

Traits as Objects in Grace

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minigrace

Minigrace JavaScript backend

homepages.ecs.vuw.ac.nz/~mwh/minigrace/js/

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Magic I... Redlin... Pandoc... PharoC... Object... Portlan... Balliol... Library... The 25... myGar... Minigr...

```
1 print "Hello, world!"
2 def Andrew = object {
3   def forname is public, readable = "Andrew"
4   method address { "black@cs.pdx.edu" }
5 }
```

Compile Run code Compile & run Target: JavaScript Load test case: 001_print Confidential minigrace-js v0.0.8.1390 / e3a7095

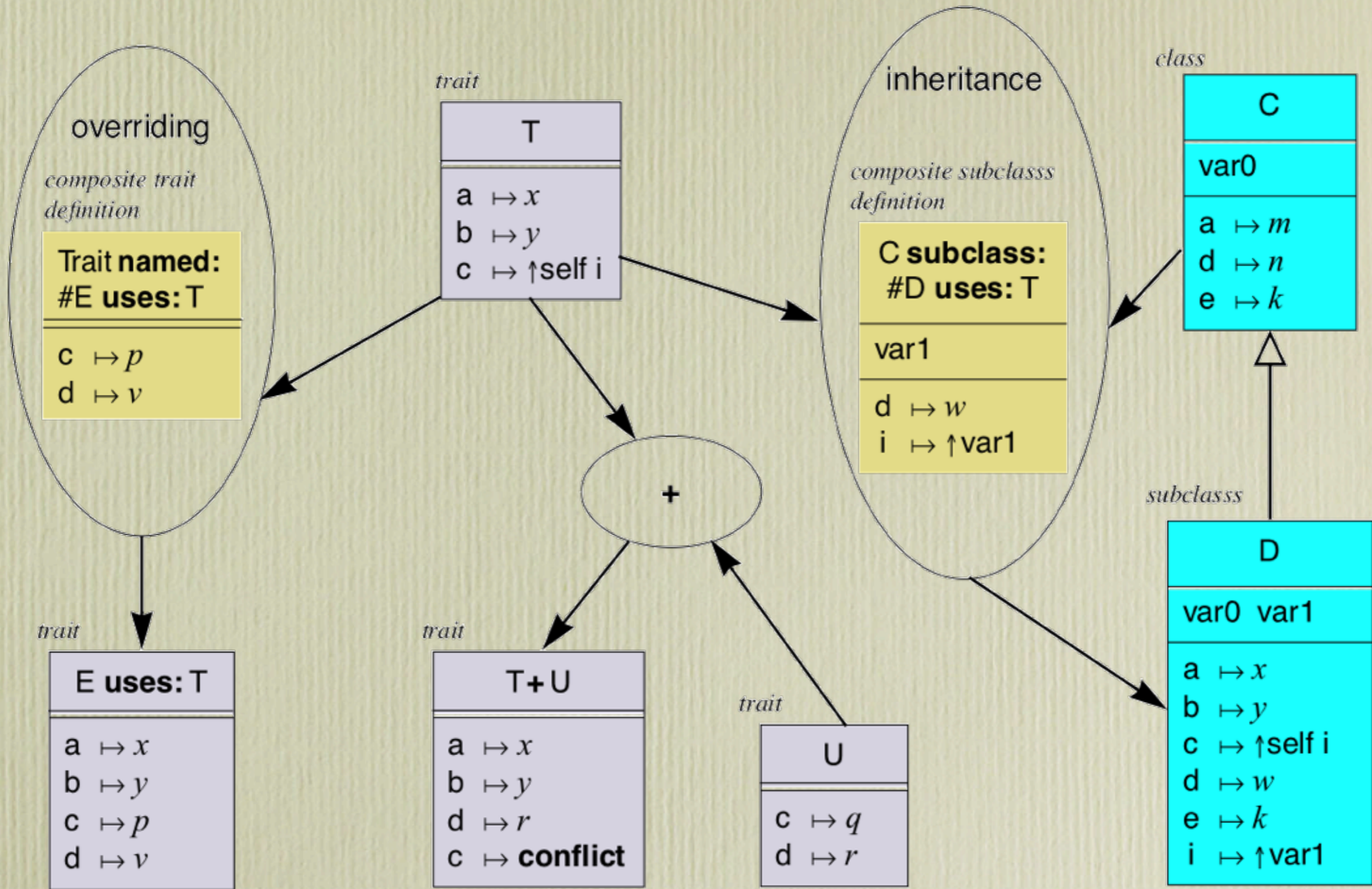
Disclaimer

The views expressed here are my own,
and may not be representative of those of
the Grace design team

Disagreement has had a powerful beneficial
effect on the design of Grace

Background on Traits

- “Traits” = Smalltalk traits as described by Schärli *et al.* [ECOOP 2004, TOPLAS 2006]:
 - algebra of method combination
 - a trait is a set of named methods with operations +, -, @ and uses
 - traits have no state; just *pure* methods and bindings to self
- There are other definitions of trait, *e.g.*,
 - Curry *et al.* [SIGOA 1982]
 - Reppy & Turon [ECOOP 2007]



What's Good about Traits

- “Despite their relative simplicity, traits offer a surprisingly rich calculus.” [Reppy & Turon 2007]
- “more nimble and lighter-weight than either multiple inheritance or mixins” [ibid.]
 - but you can do MI and mixin-like stuff with traits
- Separates the unit of reuse (the trait) from the generator of objects (the class)
 - Classes struggle to fill both roles:

Fine-grained,
often incomplete

Complete,
monolithic

Grace doesn't have Traits

and I agreed to this!

- Why?
 - Designed for teaching, not large-scale software engineering
 - ▶ So code reuse is not so important (?)
 - Traits are not “mainstream”
 - ▶ We need to teach what is in common use
 - Inheritance is “mainstream” object-orientation
 - ▶ So Grace *must* contain inheritance
 - Grace is small and simple
 - ▶ So it should not have *two* reuse mechanisms

Andrew's working hypothesis

- It's possible, in Grace to:
 - provide something very like traits using objects
 - build something very like inheritance out of traits
 - build more than one variety of inheritance
- This is a *Good Idea* because:
 - Core Grace would have one reuse mechanism, but
 - Grace could be used to teach a variety of reuse mechanisms

Objects in Grace

- Everything is an Object
 - but every object is not an instance of a class
- Instead: objects are self-contained
- Objects are created by executing an object constructor

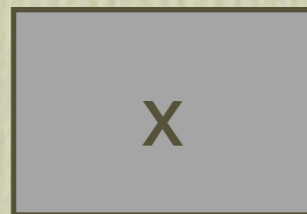
```
object {  
  def x:Number is public, readable = 2  
  def y:Number is public, readable = 3  
  method distanceTo (other:Point) → Number {  
    ((x - other.x)^2 + (y - other.y)^2) } }  
}
```

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object {  
  def x:Number is public, readable = 2  
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  method distanceTo (other:Point) → Number {  
    ((x - other.x)^2 + (y - other.y)^2) } }  
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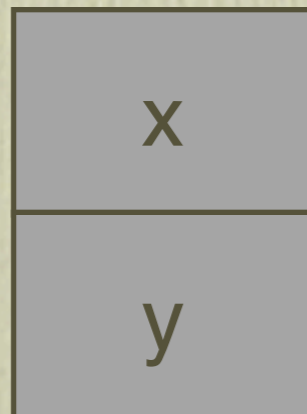
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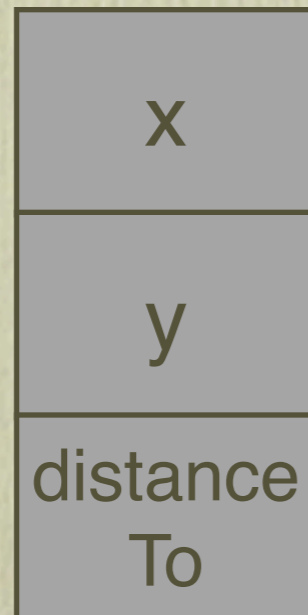
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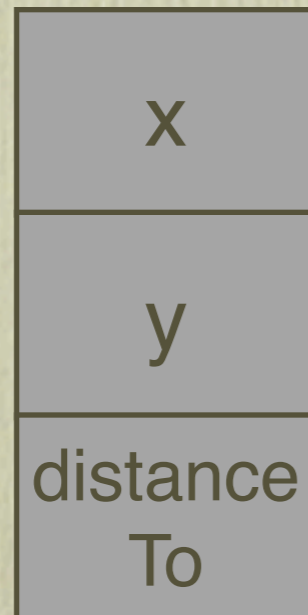
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}
```



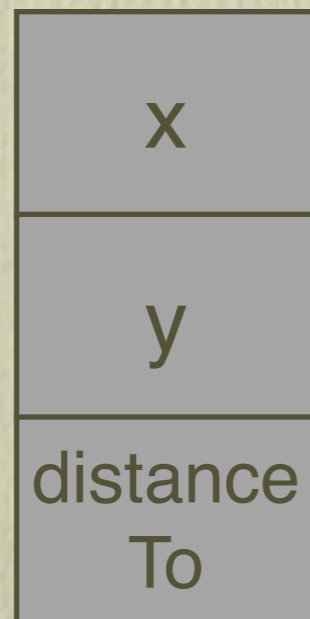
methods



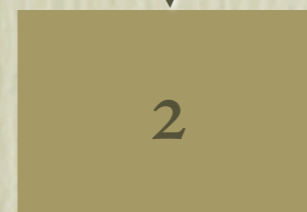
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  method distanceTo (other:Point) → Number {  
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}
```



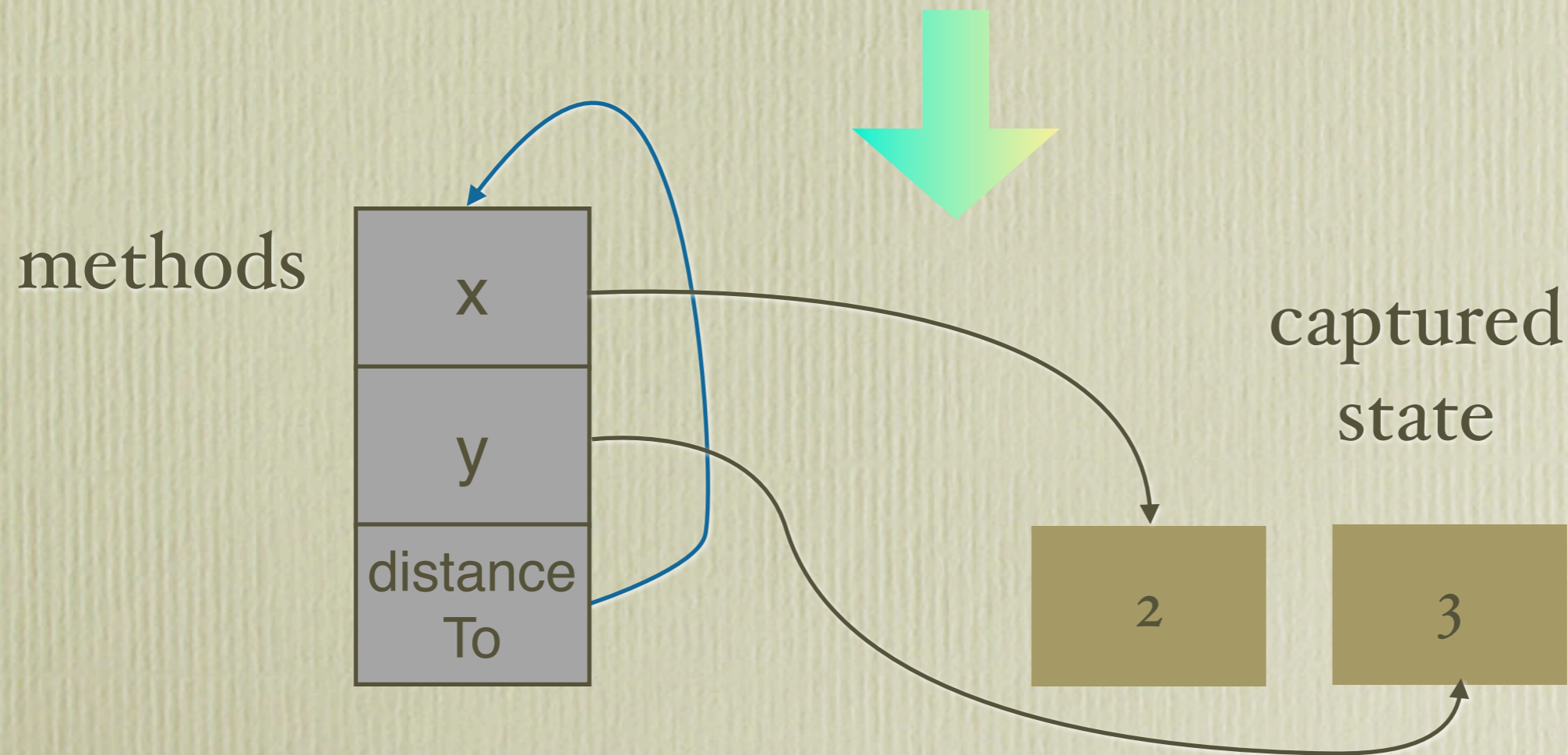
methods



captured
state



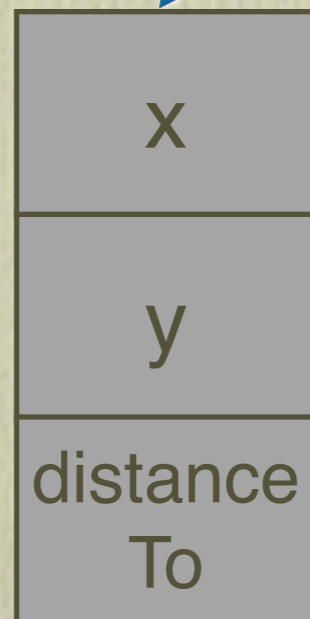

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}
```

self.x

methods



captured
state



Notice:

- Nothing in an object but methods
- No “instance variables” *per se*
 - methods can capture any **def** or **var** in scope
- Objects can be *created* with interesting fields
 - makes it simple to define simple objects
 - the *only* way to create objects with **def** fields

An aside on **self**

- In the previous figure, **self** is treated just like any other bound variable
- Alternative: **self** means “the receiver”
- What's the difference?

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- What's the difference?

```
object {  
  def mouseAction is public, readable = { self.click }  
  method click is public { self.highlight; self.dolt }  
  method dolt = { ... }  
}
```

from one to many

from one to many

```
object {  
  def x:Number is public, readable = 2  
  def y:Number is public, readable = 3  
  method distanceTo (other:Point) → Number {  
    ((x - other.x)^2 + (y - other.y)^2) } }  
}
```

from one to many

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  def y:Number is public, readable = 3  
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```

```
def aPoint = object {  
  method x(xcoord)y(ycoord) {  
    object {  
      def x:Number is public, readable = xcoord  
      def y:Number is public, readable = ycoord  
      method distanceTo (other:Point) → Number {  
        ((x - other.x)^2 + (y - other.y)^2) } } } } }
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aPoint:



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aPoint:



methods

x()y()

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    object {  
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      method distanceTo (other:Point) → Number {  
        ((x - other.x)^2 + (y - other.y)^2) } } } }
```

aPoint:



methods

x()y()

aPoint is a class object

```
def aPoint = object {  
  method x(xcoord)y(ycoord) {  
    object {  
      def x:Number is public, readable = xcoord  
      def y:Number is public, readable = ycoord  
      method distanceTo (other:Point) → Number {  
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```

aPoint.x(2)y(3):

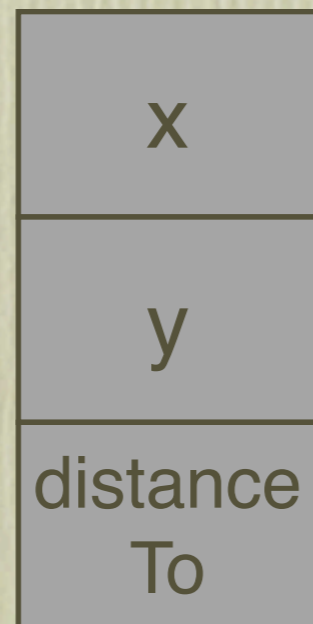
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def aPoint = object {
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```

aPoint.x(2)y(3):

methods

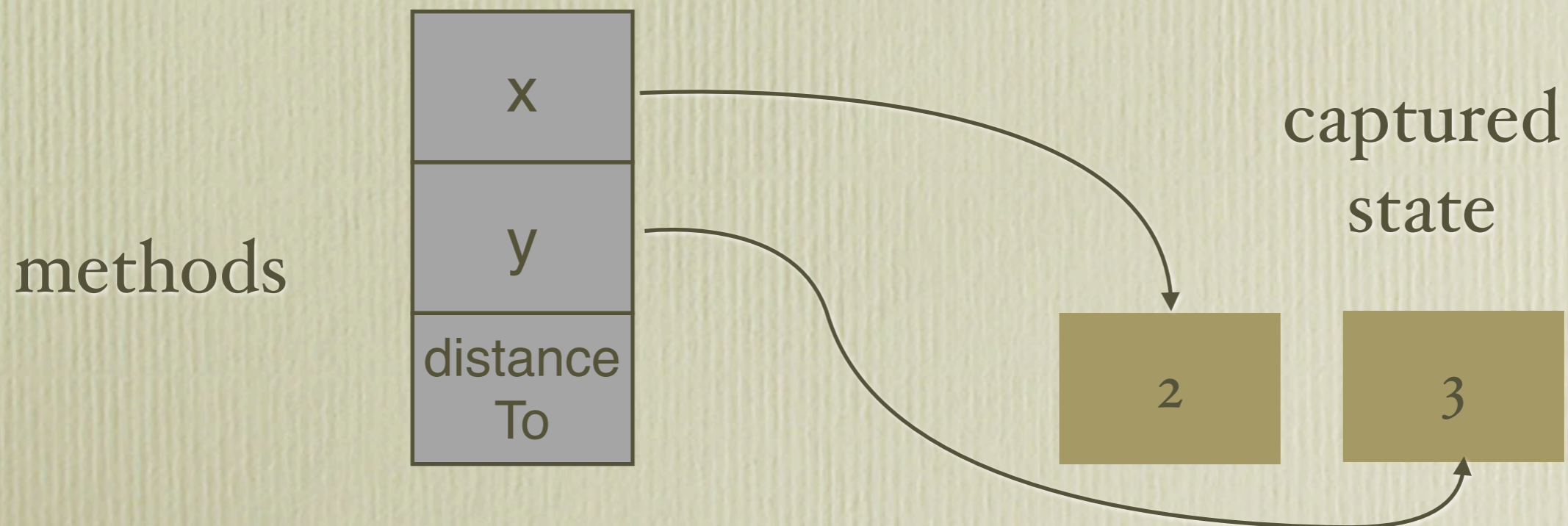


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```

aPoint.x(2)y(3):

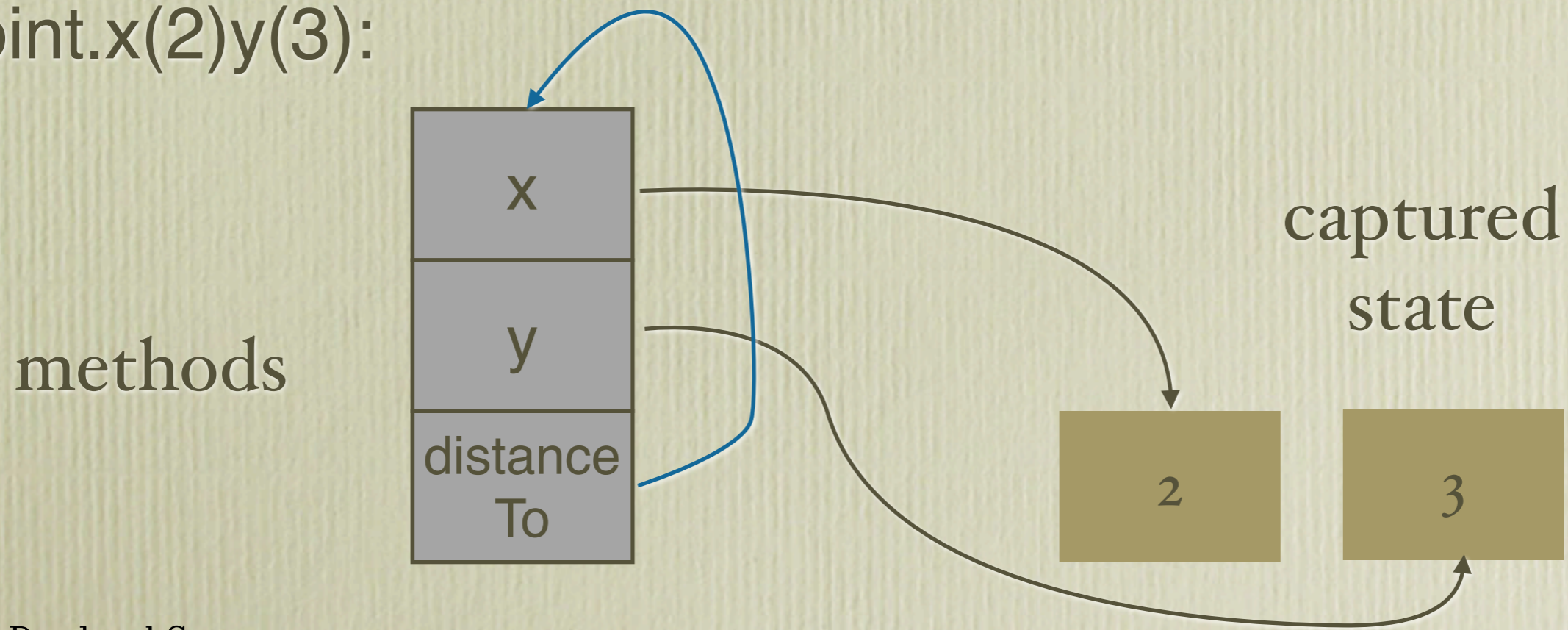


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      def x:Number is public, readable = xcoord
      def y:Number is public, readable = ycoord
      method distanceTo (other:Point) → Number {
        ((x - other.x)^2 + (y - other.y)^2) } } } }

```

aPoint.x(2)y(3):



Inheritance, Version I

- Inheritance from objects
 - restricted to “definitively static” objects, to make the job of the static type-checker easier

```
object {  
  inherits aPoint.x(2)y(3)  
  def color is public, readable = aColor.black  
}
```

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object {  
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  def color is public, readable = aColor.black  
}
```

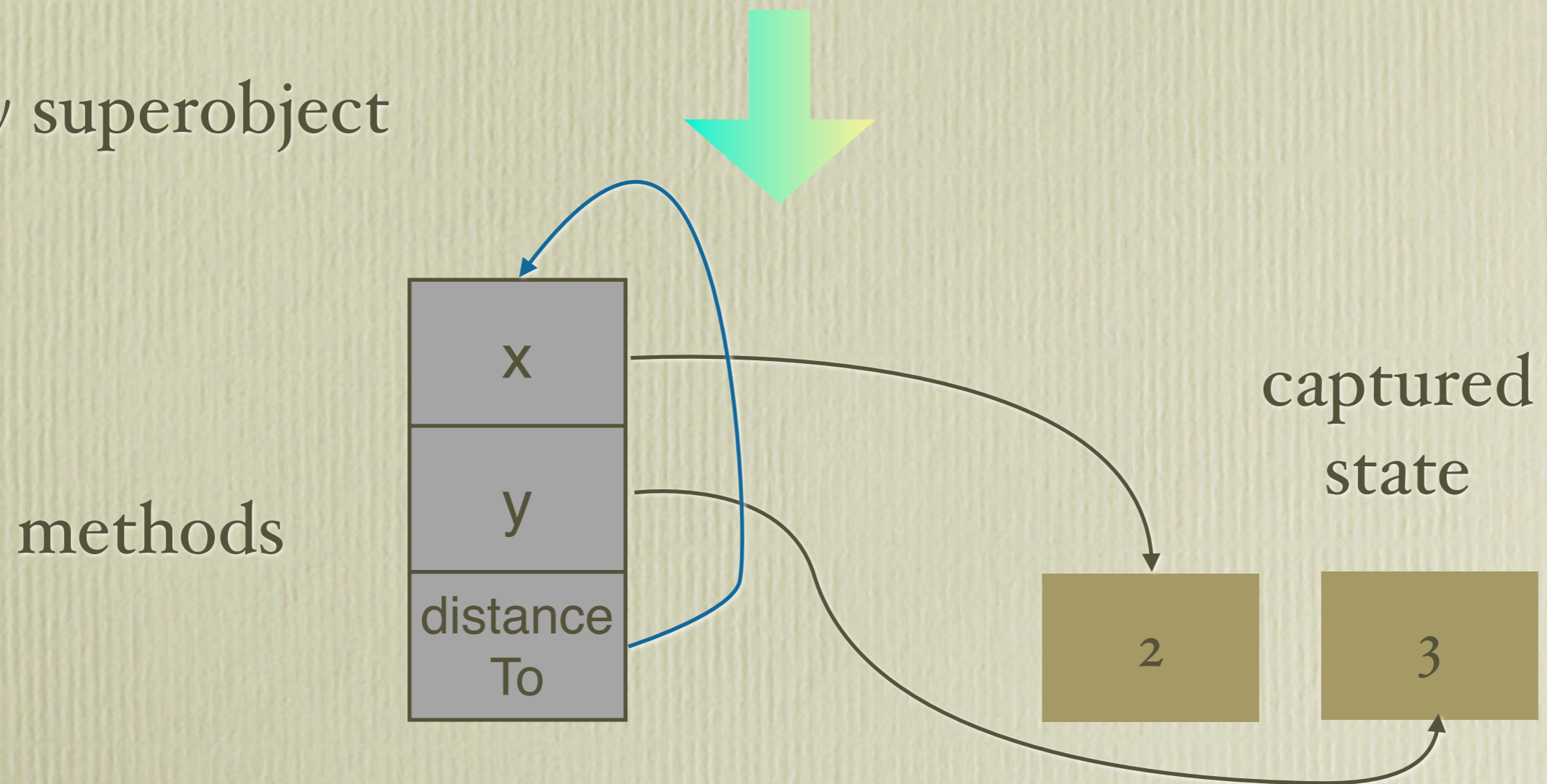
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  inherits aPoint.x(2)y(3)  
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```

I. *Copy* superobject



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```

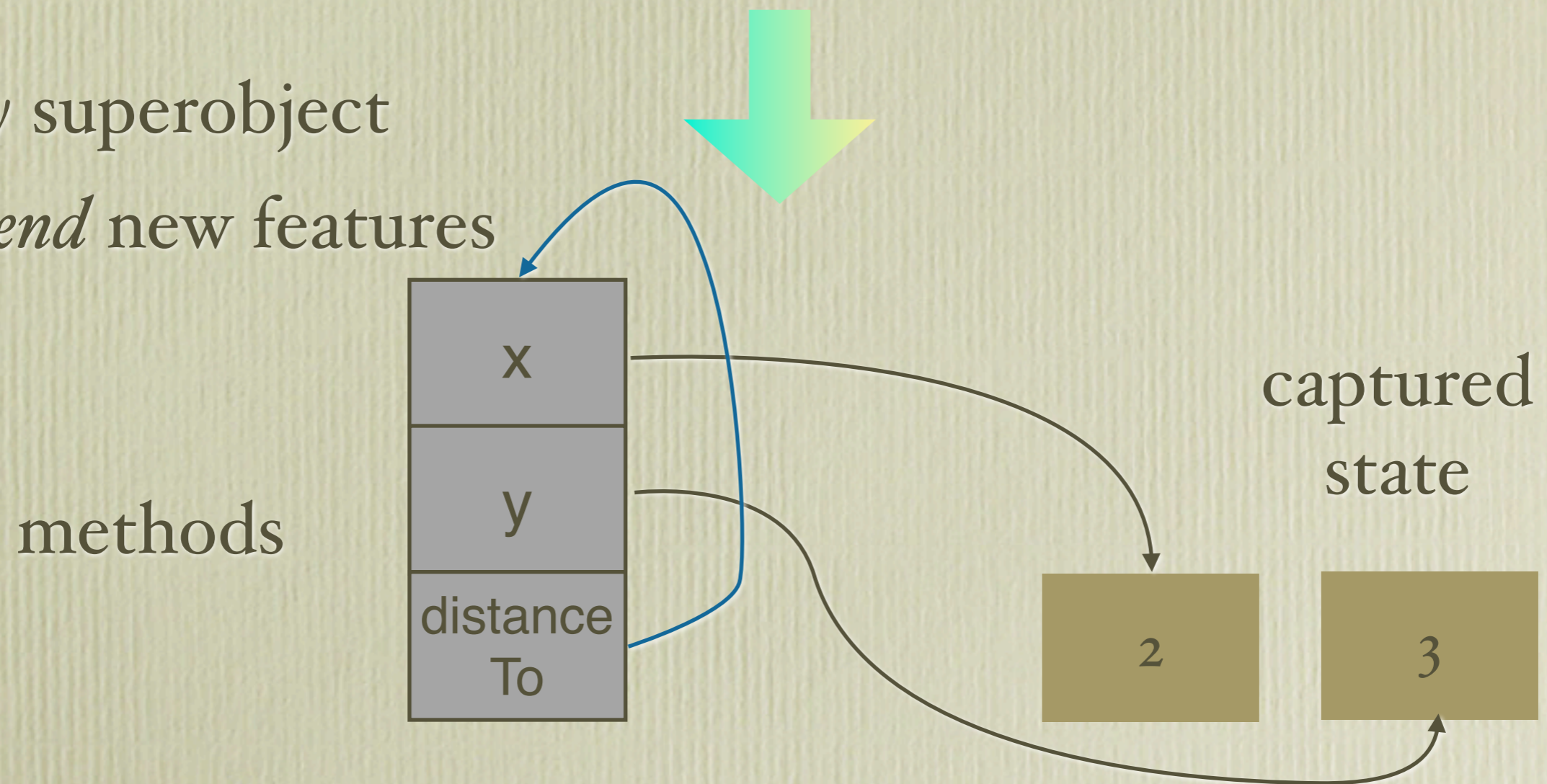
I. *Copy* superobject



```
object {  
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}
```

1. *Copy* superobject

2. *Append* new features



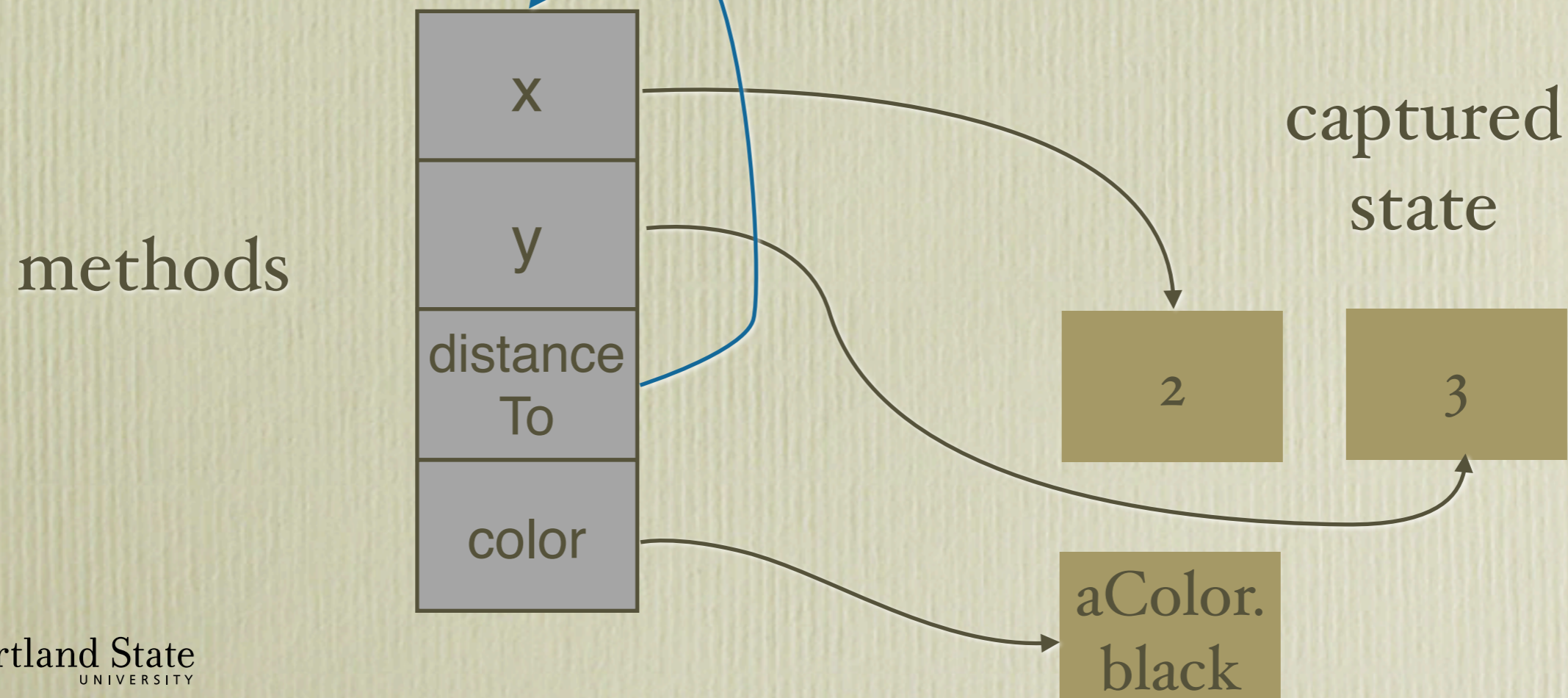
```
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}
```

1. *Copy* superobject

2. *Append* new features



Optimization: *Copy* can be elided if safe



Conceptual Problem

- Every object from which one might wish to inherit must have a **copy** method

Practical Problem

- Referential Transparency: creation of super-object is oblivious to its context

```
def aPoint = object {  
  method x(xcoord)y(ycoord) {  
    object {  
      def x:Number is public, readable = xcoord  
      def y:Number is public, readable = ycoord  
      method distanceTo (other:Point) → Number {  
        ((x - other.x)^2 + (y - other.y)^2) }  
      registry.add(self)  
    } } }  
}
```


Practical Problem

- Referential Transparency: creation of super-object is oblivious to its context

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def aPoint = object {  
  method x(xcoord)y(ycoord) {  
    object {  
      def x:Number is public, readable = xcoord  
      def y:Number is public, readable = ycoord  
      method distanceTo (other:Point) → Number {  
        ((x - other.x)^2 + (y - other.y)^2) }  
      registry.add(self)  
    }  
  }  
}
```

registration
part of object *creation*

Problem: Referential Transparency

- registry.add(**self**) registers the *super-object*
 - this object is copied, then dropped

```
object {  
  inherits aPoint.x(2)y(3)  
  def color is public, readable = aColor.black  
}
```

Inheritance, Version II


- Inheritance via object mutation
 - restricted to “definitively static” objects
 - restricted to “fresh” objects, to *hide* mutation

```
object {  
  inherits aPoint.x(2)y(3)  
  def color is public, readable = aColor.black  
}
```

```
object {  
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}
```

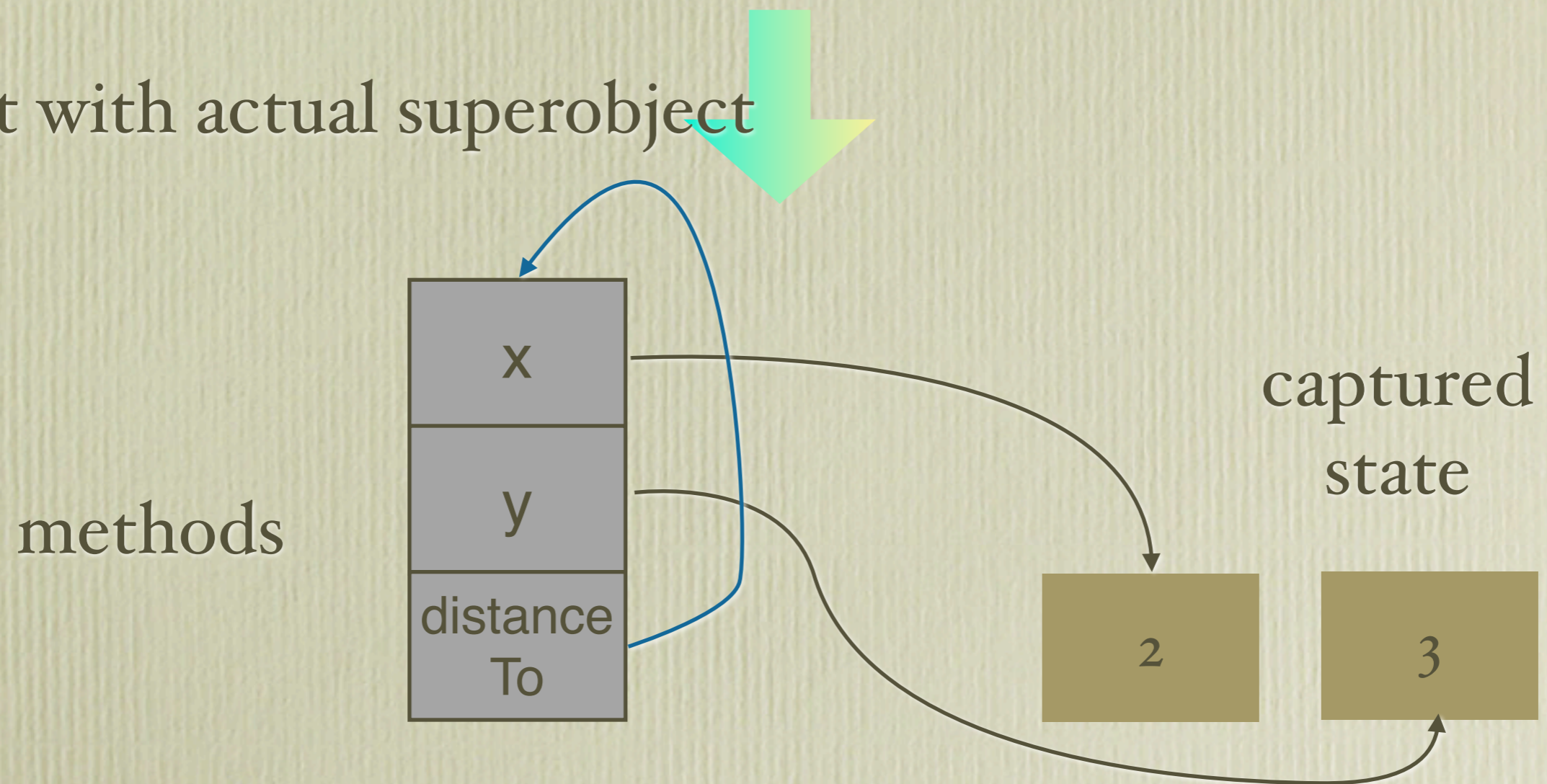
```
object {  
  inherits aPoint.x(2)y(3)  
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}
```

i. Start with actual superobject



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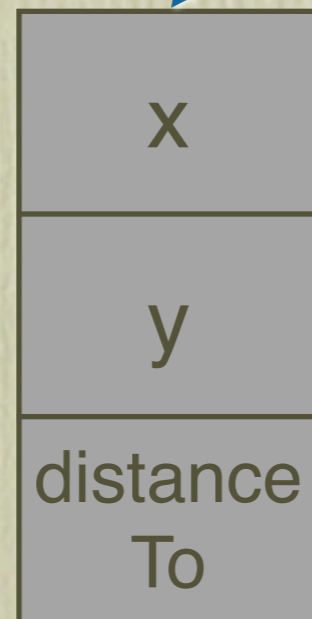
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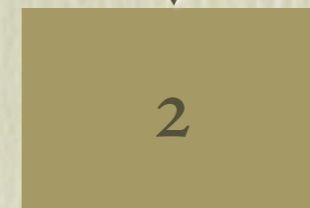
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```

1. Start with actual superobject
2. *Mutate it* by adding new features

methods



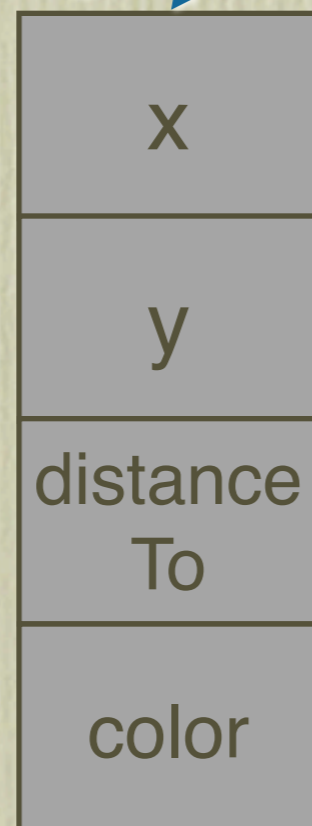
captured state



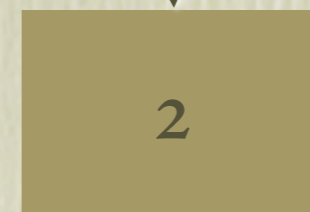
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captured state



Problem: can't inherit from objects

- “Freshness” requirement means that you must inherit from object *constructors*, or *copies*

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```
class SuccessfulMatch.new(result', bindings') {  
  inherits true  
  def result is public, readable = result'  
  def bindings is public, readable = bindings'  
  method asString {  
    "SuccessfulMatch(result = {result}, bindings = {bindings})"  
  }  
}
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- “Freshness” requirement means that you must inherit from object *constructors*, or *copies*
- If we eliminate the freshness requirement, we are visibly mutating “immutable” objects

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- “Freshness” requirement means that you must inherit from object *constructors*

```
def AssertionTrait = object {  
  method assert(bb: Boolean)description(str) is public {  
    if (! bb) ...  
  }  
  method deny(bb: Boolean)description(str) is public {  
    assert (! bb) description (str)  
  }  
  ...  
}
```

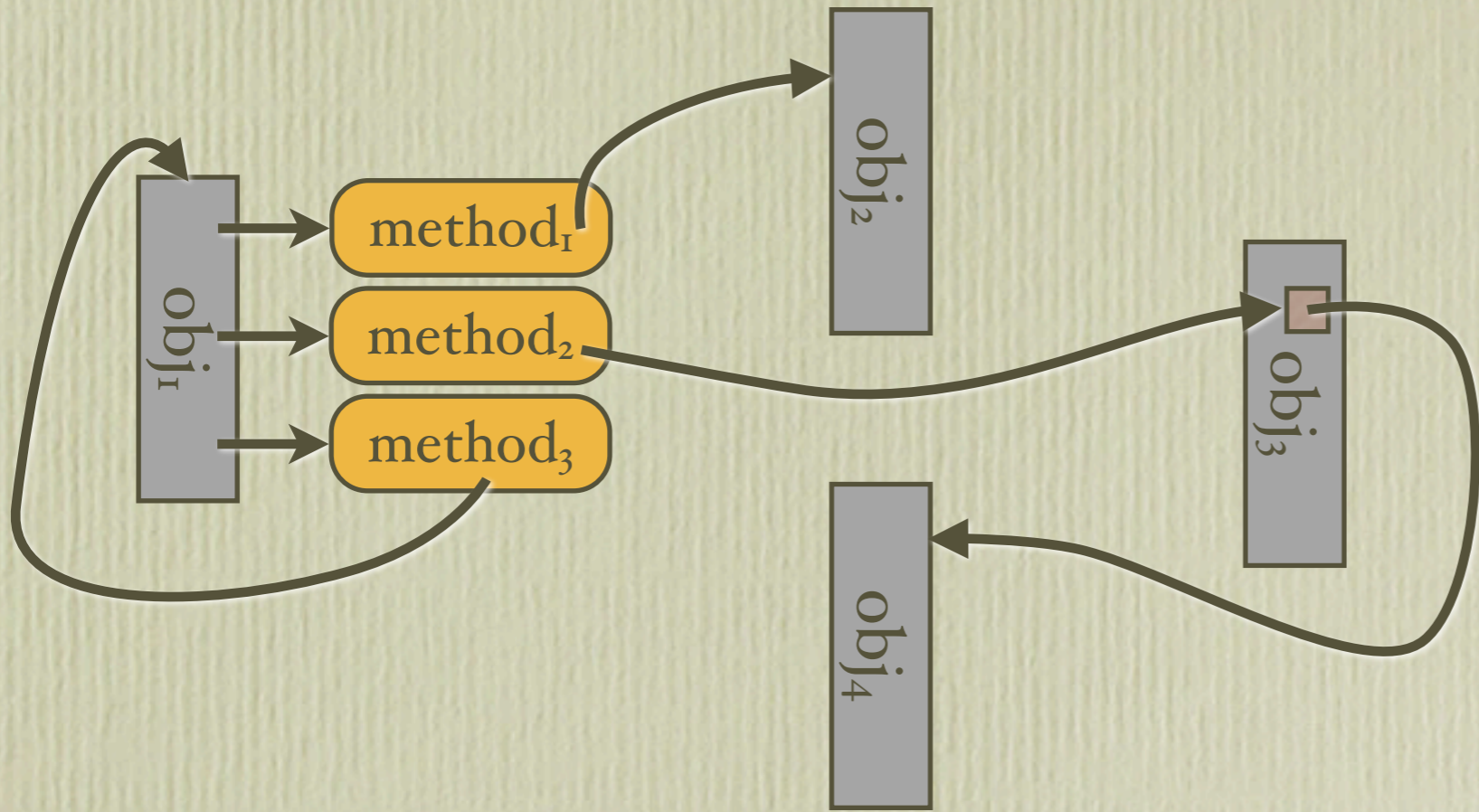

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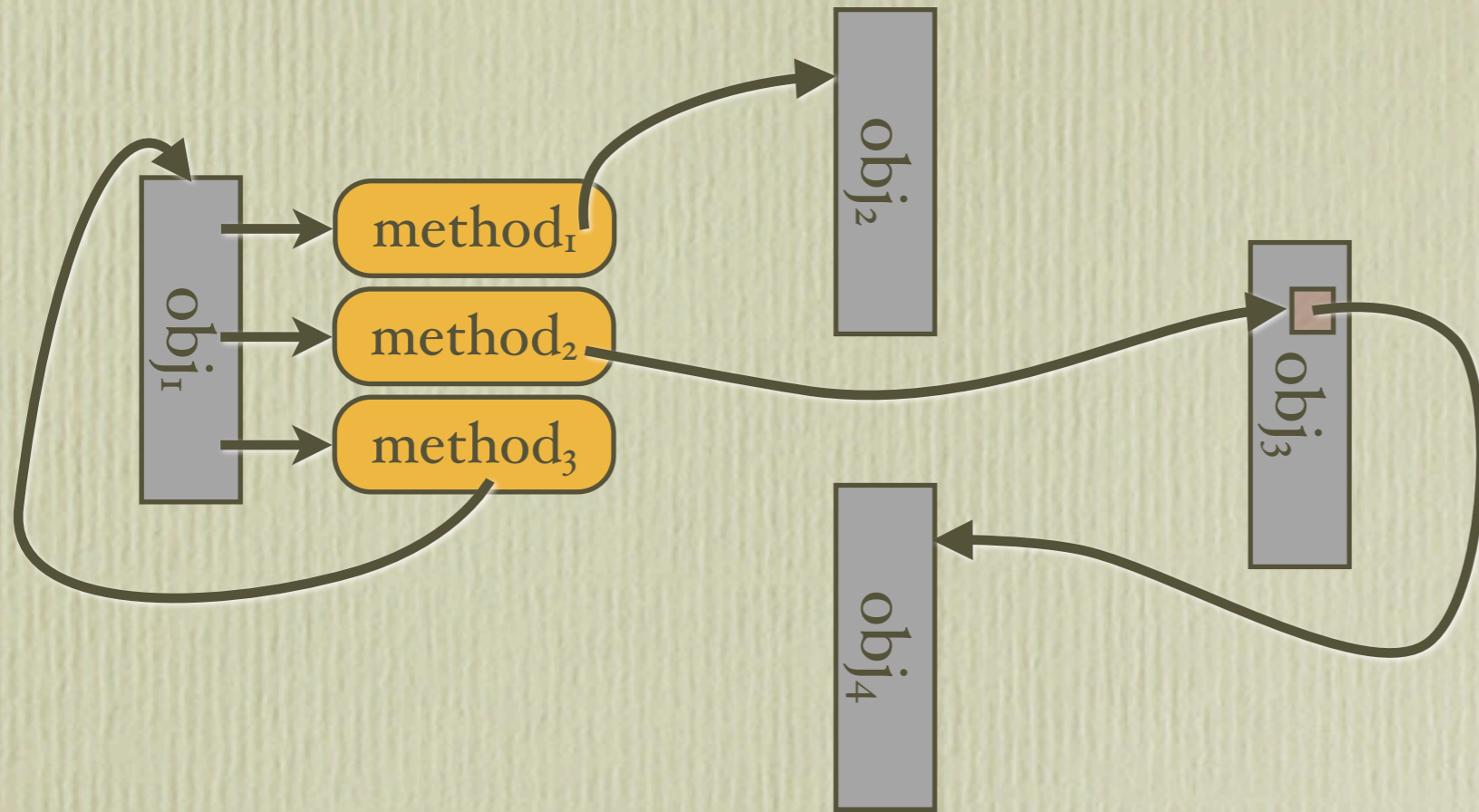
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  }  
  ...  
}
```

Conclusion: **copy** is essential

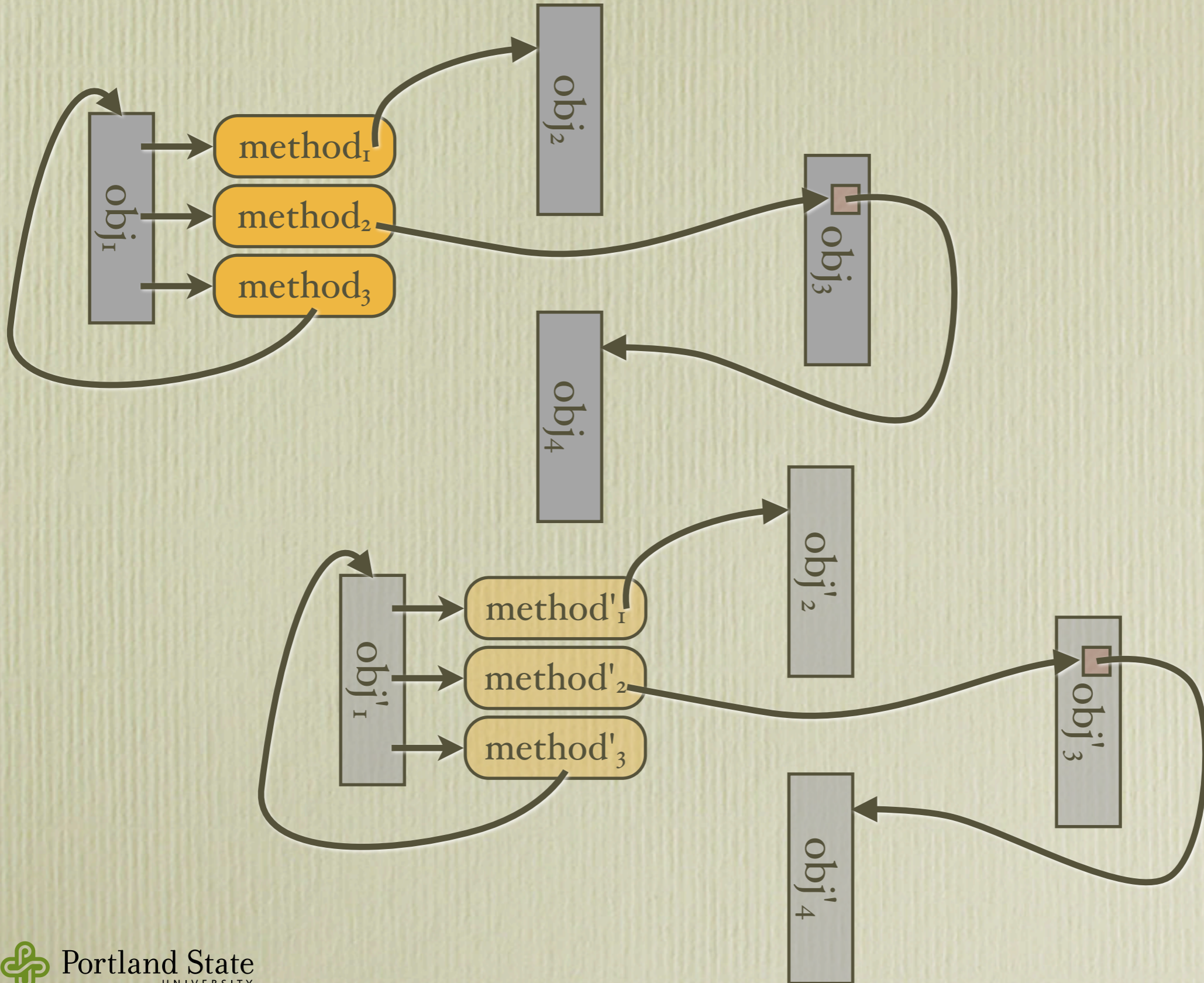
- Both versions of inheritance need **copy** as a primitive (built-in) method
- What does **copy** mean?



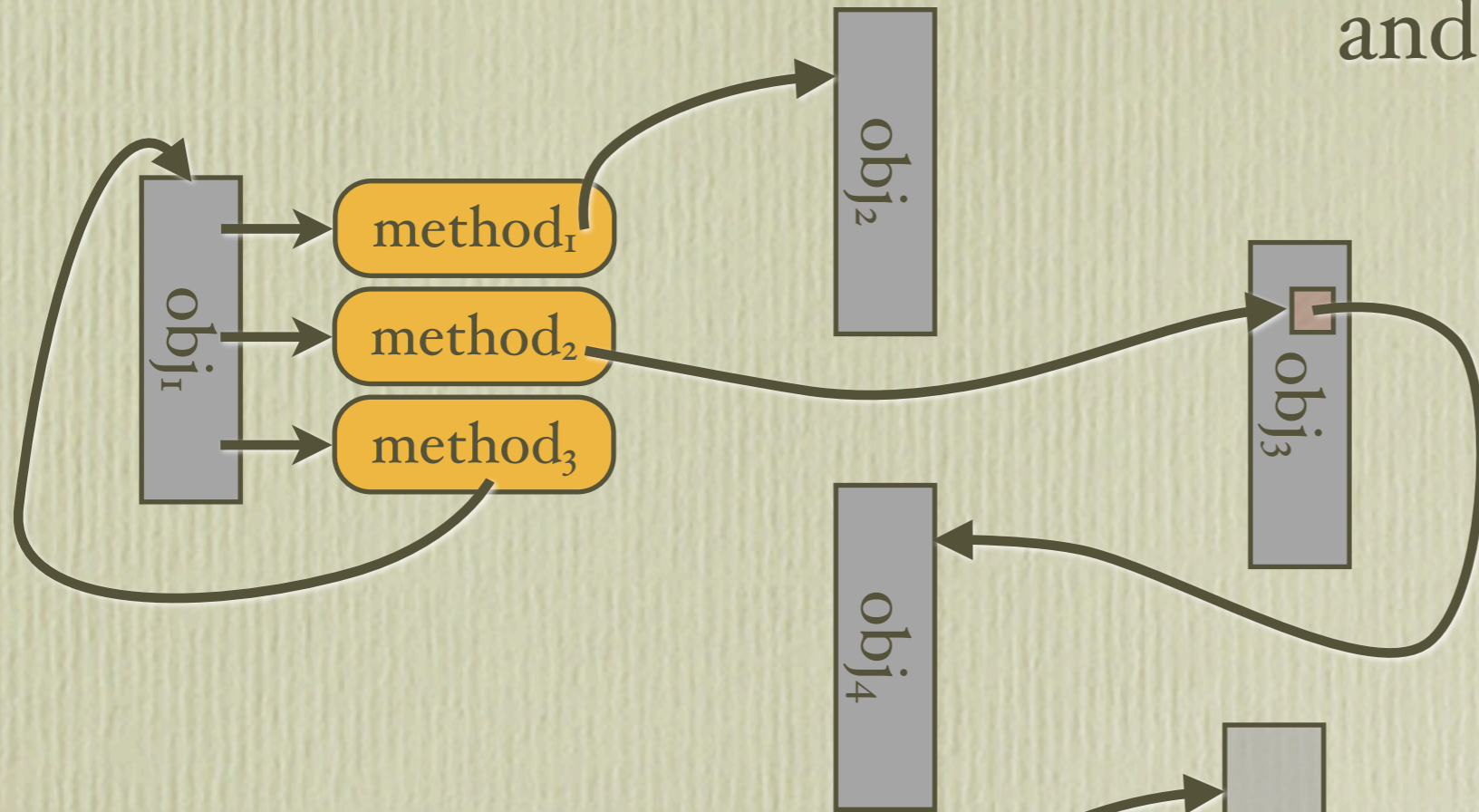
obj₁.copy ?



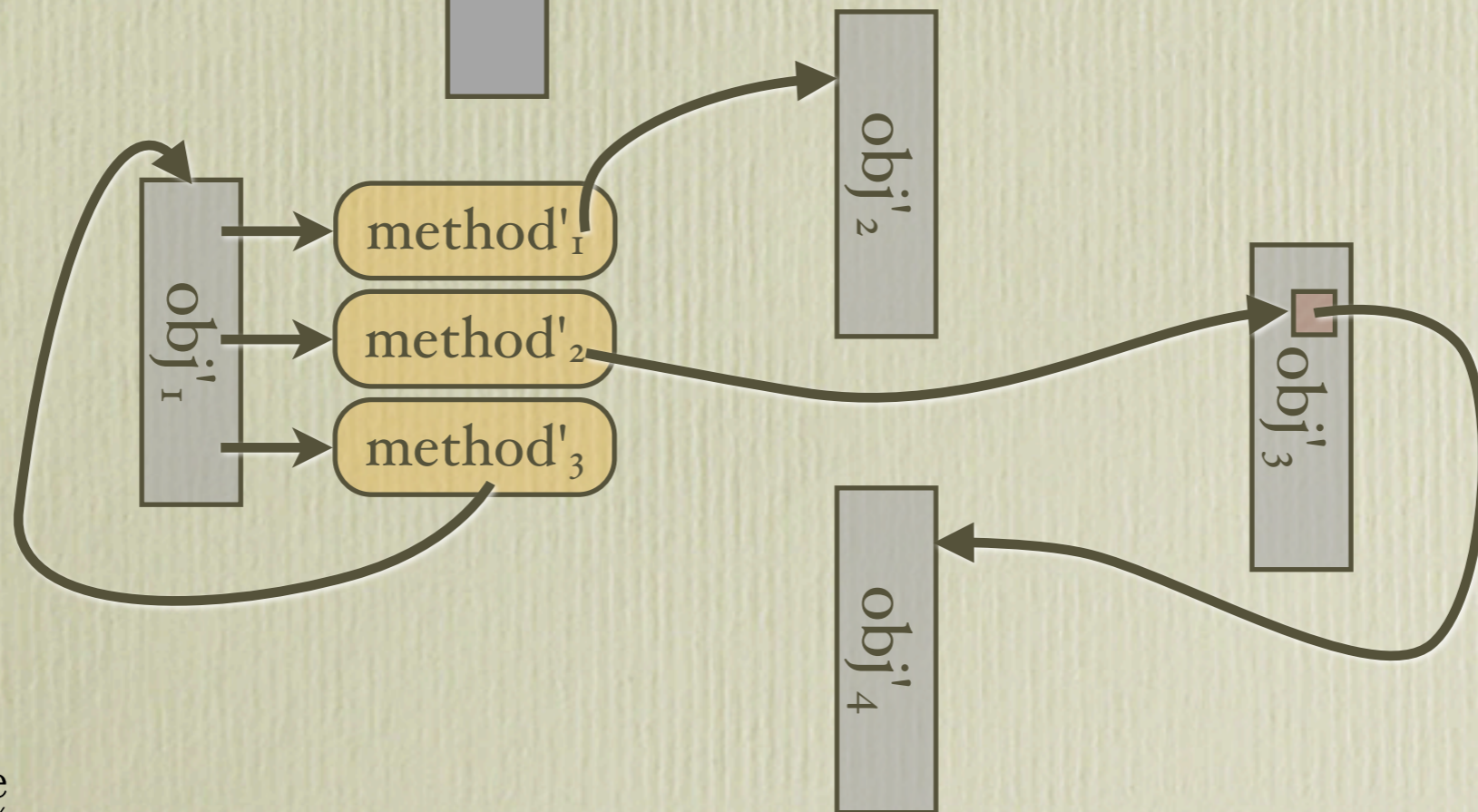
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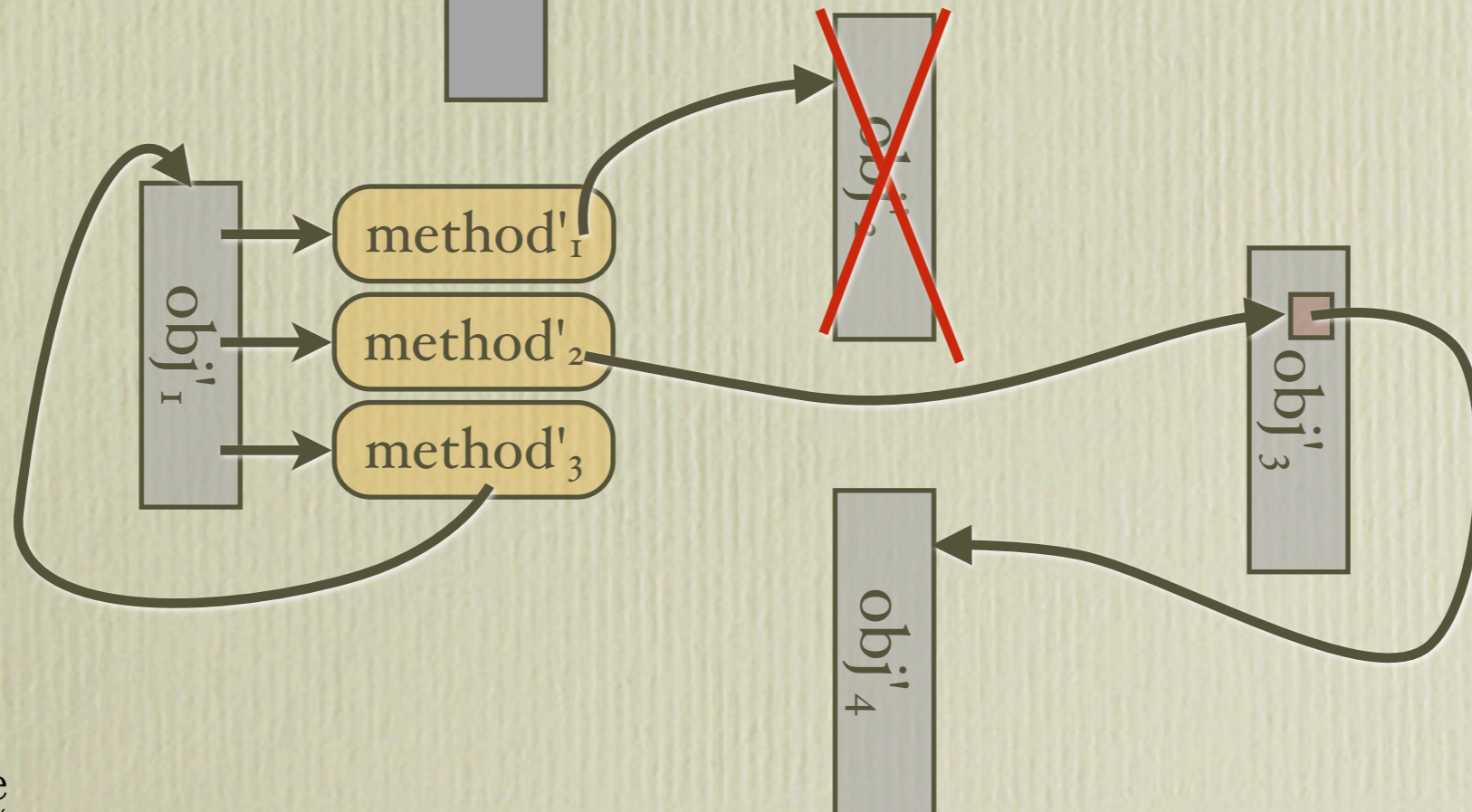
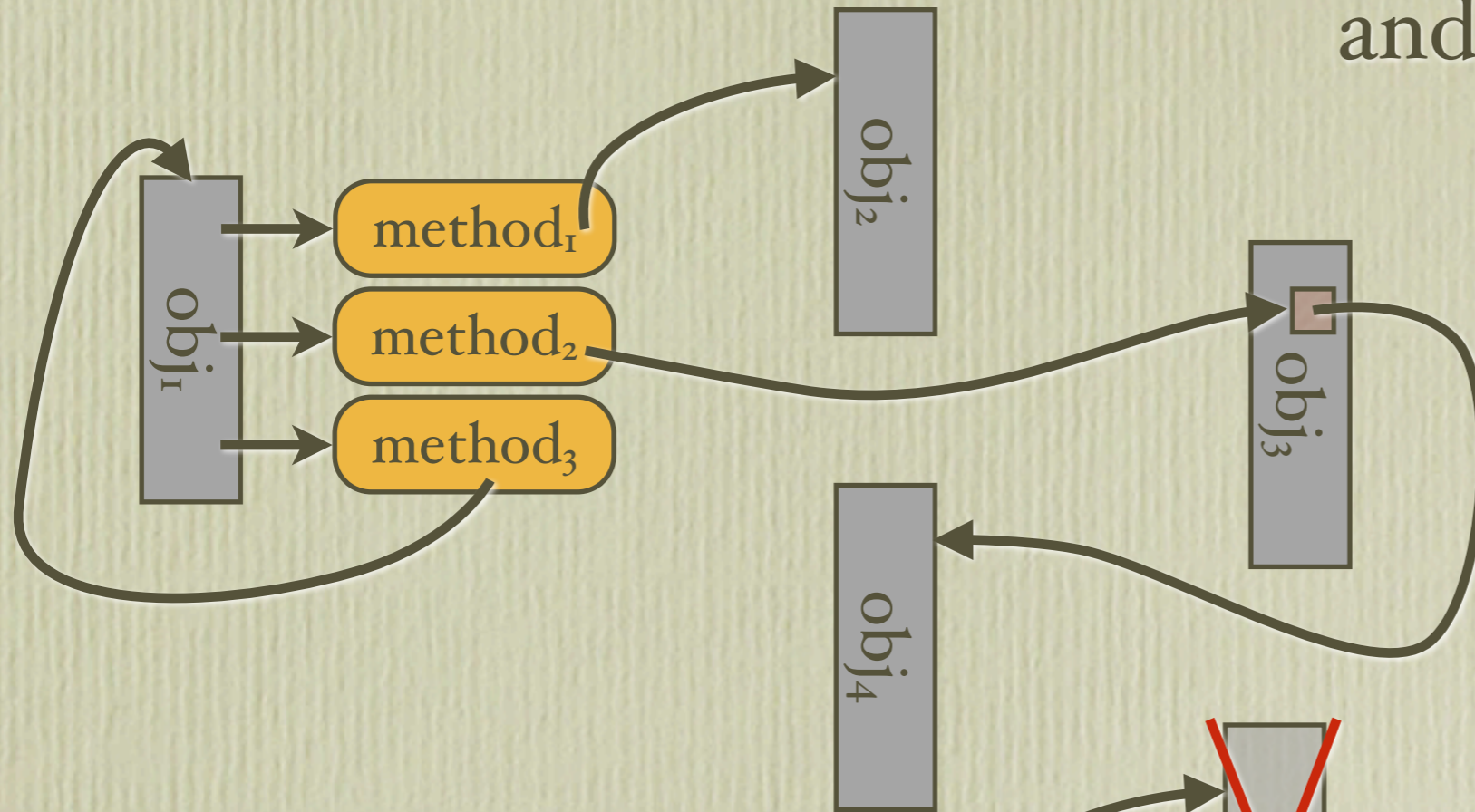


Which objects to copy and which to share?



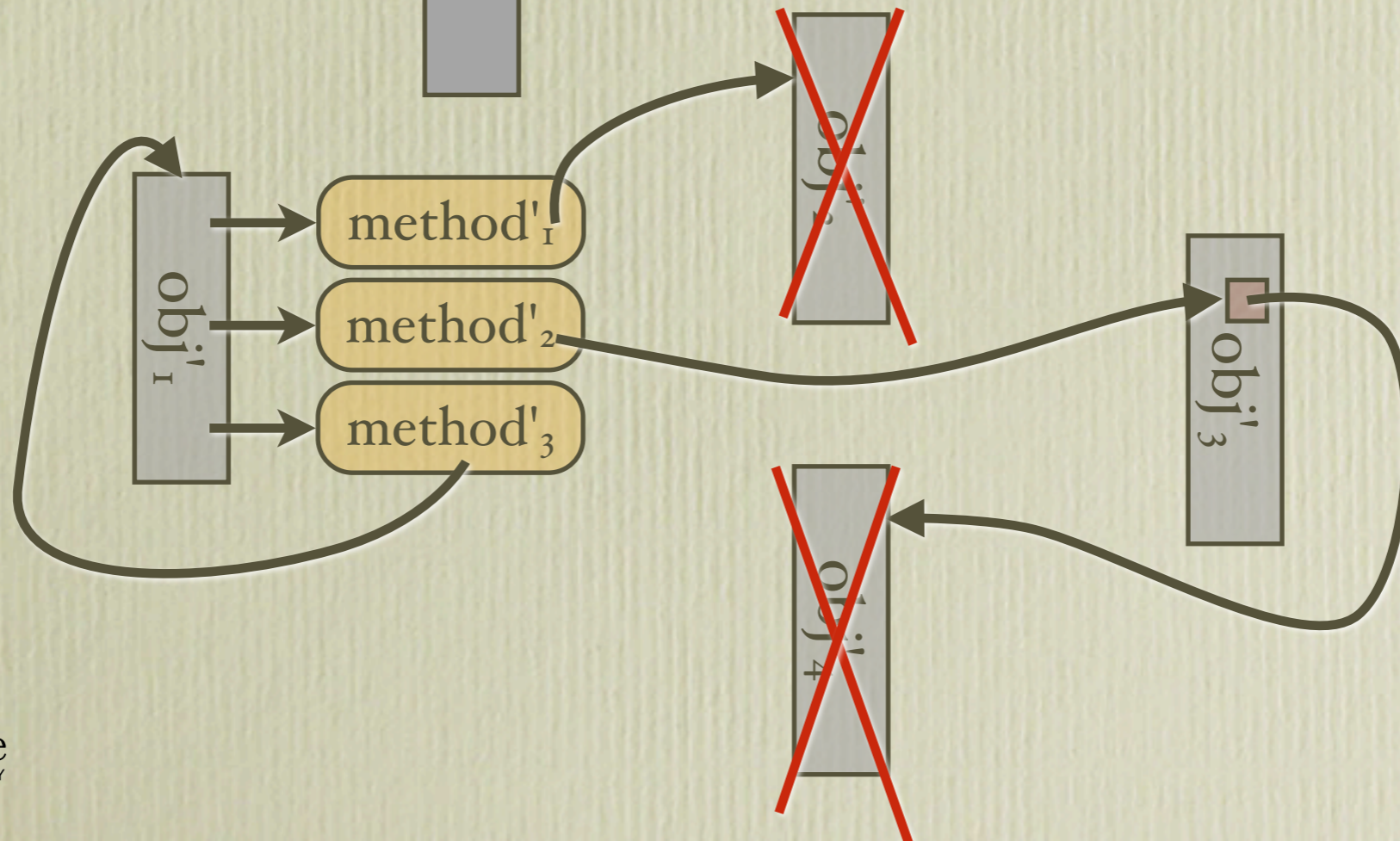
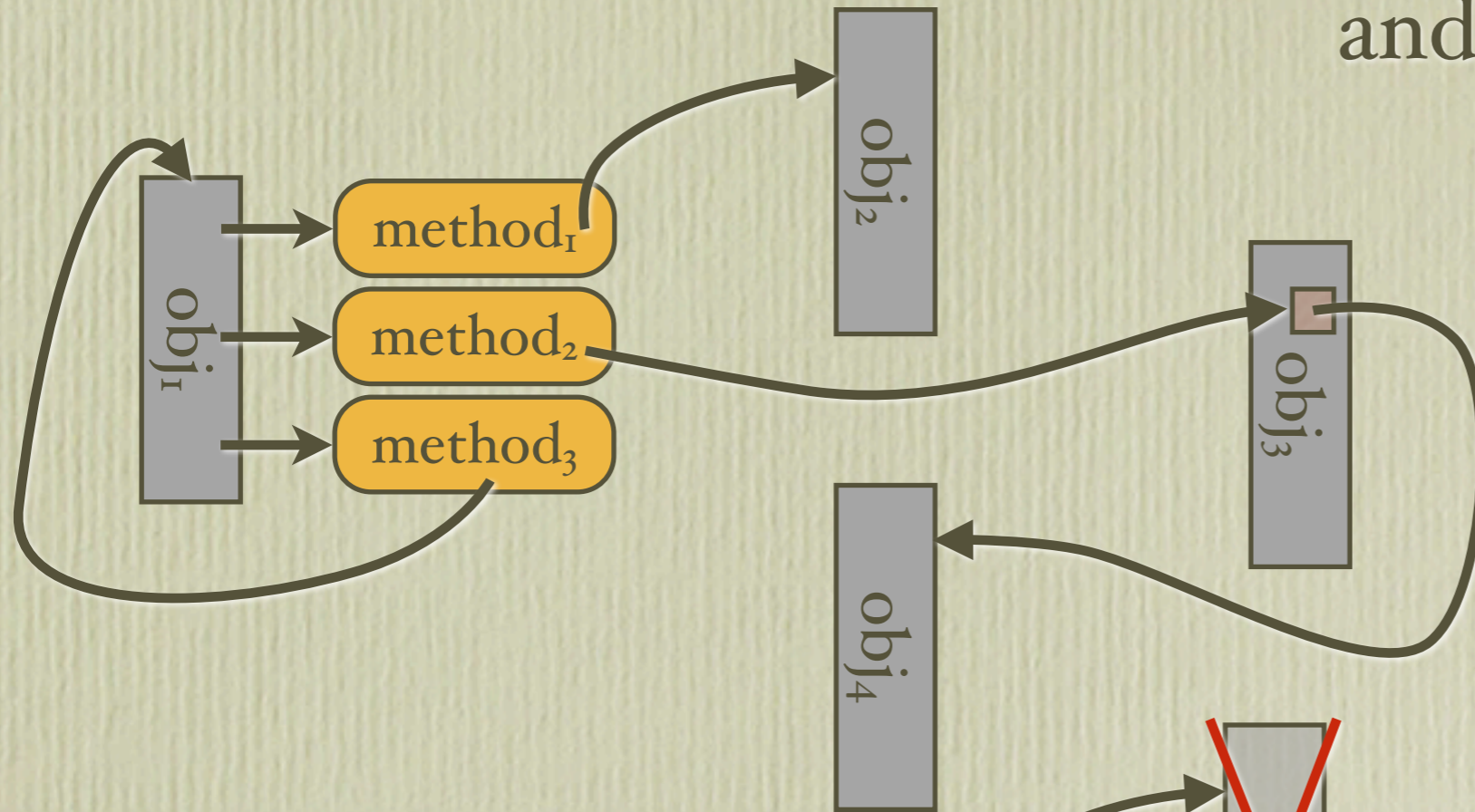
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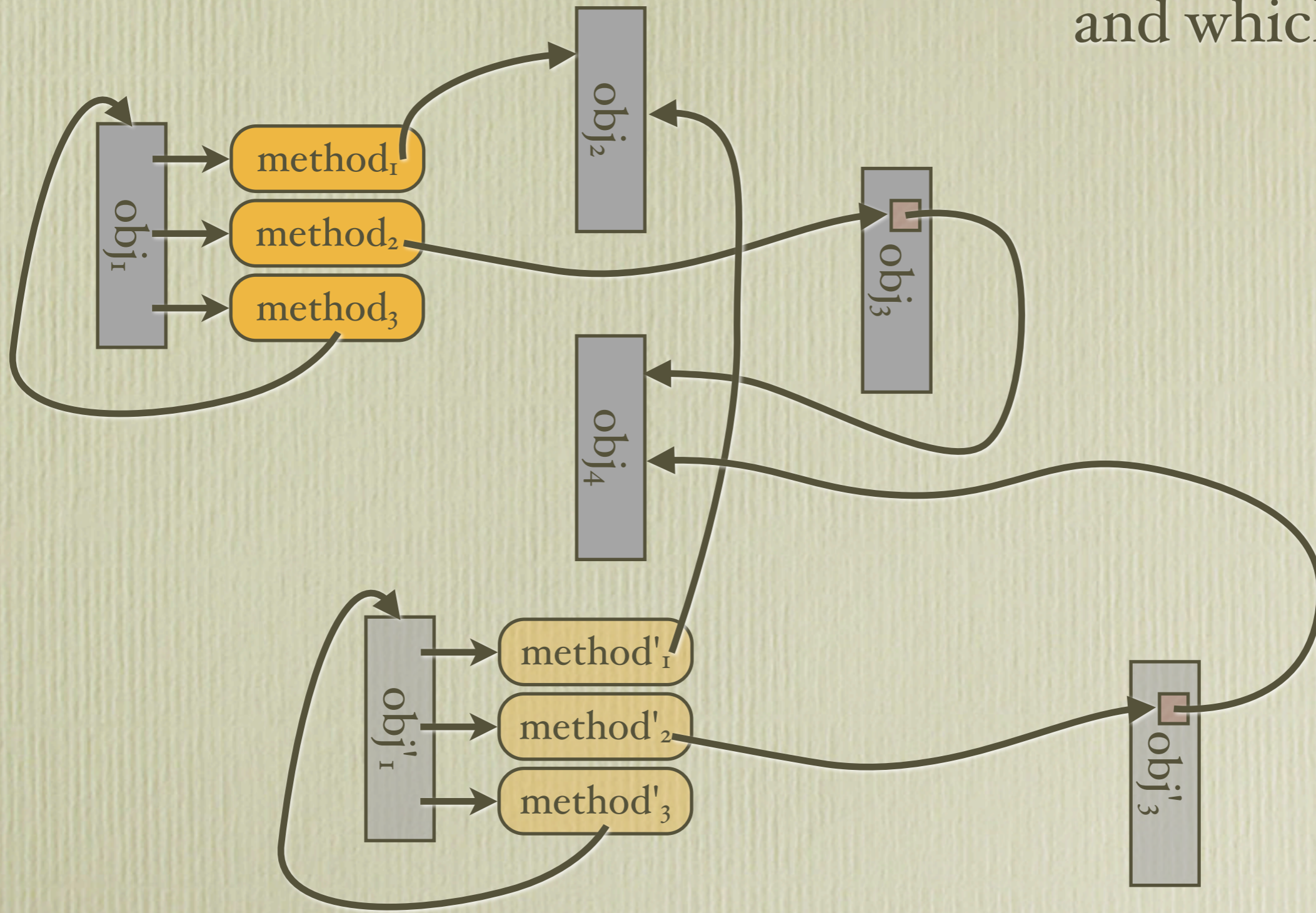
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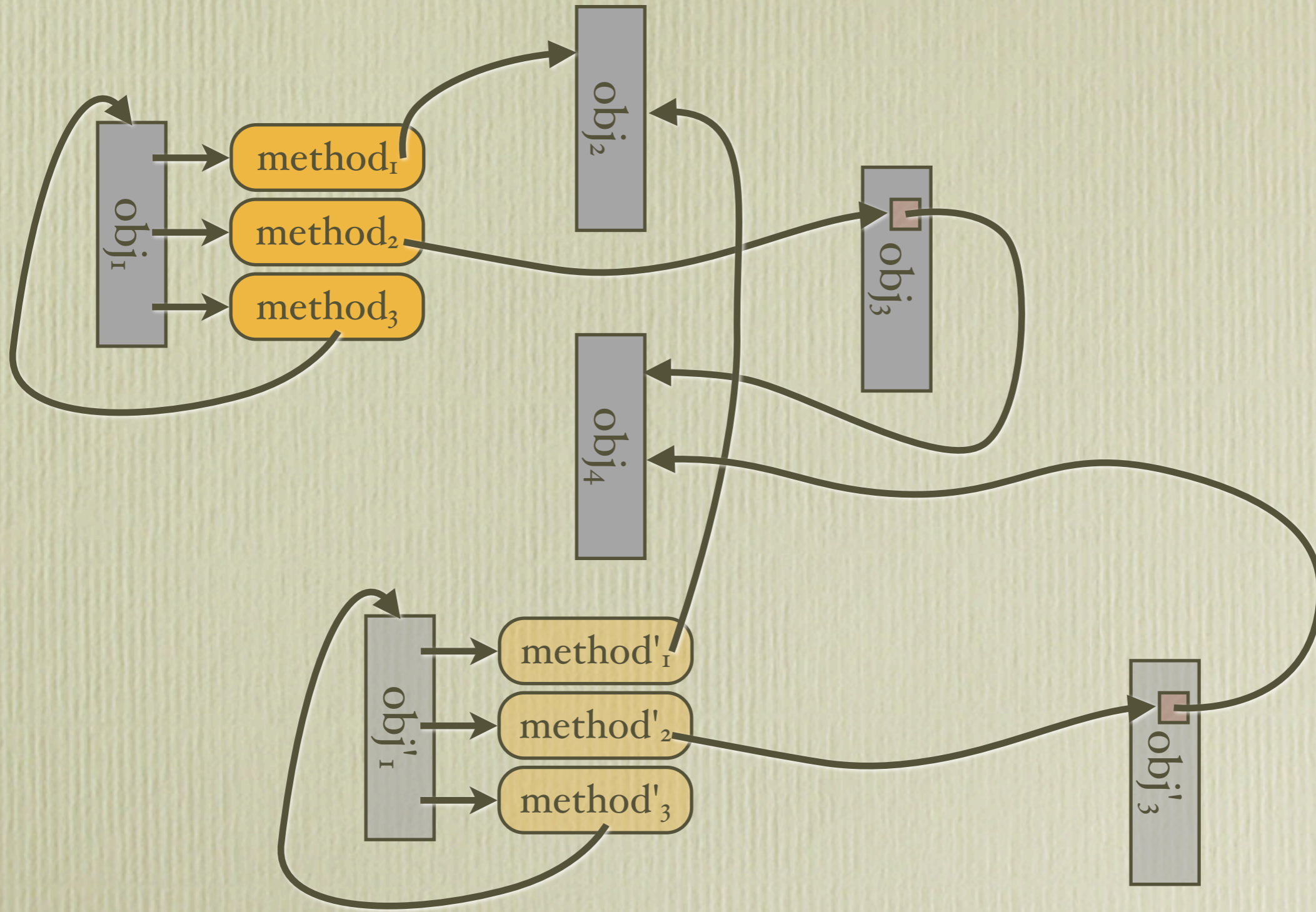
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Which objects to copy and which to share?



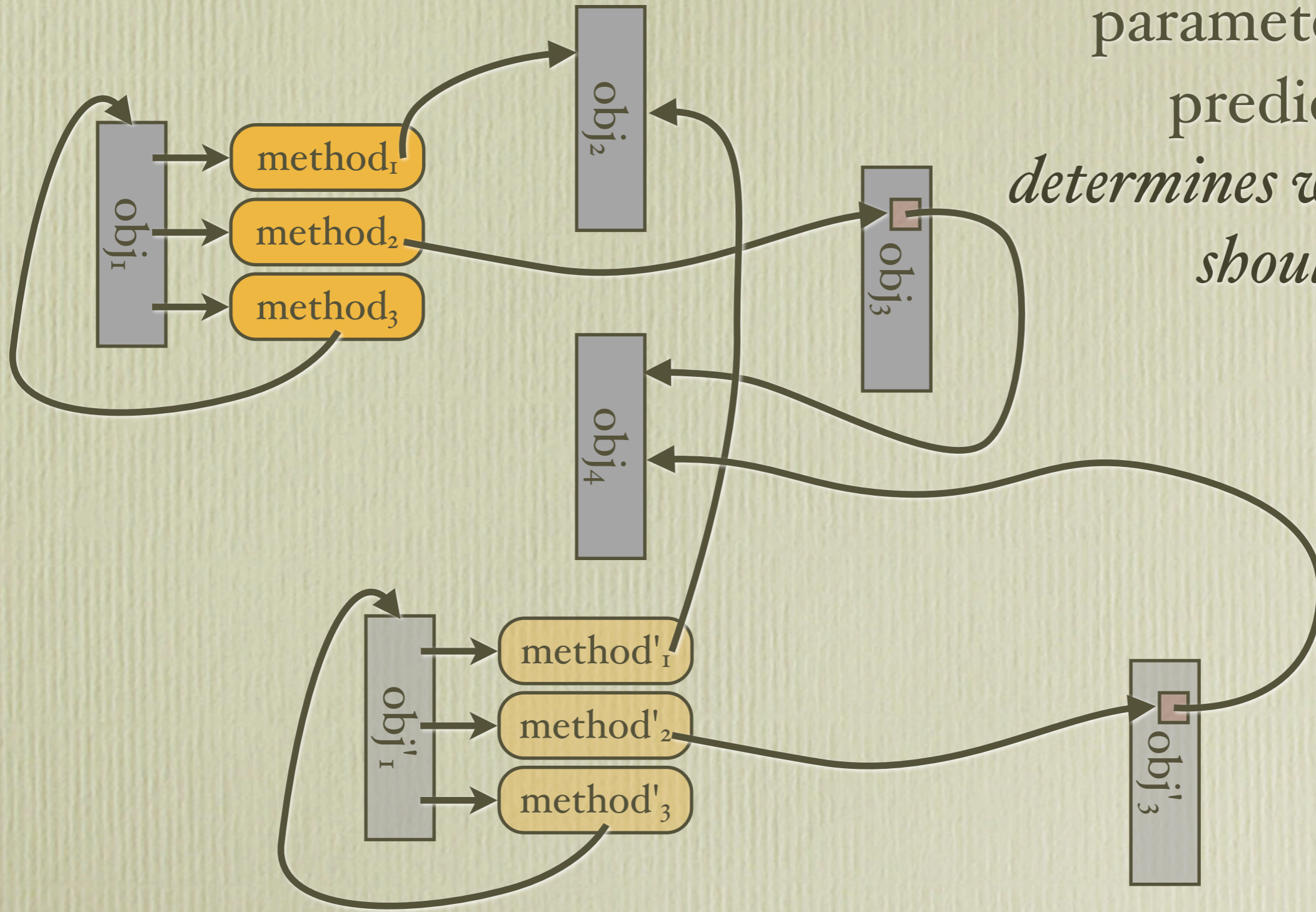
$S(x) = x \in \{ \text{obj}_1, \text{obj}_3, \text{method}_1, \text{method}_2, \text{method}_3 \}$

obj₁.copy ?



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obj₁.copy ?



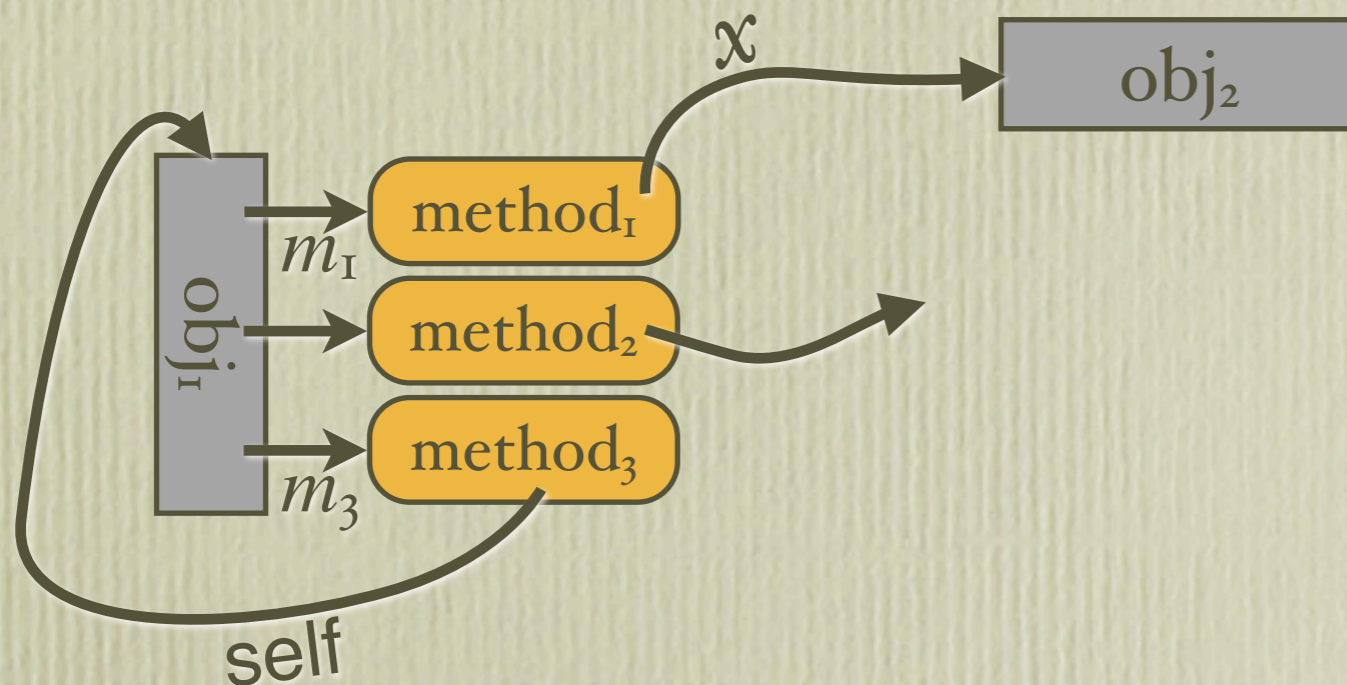
copy should be parameterized by a predicate s that determines which nodes should be copied

$$s(x) = x \in \{ \text{obj}_1, \text{obj}_3, \text{method}_1, \text{method}_2, \text{method}_3 \}$$

- $m, n \in N$ is a set of Nodes (objects, variables, methods)
- $x \in L$, a set of labels
- $p, q \in E \subset (N \times L \times N)$ is a set of Edges (pointers, object references, variable references).
- If $\langle m, x, n \rangle \in E$, then node m has an edge labeled x leading to node n , and we write $m.x = n$
- A *path* (of length k) $\vec{x} = x_1x_2 \cdots x_k \in L^k$ is *valid* from a root node n_0 exactly when $\exists n_1, n_2, \dots, n_k \in N$ such that $\langle n_0, x_1, n_1 \rangle \in E, \langle n_1, x_2, n_2 \rangle \in E, \dots, \langle n_{k-1}, x_k, n_k \rangle \in E$. We write $n_0.\vec{x} = n_k$
- F is a set of *fresh* nodes
- $s \in N \rightarrow \text{Boolean}$ is a shallowness function; if $s(n)$ then n should be copied, otherwise it should be shared.

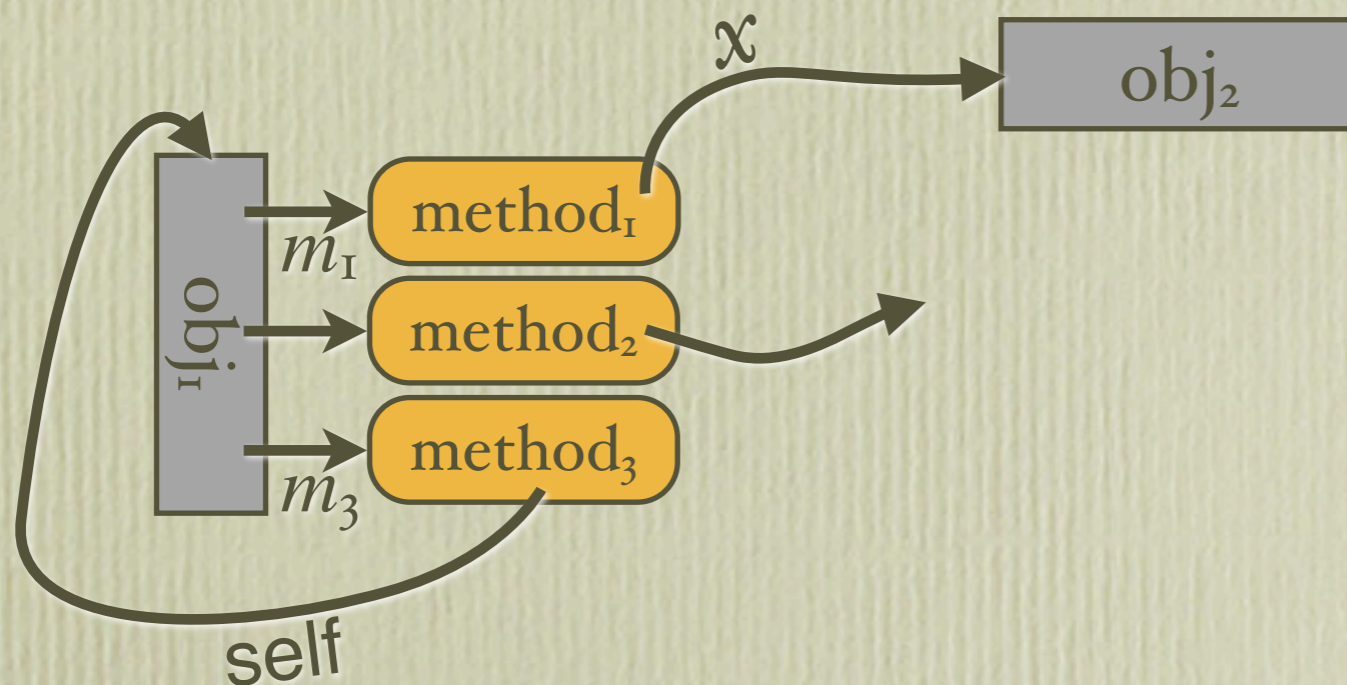
- $copy_s : N \rightarrow N \cup F$ is a function with the following properties:
 1. $s(n) \equiv copy_s(n) \in F$
 2. $\neg s(n) \equiv copy_s(n) = n$
 3. $\forall n \in N, \vec{x} \in L^*, copy_s(n.\vec{x}) \equiv copy_s(n).\vec{x}$

The last equivalence means that the path on the rhs is valid exactly when the path on the lhs is valid, and that when both are valid, the object graphs commute.



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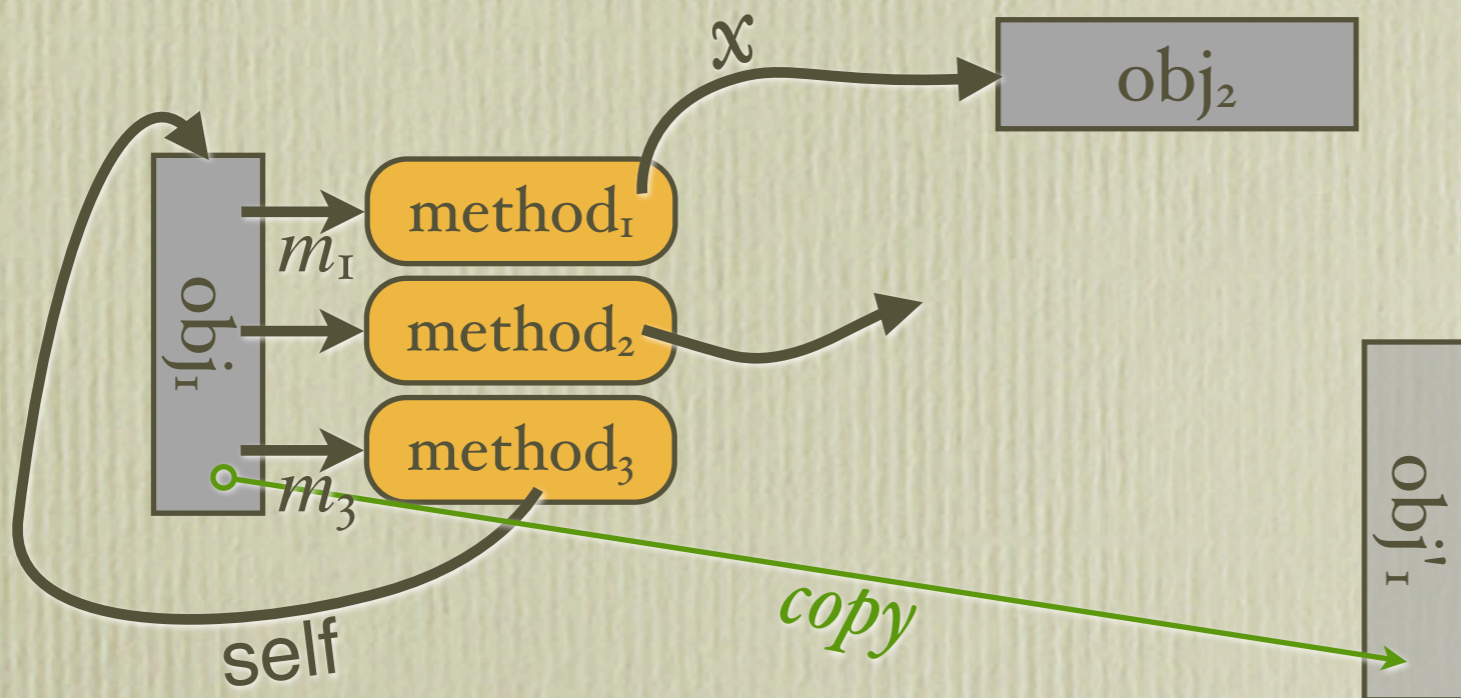
Paths from obj_1 :

$$obj_1.m_3.self = obj_1$$

$$obj_1.m_1.x = obj_2$$

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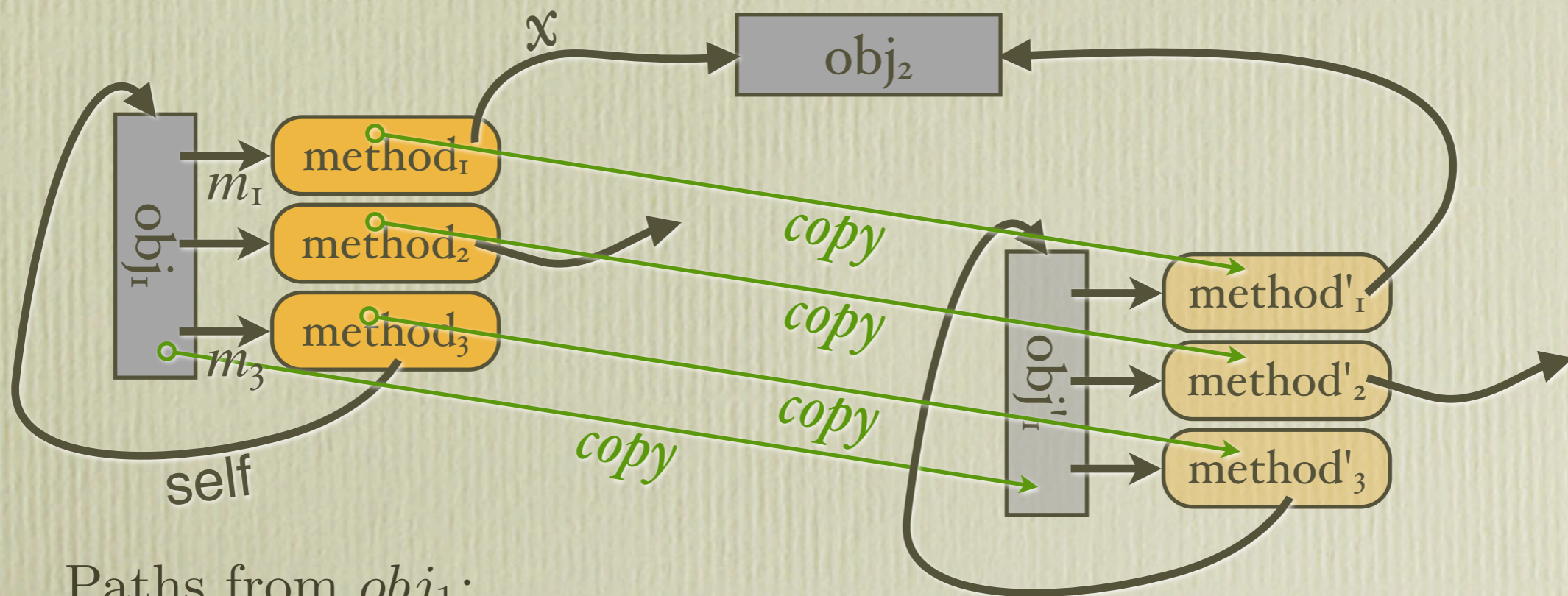
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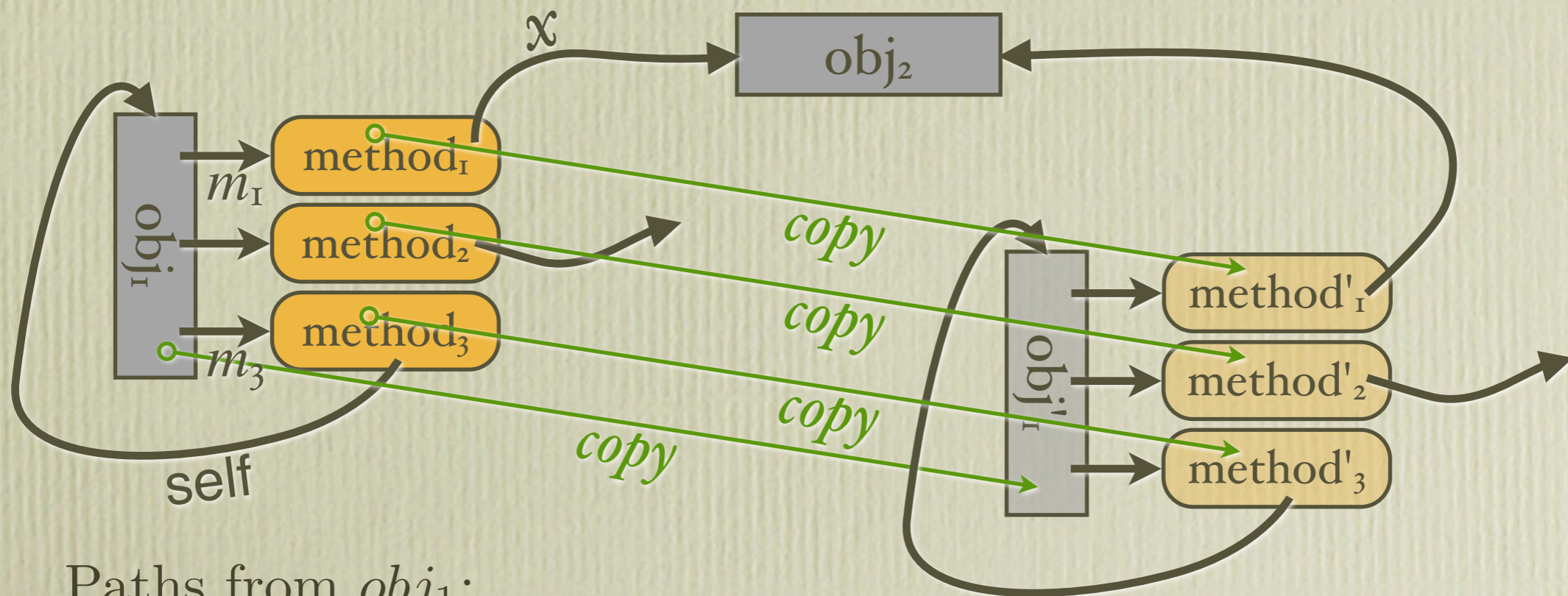
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The last equivalence means that the path on the rhs is valid exactly when the path on the lhs is valid, and that when both are valid, the object graphs commute.



Paths from obj_1 :

$$obj_1.m_3.self = obj_1$$

$$obj_1.m_1.x = obj_2$$

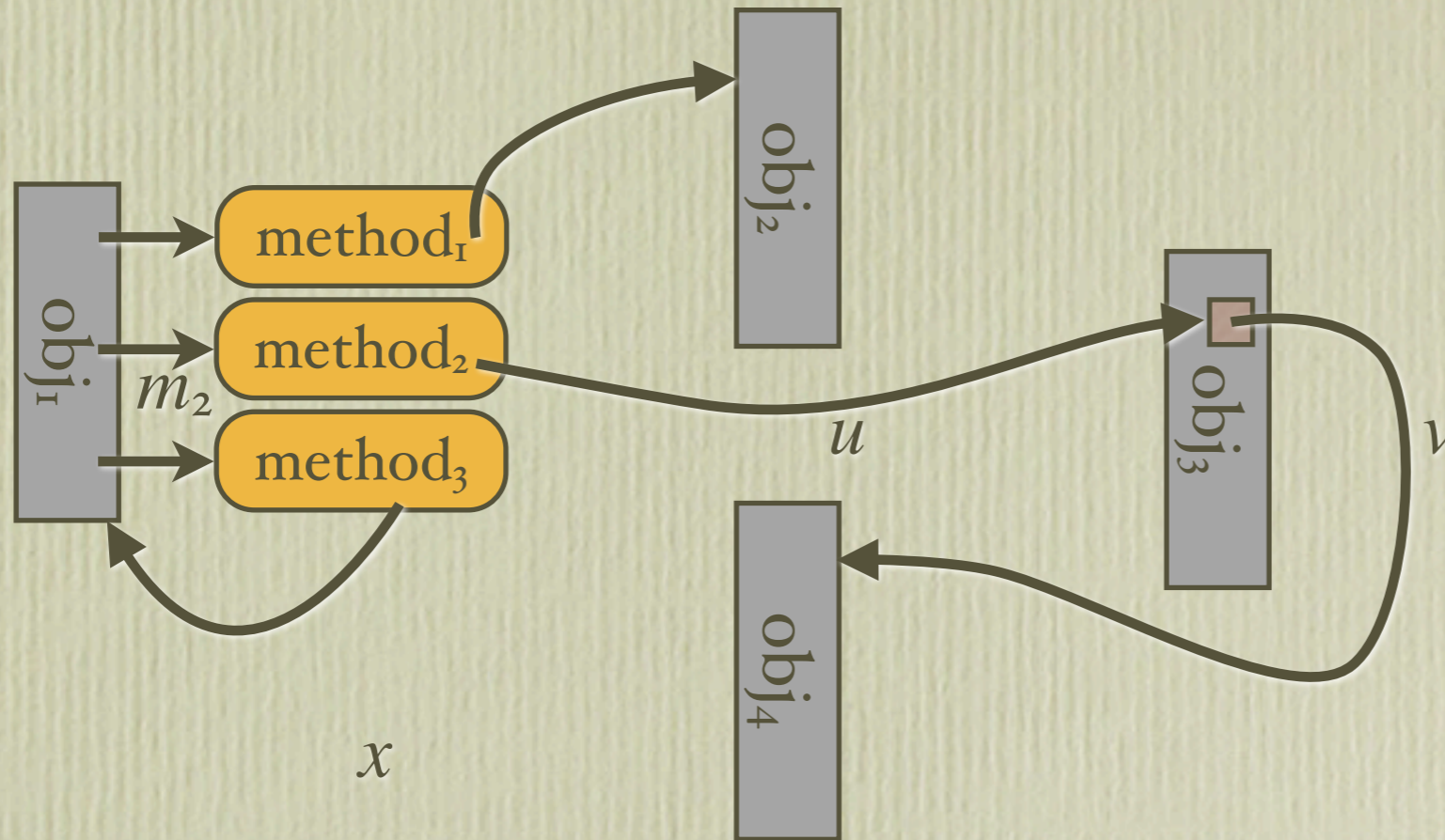
Paths from $copy(obj_1) = obj_1'$:

$$obj_1'.m_3.self = obj_1'$$

$$obj_1'.m_1.x = obj_2$$

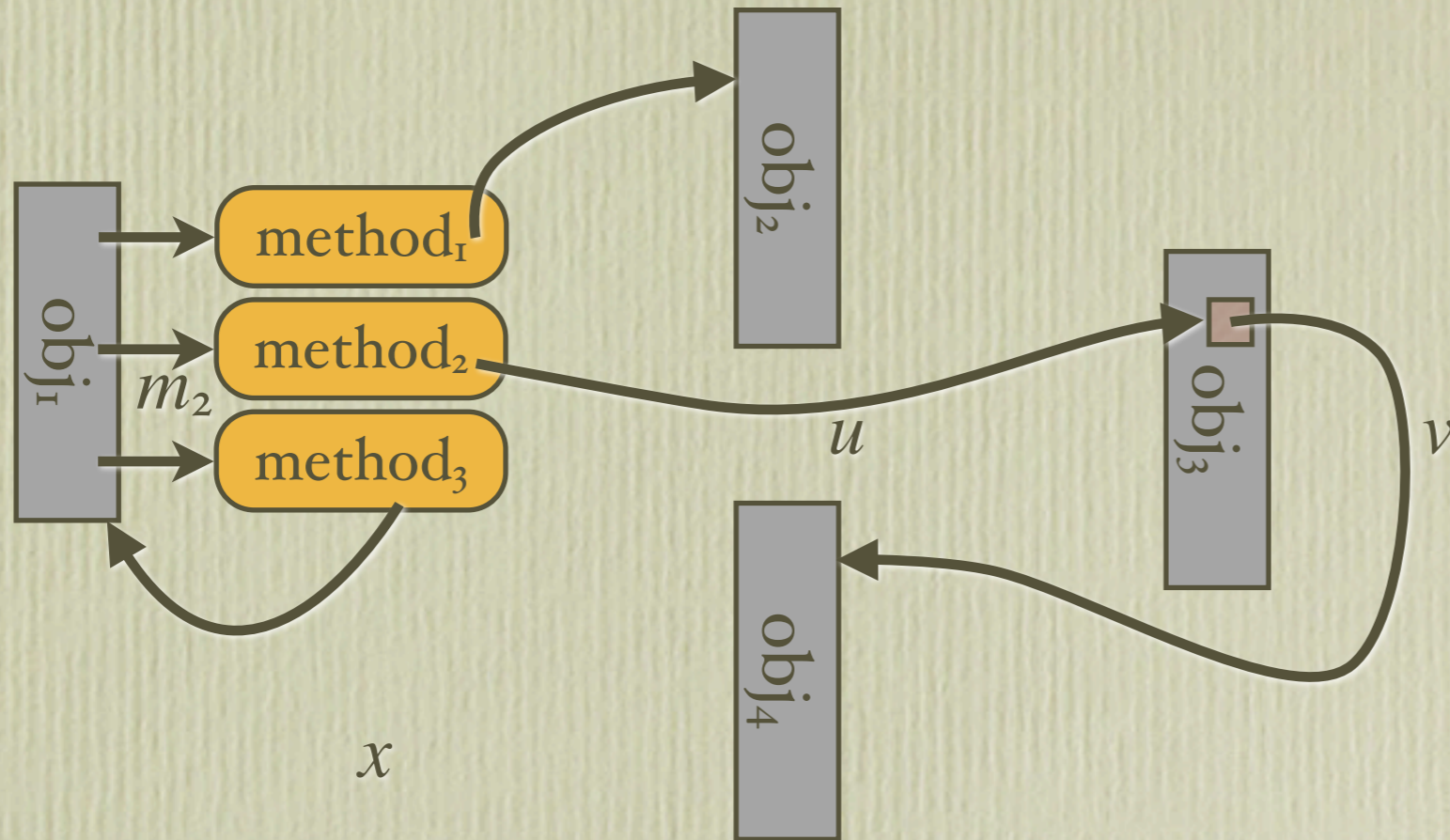
obj₁.copy ?

Which objects to copy
and which to share?



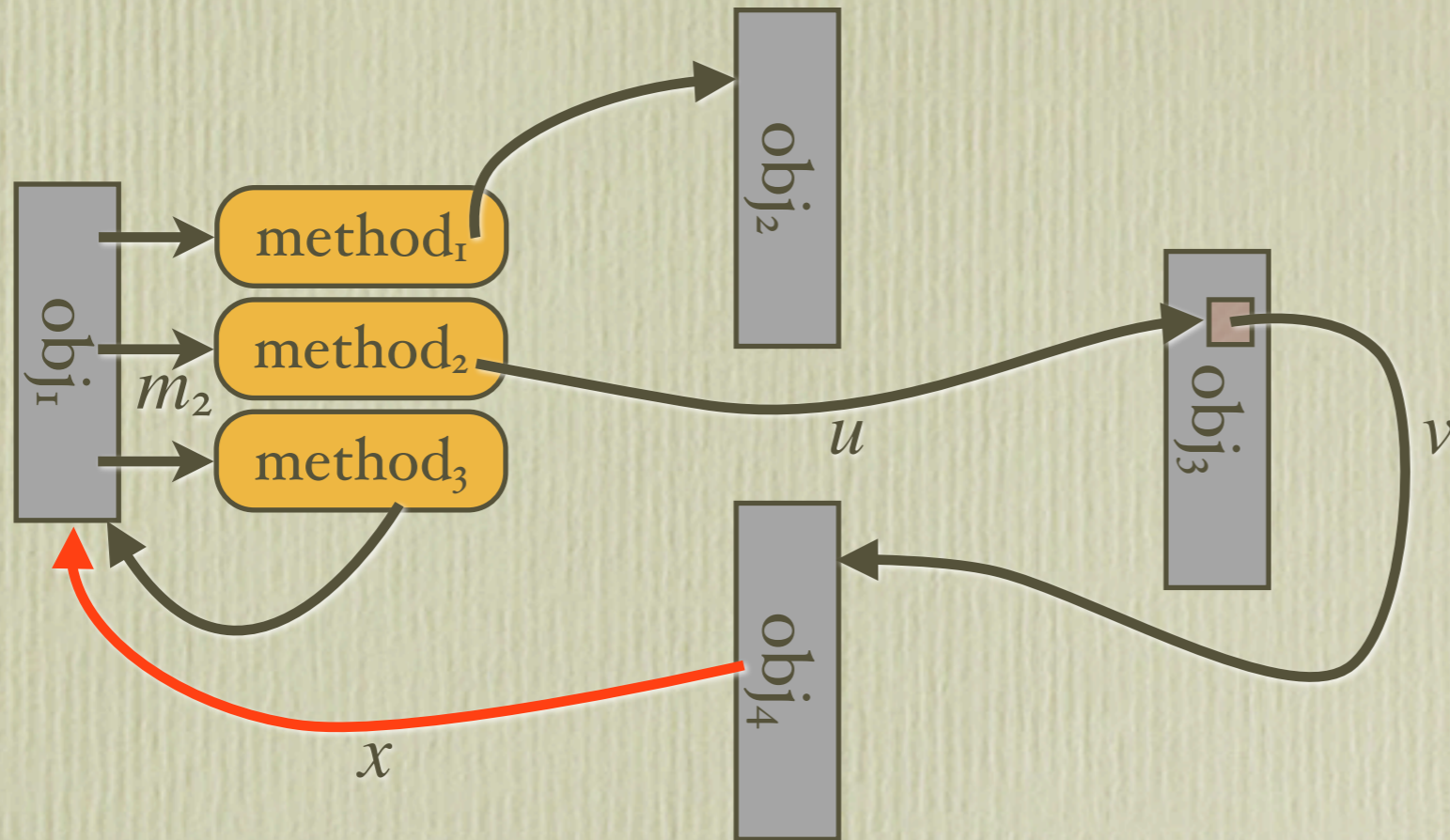
$$s(x) = x \in \{ \text{obj}_1, \text{obj}_3, \text{method}_1, \text{method}_2, \text{method}_3 \}$$

obj₁.copy ?



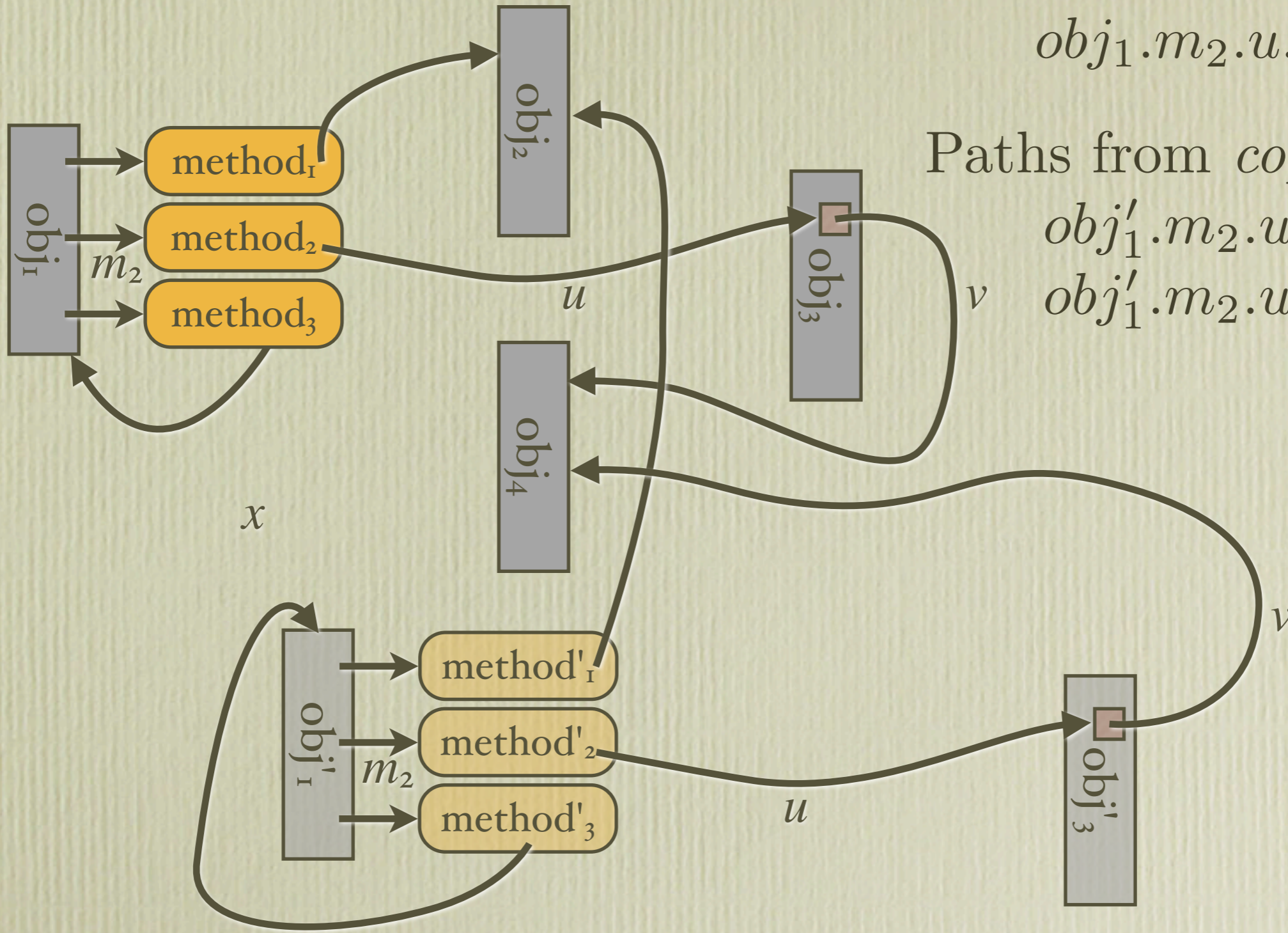
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obj₁.copy ?



$$s(x) = x \in \{ \text{obj}_1, \text{obj}_3, \text{method}_1, \text{method}_2, \text{method}_3 \}$$

obj₁.copy ?



Paths from obj_1 :

$$obj_1.m_2.u.v = obj_4$$

$$obj_1.m_2.u.v.x = obj_1$$

Paths from $copy_s(obj_1)$:

$$obj'_1.m_2.u.v = obj_4$$

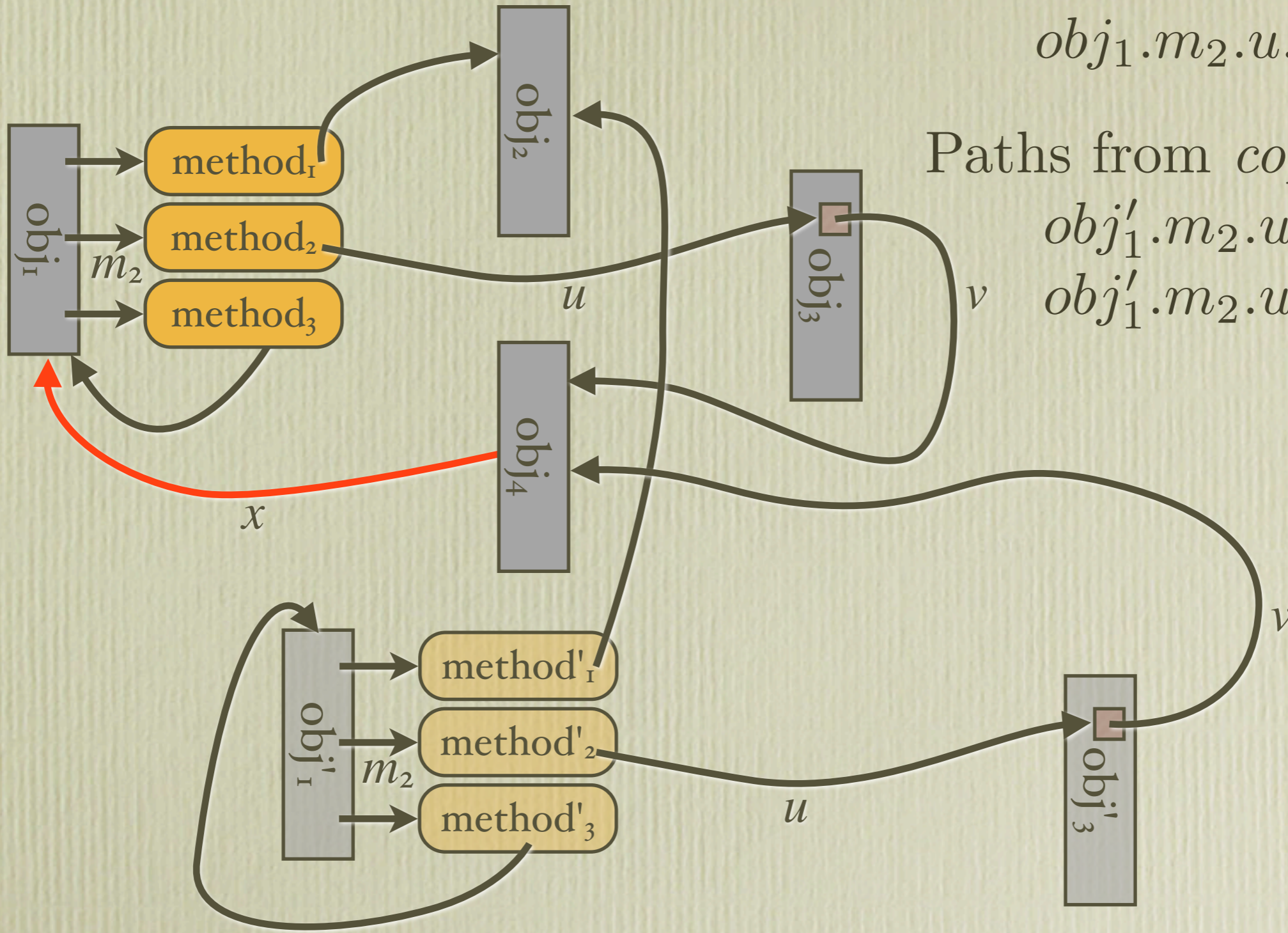
$$obj'_1.m_2.u.v.x = \text{obj}_1$$

Wrong!

$$s(x) = x \in \{ obj_1, obj_3, method_1,$$

$$method_2, method_3 \}$$

obj₁.copy ?



Paths from obj_1 :

$$obj_1.m_2.u.v = obj_4$$

$$obj_1.m_2.u.v.x = obj_1$$

Paths from $copy_s(obj_1)$:

$$obj'_1.m_2.u.v = obj_4$$

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Wrong!

$$s(x) = x \in \{ obj_1, obj_3, method_1,$$

$$method_2, method_3 \}$$

Definition of Copy

- Nothing you didn't know
 - but I've never seen this formalized
 - and we got it wrong in the Grace compiler
- For some s , there can be no correct $copy_s$
- Copy can be implemented in Grace
 - with sufficient meta-level operations
 - includes reflecting on the bound variables of methods.

Trait Proposal

- **trait** { ... } means the same as **object** { ... }
 - with the restriction that methods can't close over variables other than **self**
 - ▶ no useful object-local variables
- **using** a trait is essentially equivalent to *delegating* to the trait methods
 - **self** is bound dynamically to the object receiving the method request


```
class SuccessfulMatch.new(result', bindings') {  
  inherits true  
  def result = result'  
  def bindings = bindings'  
  method asString {  
    "SuccessfulMatch(result = {result}, bindings = {bindings})"  
  }  
}
```

```
class SuccessfulMatch.new(result', bindings') {  
  inherits true  
  def result = result'  
  def bindings = bindings'  
  method asString {  
    "SuccessfulMatch(result = {result}, bindings = {bindings})"  
  }  
}
```

- Perfectly OK — **true** has no state

- just methods like:

```
method or(another:Block) { self }
```

```
method and(another:Block) { another.apply }
```

Objects as Traits

- What about objects with captured state?
 - all objects **using** them get to share the same state
- Not what you want?
 - **copy** the object, or generate a fresh object

```
object serialNumber {  
  def rawSerial = aRandom.between(10^12)and((10^13) -1)  
  def checkDigits = calculateCheckDigitsFor(rawSerial)  
  def serial is public, readable  
    = rawSerial.asString ++ checkDigits.asString  
}
```

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```

```
class engine.ofSize(volume) {  
  uses serialNumber  
  def displacement is public, readable = volume  
  def cylinders is public, readable = 6  
}
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- Every **engine** has the same **serial**

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- Every **engine** has the same **serial**

```
class serialNumber.new {  
  def rawSerial = aRandom.between(10^12)and((10^13) -1)  
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  def serial is public, readable  
    = rawSerial.asString ++ checkDigits.asString  
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- Every engine has a new serial

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```
class engine.ofSize(volume) {  
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}
```

- Every engine has a new serial

Inheriting Initialization

- Object *initialization* is not the same as object *creation*
- Smalltalk makes this clear:

Behavior >> new

"Answer a new initialized instance of the receiver (which is a class) ..."

↑ self basicNew initialize

- Behavior >> basicNew creates the object
- Instance >> initialize assigns to fields, registers it, *etc.*

Inheriting Initialization

- Easy: inherit the `initialize` method
 - in Smalltalk, this is a real method
 - in Java, it's a “special” method called "`<init>`"
- *Pharo* Smalltalk and Java classes both invoke initialization automatically
 - *after* the object has been created
- If we want to inherit initialization in Grace, we can do the same thing

Inheriting Initialization

```
def initializable is public, readable = trait {  
  method create { done }  
  method new is public {  
    def instance = self.create  
    instance.initialize  
    instance  
  }  
}
```

- Captures the separation of creation and initialization as a trait

Inheriting Initialization

```
def initializable is public, readable, writable {
  method create { done }
  method new is public {
    def instance = self.create
    instance.initialize
    instance
  }
}
```

new method creates and initializes

- Captures the separation of creation and initialization as a trait

Using the Initialization Trait

```
def aWindow = object {  
  uses initializable  
  method create is override {  
    object {  
      var bounds is public, readable, writable  
      method paint(c) is public { ... }  
      method initialize is public {  
        world.register(self) }  
      method minimize is public { ... } }  
    }  
  method withBounds(b) is public {  
    def instance = self.create  
    instance.bounds := b  
    instance.initialize  
  }  
}
```

Using the Initialization Trait

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    def instance = self.create  
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}
```

gets us the create
and new methods

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}
```

aWindow.withBounds(aRectangle.
topLeft(100@100)diagonal(50@50))

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        world.register(self) }  
      method minimize is public { ... }  
    }  
  }  
  method withBounds(b) is public {  
    def instance = self.create  
    instance.bounds := b  
    instance.initialize  
  }  
}
```

creates and
sets bounds of a new
window

```
aWindow.withBounds(aRectangle.  
topLeft(100@100)diagonal(50@50))
```

Using the Initialization Trait

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```

aWindow.new

aWindow.withBounds(aRectangle.
topLeft(100@100)diagonal(50@50))

Using the Initialization Trait

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        world.register(self) }  
      method minimize is public { ... }  
    }  
  }  
  method withBounds(b) is public {  
    def instance = self.create  
    instance.bounds := b  
    instance.initialize  
  }  
}
```

creates a new,
initialized window with
undefined bounds

aWindow.new

aWindow.withBounds(aRectangle.
topLeft(100@100)diagonal(50@50))

Using the Initialization Trait

```
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  method create is override {
    object {
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  }
}
```

aWindow.new

aWindow.withBounds(aRectangle.
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What About Classes?

Currently

```
class A.name {  
    inherits S  
    defs, vars and methods }
```

means

```
def A = object {  
    method name { object {  
        inherits S  
        defs, vars and methods }  
    }  
}
```

We can change this!

Summary

- Don't “build in” complex features
- Start with general-purpose building blocks
 - Complex features can be fabricated from the building blocks
 - They will inevitably be consistent