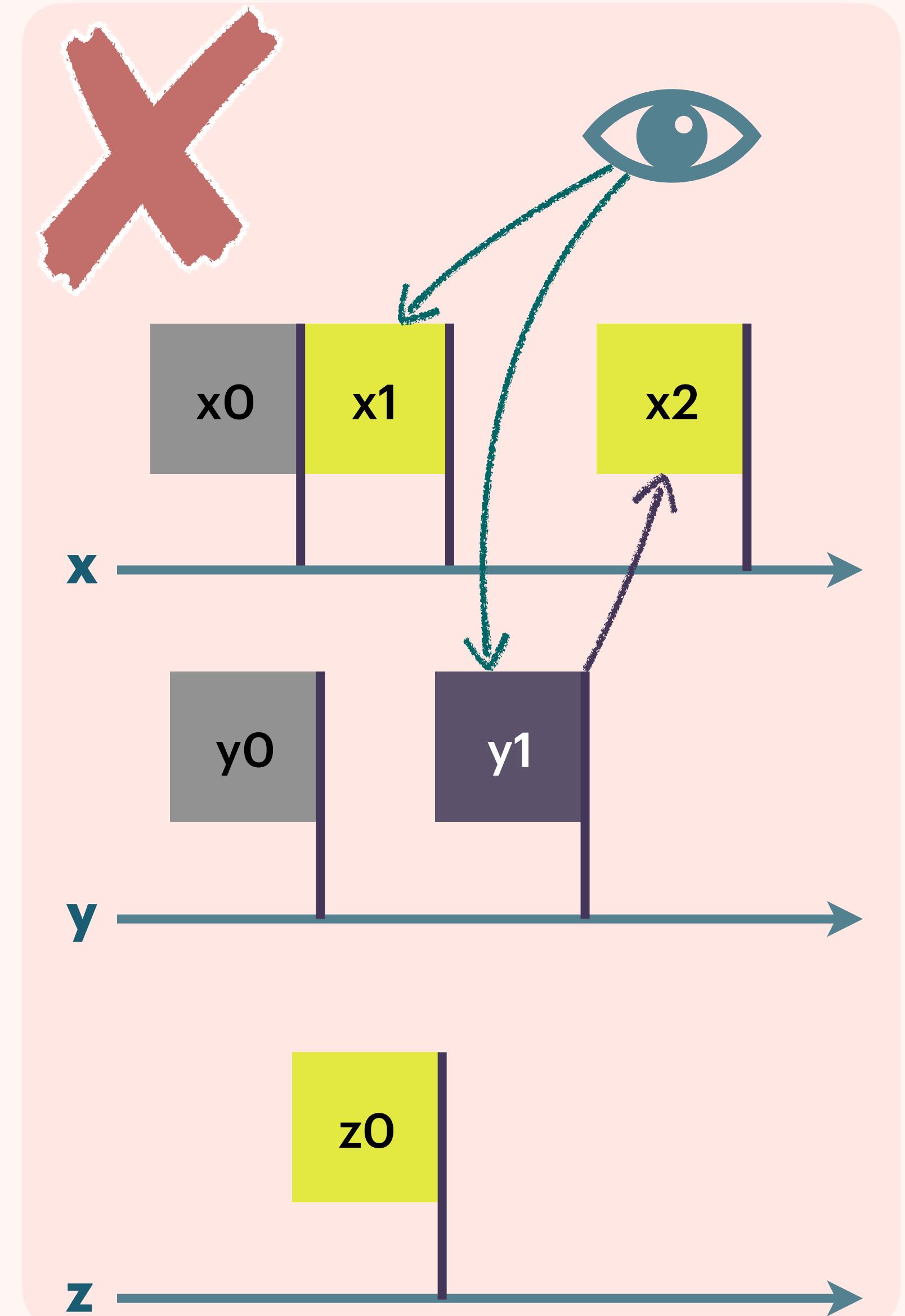
**Redundant Read Elimination**

$$y?; M \rightarrow\!\!\! \rightarrow M$$

**we identify operational invariants**

**and impose them as denotational requirements**

$$\kappa \langle \mu, \mu \rangle \kappa .: \langle \rangle \in \llbracket \langle \rangle \rrbracket \implies \exists v. \kappa \langle \mu, \mu \rangle \kappa .: v \in \llbracket y? \rrbracket$$



# DIVERGING STATE

## Overwritten Write Elimination

$x := 0; x := 1 \Rightarrow x := 1$

$$\alpha \langle \mu, \mu \uplus \{ \textcolor{brown}{1} \} \rangle \omega \doteq \langle \rangle$$

$\cup$

$$[\![x := 0; x := 1]\!] \supseteq [\![x := 1]\!]$$

# DIVERGING STATE

**Overwritten Write Elimination**

$$x := 0; x := 1 \Rightarrow x := 1$$

$$\alpha \langle \mu, \mu \uplus \{ \textcolor{brown}{0} \} \rangle \omega \doteqdot \langle \rangle$$
$$\cup$$

$$[\![x := 0; x := 1]\!] \supseteq [\![x := 1]\!]$$

$\cap$

$$\alpha \langle \mu, \mu \uplus \{ \textcolor{brown}{0} \} \rangle \langle \mu \uplus \{ \textcolor{brown}{0} \}, \mu \uplus \{ \textcolor{brown}{0} \mid \textcolor{brown}{1} \} \rangle \omega \doteqdot \langle \rangle$$

# DIVERGING STATE

**Overwritten Write Elimination**

 $x := 0; x := 1 \Rightarrow x := 1$ 

$$\alpha \langle \mu, \mu \uplus \{ \boxed{1} \} \rangle \omega \doteq \langle \rangle$$

\cup

$$[\![x := 0; x := 1]\!] \supseteq [\![x := 1]\!]$$

$\cap$

$$\alpha \langle \mu, \mu \uplus \{ \boxed{0} \} \rangle \langle \mu \uplus \{ \boxed{0} \}, \mu \uplus \{ \boxed{0} \boxed{1} \} \rangle \omega \doteq \langle \rangle$$

**mumble**

# DIVERGING STATE

**Overwritten Write Elimination**

 $x := 0; x := 1 \Rightarrow x := 1$ 

$\mathcal{M}$

 $\alpha \langle \mu, \mu \uplus \{ 0 \} \rangle \langle \mu \uplus \{ 0 \}, \mu \uplus \{ 0, 1 \} \rangle \omega \therefore \langle \rangle$ 
 $\alpha \langle \mu, \mu \uplus \{ 1 \} \rangle \omega \therefore \langle \rangle$ 

$\cup$

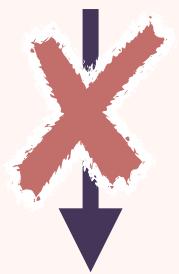
↑ **absorb**

 $\alpha \langle \mu, \mu \uplus \{ 0, 1 \} \rangle \omega \therefore \langle \rangle$ 

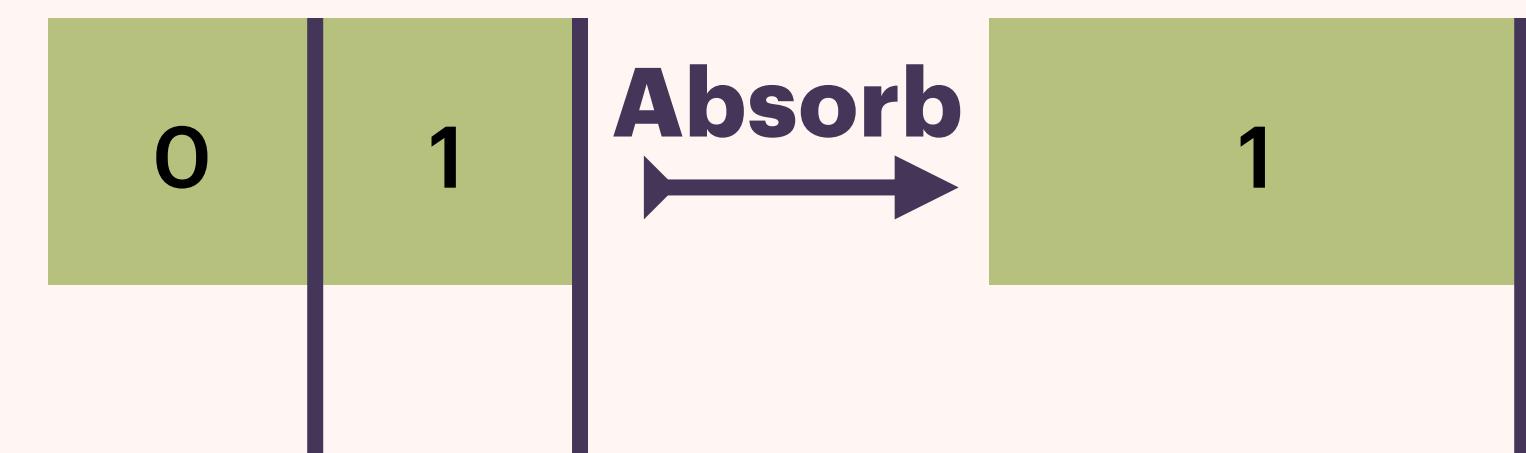
↑ **mumble**

# NO CORRESPONDENCE WITH INTERRUPTED EXECUTIONS

$\alpha \langle \mu_1, \rho_1 \rangle \langle \mu_2, \rho_2 \rangle \dots \langle \mu_{n-1}, \rho_{n-1} \rangle \langle \mu_n, \rho_n \rangle \omega \because r$



$\dots \langle \mu_2, - \rangle, M_1 \rightarrow^* \langle \rho_2, - \rangle, M_2 \dots$



# ALL REWRITE RULES

Loosen	$\alpha \boxed{\xi (\eta \overline{\sqcup} \{\epsilon\})} \omega$	$\xrightarrow{Ls}$	$\alpha \boxed{\xi (\eta \overline{\sqcup} \{v\})} \omega$	$v \leq_{vw} \epsilon$
Expel	$\alpha \boxed{\xi (\eta \overline{\sqcup} \{\epsilon_i^{\nu.i}\})} \omega$	$\xrightarrow{Ex}$	$\alpha \boxed{\xi (\eta \overline{\sqcup} \{v, \epsilon\})} \omega$	$v \prec \epsilon$
Condense	$\alpha \boxed{\xi (\eta \overline{\sqcup} \{v, \epsilon\})} \omega$	$\xrightarrow{Cn}$	$(\alpha \boxed{\xi (\eta \overline{\sqcup} \{v\})} \omega) [\uparrow \epsilon]$	$v \dashv \epsilon$
Stutter	$\alpha \boxed{\xi \eta} \omega$	$\xrightarrow{St}$	$\alpha \boxed{\xi \langle \mu, \mu \rangle \eta} \omega$	Rewind
Mumble	$\alpha \boxed{\xi \langle \mu, \rho \rangle \langle \rho, \theta \rangle \eta} \omega$	$\xrightarrow{Mu}$	$\alpha \boxed{\xi \langle \mu, \theta \rangle \eta} \omega$	$\kappa \boxed{\xi} \omega \xrightarrow{Rw} \alpha \boxed{\xi} \omega \quad \alpha \leq \kappa$
Tighten	$\alpha \boxed{\xi \langle \mu, \rho \sqcup \{v\} \rangle \eta \overline{\sqcup} \{v\}} \omega$	$\xrightarrow{Ti}$	$\alpha \boxed{\xi \langle \mu, \rho \sqcup \{\epsilon\} \rangle \eta \overline{\sqcup} \{\epsilon\}} \omega$	$v \leq_{vw} \epsilon$
Absorb	$\alpha \boxed{\xi \langle \mu, \rho \sqcup \{v, \epsilon\} \rangle \eta \overline{\sqcup} \{v, \epsilon\}} \omega$	$\xrightarrow{Ab}$	$\alpha \boxed{\xi \langle \mu, \rho \sqcup \{\epsilon_i^{\nu.i}\} \rangle \eta \overline{\sqcup} \{\epsilon_i^{\nu.i}\}} \omega$	$v \prec \epsilon$
Dilute	$(\alpha \boxed{\xi \langle \mu, \rho \sqcup \{v\} \rangle \eta \overline{\sqcup} \{v\}} \omega) [\uparrow \epsilon]$	$\xrightarrow{Di}$	$\alpha \boxed{\xi \langle \mu, \rho \sqcup \{v, \epsilon\} \rangle \eta \overline{\sqcup} \{v, \epsilon\}} \omega$	$v \dashv \epsilon$



# NEW ADEQUACY PROOF IDEA

Traces are not operational — adequacy proof is *significantly* more challenging:

1. We first define a denotational semantics  $\llbracket M \rrbracket$  but without the abstract rules
2. We show it is adequate — easier: traces correspond to interrupted executions  
(with an admissible view-advancing rule)
3. We show it is enough to apply the abstract closure  $\dagger$  on top  $\llbracket M \rrbracket = \underline{\llbracket M \rrbracket}^\dagger$ 
  - *This is the main technical challenge — complicated commutativity property*
4. We show that the abstract rewrites preserve observable results  
(rather than interrupted executions)





## Laws of Parallel Programming

Symmetry

$$M \parallel N \rightarrow \mathbf{match} N \parallel M \mathbf{with} \langle y, x \rangle. \langle x, y \rangle$$

Generalized Sequencing

$$(\mathbf{let} x = M_1 \mathbf{in} M_2) \parallel (\mathbf{let} y = N_1 \mathbf{in} N_2) \rightarrow \mathbf{match} M_1 \parallel N_1 \mathbf{with} \langle x, y \rangle. M_2 \parallel N_2$$

Eliminations

Irrelevant Read

$$\ell? ; \langle \rangle \rightarrow \langle \rangle$$

Write-Write

$$\ell := v ; \ell := w \xrightarrow{\text{Ab}} \ell := w$$

Write-Read

$$\ell := v ; \ell? \rightarrow \ell := v ; v$$

Write-FAA

$$\ell := v ; \text{FAA}(\ell, w) \xrightarrow{\text{Ab}} \ell := (v + w) ; v$$

Read-Write

$$\mathbf{let} x = \ell? \mathbf{in} \ell := (x + v) ; x \rightarrow \text{FAA}(\ell, v)$$

Read-Read

$$\langle \ell?, \ell? \rangle \rightarrow \mathbf{let} x = \ell? \mathbf{in} \langle x, x \rangle$$

Read-FAA

$$\langle \ell?, \text{FAA}(\ell, v) \rangle \rightarrow \mathbf{let} x = \text{FAA}(\ell, v) \mathbf{in} \langle x, x \rangle$$

FAA-Read

$$\langle \text{FAA}(\ell, v), \ell? \rangle \rightarrow \mathbf{let} x = \text{FAA}(\ell, v) \mathbf{in} \langle x, x + v \rangle$$

FAA-FAA

$$\langle \text{FAA}(\ell, v), \text{FAA}(\ell, w) \rangle \xrightarrow{\text{Ab}} \mathbf{let} x = \text{FAA}(\ell, v + w) \mathbf{in} \langle x, x + v \rangle$$

Others

Irrelevant Read Introduction

$$\langle \rangle \rightarrow \ell? ; \langle \rangle$$

Read to FAA

$$\ell? \xrightarrow{\text{Di}} \text{FAA}(\ell, 0)$$

Write-Read Deorder

$$\langle (\ell := v), \ell'? \rangle \xrightarrow{\text{Ti}} (\ell := v) \parallel \ell'? \quad (\ell \neq \ell')$$

Write-Read Reorder

$$\langle (\ell := v), \ell'? \rangle \xrightarrow{\text{Ti}} \mathbf{let} x = \ell'? \mathbf{in} (\ell := v) ; x \quad (\ell \neq \ell')$$

# CONCLUSION

- **Standard, adequate and fully-compositional denotational semantic for RA**
- **Sufficiently abstract: validates all RA transformations that we know of (memory access, laws of parallel programming, structural transformations)**
- **More nuanced, complicated traces**
  - interpreted as **Rely/Guarantee sequences**
  - **denotations closed under 10 rewrite rules**
- **Extended RA view-based machine with compositional (i.e. first-class) parallelism (weak-memory models are usually studied with top-level parallelism)**

# OPPORTUNITIES

- **Language features (e.g. recursion)**
- **Type-and-effect system (e.g. regions)**
- **Algebraic presentation (refines monad approach)**
- **Full C11 model (e.g. non-atomics)**
- **Full abstraction theorem (for first-order)?**