

Formal Techniques for Software Engineering: Denotational Semantics

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Lesson 4

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Key motivations

Two main contributions of denotational semantics for programming languages:

- 1 Compositionality
- 2 Characterization of recursion

Core ingredients



CPOs

$$X = fX$$

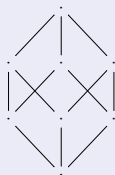
fixpoints of functions

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Functions Representation

Big Questions

- What is a function?
- How do we define a function?



The λ -calculus

We need a formal language for defining

- functions
- functions composition
- functions evaluation

λ -calculus was introduced in the thirties and permits describing *all computable functions*

λ -calculus (a quick and dirty intro to relevant notation)

A calculus of function composition

λ -abstraction	$\lambda x. e$	x is a variable and e an expression
composition	$f \circ g$	often denoted as fg
β -reduction	$\mathcal{C}[(\lambda x. d) e] \rightsquigarrow \mathcal{C}[d\{e \mapsto x\}]$	(e not a composition)

E.g. :

$$succ \equiv \lambda x. x + 1 \qquad succ\ 3 \rightsquigarrow 3 + 1 \qquad succ\ succ \rightsquigarrow (\lambda x. x + 1) + 1$$

$$poly \equiv \lambda x. x^2 - 3 \cdot x + 1 \qquad poly\ 5 \rightsquigarrow 5^2 - 3 \cdot 5 + 1$$

$$g \equiv \lambda x. \lambda y. x - y \qquad g\ 3\ 4 \rightsquigarrow^2 3 - 4 \qquad g\ 3 \rightsquigarrow \lambda y. 3 - y$$

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non β -reducible expressions are **canonical**

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λ -calculus

- $0 \equiv \lambda f. \lambda x. x$
- $1 \equiv \lambda f. \lambda x. f x$
- $2 \equiv \lambda f. \lambda x. f f x$
- $3 \equiv \lambda f. \lambda x. f f f x$
- ...
- $\text{succ} \equiv \lambda n. \lambda f. \lambda x. f (n f x)$
- $\text{plus} \equiv \lambda m. \lambda n. \lambda f. \lambda x. m f (n f x) \equiv \lambda m. \lambda n. m \text{ succ } n$

- $\text{true} \equiv \lambda x. \lambda y. x$
- $\text{false} \equiv \lambda x. \lambda y. y$
- $\text{and} \equiv \lambda p. \lambda q. p q p$
- $\text{or} \equiv \lambda p. \lambda q. p p q$
- $\text{not} \equiv \lambda p. \lambda a. \lambda b. p b a$
- $\text{cond} \equiv \lambda p. \lambda a. \lambda b. p a b$

An Example Computation

Conditional Statement

$$\text{cond}(x, y, z) = \begin{cases} y & \text{if } x = \mathbf{tt} \\ z & \text{if } x = \mathbf{ff} \end{cases}$$

Conditional Statement in λ -calculus

- $\mathbf{tt} \equiv \lambda m. \lambda n. m$
- $\mathbf{ff} \equiv \lambda m. \lambda n. n$
- $\text{cond} \equiv \lambda a. \lambda b. \lambda c. a b c$

same definition of 0

Computing $\text{cond}(e, y, z)$

- Assume $e \rightsquigarrow^* \mathbf{tt}$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{cond}(e, y, z) &\rightsquigarrow^* \text{cond}(\mathbf{tt}, y, z) \equiv (\lambda a. \lambda b. \lambda c. a b c) (\lambda m. \lambda n. m) y z \\ &\rightsquigarrow^* (\lambda m. \lambda n. m) y z \rightsquigarrow^* y \end{aligned}$$

- Check the case $e \rightsquigarrow^* \mathbf{ff}$

λ -calculus

Every λ -object is a function

- numbers, boolean constants, states
- arithmetic functions ($+$, $*$, \dots)
- boolean predicates (\leq , \wedge , \dots).
- \dots

Main Constructors

All computable functions can be

- defined by means of (more elementary) functions composition
- evaluated by means of β -reductions.

Recursion

Recursively defined functions (functions using their own definition) are dealt by means of so called **fixed point** theory.

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Recap of basic assumptions

Syntactic categories

- **Num**, numerals
- **Var**, variables
- **Aexp**, arithmetic expressions
- **Bexp**, boolean expressions
- **Stm**, statements

Semantic Functions

We assume availability of some (λ -defined) semantic functions:

- $\mathcal{N} : \mathbf{Num} \rightarrow \mathbf{Z}$
- $+$: $\mathbf{Z} \times \mathbf{Z} \rightarrow \mathbf{Z}$ (same for $-$, $*$, \dots)
- \leq : $\mathbf{Z} \times \mathbf{Z} \rightarrow \{\mathbf{tt}, \mathbf{ff}\}$ (same for $=$, \neq , $<$, \geq , \dots)

State Function

- $s : \mathbf{Var} \rightarrow \mathbf{Z}$

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Compositionality - Example 1

Given a function

$$\llbracket B \rrbracket : \mathbf{State} \rightarrow \{\mathbf{tt}, \mathbf{ff}\}$$

and two partial functions

$$\llbracket C \rrbracket, \llbracket D \rrbracket : \mathbf{State} \hookrightarrow \mathbf{State}$$

we define the function

$$\llbracket \text{if } B \text{ then } C \text{ else } D \rrbracket : \mathbf{State} \hookrightarrow \mathbf{State}$$

$$\llbracket \text{if } B \text{ then } C \text{ else } D \rrbracket = \lambda s. \text{cond}(\llbracket B \rrbracket s, \llbracket C \rrbracket s, \llbracket D \rrbracket s) \quad (s \in \mathbf{State})$$

where

$$\text{cond}(x, y, z) = \begin{cases} y & \text{if } x = \mathbf{tt} \\ z & \text{if } x = \mathbf{ff} \end{cases} \text{ is a function composing the}$$

semantics of the sub-commands

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Compositionality - Example 2

Sequential composition

Given partial functions $\llbracket C \rrbracket, \llbracket D \rrbracket: \mathbf{State} \leftrightarrow \mathbf{State}$

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Comparing the denotational with the operational approach

Structural semantics

$$[\text{comp}_{\text{sos}}^1] \quad \frac{\langle S_1, s \rangle \Rightarrow \langle S'_1, s' \rangle}{\langle S_1; S_2, s \rangle \Rightarrow \langle S'_1; S_2, s' \rangle}$$

$$[\text{comp}_{\text{sos}}^2] \quad \frac{\langle S_1, s \rangle \Rightarrow s'}{\langle S_1; S_2, s \rangle \Rightarrow \langle S_2, s' \rangle}$$

Natural semantics

$$[\text{comp}_{\text{ns}}] \quad \frac{\langle S_1, s \rangle \rightarrow s', \langle S_2, s' \rangle \rightarrow s''}{\langle S_1; S_2, s \rangle \rightarrow s''}$$

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Comparing the denotational with the operational approach

Structural semantics

$$[\text{comp}_{\text{sos}}^1] \quad \frac{\langle S_1, s \rangle \Rightarrow \langle S'_1, s' \rangle}{\langle S_1; S_2, s \rangle \Rightarrow \langle S'_1; S_2, s' \rangle}$$

$$[\text{comp}_{\text{sos}}^2] \quad \frac{\langle S_1, s \rangle \Rightarrow s'}{\langle S_1; S_2, s \rangle \Rightarrow \langle S_2, s' \rangle}$$

Natural semantics

$$[\text{comp}_{\text{ns}}] \quad \frac{\langle S_1, s \rangle \rightarrow s', \langle S_2, s' \rangle \rightarrow s''}{\langle S_1; S_2, s \rangle \rightarrow s''}$$

Semantics of arithmetic expressions

$$\mathcal{A} : \mathbf{Aexp} \rightarrow (\mathbf{State} \rightarrow \mathbf{Z})$$

By structural induction on the syntax of arithmetic expressions (equivalently, by case analysis on the outermost operator).

$$\mathcal{A}[[n]]s = \mathcal{N}[[n]]$$

$$\mathcal{A}[[x]]s = s\ x$$

$$\mathcal{A}[[a_1 + a_2]]s = \mathcal{A}[[a_1]]s + \mathcal{A}[[a_2]]s$$

$$\mathcal{A}[[a_1 \star a_2]]s = \mathcal{A}[[a_1]]s \cdot \mathcal{A}[[a_2]]s$$

$$\mathcal{A}[[a_1 - a_2]]s = \mathcal{A}[[a_1]]s - \mathcal{A}[[a_2]]s$$

We could have used the λ -notation:

- $\mathcal{A}[[n]] = \lambda s. \mathcal{N}[[n]]$
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Semantics of boolean expressions

$$\mathcal{B} : \mathbf{Bexp} \rightarrow (\mathbf{State} \rightarrow \{ \mathbf{tt}, \mathbf{ff} \})$$

By structural induction on the syntax of boolean expressions.

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{B}[\mathbf{false}]s &= \mathbf{ff} \\ \mathcal{B}[a_1 = a_2]s &= \begin{cases} \mathbf{tt} & \text{if } \mathcal{A}[a_1]s = \mathcal{A}[a_2]s \\ \mathbf{ff} & \text{if } \mathcal{A}[a_1]s \neq \mathcal{A}[a_2]s \end{cases} \\ \mathcal{B}[a_1 \leq a_2]s &= \begin{cases} \mathbf{tt} & \text{if } \mathcal{A}[a_1]s \leq \mathcal{A}[a_2]s \\ \mathbf{ff} & \text{if } \mathcal{A}[a_1]s > \mathcal{A}[a_2]s \end{cases} \\ \mathcal{B}[\neg b]s &= \begin{cases} \mathbf{tt} & \text{if } \mathcal{B}[b]s = \mathbf{ff} \\ \mathbf{ff} & \text{if } \mathcal{B}[b]s = \mathbf{tt} \end{cases} \\ \mathcal{B}[b_1 \wedge b_2]s &= \begin{cases} \mathbf{tt} & \text{if } \mathcal{B}[b_1]s = \mathbf{tt} \text{ and } \mathcal{B}[b_2]s = \mathbf{tt} \\ \mathbf{ff} & \text{if } \mathcal{B}[b_1]s = \mathbf{ff} \text{ or } \mathcal{B}[b_2]s = \mathbf{ff} \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

Denotational Semantics of While

$$\mathcal{S}_{ds} : Prog \rightarrow (State \leftrightarrow State)$$

$$\mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket x := a \rrbracket s = s[x \mapsto \mathcal{A} \llbracket a \rrbracket s]$$

$$\mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket \text{skip} \rrbracket = \text{id}$$

$$\mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket S_1 ; S_2 \rrbracket = \mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket S_2 \rrbracket \circ \mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket S_1 \rrbracket$$

$$\mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket \text{if } b \text{ then } S_1 \text{ else } S_2 \rrbracket = \text{cond}(\mathcal{B} \llbracket b \rrbracket, \mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket S_1 \rrbracket, \mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket S_2 \rrbracket)$$

$$\mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket \text{while } b \text{ do } S \rrbracket = \text{FIX } F$$

$$\text{where } F g = \text{cond}(\mathcal{B} \llbracket b \rrbracket, g \circ \mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket S \rrbracket, \text{id})$$

$$\text{id} \equiv \lambda s. s$$

Semantics of while-do: details

Given:

- a function $\mathcal{A}[[b]]: \mathbf{State} \rightarrow \{\mathbf{tt}, \mathbf{ff}\}$

- a partial function $\mathcal{S}_{ds}[[C]]: \mathbf{State} \leftrightarrow \mathbf{State}$

we let: $\mathcal{S}_{ds}[[\mathbf{while } b \text{ do } C]] = \mathit{fix } F_{b,C}$

where: $F_{b,C} = \lambda w. \lambda s. \mathit{cond}(\llbracket b \rrbracket s, w \llbracket C \rrbracket s, s)$

$\mathit{fix } F_{b,C}$

denotes a partial function $\llbracket W \rrbracket: \mathbf{State} \leftrightarrow \mathbf{State}$ such that:

$$\llbracket W \rrbracket = F_{b,C} \llbracket W \rrbracket$$

Questions:

- Does this equation have solutions?
- How many solutions does it have?
- Which one should we take?

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Semantics of while-do: an example

$$\mathcal{S}_{ds} \llbracket \text{while } x > 0 \text{ do } (y := x * y; x := x - 1) \rrbracket = \text{fix } F_{b,C}$$

we take as given

$$\text{State} = \{x, y\} \rightarrow \mathbf{Z} \quad \text{the content of the memory at locations } x \text{ and } y$$

we look for a solution X to the equation

$$X = \lambda s. \text{cond}(\llbracket x > 0 \rrbracket s, X \llbracket y := x * y; x := x - 1 \rrbracket s, s)$$

Note that X is a function in $\text{State} \leftrightarrow \text{State}$

How do we calculate the fixed point X ?

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How do we calculate the **fixed point** X ?

Fixed Points

A recursive function

$$f = \lambda x. (x = 0) \rightarrow 1, f(x + 1)$$

- f indicates any function that yields 1 on argument 0, but its value for the other arguments is not specified.
- to compute f on x , check whether $x = 0$, if so put $f(x) = 1$; otherwise evaluate f on $x + 1$.

A possible solution

If \perp denotes absence of information then $g \equiv \lambda x. (x = 0) \rightarrow 1, \perp$ could be the solution of the equation defining f

$$\begin{aligned} & \lambda x. (x = 0) \rightarrow 1, \underbrace{(\lambda x. (x = 0) \rightarrow 1, \perp)}_g(x + 1) \\ &= \lambda x. (x = 0) \rightarrow 1, (x + 1 = 0) \rightarrow 1, \perp \\ &= \lambda x. (x = 0) \rightarrow 1, \perp \quad \text{for no } x \geq 0 \text{ we have } x + 1 = 0 \\ &\equiv g. \end{aligned}$$

Fixed Points

However, ... each function of the form

$$g_k \equiv \lambda x. (x = 0) \rightarrow 1, k$$

is a solution of the equation for f , whichever $k \in \mathbb{N}$ we take.

- Among all solutions, g corresponds to the results obtained from the **computational interpretation** of f .
- To evaluate f for a generic $x > 0$, **expand the body of f** to discover that it is necessary to evaluate it on $x + 1$, then on $x + 2$, and so on
- g is less defined than each g_k ; indeed g is defined only on 0 and for this value all g_k take the same value:

$$\forall k. g(0) = g_k(0).$$

Fixed Points

Given a function $f : D \rightarrow D$, the *fixed point* of f is any element $d \in D$ such that $fd = d$.

Examples

- The solution of $x = 2x + 1$ is -1 , i.e, the fixed point of the function: $f \equiv \lambda x.2x + 1$
- Function $\tau : (\mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N}) \rightarrow (\mathbb{N} \rightarrow \mathbb{N})$ takes a function as arguments and yields another function:

$$\tau \equiv \lambda f.(\lambda x.(x = 0) \rightarrow 1, f(x + 1)).$$

- Consider

$$\tau_{fact} \equiv \lambda f.\lambda x.(x = 0) \rightarrow 1, x * f(x - 1)$$

If we let

$$fact \equiv \lambda x.(x = 0) \rightarrow 1, x * fact(x - 1)$$

we have

$$\tau_{fact}(fact) = fact$$

Fixed point

Ordering Functions

let $f, g : D \rightarrow D'$ be two functions.

$$f \sqsubseteq g \Leftrightarrow \forall x. \text{ if } f(x) \text{ is defined then } f(x) = g(x).$$

We then say that f **approximates** g or f is **less defined** than g

Minimal fixed points

The fixed point that is less defined than all the others (**minimal fixed point**) is the one that corresponds to the operational intuition behind functions specifications.

Finding fixed points

- $\Omega \equiv \lambda x. \perp$, is the function undefined everywhere and represents the worst approximation of every function.
- To calculate fixed points we make use of Ω :

$$\tau \Omega = \lambda x. (x = 0) \rightarrow 1, \Omega(x + 1) = g.$$

Fixed point

Ordering Functions

Solution g is obtained by applying τ to its approximands!

Consider τ_{fact} , then $Fact_1 \equiv \tau_{fact} \Omega$ is

- $Fact_1 \equiv \tau_{fact} \Omega = \lambda x.(x = 0) \rightarrow 1, x * \Omega(x - 1) = \lambda x.(x = 0) \rightarrow 1, \perp$
 $Fact_1$ is not the fixed point of τ_{fact} but a function more defined than Ω . It is a better approximation than Ω of factorial function.

- The sequence

$$Fact_2 \equiv \tau_{fact} Fact_1, Fact_3 \equiv \tau_{fact} Fact_2, \dots$$

is a chain of better and better approximations of factorial whose limit is the factorial function.

- The minimum fixed point of the specification of factorial function is obtained by a sequence of approximation steps.
- Each approximation is finitely represented and is, obviously, **non recursive**.

Semantics of while-do: an example - continued

$$f = \lambda Z. \lambda s. \text{cond}(\llbracket x > 0 \rrbracket s, Z \llbracket y := x * y; x := x - 1 \rrbracket s, s)$$

We look for X such that $X = fX$ and we start from Ω

$$\begin{aligned} f^1 = f\Omega &= \begin{cases} (x, y) & \text{if } x \leq 0 \\ \perp & \text{if } x \geq 1 \end{cases} \\ f^2 &= \begin{cases} (x, y) & \text{if } x \leq 0 \\ (0, 1 * y) & \text{if } x = 1 \\ \perp & \text{if } x \geq 2 \end{cases} \\ f^3 &= \begin{cases} (x, y) & \text{if } x \leq 0 \\ (0, 1 * y) & \text{if } x = 1 \\ (0, 2 * y) & \text{if } x = 2 \\ \perp & \text{if } x \geq 3 \end{cases} \\ f^4 &= \begin{cases} (x, y) & \text{if } x \leq 0 \\ (0, 1 * y) & \text{if } x = 1 \\ (0, 2 * y) & \text{if } x = 2 \\ (0, 6 * y) & \text{if } x = 3 \\ \perp & \text{if } x \geq 4 \end{cases} \\ &\quad \vdots \\ f^{n+1} &= \begin{cases} (x, y) & \text{if } x \leq 0 \\ (0, x! * y) & \text{if } 1 \leq x \leq n \\ \perp & \text{if } x \geq n+1 \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

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$$f^\omega = \bigsqcup_{i \in \mathbb{N}} f^i = \begin{cases} (x, y) & \text{if } x \leq 0 \\ (0, x! * y) & \text{if } x \geq 1 \end{cases}$$

We have that

$$f^\omega = f f^\omega$$

and, wrt every other fixpoint w :

$$w = f w \Rightarrow f^\omega \sqsubseteq w$$

Semantics of while-do: an example - continued

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Defining the Semantics of Fixpoints

$\langle D, \preceq \rangle$ is a **po-set** if \preceq is a partial order

(*refl + antisym + tr*)

e.g. $\langle \mathbf{State} \leftrightarrow \mathbf{State}, \sqsubseteq \rangle$ is a poset

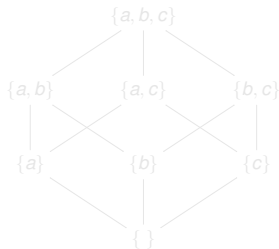
A **chain** $C = d_0 \preceq d_1 \preceq d_2 \preceq \dots$ is a totally ordered subset of D

$\text{lub}(C) = \bigsqcup_{i \geq 0} d_i$ satisfies:

- $\forall i \geq 0 \ d_i \preceq \text{lub}(C)$
- $\forall i \geq 0 \ d_i \preceq U$ implies $\text{lub}(C) \preceq U$

$\langle D, \preceq \rangle$ is a **complete** po-set (CPO) if

- $\perp \in D$ and $\perp \preceq d$ for every $d \in D$
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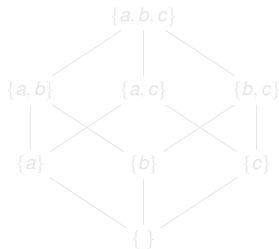
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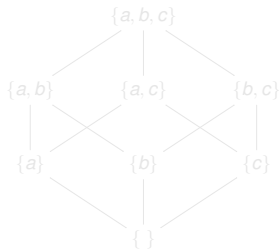
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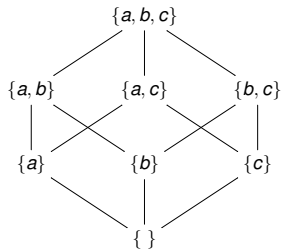
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$\langle 2^{\{a,b,c\}}, \subseteq \rangle$

Computations as Chains

We restrict to (possibly infinite) chains, and their **lub** *(ref.lattices)*

$\langle D, \preceq \rangle$ a CPO as an information domain (with refinement)

$f : D \rightarrow D$ an information transformer

f monotone: $a \preceq b \Rightarrow f(a) \preceq f(b)$ *(information preserving)*

f continuous: (1) $\text{lub}(f C) \in D$ for every chain C
(2) $f(\text{lub}(C)) = \text{lub}(f C)$ for every chain C
(limit preserving)

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Fixpoints as Limits of Chains

Theorem (Tarski Fixpoint Theorem)

$\langle D, \preceq \rangle$ CPO

A continuous function $f : D \rightarrow D$

1. has a fixpoint
2. has a minimal fixpoint (denoted $\text{fix } f$)
3. $\text{fix } f = \text{lub} \{ f^i \perp \mid i \in \mathbb{N} \}$ where

$$f^0 x = x$$

$$f^{i+1} x = f(f^i x)$$

A constructive result of fixpoint existence

As a consequence, we can denote $\text{fix } f$ also as $\bigsqcup_{i \in \mathbb{N}} f^i$

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$$\mathcal{S}_{\text{ds}}[x := a]s = s[x \mapsto \mathcal{A}[a]s]$$

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$$\mathcal{S}_{\text{ds}}[S_1 ; S_2] = \mathcal{S}_{\text{ds}}[S_2] \circ \mathcal{S}_{\text{ds}}[S_1]$$

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$\mathcal{S}_{\text{ds}}[P]$ exists for every $P \in \text{Stm}$

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Recap:

$$\mathcal{S}_{\text{sos}}[[S]]s = \begin{cases} s' & \text{if } \langle S, s \rangle \Rightarrow^* s' \\ \underline{\text{undef}} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

To show: $\mathcal{S}_{\text{sos}}[[P]] = \mathcal{S}_{\text{ds}}[[P]]$

$\langle P, s \rangle \Rightarrow^* s'$ implies $\mathcal{S}_{\text{ds}}[[P]]s = s'$ (check other dir.)

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