

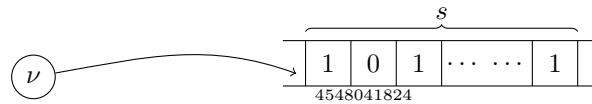
NAMES AND VALUES

ERIC MARTIN

We talk of 0, 1, 2, 3.14 as values, but 0, 1, 2, 3.14 are also names of values; we cannot refer to values without naming them. In the computing world, a value is “stored” in memory as bits. How a sequence of bits relates to a value is determined by a particular coding and decoding scheme. For instance, the scheme that represents nonnegative integers in base 2 over 8 bits can let us “store” the value (named) 9 as 00001001 somewhere in memory. Neither a name nor a sequence of bits is a value; to refer to the name of a value and to the storage of a value somewhere in memory, let us talk about *v-name* and *v-storage*, respectively, without investigating further what the value itself actually is. . .

A *v-name* can have many *occurrences*: in the expression $X = 2+2$, there are two occurrences of the *v-name* 2. As much as “value” is an abstract notion, occurrences of *v-names* and *v-storages* can be concretely located in the text of a program and in computer memory, respectively.

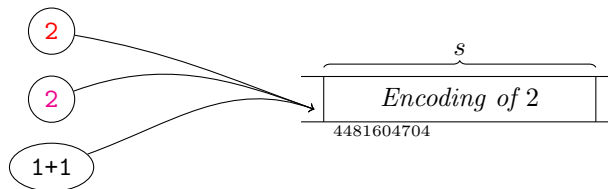
An occurrence of a *v-name* is always *referring* to a *v-storage* that determines some value according to an implicit coding and decoding scheme. The following diagram is fundamental; it indicates that an occurrence ν of a *v-name* is always, necessarily, associated with, referencing, a *v-storage* s , that is, a sequence of bits stored at a particular memory address; a particular coding and decoding scheme is implicit and determines the value that is named via ν and stored as s .



There are two kinds of *v-names*, *constant expressions* and *variable expressions*, with as particular cases, *constants* and *variables*, respectively.

For instance, 2 and 1+1 are two constant expressions, the first of which is a constant. In the following code, the two occurrences of 2 and the unique occurrence of 1+1 are seen to refer to the same *v-storage*, with the expectation that it “stores” the value 2 thanks to an appropriate coding and decoding scheme.

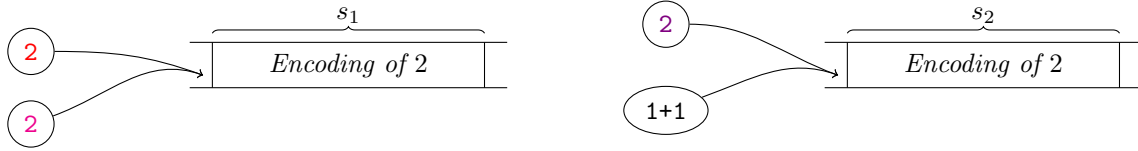
```
>>> id(2), id(2), id(1+1)
(4481604704, 4481604704, 4481604704)
```



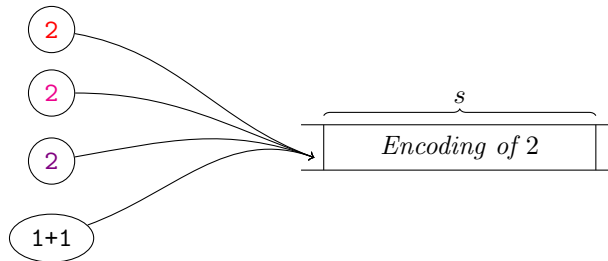
The code

```
>>> 2 is 2, 2 is 1+1
(True, True)
```

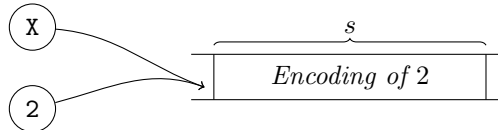
allows us to draw the diagrams



and suspect that s_1 and s_2 are actually identical, so that the picture could actually be:



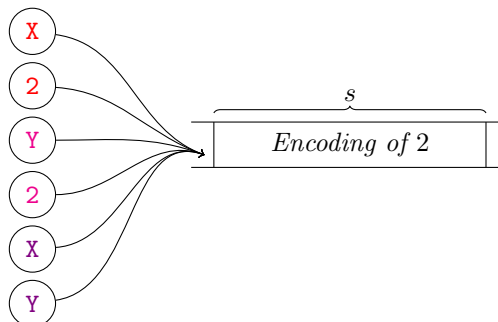
Whereas the value named by a constant expression is fully determined by the syntactic rules and semantics of the language, the value named by a variable is arbitrary. With the assignment operator $=$, we let a variable refer to a v-storage. Thanks to the code $X = 2$, we are somehow letting X be a v-name for the value 2, but more precisely, and fundamentally, we are letting X be another v-name for the value (named) 2 by letting X reference the same v-storage as the occurrence of the v-name 2 to the right of the assignment operator does, and this for at least as long as we do not change the value of X :



So from the code

```
>>> X = 2; Y = 2
>>> X is Y
True
```

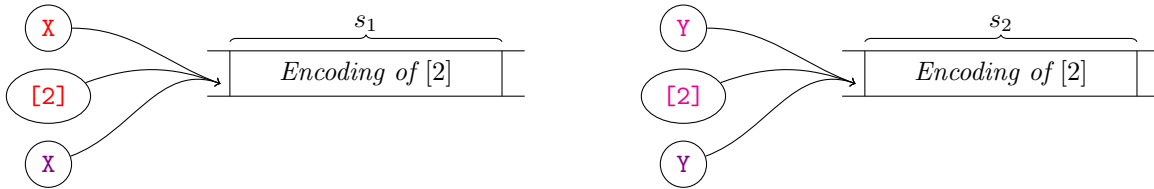
we are justified in drawing the diagram



whereas from the code

```
>>> x = [2]; y = [2]
>>> x is y
False
```

we are justified in drawing the diagram



The code

```
>>> x = 1; y = 0; id(x), id(y)
(4481604672, 4481604640)
>>> x = 0; y = 1; id(x), id(y)
(4481604640, 4481604672)
```

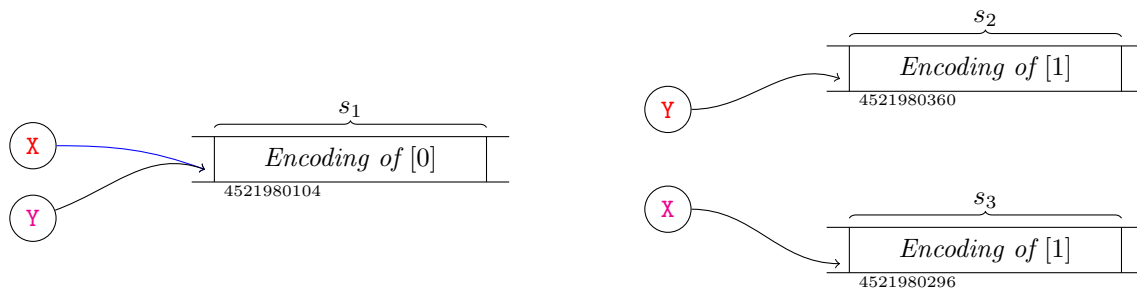
leads to the diagram:



The code

```
>>> x = [0]; y = [1]; id(x), id(y)
(4521980104, 4521980360)
>>> x = [1]; y = [0]; id(x), id(y)
(4521980296, 4521980104)
```

leads to the diagram:



The following code involves 5 occurrences of names for the same value and 3 v-storages.

```
>>> id([0, 1]); id([0, 1]); id([0, 1]); id([0, 1]); id([0, 1])
4511633480
4486339464
4486339464
4486339464
4511631496
```

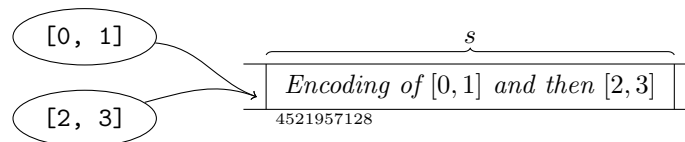
In reference to the four occurrences of `[0, 1]`, either 2 or 3 v-storages are involved with the following code.

```
>>> id([0, 1]) is id([0, 1])
False
>>> id([0, 1]), id([0, 1])
(4521980232, 4521980232)
```

With the following code

```
>>> id([0, 1]), id([2, 3])
(4521957128, 4521957128)
```

we see one value “take the place” of another one in memory:



There are more occurrences of v-names than in our code:

```
>>> import sys
>>> sys.getrefcount(0), sys.getrefcount(1), sys.getrefcount(2), sys.getrefcount(3)
(1459, 1670, 457, 172)
>>> sys.getrefcount(4), sys.getrefcount(5), sys.getrefcount(6), sys.getrefcount(7)
(243, 104, 89, 51)
>>> sys.getrefcount(8), sys.getrefcount(9), sys.getrefcount(254), sys.getrefcount(255)
(187, 60, 4, 18)
>>> sys.getrefcount(256), sys.getrefcount(257), sys.getrefcount(258), sys.getrefcount(259)
(59, 2, 2, 2)
```

The following code provides another illustration of the transition between integers smaller than 257 and integers at least equal to 257.

```
>>> X = 255
>>> X is 255
True
>>> X = 256
>>> X is 256
True
>>> X = 257
>>> X is 257
False
>>> X = 258
>>> X is 258
False
```

But the following code does not.

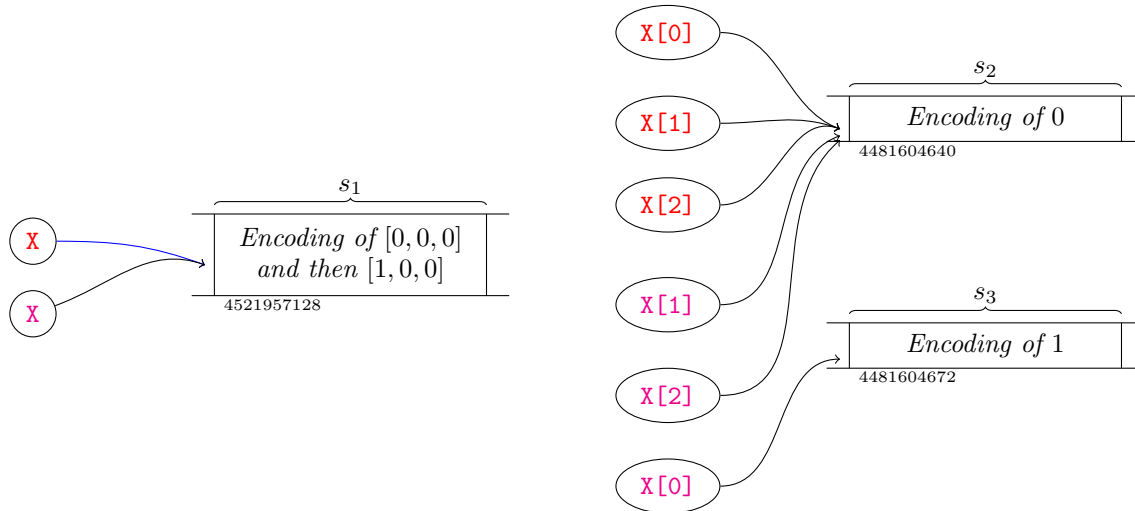
```
>>> X = 255; X is 255
True
>>> X = 256; X is 256
True
>>> X = 257; X is 257
True
>>> X = 258; X is 258
True
```

In the following code, each of the 4 occurrences of `[0, 1]` refers to a different v-storage of the value `[0, 1]`, and each of those v-storages is minimally referred to.

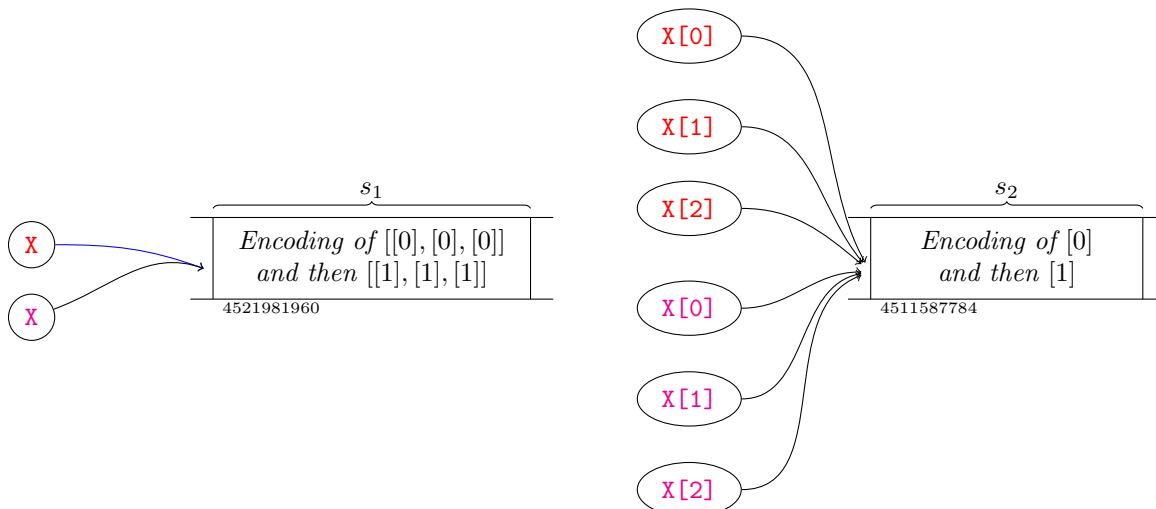
```
>>> X = [0, 1]; Y = [0, 1]; Z = [0, 1]
>>> X is Y, Y is Z, X is Z
(False, False, False)
>>> sys.getrefcount([0, 1])
1
>>> sys.getrefcount(X), sys.getrefcount(Y), sys.getrefcount(Z)
(2, 2, 2)
```

The following three pieces of code deal with a list of integers and lists of lists of integers.

```
>>> X = [0] * 3; X
[0, 0, 0]
>>> id(X), id(X[0]), id(X[1]), id(X[2])
(4521957128, 4481604640, 4481604640, 4481604640)
>>> X[0] = 1; X
[1, 0, 0]
>>> id(X), id(X[0]), id(X[1]), id(X[2])
(4521957128, 4481604672, 4481604640, 4481604640)
```



```
>>> X = [[0]] * 3; X
[[0], [0], [0]]
>>> id(X), id(X[0]), id(X[1]), id(X[2])
(4521981960, 4511587784, 4511587784, 4511587784)
>>> X[0][0] = 1; X
[[1], [1], [1]]
>>> id(X), id(X[0]), id(X[1]), id(X[2])
(4521981960, 4511587784, 4511587784, 4511587784)
```



```
>>> X = [[0], [0], [0]]; X
[[0], [0], [0]]
>>> id(X), id(X[0]), id(X[1]), id(X[2])
(4521980424, 4521980104, 4521981832, 4521980680)
>>> X[0][0] = 1; X
[[1], [0], [0]]
>>> id(X), id(X[0]), id(X[1]), id(X[2])
(4521980424, 4521980104, 4521981832, 4521980680)
```

