

LEARNINGS FROM MIGRATING A FLASK APP TO FASTAPI

PyCon DE & PyData

Orell Garten

24.04.2025



LET'S START WITH SOME QUESTIONS

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Who has used flask?

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Who has used FastAPI?

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Who has used flask?

Who has used FastAPI?

Has anyone migrated an app?

/WHOAMI

/WHY

Are there any good reasons to migrate from flask to fastAPI?

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Are there any good reasons to migrate from flask to fastAPI?

Performance?

Data Validation?

Async?

Developer Experience?

GOALS

Migration from Flask to FastAPI was not the main goal.

- We wanted:
 - Database integration
 - better code quality
 - Better testability

Migration to FastAPI was helping us achieve this.

DISCLAIMER

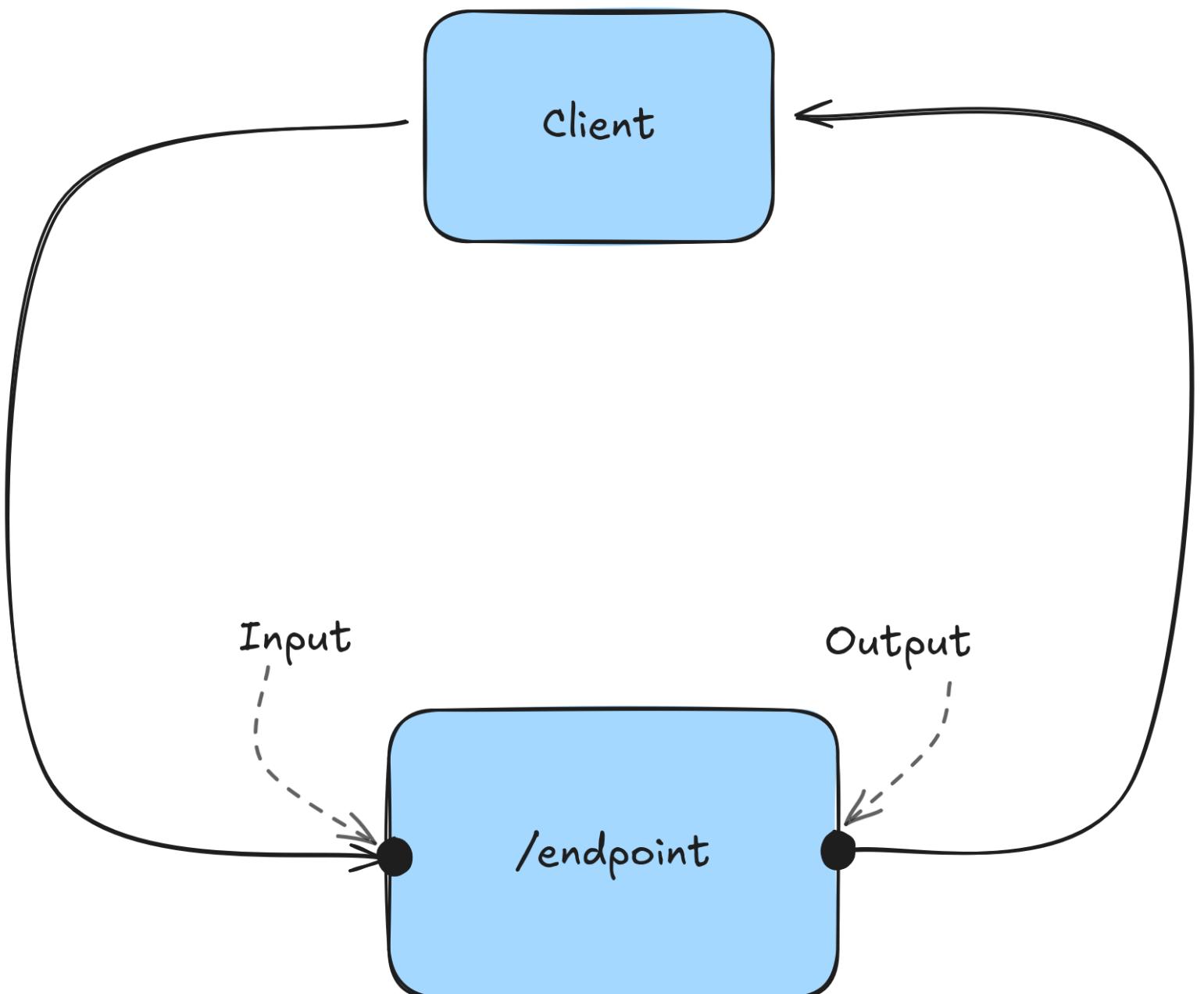
- This talk is about **my** experiences.
- Your experience might be different

/AGENDA

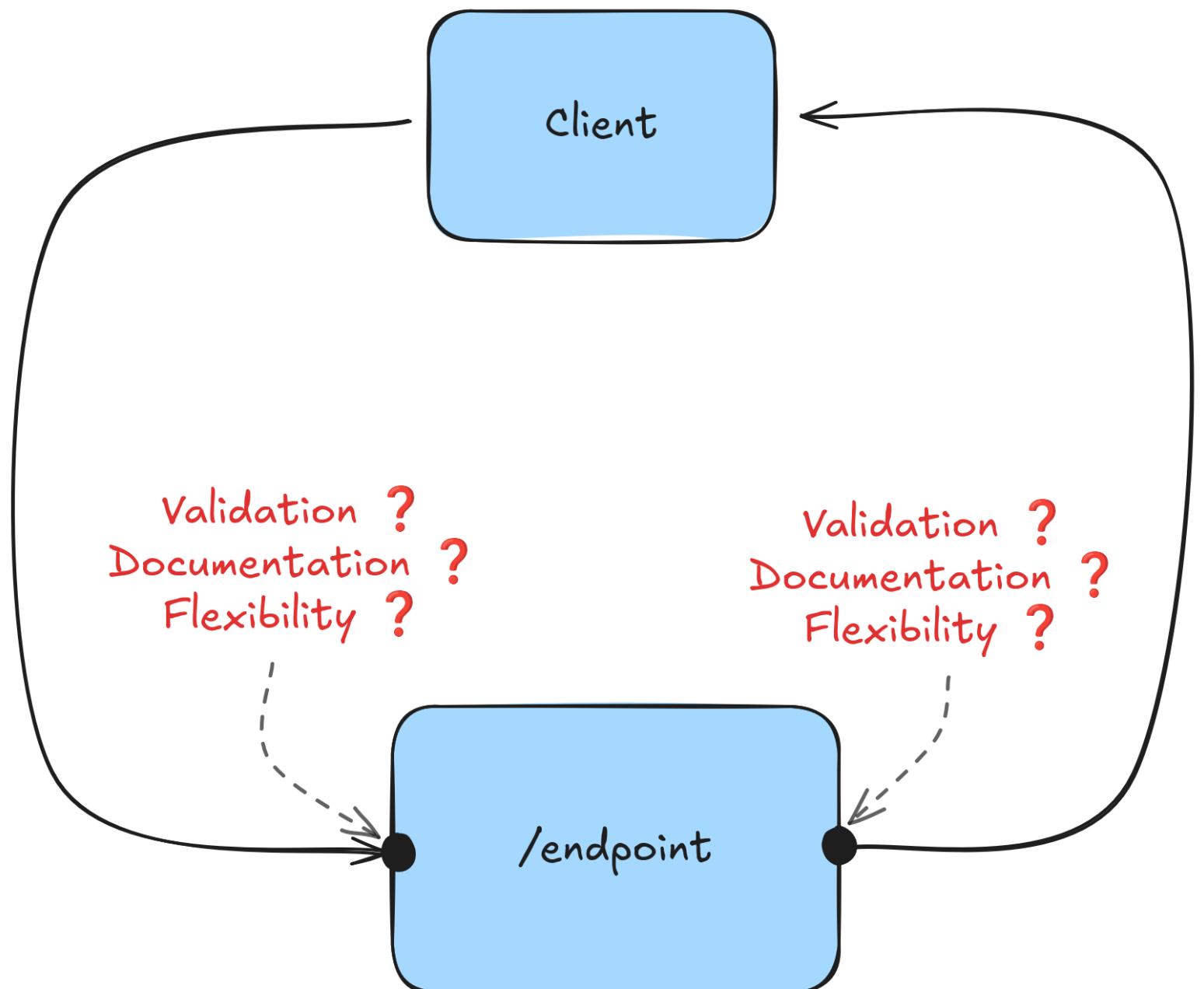
1. Data modeling
2. To async or not to async
3. Problems you will encounter
4. Migration strategy
5. Q&A

DATA MODELING

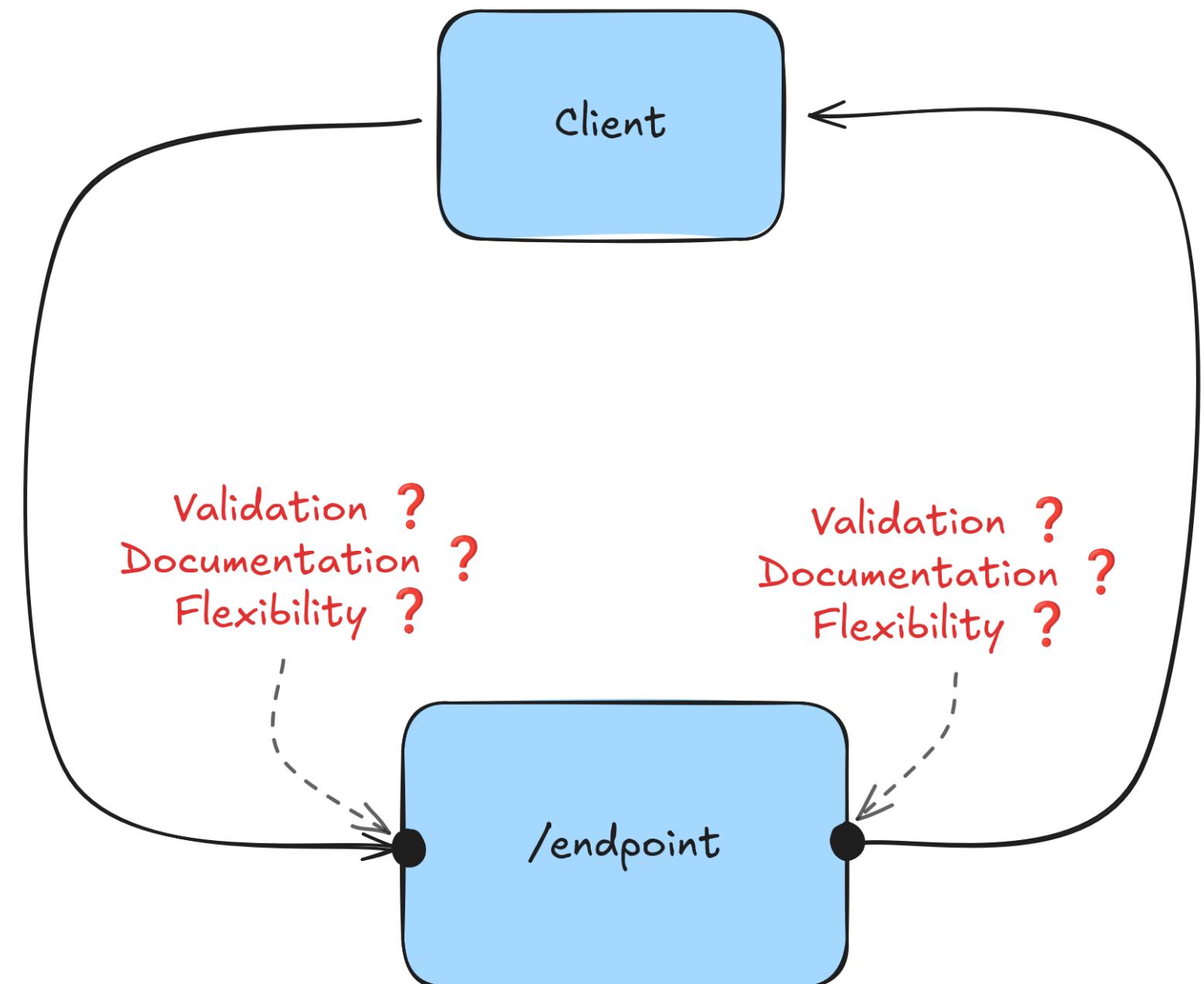
THE SITUATION



THE SITUATION



THE SITUATION



How do we deal with input and outputs in a good way?

INPUTS WITH FLASK

```
1 @app.route('/user', methods=['POST'])
2 def create_user():
3     data = request.get_json()
4     username = data.get('name')
5     email = data.get('email')
6     password = data.get('password')
7
8     # Create user in DB
9     db[1] = {"name": username, "email": email, "password": password}
10
11    return jsonify({'message': 'User created successfully', 'id': 1}), 201
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$ curl -X 'POST' \
  'http://localhost:8000/user' \
  -H 'accept: application/json' \
  -H 'Content-Type: application/json' \
  -d '{"name": "Orell", "email": "hello@orellgarten.com", "password": "test"}'

{"id":1,"message":"User created successfully"}
```

OUTPUTS WITH FLASK

```
1 @app.route("/user/<int:id>", methods=['GET'])
2 def get_user(id: int):
3     # do something, e.g. create user in database
4     user = db.get(id)
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6     return user
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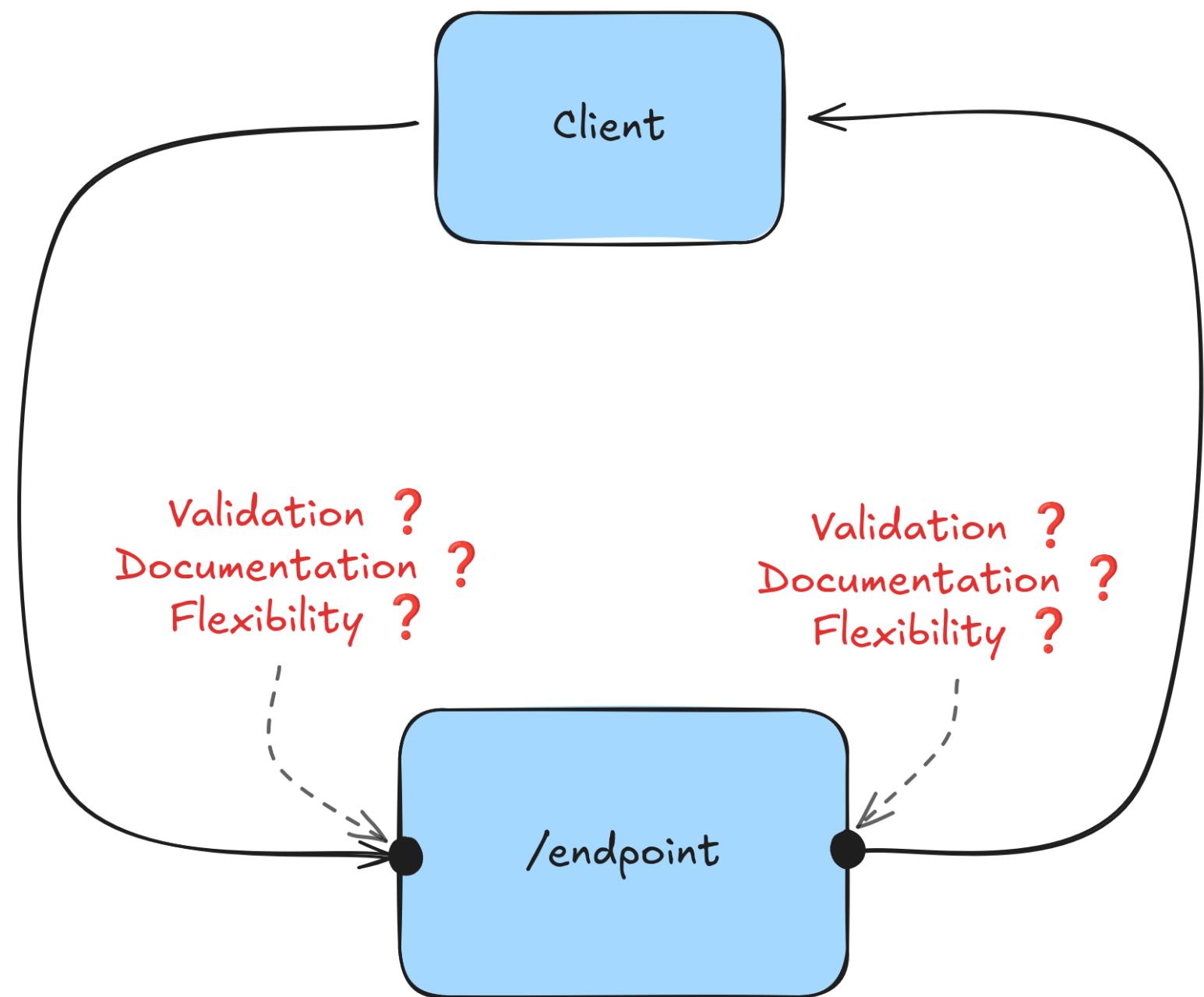
Oops, password in response!

FLASK IN/OUT

- Work with `request` object
- Typing not required

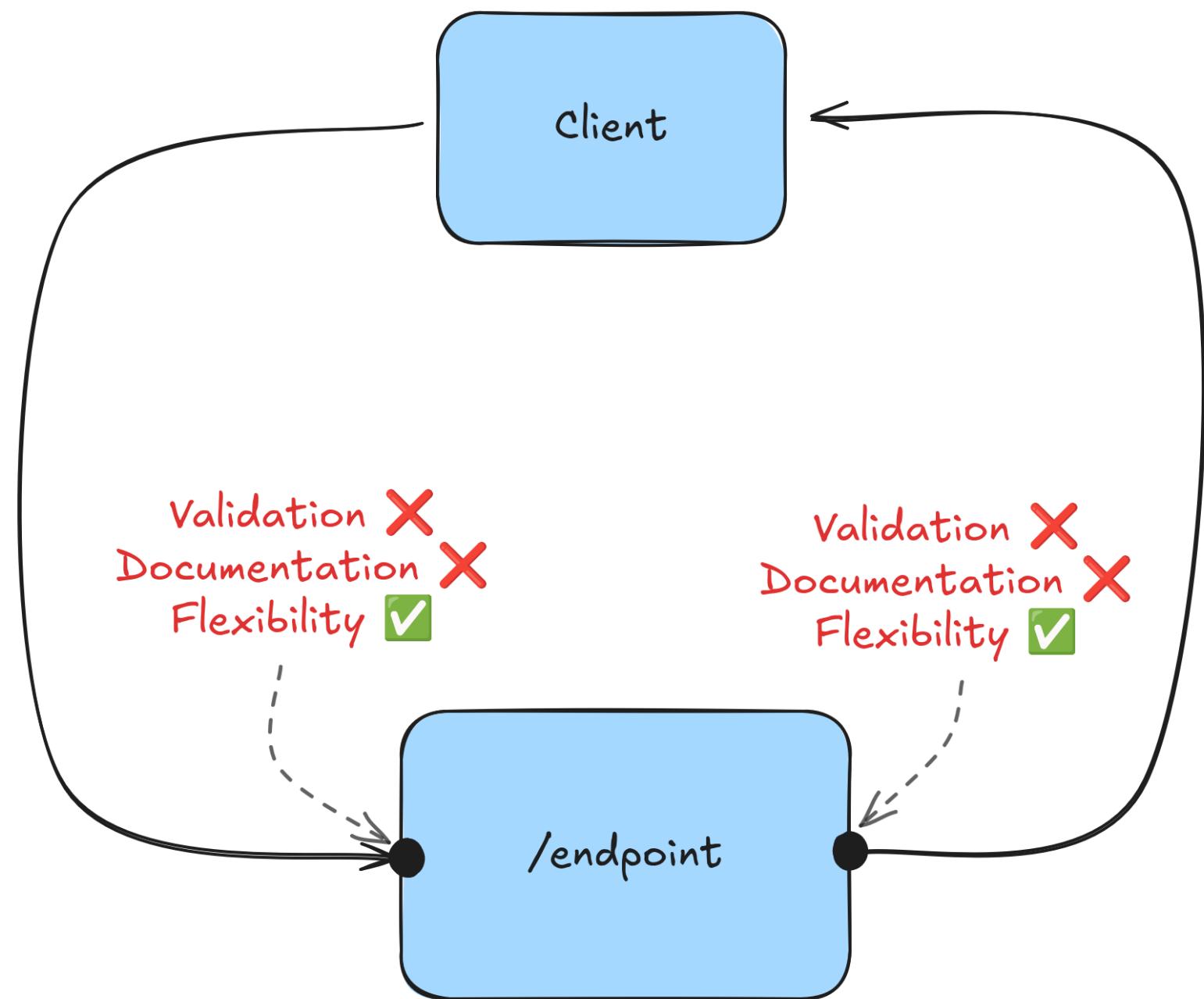
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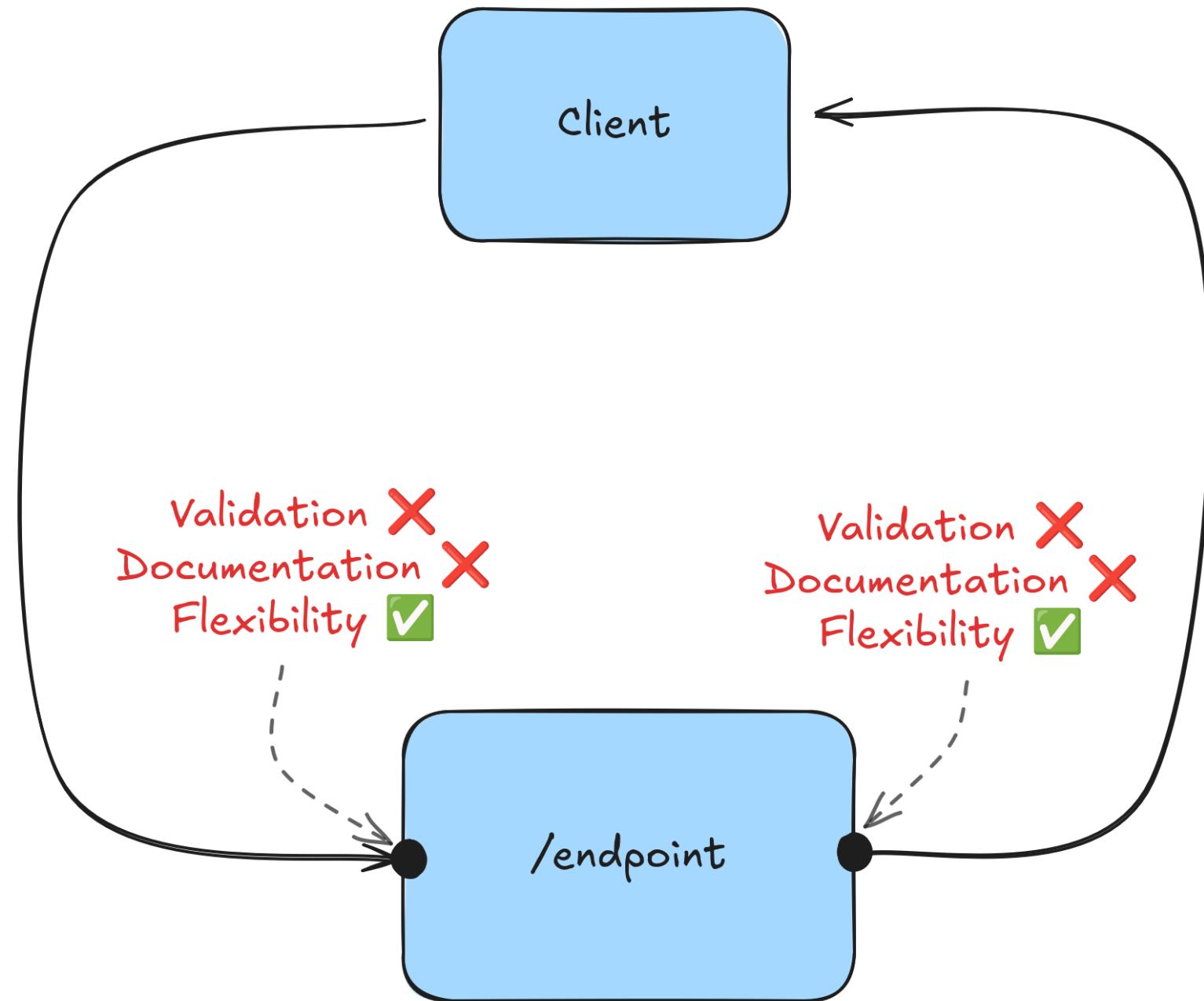
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FLASK IN/OUT

- Work with `request` object
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- No automatic input validation
- Manual data validation requires more boilerplate/libraries

INPUTS WITH FASTAPI

```
27 class UserIn(BaseModel):
28     name: str
29     email: str
30     password: str
31
32 @app.post("/user", status_code=status.HTTP_201_CREATED)
33 def create_user(
34     user: UserIn,
35     db: Annotated[Dict, Depends(get_db)]
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37     # do something, e.g. create user in database
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{"message": "User created successfully", "id": 1}
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OUTPUTS WITH FASTAPI

```
42 class UserOut(BaseModel):
43     name: str
44     email: str
45
46 @app.get("/user/{id}",
47         response_model=UserOut,
48         status_code=status.HTTP_200_OK
49     )
50 def get_user(
51     id: int,
52     db: Annotated[Dict, Depends(get_db)]
53 ):
54     # get user from database
55     user = db.get(id)
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57     return UserOut.model_validate(user, from_attributes=True)
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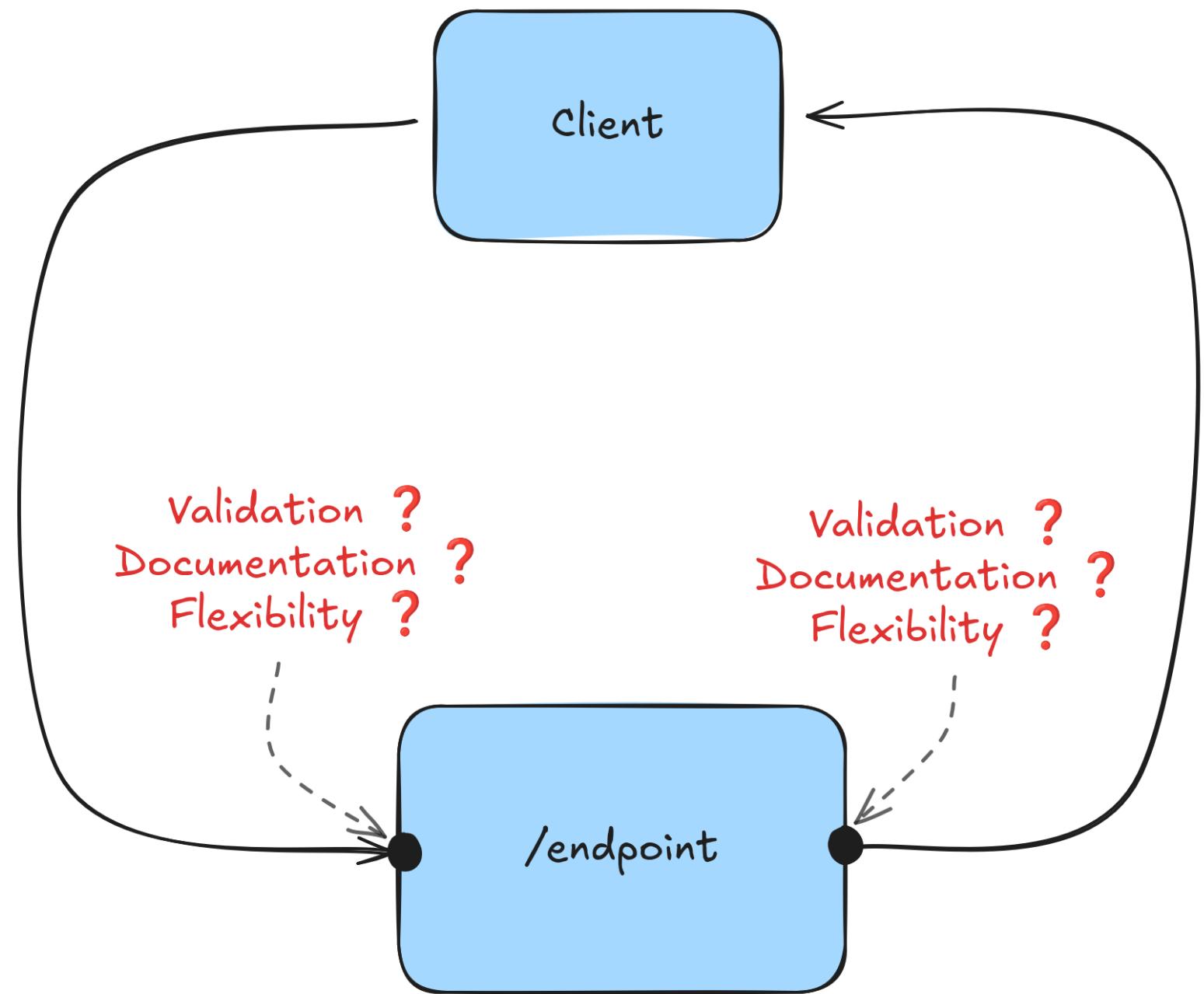
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Data Transfer Object: Password not leaked

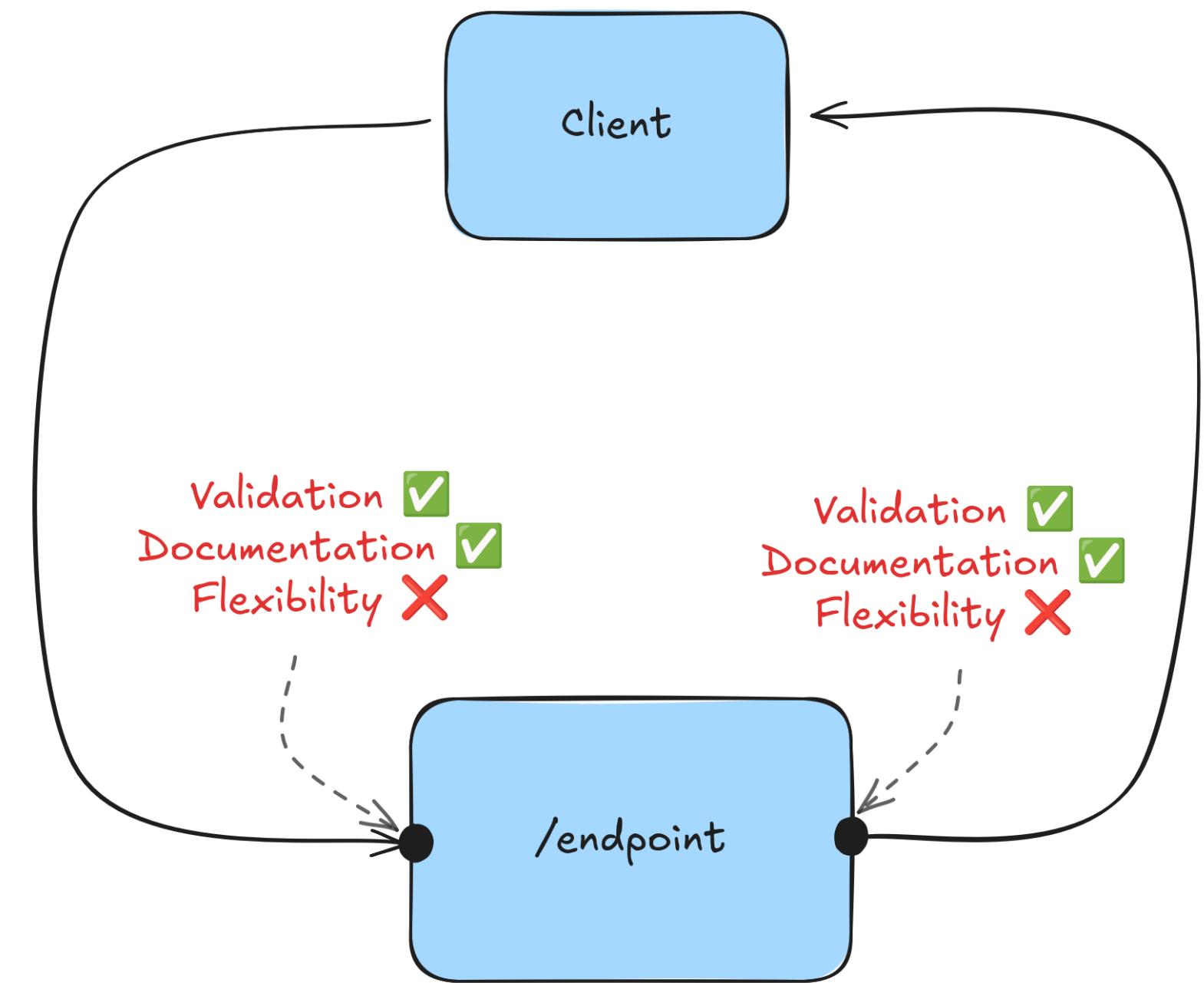
REMARKS

- Works with Pydantic Models
- Automatic OpenAPI docs



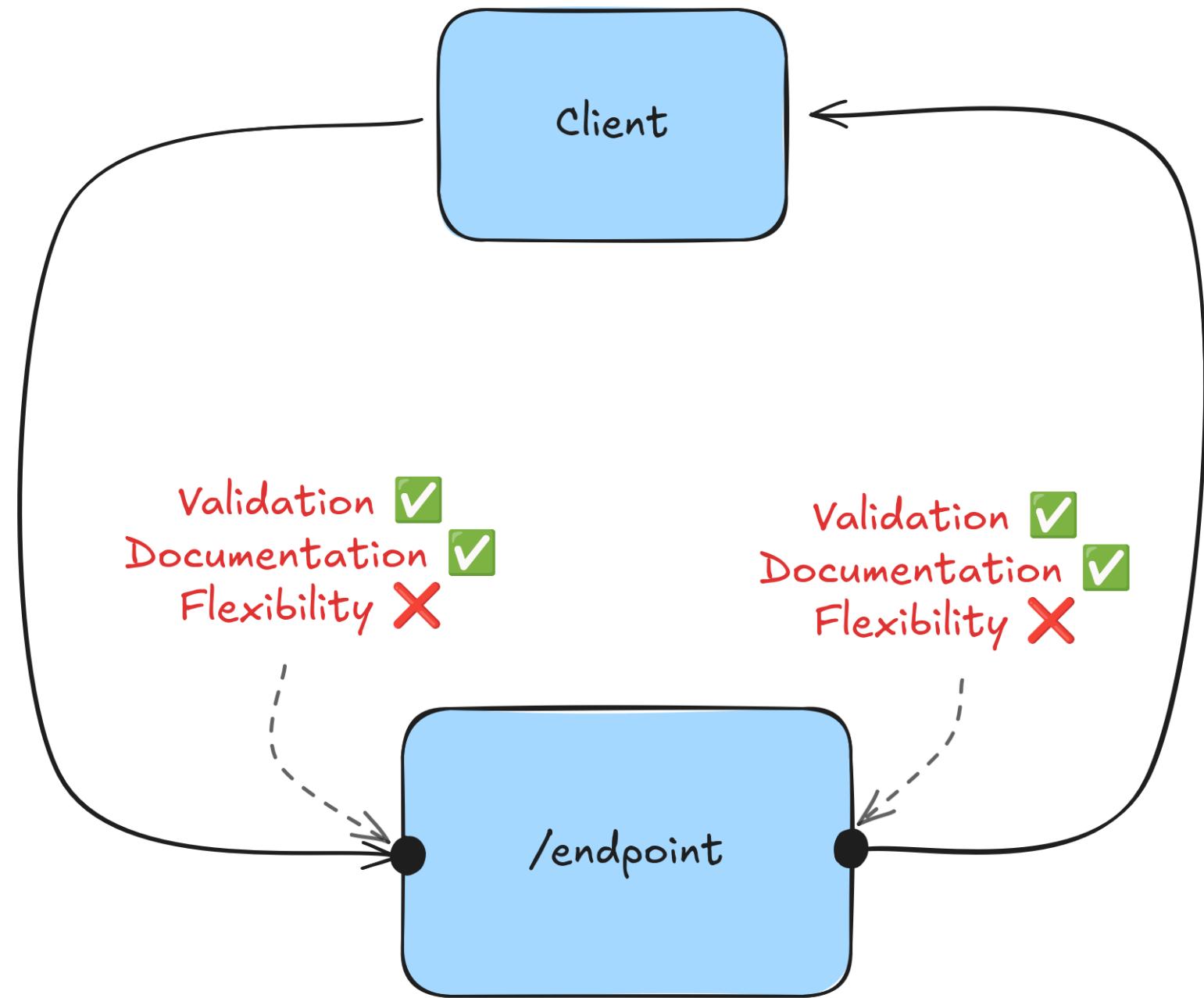
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REMARKS

- Works with Pydantic Models
- Automatic OpenAPI docs



- Data modeling forces you to think about your application

LEARNING 1

Data modeling is not something you can do, it's something you must do.



ASYNC IS OVERRATED



ASYNC MEANS HIGH PERFORMANCE



ASYNC MEANS HIGH PERFORMANCE?

THE PROBLEM

Code in tutorials usually looks like this:

```
1 from fastapi import FastAPI  
2  
3 app = FastAPI()  
4  
5 @app.get("/")  
6 async def root():  
7     return {"message": "Hello World"}
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ASYNC



- Single-threaded event loop
- Async runtime makes sure event loop is busy

THE PROBLEM

```
1 from fastapi import FastAPI
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3 app = FastAPI()
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5 @app.get("/")
6 async def root():
7     time.sleep(5) # Simulate long-running blocking op
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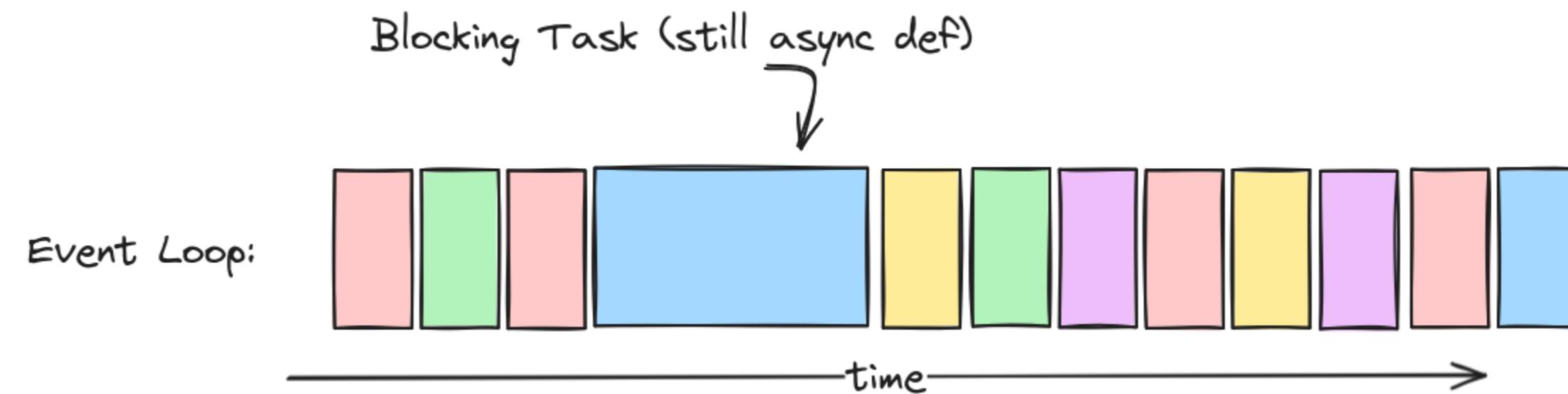
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ASYNC



THE SOLUTION

```
1 from fastapi import FastAPI
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7     await asyncio.sleep(5) # long-running non-blocking operation
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- Only use awaitable functions (coroutines)
- Blocking calls block everything!

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THE OTHER SOLUTION

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- do not use `async` and `fastAPI` knows what to do
- path operation runs in thread-pool and is awaited

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- do not use `async` and `fastAPI` knows what to do
- path operation runs in thread-pool and is awaited

LEARNING 2: ASYNC DOES NOT MEAN HIGH PERFORMANCE

REMARKS

- Async require a different mental model of programming
- Easy to make mistakes, e.g. blocking the event loop
- Async is not the silver bullet for performance

WHEN TO USE `async`?

- Only if you are sure it's non-blocking
- Middleware and dependencies
- Trivial code

LEARNING 3:

Use def instead of `async def` unless you are certain it does not hurt.

PROBLEMS YOU WILL ENCOUNTER

OVERVIEW

- Problem 1) Global objects vs dependency injection
- Problem 2) Sessions
- Problem 3) Flask plugins

1) FLASK - GLOBAL OBJECTS

Not-untypical deep inside the call stack in a Flask application:

```
1 # core/processing/files.py
2 def enrich_file(file):
3
4     # TODO: don't use request here
5     tag = request.args.get('tag', 'unidentified')
6     timestamp = datetime.utcnow().isoformat()
7
8     # do more things
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10    return file
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PROBLEMS?

- `request` being used in modules relatively unrelated to actual API
- `tag` is a query parameter!

1) FLASK - GLOBAL OBJECTS

- request and g are global states
- Find use of global state in your application
 - grep -nri request (request context)
 - grep -nri 'import g' for application context

1) FASTAPI - DEPENDENCY INJECTION

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2) SERVER-SIDE-SESSIONS

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- Use like a key-value storage object
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2) SERVER-SIDE-SESSIONS

- Provided by the `flask-session` package
- Supports various backends for session storage
- Use like a key-value storage object
- Automatically sets cookies

No equivalent solution in FastAPI:

- Session management needs to be done manually
- Ideally, you don't want server-side session anyway
- MSAL auth is session based

3) PLUGINS

Flask:

- Has plugins for everything
- Install a flask-specific Python package
- Understand how to use that package
- Connect the app and the plugin

FastAPI:

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Flask:

- Has plugins for everything
- Install a flask-specific Python package
- Understand how to use that package
- Connect the app and the plugin

FastAPI:

- Very few plugins available
- Dependency injection to extent function
- "plug'n'play" with normal packages

MIGRATION STRATEGY

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Migration Strategy

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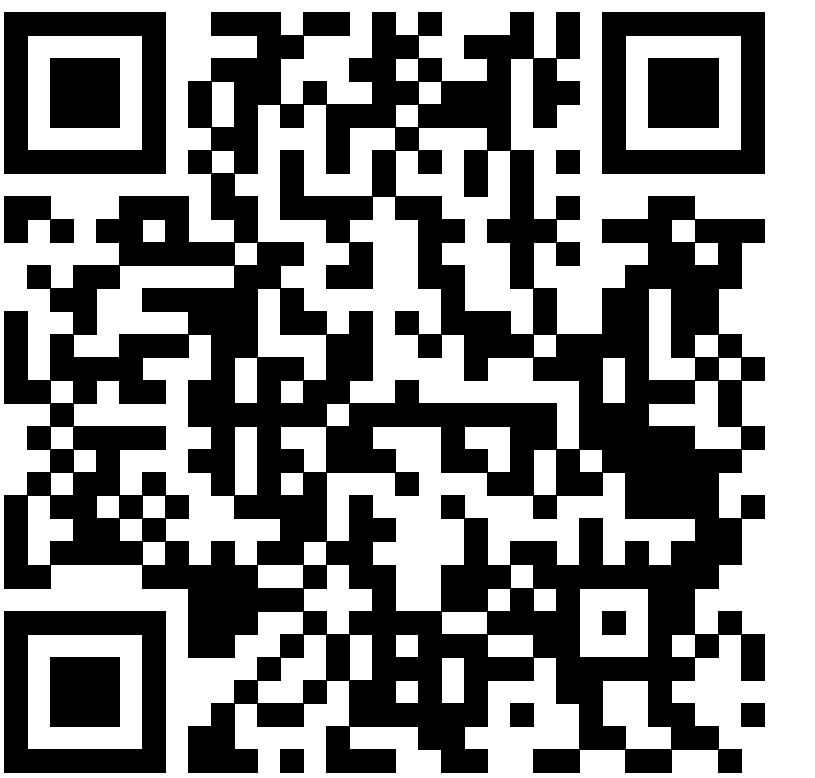
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Migration Strategy

1. Create test cases for all routes
2. Create endpoints in FastAPI app
3. Identify locations where global state is used
4. Move that state to endpoint and explicitly call functions with required information
5. Identify input and output models and create Pydantic models
6. Implement fastAPI endpoint

LET'S CONNECT



hello@orellgarten.com



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