

Variations in the O-O model Self

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Introduction

- In the next 2-3 lectures we will look at different trends in object-oriented languages
 - First, we will look at a language that tries to strip the power of O-O (and more) to a bare minimum
 - Then we will look at language extensions that researchers are proposing in literature today

Self: the power of simplicity

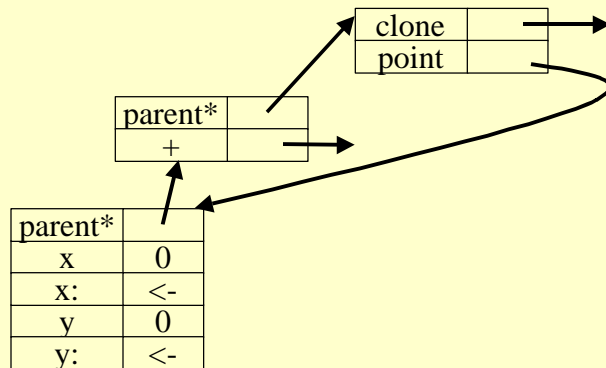
- Starting point: **Smalltalk**
 - Everything is an object
 - Primary operation is a message
 - No builtin control structures: handled using “blocks” or closures
 - Same cryptic syntax...

Comparison to Smalltalk (cont.)

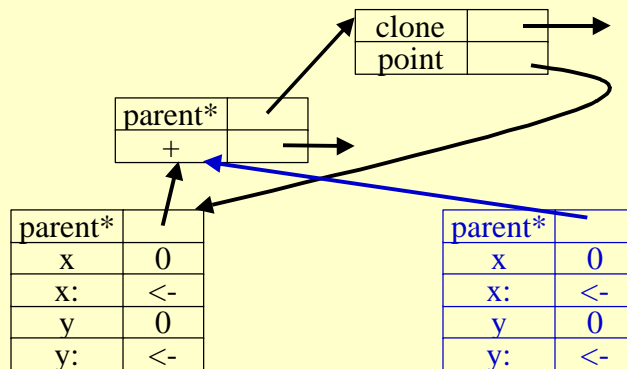
- Differences
 - No distinction between classes, metaclasses, and instances
 - No distinction between variable access and message send
 - No static inheritance
 - Methods are also objects

No distinction between classes, meta-classes, and instances

- Objects are created by cloning an existing object



Cloning

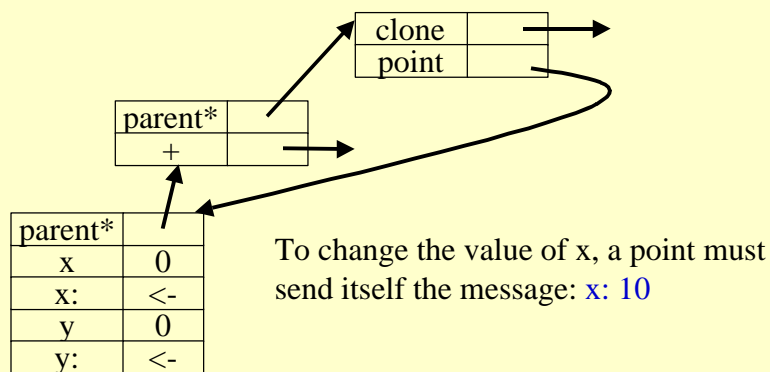


Cloning discussion

- Can clone any object, but which one should I clone?
 - By convention, a program may designate an object as a “prototypical” object (e.g., prototypical point)
 - A prototypical object is similar to a class in this function
- What is a “parent*” field?
 - A place where you continue searching if a particular slot is not found in the receiver
 - Not too different from a superclass

No distinction between variable access and method sends

- Everything is a message send

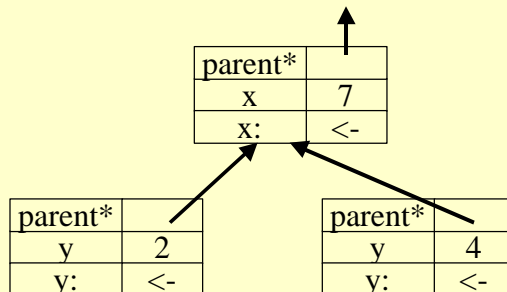


More on slots

- Depending on how one declares a “selector” (a field in traditional lingo), one gets one or two slots
 - A “read-only” selector gets only one slot (i.e., no x: slot)
 - A “read-write” selector gets two slots (i.e., x and x:)

Advantages of “even field accesses are messages”

- Can compute a field instead of storing it
- Shared state

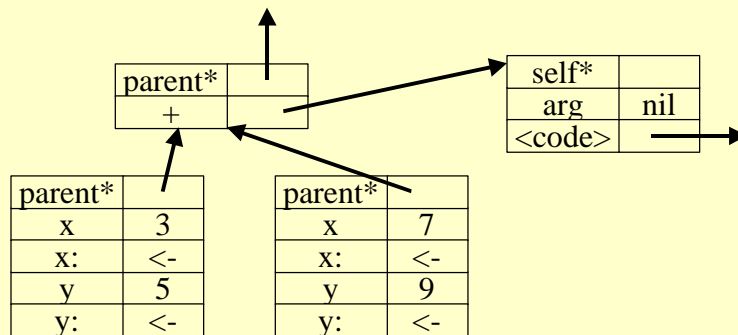


No static inheritance

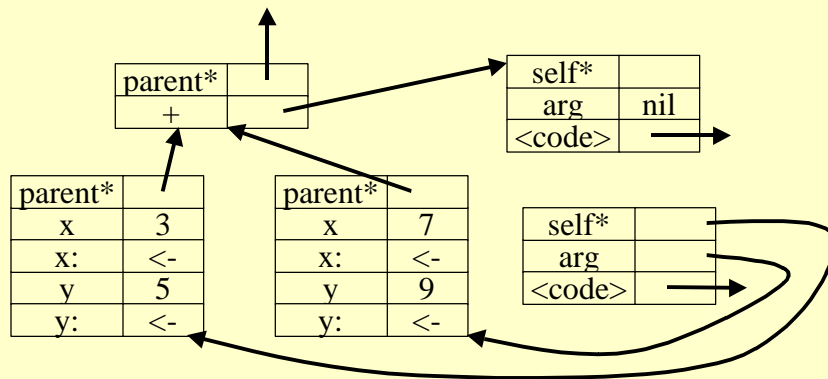
- If a “parent” is declared read-write, inheritance can be changed on the fly
- Would you want to do that?

Methods are also objects

- Methods are represented by an “activation record” that gets cloned and filled in at a call



(3, 5) + (7, 9)



Advertised advantages of the prototype based model

- **Simpler relationships**
 - only relationship is “inherits from”
- **Copying instead of instantiating from a class is more natural**
- **Examples of preexisting modules**
 - Modules are more concrete than classes and thus better descriptions
- **Support for one-of-a-kind objects**
- **Elimination of meta-regress**

Where is SELF headed?

- Behaviorism
 - The only way to know an object is by its actions
- Computation viewed as refinement
 - Refinement of shared behavior
- Parents viewed as shared parts

Discussion

- How simple is Self?
- Are you convinced in favor of prototype based languages over class based languages?
- Is it too powerful for programming-in-the-large?

Next lecture: multiple dispatching

- Reading: “Cecil”, Chambers. Paper on web