Observation of Distributed Computations: a Reflective Approach for CORBA

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Abstract

This document describes some reflective programming techniques to observe a distributed computation in a CORBA environment. First, we propose a new order relation to translate causal dependencies in a distributed program. We generalize Lamport's *Happened before* relation defined for message passing applications, to an object causal relation between distributed events in an environment with synchronous and asynchronous method calls, method synchronizations and variable sharings. Second, we propose a reflective approach to observe this relation. Finally, a tool is provided to display the causal dependencies graph of a distributed run.

Key Words: Causality, CORBA, Reflection, OpenJava, Observation.

1 Introduction

With numerous entities distributed over a network, cooperative systems and applications written with CORBA [OMG98] are quite complex and often generate a high volume of communication, numerous concurrent activities, and complex synchronization schemes. Programmers have to master many different software techniques and the design, the development, the debug and the observation of these applications become more and mode complex.

In this document, we focus our attention on the observation of distributed runs in CORBA environments. Like in most existing studies, we do not assume that the system provides a global clock or some perfectly synchronized local clocks. Hence, the observation of a run requires some additional techniques to order distributed events. The partially ordered set approach used by Lamport's *Happened before* relation provides a good solution for such a work. Based on this, numerous studies [LMC87][MC88][CL85][SM92][ACGS91] addressed the issue of the observation of consistent global states. Nevertheless, this relation mainly translates dependencies that are generated by asynchronous communications. First, we can argue that environments such as CORBA rather use synchronous communication schemes. Second, many other sources of dependencies exist in distributed applications. For instance, the synchronization of concurrent methods introduce some dependencies that are not captured by the *Happened before* relation. In this document, we present an order relation called the object causal order. Its goal is to capture, not only communication dependencies, but also synchronization dependencies, dependencies generated by dynamic creations of threads, and transactional dependencies.

This document extends previous works [PDFS95, DJ99], and proposes a reflective approach to observe the object causal order. [PDFS95] addressed this issue for the GUIDE [BBB+91] language. [DJ99] was a first study for CORBA/Java environments. This paper addresses the reflective part of this work. Our target environment is based on the free CORBA ORB JacORB [Bro97], and on the OpenJava [TC98] reflective language. OpenJava is an extension of the Java language that

provides features (i.e. metaclasses) to introspect and to redefine the default semantics of a Java program. We use it to transparently add some code to observe the object causal order.

The document is divided as follows. Section 2 presents the background and the context of our study. Section 3 defines the object causal order. Next, Section 4 gives the architecture of our tool. Section 5 briefly presents the stamping algorithm and the graphs that are generated. Finally, Section 6 presents our conclusions and some directions for future works.

2 Background

2.1 Order relations

The field of order relations for distributed computations has been thoroughly studied. In [Lam78], Lamport introduces a model of sequential processes communicating by asynchronous point-to-point messages. The *Happened before* relation translates causal dependencies in such a model. It is used for instance, for check-pointing, replaying or debugging distributed computations.

Given a set E of local, send and receive events, the *Happened before* order relation, denoted by $\rightarrow$, is the smallest transitive[1] relation satisfying:

- if a and b are events in the same process, and a was executed before b, then $a \rightarrow b$,
- if a is a send event by one process and b is the corresponding receive event by another process, then $a \rightarrow b$.

The notions of concurrent events and of consistent cuts can be defined according to this relation (the reader should refer, for instance, to [SM92] for more details). Most of the existing techniques to compute causal dependencies and consistent cuts use vector stamps [Fid88][Mat88].

2.2 CORBA

CORBA [OMG98], the standard Object Request Broker (ORB) from the OMG, proposes an architecture that enables objects to transparently make and receive requests and replies in a distributed object environment. It provides asynchronous (oneway) and synchronous remote method invocations on objects via the ORB. Each object owns an interface described in the Interface Description Language (IDL) and can be implemented in different languages. On the object server side, the Object Adapter (OA) performs two tasks: (1) it dispatches the incoming method calls to their server objects and, (2) it provides several object activation policies that modify the way methods are executed. For instance, multiple active objects can share the same servant, or only one object at a time can be active on one servant, or each method invocation may be executed by a separate servant.

Few CORBA environments offer tools to correctly observe distributed computations. Projects such as MAScOTTE [MAS97], products such as IONA's OrbixOTM management services [Ion98] and Inprise's AppCenter [Inp99], or protocol analyzers such as [Tre99], propose some features to observe requests and replies of remote method. GoodeWatch [GMG99] provides mechanisms to grab events occuring at the ORB level. Our tool goes a step further and, not only grabs ORB related events, but also provides a smart display through the detections of causal dependencies between these events. As far as we know, none of the above mentioned tools perform such a work.

2.3 Reflection

P. Maes in [Mae87], defines reflection as the ability of a system "to reason and to act upon itself". Reflective programming languages such as CLOS [KdRB91], OpenC++ [Chi95], OpenJava [TC98] or Iguana [GC96] distinguish two levels of code: the base level that defines the basic functionalities of an application, and the meta level that provides a way to introspect the base level code and

[1] i.e. if $a \rightarrow b$ and $b \rightarrow c$ then $a \rightarrow c$

to modify its default semantics. The base and the meta levels interact through interfaces and a protocol called a metaobject protocol (MOP for short). The elements of the base level that can be accessed and modified at the meta level are said to be reified. Most existing reflective languages reify method calls. Their default behaviors can then be extended to support for instance, local and remote calls. The extension is transparent to the base level which is unchanged. MOPs can be classified in two categories: compile time and run time. In the former case, the semantics extension defined by the meta levels occurs during the compilation of the program, while in the latter case, it occurs during its execution. Compile time MOPs such as OpenC++ v2 or OpenJava provide better performances, while programs developed with run time MOPs such as CLOS or Iguana are more adaptable and flexible.

In the last few years reflection has become popular in distributed computing as it provides a clear way to handle separation of concerns. Indeed, the numerous functionalities of a distributed program (e.g., communication, concurrency, replication, mobility) can be addressed separately in different meta levels. In this paper, we use reflection to transparently implement an observation service for CORBA applications.

3 Object causal order

As pointed out in the introduction, we define the object causal order (denoted by $\rightarrow_o$) as an extension of Lamport's *Happened before* relation. The object causal order translates dependencies generated by (1) sequential executions of operations, called local dependencies, (2) synchronous and asynchronous communications, called interaction dependencies, (3) dynamic creations of threads, called thread management dependencies, (4) method synchronizations, called intra-object dependencies, and (5) transactional orderings of read and write operations, called transactional dependencies. Paragraph 3.1 presents our system model. Next, Paragraph 3.2 defines the causal dependencies that we consider in such a system.

3.1 Model

We consider a system model of multi-threaded objets communicating through a CORBA ORB. We assume that these objects do not share any memory. We also assume that the system does not provide any global clock, nor any perfectly synchronized local clocks. The events that may be generated by such a system are listed below:

1. communication events: objects interact through remote method calls, either synchronous (two ways, blocking), or asynchronous (one way, non blocking). Six events are associated with these operations: method call, send, return, arrival, start, and end. The method call event is the synchronous call of a method. The method return event is the return associated with such a call. The method send event is the asynchronous call of a method. The method arrival event is generated when a method is received on the called object side. The method start event is generated when a called method starts. Finally, the method end event is generated when a method ends.

2. thread management events: a distributed program is inherently concurrent. It dynamically create and join threads. Four events are considered with these operations: thread start, run, end, and join. The thread start event is generated when a thread is created. The thread run event is generated when a thread run begins. The thread end event is generated when a thread ends. Finally, the thread join event is generated when a thread join operation is performed.

3. synchronization events: multi-threaded objects may need to perform some synchronizations. For instance, when Java objects are considered, these synchronizations occur when a thread needs to enter a synchronized method or a synchronized block of code, or when the *wait* and *notify* method of the *java.lang.Thread* class are called. In our current model, only the first

case (synchronized method) is addressed. We leave the other cases for future works. Three events (already mentioned above) are associated with these operations: method arrival, start, and end. Paragraph 3.2.4 defines how dependencies generated by synchronized methods can be detected with these three events.

4. read/write operations on shared variables: each of these operations is associated with an event.

3.2 Causal dependencies

Causal dependencies record order relations between events. These relations are needed when, for instance, a replay service is to be applied to a distributed run. They are also used to construct a logical time for the system. As we do not assume any global clock, this logical clock stamps distributed events. The *Happened before* relation performs such a work, but we argue that other causal dependencies are needed. For instance, consider the case when two executions of a synchronized method are performed concurrently, and when one of these executions is delayed due to the other. If a replay service needs to rerun these executions in the same order, the causal dependency generated by the delay must be recorded.

The object causal order, denoted by $\rightarrow_o$, is the smallest transitive relation satisfying the next five definitions. Figure 1 illustrates these definitions.

3.2.1 Local dependencies

This first source of dependencies comes from the sequential execution of events within a thread. The definition is the same as in *Happened before*.

Definition 1

- *If* e_1 *and* e_2 *are two events that belong to the same thread, and* e_1 *is executed before* e_2*, then* $e_1 \rightarrow_o e_2$.

3.2.2 Interaction dependencies

The interaction source of order translates dependencies created by point-to-point, synchronous and asynchronous communications, between local and remote objects. It defines a property similar to Lamport's *Happened-before* relation which assumes that "a message can not be delivered before its sending" [Lam78]. Here, the idea is that each event that is executed before a method call, happens before the execution of the called method. On the same way, each event that is executed after a synchronous method call, happens after the execution of the called method.

Definition 2

- *If* e_{sc} *is a synchronous method call event, and* e_{ma} *its corresponding method arrival event, then* $e_{sc} \rightarrow_o e_{ma}$.
- *If* e_{ac} *is an asynchronous method call event, and* e_{ma} *its corresponding method arrival event, then* $e_{ac} \rightarrow_o e_{ma}$.
- *If* e_{me} *is a method end event, and* e_{mr} *its corresponding method return event, then* $e_{me} \rightarrow_o e_{mr}$.

3.2.3 Thread management dependencies

Thread management dependencies create a link between a thread and its child threads, and between a thread and a joined thread.

Definition 3

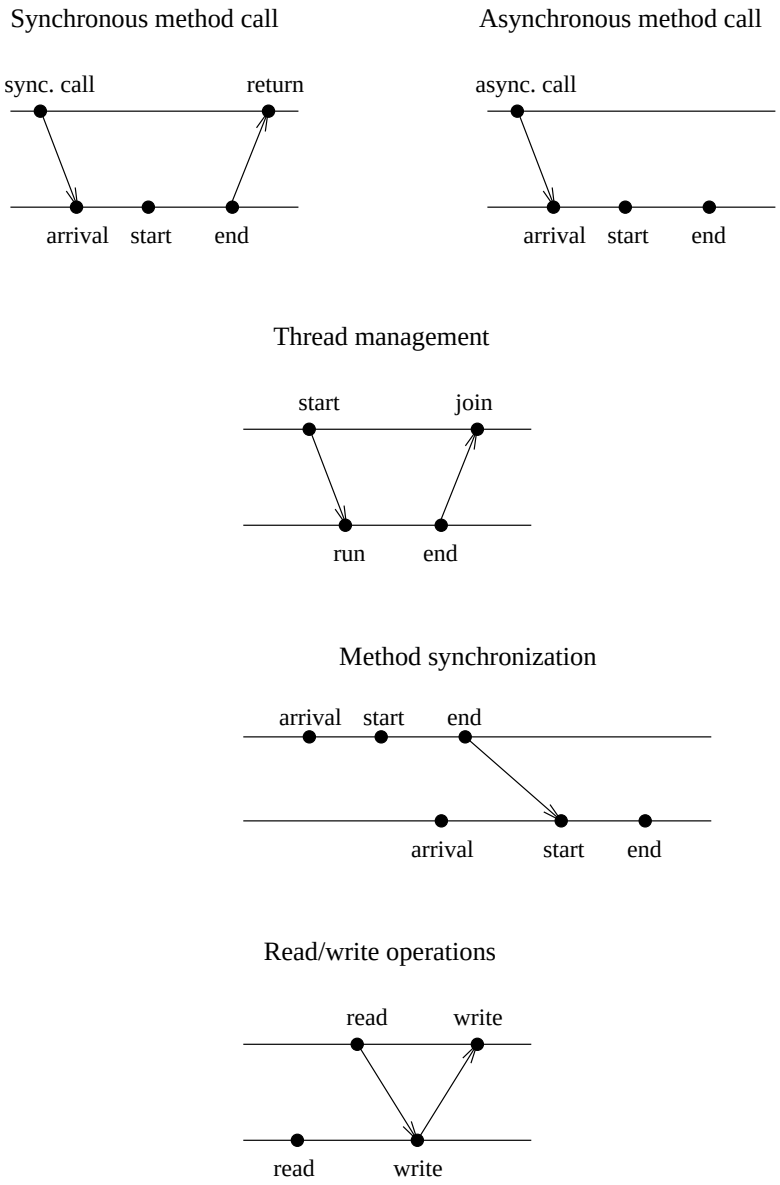


Figure 1: Causal dependencies defined in our system model

- *If e_{ts} is a thread start event and e_{tr} its corresponding thread run event, then $e_{ts} \rightarrow_o e_{tr}$.*
- *If e_{te} is a thread end event and e_{tj} a thread join event waiting for this thread end event, then $e_{te} \rightarrow_o e_{tj}$.*

3.2.4 Synchronization dependencies

Synchronization dependencies record links between executions of a synchronized method. A synchronized method is allowed an exclusive access to its object. Any other thread that tries to access this object will be delayed until the previous execution exits the method. This synchronization scheme introduces a causal dependency between two executions. The dependency can be detected when a method start event can not be performed until an end event associated with the same synchronized method is generated.

Definition 4

- *If e_{me} is a method end event of a synchronized method, and e_{ma} and e_{ms} method arrival and method start events of the same method, and if for the local object where the methods are performed, e_{me} occurs between e_{ma} and e_{ms}, then $e_{me} \rightarrow_o e_{ms}$.*

3.2.5 Transactional dependencies

The last source of dependencies comes from the sharing of variables. The basic idea is that read and write operations on a shared variable create dependencies between the threads that perform them. For instance, a read operation can be said to "observe" the effect of the previous write operation. Indeed, the result of the execution would not have been the same if the read had been performed before the write. The transactional relation translates the following dependencies: *read-write*, *write-read*, and *write-write*. As pointed out by the serializability theory (see for instance [BHG87]), a concurrent execution is legal, i.e. is equivalent to a sequential one, if and only if, the transactional dependencies graph deduced from these rules is acyclic.

Definition 5

- *If e_r is a read event and e_w the next write event on the same variable, then $e_r \rightarrow_o e_w$.*
- *If e_w is a write operation and e_r the next read operation on the same variable, then $e_w \rightarrow_o e_r$,*
- *If e_{w1} is a write operation and e_{w2} the next write operation on the same variable, then $e_{w1} \rightarrow_o e_{w2}$.*

4 Observation service

In this section we present the prototype of our reflective observation service for CORBA/Java applications. The target ORB is the free ORB JacORB [Bro97], and the observation is implemented with the OpenJava [TC98] reflective language.

4.1 Architecture

Our architecture contains two basic components: an observer object, and an observer metaobject (see figure 2). The third type of components mentioned in the figure, observed objects, are the application level objects that need to be observed.

The observer object is a standard CORBA object. There is one such object for each observed application. It owns an IDL interface with 11 asynchronous methods where each method records one of the events mentioned in Paragraph 3.1. The observer is implemented in Java and stores each received event in a hastable of vectors. There is one vector per observed application level object, and one vector per shared observed variable.

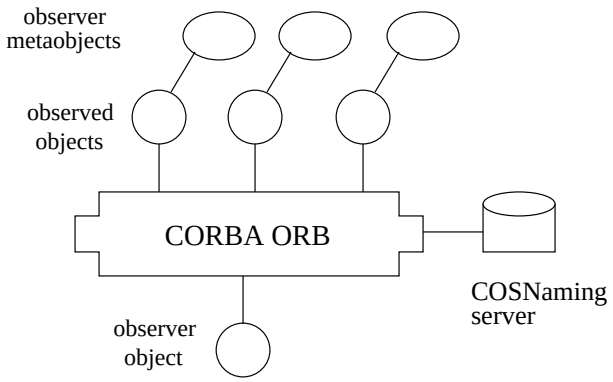


Figure 2: Architecture of the observation service

An observer metaobject is associated to each application level object that needs to be observed. It reifies the elements needed to grab the 11 above mentioned events. Once an event is grabbed, the observer metaobject sends it to the observer object. The binding process between the observer metaobjects and the observer object is kept as simple as possible: the observer registers a well-known name with the CORBA naming service, and each observer metaobject lookups this name. The communication between the observer metaobjects and the observer object is performed by some asynchronous method calls. Unless the CORBA specifications state that the semantics of such calls is "best effort" (i.e. the calls may not be delivered), this mechanism is faster and less intruisive than synchronous method calls.

Transmitted data

When an observer metaobject notifies the observer that an event occured, it transmits the CORBA reference of the observee object, the index of this event in the observee, and the index of the method execution in which this event occurred (each observer metaobject stores the number of events and the number of method executions that have been generated so far). The observer object needs the first index to reconstruct the object local order, and the second one to associate each event to its method execution (as objects are multi-threaded several executions of the same method may be performed concurrently). Furthermore, for some events, additional parameters are transmitted to the observer object (Table 1 summarizes the event types recorded and their additional parameters).

1. An invocation key is recorded for each method call and method arrival event. This key, which contains the caller object reference, the caller method identifier and an invocation number, allows the observer object to generate the dependency between the call and the arrival. This key needs to be piggy-backed on each method invocation between application level objects (indeed, when the method arrival event is generated at the server side, this key needs to be sent to the observer). We modified the JacORB client stubs and server skeletons generation code to transparently add this key. Some future works could tackle the use of a more generic solution. For instance, the architectural framework of the Jonathan ORB [DHTS98] provides a mechanism to plug customized stub factories into the ORB. Another more portable solution could be to use some standard request level interceptor to perform this piggy-backing process.

2. The parent thread identifier is recorded for each thread run event. This data is needed to generate a dependency between a thread start event and its corresponding thread run event.

3. Finally, the identifier and the object reference of a shared variable is transmitted to the observer object each time a read or write operation is performed on a shared variable.

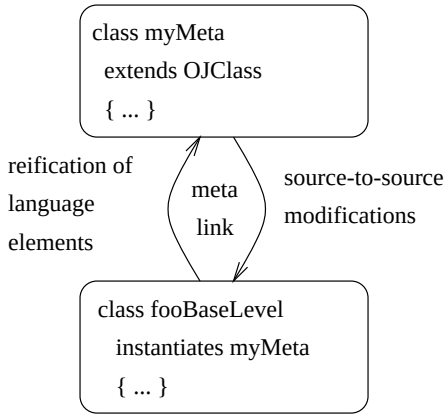
Event type	Description	Additional parameters
Method call	A method is called	Invocation key
Method return	A method call is returned	
Method arrival	A method is delivered	Invocation key
Method start	A method begins	
Method end	The method execution ends	
Thread start	A thread start is performed	
Thread join	A thread join is performed	
Thread run	A thread begins	Parent thread id
Thread end	A thread ends	
Read operation	Read of a shared variable	Id and obj ref of the shared variable
Write operation	Write of a shared variable	Id and obj ref of the shared variable

Table 1: Grabbed events

4.2 Observer metaobjects

4.2.1 OpenJava meta features

The code needed to observe the 11 events of Table 1 is automatically added by some OpenJava [TC98] metaclasses. Like the Java reflection API [Sun97], OpenJava provides a way to introspect the components of a base level program. As shown in Figure 3, the root metaclass of OpenJava is *OJClass*. The `instantiates` keyword is the only modification needed to specify a meta link between a base level class and a metaclass.




```
class OJClass {
   OJMethod[ ] getDeclaredMethods();
   void addField( OJField field );
   void addMethod( OJMethod field );
   void translateDefinition();
   Expression expandFieldRead( ...  );
   Expression expandFieldWrite( ...  );
   Expression expandMethodCall( ...  );
   ...
}
```

Figure 3: Meta link with OpenJava and some selected methods from OJClass

Among other things, the interface of *OJClass* (see Figure 3) provides a *getDeclaredMethods* method that returns a description of the base level methods. OpenJava goes a step further than the Java Reflection API and provides a way to add methods or fields (*addMethod* and *addField*), to modify the methods body (*OJMethod.setBody*), or to alter the default semantics of any element in the base level class (*translateDefinition*). Finally, *expand* methods (*expandFieldRead*, *expandFieldWrite* and *expandMethodCall*), are automatically called each time respectively, a field variable is read, a field variable is written, and a method is called. By this way, OpenJava can be seen as a Java language source-to-source translator.

4.2.2 Observation process

Our main metaclass (*Observer*) is the metaclass of any observed base level class. It extends *OJClass* and customizes its default behavior by, (1) recording the method start and end events (*translateDefinition*), (2) recording the read operation events (*expandFieldRead*), (3) recording the write operation events (*expandFieldWrite*), (4) recording the method call and return events (*expandMethodCall*). The method arrival event is recorded with a wrapper around any synchronized method. The thread related events are recorded with a wrapper class around the standard *java.lang.Thread* class.

The observer metaclass also defines a new keyword: `traced`. It is used as a modifier for base level variables and methods that needs to be traced. By this way, programmers can reduce the volume of trace informations by specifying at compilation time, some relevant elements to trace. Figure 4 gives the example of an observed class where only fields variables *f1* and *f3*, and method *m2* are traced. Events related to the other variables and methods are not grabbed.

```
class fooToBeObserved instantiates Observer {
   traced protected float f1;
   float f2;
   traced static int f3;
   void m1( float x );
   traced int m2( float x );
}
```

Figure 4: Fields and methods tagged with the `traced` modifier are observed

The compile time reflective feature of OpenJava is one of its benefits. As stated in Paragraph 2.3, metaobjects in such languages do not exist during program executions, but only during compilations. The advantage is that there is no execution overhead due to the use of a reflective language. The only overhead introduced comes from the execution of asynchronous method calls to the observer object each time an event is generated.

5 Stamping process and graphs

The causal dependencies of a distributed run are computed using vector timestamps. Each element in a vector translates the ordering of events within an activity. In our model, an activity is an application level distributed thread of control that can be stretched on several servers when remote method calls are performed. Activities are created when the application creates threads to carry out new jobs or perform an asynchronous method call. As a distributed application is inherently dynamic, the number of activities, and thus the size of the vector timestamps, are unknown until the end of the run.

Next paragraph describes the way timestamp vectors are constructed. Paragraph 5.2 gives the update rules for these vectors. Finally, Paragraph 5.3 gives an overview of the graphs that are generated.

5.1 Timestamp vectors

We define a timestamp vector TE for an event e as $TE_i^j = (te_{i,1}^j, ..., te_{i,n}^j)$, where n is the total number of activities, i the identifier of the activity and j the identifier of the event. This vector is updated each time an event is generated in activity i. In the following rules, we assume that the total number of activities n is known.

For each shared variable, we manage two vectors TW and TR: $TW_x = (tw_{x,1}, ..., tw_{x,n})$ and $TR_x = (tr_{x,1}, ..., tr_{x,n})$. These are respectively, the timestamp vector of the last write and the timestamp vector of the last read on variable x.

5.2 Rules to update timestamp vectors

This paragraph gives the rules to update timestamp vectors. We assume that the execution order of each activity and the sequential order of read and write operations on each shared variable are known.

Rule 1 *thread start event and asynchronous method call event:* let e, a thread start event or an asynchronous method call event, be the j-th event in activity i. Let q be the identifier of the created thread or method call activity. The q-th element of TE_q^1 is set to 1. To translate the dependency the other elements of TE_q^1 are set to the values of corresponding elements of TE_i^j.

$$\forall q \in [1, ..., p], \forall k \in [1, .., n] \begin{cases} k = q : te_{q,k}^1 = 1 \\ k \neq q : te_{q,k}^1 = te_{i,k}^j \end{cases}$$

Rule 2 *thread join event:* let e, a thread join event, be the j-th event in activity i. Let q be the identifier of the thread, i is waiting for to die. The dependency generated by the last event of thread q must be taken into account.

$$\forall k \in [1, ..., n] \begin{cases} k = i : te_{i,k}^j = te_{i,k}^{j-1} + 1 \\ k \neq i : te_{i,k}^j = Max(te_{q,k}^{last}, te_{i,k}^{j-1}) \end{cases}$$

Rule 3 *method start event:* let a, a method start event, be the j-th event in activity i. If the considered method is synchronized, and if there exists a method end event e_{me} whose timestamp vector is TE_q^p, and a method arrival event e_{ma} of the same method, and if for the local objects where the events are generated, e_{me} occurs between e_{ma} and e, then the i-th element of TE_i^j is increased, and its other elements are set to the maximum of the corresponding elements of TE_i^{j-1} and TE_q^p.

$$\forall k \in [1, ..., n] \begin{cases} k = i : te_{i,k}^j = te_{i,k}^{j-1} + 1 \\ k \neq i : te_{i,k}^j = Max(te_{i,k}^{j-1}, te_{q,k}^p) \end{cases}$$

Rule 4 *read event:* let e, a read event on variable x, be the j-th event in activity i. The i-th element of TE_i^j is increased and its other elements are set to the maximum of corresponding elements of vectors TE_i^{j-1} and TW_x. TR_x is also updated to record the read dependency for the next write operation.

$$\forall k \in [1, ..., n] \begin{cases} k = i : te_{i,k}^j = tr_{x,k} = te_{i,k}^{j-1} + 1 \\ k \neq i : te_{i,k}^j = tr_{x,k} = Max(te_{i,k}^{j-1}, tw_{x,k}) \end{cases}$$

Rule 5 *write event:* let e, a write event on variable x, be the j-th event in activity i. The i-th element of TE_i^j is increased and its other elements are set to the maximum of corresponding elements of vectors TE_i^{j-1}, TW_x and TR_x. TW_x records the timestamp of the last write operation and TR_x is cleared to avoid redundant transitive dependencies.

$$\forall k \in [1, ..., n] \begin{cases} k = i : te_{i,k}^j = tw_{x,k} = te_{i,k}^{j-1} + 1 \\ k \neq i : te_{i,k}^j = tw_{x,k} = Max(te_{i,k}^{j-1}, tw_{x,k}, tr_{x,k}) \\ tr_{x,k} = 0 \end{cases}$$

Rule 6 *other events:* let E be the j-th event in activity i. We increase the i-th element of TE_i^j.

$$\forall k \in [1, ..., n] \begin{cases} k = i : te_{i,k}^j = te_{i,k}^{j-1} + 1 \\ k \neq i : te_{i,k}^j = te_{i,k}^{j-1} \end{cases}$$

5.3 Graphs

Based on the information sent by the observer metaobjects, a causal dependencies graph is generated online by the observer object. It is then displayed with the VGJ [McC98] tool which is a graph viewer application. VGJ provides a framework to plug customized graph manipulation algorithms. We designed such an algorithm for our observation process: it instanciates the CORBA observer object, records the events, and generates the graph. The graph is updated as new events are sent to the observer object, and as some new dependencies are detected. When a new activity is detected, either through a thread start event or an asynchronous method call, the timestamp vector size of all previously received events is increased by one.

We provide a panel with buttons to control the display of the graph. It can be paused, resumed and moved forward or backward. Note that this panel only controls the display, not the computation itself. Even if the display is paused, the computation keeps running. Figure 5 gives a screen snapshot of our tool[2]. A text description of the graphs can be generated in the GML [Him97] markup language (this is a built-in feature of VGJ). Each node in the graph is an event. Each event is labelled with its timestamp vector. Edges are causal dependencies. They are labelled with the source event type, and the target event type. Event types are two letters words (except for asynchronous method calls which are simply labelled with the letter *s*). The first letter translates the event category: *t* for thread, *m* for method and *v* for variable. The second one translates the event type in its category: for instance, *tj* stands for thread join, *ma* stands for method arrival, *vw* stands for variable write, etc. Each called method or created thread is displayed with a new line in the graph. This line is labelled with either the Java object reference of the created thread, or the CORBA IOR (server IP address and port number) and the identifier of the called method.

6 Conclusion

This document presents a causality relation called the object causal order, for distributed applications in a CORBA environment. This relation extends Lamport's *Happened before* relation by (1) considering both synchronous and asynchronous communications (Lamport only considers asynchronous ones), and (2) incorporating dependencies generated by communications, method synchronizations and variable sharings (Lamport only considers communications). By this way, we think that the object causal relation provides a better understanding of the semantics of distributed applications.

The second main point of our paper is that the relation is observed by taking advantage of the features of a reflective language. As stated in Section 4, our target CORBA ORB is JacORB [Bro97] and our target reflective language is OpenJava [TC98]. We developed some OpenJava metaclasses to transparently add the code needed to record our causal dependencies. These metaclasses reify events related to method calls and processings, thread management and read/write operations on shared variables. Events generated by the application are sent by these metaclasses to a global observer. Next, we define vector timestamps for the generated events and we provide an algorithm to compute the causal dependencies graph. Finally, our tool, which is an extension of the existing VGJ [McC98] viewer, displays this graph. It is updated online as new events are sent to the observer.

Several extensions can be considered for this work. First, algorithms could be added to check global predicates (with techniques described for instance in [CG98] and [Gar97]). Second, some tools could be developed to filter and to analyze more precisely the traces.

[2] Our tool and some technical informations can be downloaded from our Web page: *http://www-src.lip6.fr/homepages/Lionel.Seinturier/RCO/*

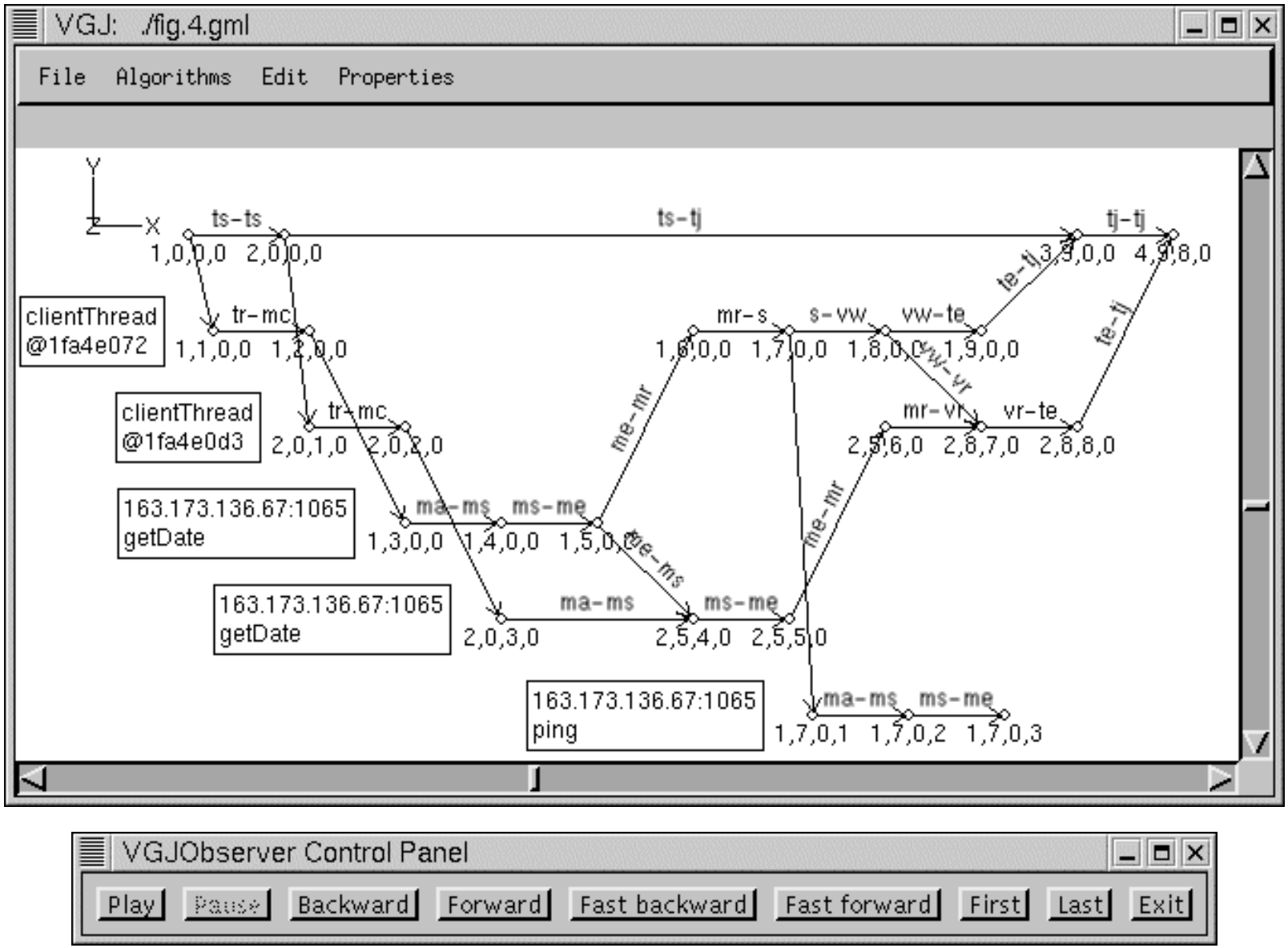


Figure 5: Screen snapshot of our tool

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