# The Askew Wall

SQL and The Relational Model (background to *The Third Manifesto*)

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for

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CS319

# Terminological Equivalences (?)

Posh term	Cuddly term
Relation	Table
(n-)tuple	Row
Attribute	Column
Domain	(data) type
Domain	(object) class

The table represents a relation! Its predicate:

Cuddly term is the SQL counterpart of Relationland's Posh term.

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# The Perversity of SQL

SELECT CityName FROM City C1 WHERE 4 > (SELECT COUNT(\*)

FROM City C2
WHERE C1.Population < C2. Population)

# The Unperversified Version

SELECT CityName FROM City C1

WHERE (SELECT COUNT(\*) FROM City C2

WHERE C2. Population > C1. Population) < 4

.

# The Third Manifesto

or

Date and Darwen's Database Dream



## References

Relational Database Writings 1985-1989 by C.J.Date with a special contribution "Adventures in Relationland" by H.D. ( as Andrew Warden)

Relational Database Writings 1989-1991 by C.J.Date with Hugh Darwen

Relational Database Writings 1991-1994 by C.J.Date

Databases, Types, and The Relational Model : *The Third Manifesto*by C.J. Date and Hugh Darwen (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2006)

SQL: A Comparative Survey by Hugh Darwen, 2012 (free download from Bookboon.com)

# A Brief History of Data

1960: Punched cards and magnetic tapes

1965: Disks and 'direct access'

1970: E.F. Codd's great vision:

"A Relational Model of Data

for Large Shared Data Banks"

1970: C.J. Date starts to spread the word

1975: Relational Prototypes in IBM:

PRTV (ISBL), QBE, System R

1979: First SQL product: Oracle. IBM shipped in 1980.

1987: SQL an international standard

1990: OODB – didn't come to much in the end

200x: XML? (shudder!—what actually happened?)

201x: Big data? (back to square one)

# A Brief History of Me

1967 : IBM Service Bureau, Birmingham

1969 : "Terminal Business System" – putting users in direct contact with their databases.

1972 : Attended Date's course on database (a personal watershed)

1978 : "Business System 12"

- a relational dbms for the Bureau Service

1985: Death of Bureau Service (and of BS12)

1987 : Joined IBM Warwick dev. lab. Attended a Codd & Date database conference in December

1988 : "Adventures in Relationland" by Andrew Warden. Joined SQL standardization committee.

2004: Retired from IBM

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#### The Wall Around Relationland



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#### What The Askew Wall Has Done

Lots of Good Things, to be sure, but ...

- Untold damage to the Relational Model's reputation.
- Stifled research in the relational field.

People even think the Wall is Relationland.

There have even been attempts to move back to the "Higgledy-Piggledy Model of Data" (Object Oriented Databases) and the hierarchical model (XML).

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#### The Good Things The Askew Wall Has Done

Codd's vision has come true in the following respects:

- TABLE as the only available structure (though, alas, table  $\neq$  relation)
- Value at row/column intersection the ONLY method of representing information. e.g., no pointers, no ordering of rows.
- Orthogonality of tables with respect to data types (domains) over which their columns are defined.
- The catalogue is made of tables, too.
- Query language ALMOST closed over tables and does embrace relational algebra/calculus principles (as well as regrettably departing from them).
- Constraints expressed declaratively, in the schema, and enforced by the dbms.
- No "record-level" (or other) subversion.

but... 15

#### The "Fatal Flaws" of SQL

- Anonymous columns (partly addressed in 1992)
- FROM clause restricted to named tables (fixed in 1992)
- Duplicate column names
- · Order of columns is significant
- Duplicate rows
- NULL
- Failure to support degenerate cases (e.g. columnless tables)
- Failure to support "=" properly
- and lots more, and probably more to come

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# COLUMN NAMING FLAWS

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#### A Thematic Query Example

Ref: "The Naming of Columns", chapter 17 in RDBW 1985-89

Given : ExamMarks

Name	Subject	Mark
Anne	Relational DB	92
Boris	Object DB	68
Cindy	Object DB	56
Dave	Relational DB	84

To derive:

Name	Subject	Mark	Avg
Anne	Relational DB	92	88
Boris	Object DB	68	62
Cindy	Object DB	56	62
Dave	Relational DB	84	88

\_\_\_\_

#### **Anonymous Columns**

Ref: "The Naming of Columns", chapter 17 in RDBW 1985-89

#### Example 3:

Show the average exam mark obtained by all students in each subject.

SELECT Subject, AVG(Mark) FROM ExamMarks GROUP BY Subject

The "second" column of this table has no name!

This is a CORRECTABLE flaw (well, NEARLY correctable). It was corrected (kind of) in 1992.

It is NOT BYPASSABLE

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#### FROM Clause Restricted to Named Tables

#### Example 4:

Show for each student in each subject the mark obtained and the average mark by all students in that subject.

SELECT Name, E.Subject, E.Mark, S.??? -- unnamed column
FROM ExamMarks E,
(SELECT Subject, AVG(Mark)
FROM ExamMarks
GROUP BY Subject) S
WHERE E.Subject = S.Subject

This is a correctable flaw (and was corrected in 1992). It is not generally bypassable, though sometimes you can create a named view for the "nested" query.

Actually, this particular query CAN be done without nesting (exercise for reader!), but the solution cannot be generalized.

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#### The FROM clause fix

#### Example 4 (fixed):

WHERE

Show for each student in each subject the mark obtained and the average mark obtained by all students in that subject.

SELECT Name, E.Subject,E.Mark,S.Avg FROM ExamMarks AS E,

(SELECT Subject, AVG(Mark) AS Avg
FROM ExamMarks
GROUP BY Subject) AS S
E.Subject = S.Subject

This is still only an optional conformance feature in SQL:2011. I think it is *very* important. Without it SQL is relationally incomplete.

But it's clunky!

# With WITH

Example 4 (fixed and made possibly a bit more digestible):

WITH AvgMarks AS

(SELECT Subject, AVG(Mark) AS Avg FROM ExamMarks GROUP BY Subject)

SELECT Name, E. Subject, E.Mark, A.Avg
FROM ExamMarks AS E, AvgMarks AS A
WHERE E.Subject = A. Subject

WITH is an optional conformance feature in SQL:2011. Not many implementations have it, and even those that do have it do so only with unpleasant restrictions.

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#### Duplicate column names (1)

Ref: "In Praise of Marriage", chapter 18 in RDBW 1985-89

#### Example 5:

 SELECT
 \*

 FROM
 ExamMarks E, Student S

 WHERE
 E.Name = S.Name

A very natural-looking join, but there are two columns called Name. These are also <u>duplicate columns</u>, as it happens.

Sometimes such joins generate two columns both called, e.g., Remarks, that are <u>not</u> duplicate columns.

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#### **Duplicate Column Names (2)**

Thanks to AS you can now even do this:

SELECT Col1 AS X, Col2 AS X FROM T

Enjoy!

#### A Fix for Duplicate Column Names (1)

NATURAL JOIN was added to SQL in 1992 but not widely implemented.

SELECT

FROM ExamMarks NATURAL JOIN Student

Note elimination of:

- need to write a joining condition in the WHERE clause
   need to write a possibly long list of column names to avoid having the same column twice

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## Why NATURAL JOIN is "Natural"

Relational JOIN is the relational counterpart of logical AND.

Assume predicates:
ExamMarks "Name scored Mark in Subject".
Student "Name joined in Year, was born on DoB [etc.]"

Then the predicate for

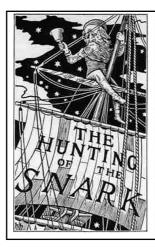
ExamMarks JOIN Student

is "Name scored Mark in Subject and Name joined in Year, was born on DoB [etc.]"

The two Names are the same variable!

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# **DUPLICATE ROWS**





#### **Duplicate Rows**

Ref: "The Duplicity of Duplicate Rows", chapter 5 in RDBW 89-91 "The Keys of the Kingdom", chapter 19 in RDBW 85-89, and:

"If something is true, saying it twice doesn't make it more true" (E.F. Codd)

#### This is a bypassable flaw:

- · Declare at least one candidate key for every base table. and ask for support for system-generated keys.
- Always write DISTINCT after the word SELECT and complain to supplier if this makes duplicate-free queries go slower.
- Never write the word ALL after UNION and demand decent optimization here, too.

but, alas, it is not a correctable flaw.

Usability problems should be recognized and solved, but NOT by departing from fundamental principles.

#### Are Duplicate Rows Really Harmful?

Well, they needlessly complicate the language, making it more difficult than it ought to be to define, teach, and learn.

And they allow the implementation to place some of the performance burden needlessly on its users (when is it safe to write UNION ALL or to omit DISTINCT?)

But look at the trap somebody fell into here:

SELECT COUNT(\*) AS HowMany, AVG ( Salary ) AS HowOld FROM

(SELECT Emp#, Salary FROM Emp NATURAL JOIN (SELECT Emp#

FROM Worksin

WHERE Dept# IN ( 'D3', 'D7' ) ) AS dummy ) AS dummy

"How many people work in departments 3 and 7, and what is their average salary?"

SUMMARIZE
((( (WorksIN WHERE Dept# = 'D3' OR Dept# = 'D7' ) { Emp# }
JOIN Emp ) { Emp#, Age } )
ADD ( COUNT AS HowMany, AVG( Age ) AS HowOld )

# **NULL**

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#### NULL

Ref: "Into the Unknown", chapter 23 in RDBW 85-89. See also chapters 8 ("NOT" is not 'Not'!") and 13 ("EXISTS is not 'Exists'!" and the whole of part IV( chapters 17-21) in RDBW 89-91

Cause of much debate and anguish.

There's even a split in the relational camp (E.F. Codd proposed "A-marks", "I-marks" and a 4-valued logic).

How many different things can NULL mean? Is it valid to treat all nulls alike?

NULL ruins everything -

- UNION of sets, cardinality of sets.

Destruction of functional dependency theory

SQL's implementation of NULL is even worse than the best suggested by theoreticians. And it's not completely BYPASSABLE, because SQL thinks that the sum of the empty set is NULL! Nor is it CORRECTABLE.

#### Is NULL a Value?

CREATE TABLE NT ( N INTEGER ); INSERT INTO NT VALUES NULL, NULL; -- inserts two rows!

Now, what is the cardinality of:

(a) SELECT \* FROM NT WHERE N = N (b) SELECT \* FROM NT WHERE N <> N (c) SELECT DISTINCT \* FROM NT

Which answers are consistent with NULL being a value?

What difference would it have made if it had been a value?

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# 3-Valued Logic: The Real Culprit

Relational theory is founded on classical, 2-valued logic.

A relation r is interpreted as a representation of the extension of some predicate P.

Let t be a tuple with the same heading as r.

If tuple t is a member of r, then the proposition P(t) is taken to be TRUE; otherwise (t is not a member of r), P(t) is taken to be FALSE.

There is no middle ground. The Law of The Excluded Middle applies.

There is no way of representing that the truth of P(t) is unknown, or inapplicable, or otherwise concealed from us.

SQL's WHERE clause arbitrarily splits at the TRUE/UNKNOWN divide.

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# Surprises Caused by SQL's NULL

1. SELECT \* FROM T WHERE X = Y OR NOT (X = Y) is not equivalent to SELECT \* FROM T

SELECT SUM(X) + SUM(Y) FROM T is not equivalent to
 SELECT SUM(X + Y) FROM T

3. IF X = Y THEN 'Yes'; ELSE 'No' is not equivalent to
IF NOT ( X = Y ) THEN 'No'; ELSE 'Yes'

Why NULL Hurts Even More Than It Once Did

Suppose "x = x" returns "unknown"

Can we safely conclude "x IS NULL"?

Suppose *x* "is not the null value"?

Can we conclude "x IS NOT NULL"?

Not in modern SQL!

#### How x= x Unknown Yet x NOT NULL

For example:

- 1. *x* is ROW (1, null) or even ROW(null, null) ROW(...) is a row "constructor".
- x is POINT (1,null)
   POINT(a,b) is a "constructor" for values in the user-defined data type POINT.
- 3. x is ROW (POINT(1,1), POINT(null,3))

Consequences?

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# TABLE\_DEE AND TABLE DUM

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#### TABLE\_DEE and TABLE\_DUM

Ref: "TABLE\_DEE and TABLE\_DUM", chapter 22 in RDBW 85-89, and "The Nullologist in Relationland, or Nothing *Really* Matters", chapter 13 in RDBW 89-91

Two very important relations that SQL is unaware of.

Consider the question, "Do we have any students?"

In Tutorial D: Student { }

SQL counterpart would be SELECT DISTINCT FROM Student

The result is a relation of degree 0 (no attributes) and either one tuple (TABLE\_DEE) or none (TABLE\_DUM).

Interesting property of TABLE\_DEE: for every relation r, r JOIN TABLE\_DEE = r

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#### Failure to Recognise DEE and DUM

Consequences of SQL's failure to recognise DEE and DUM:

- \* Can't have a table with no columns.
  - \* Can't DROP the only remaining column. Correctable, not bypassable.
  - \* Can't SELECT no columns at all. Correctable, somewhat bypassable.
- \* FROM clause can't specify "no tables". Correctable, somewhat bypassable.
- \* Primary and foreign keys can't be empty. An empty PK implies at most one row. Correctable, not bypassable.

and the above set of nullological observations is still growing,

#### Bypasses for Absence of DEE and DUM

#### Example 6:

"Did any student obtain more than 75 marks in Relational DB?"

SELECT DISTINCT 'Yes!'
FROM ExamMarks
WHERE Mark > 75 AND Subject = 'Relational DB'

#### Example 7:

"What's the time?"

SELECT DISTINCT CURRENT\_TIME
FROM Student

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# It Could Have Been Worse ...

... if SQL had paid proper attention to degenerate cases.

SQL fails to recognise TABLE\_DEE and TABLE\_DUM. These in turn depend on the existence of the 0-tuple. Suppose SQL had not made this oversight.

CREATE TABLE T ( C1 ROW ( ) ); INSERT INTO T VALUES ( ROW ( ) );

uery Result Cardinality

SELECT \* FROM T WHERE C1 IS **NOT** NULL SELECT \* FROM T WHERE C1 IS NULL

C1 "is not the null value"; also, no field of C1 "is the null value". But it is also true that  $\it every$  field of C1 "is the null value"!

At least 5 errors of language design are involved in this little example!

# MISCELLANEOUS FURTHER FLAWS

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# "=" Is Not "equals"

Modern SQL supports user-defined "equals" functions, for user-defined data types.

We would like to require these to honour the rule that if a=b then for all f, f(a) = f(b)

Unfortunately SQL itself already fails to honour it: 'A' = 'A ', but Length('A') < Length('A ')

Unpleasant consequences for GROUP BY, NATURAL JOIN, DISTINCT, foreign keys, etc.

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# Indeterminacy in SQL

What's the result of: SELECT DISTINCT X FROM ( VALUES 'x', 'x ') AS T(X) ?

or:

SELECT MAX(X) AS MaxX, MIN(X) AS MinX FROM ( VALUES 'x', 'x ' ) AS T(X) ?

Because of these difficulties, all expressions involving DISTINCT, MAX and MIN on character strings are classed as "possibly non-deterministic" and therefore may not be used in constraints.

This flaw is rather irrelevant in practice because support for subqueries in constraints is optional and most implementations don't allow those anyway

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## Tables and Multisets of Rows

SQL's table types are not "data types".

So a table can't be the value of a local variable, a parameter, an operator invocation, or a "field".

But users wanted support for "nested tables", like relation-valued attributes in **Tutorial D**.

So SQL:2003 introduced MULTISET types.

A MULTISET type whose element type is a ROW type is a table type "in disguise"!

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# SQL's TABLE Operator

TABLE ( exp )

If *exp* is a query (table expression), result is the multiset consisting of the rows of *exp*.

If exp is a multiset expression, result is the table consisting of the rows of exp.

Enjoy! (but beware: TABLE(TABLE(t)) is not necessarily equal to t)

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#### Clunkiness of SELECT-FROM-WHERE

In SQL:

SELECT Name, Total\_Pay FROM

(SELECT (E.\*)\* Must qualify \* here!

Salary + Bonus AS Total\_Pay

FROM Emp E) (AS dummy)

WHERE Total\_Pay > 1000

Required but useless name!

In Tutorial D:

**EXTEND Emp ADD** 

( Salary + Bonus AS Total\_Pay ) WHERE Total\_Pay > 1000 {Name, Total\_Pay} $_{_{48}}$ 

#### A Murky Story

On the subject of:

SELECT(E.\*, Salary + Bonus AS Total\_Pay

...

Must qualify \* here!

In 2005 a UK proposal to correct the silly mistake and allow SELECT\*, Salary + Bonus AS Total\_Pay was vigorously opposed by the USA, led by Oracle and IBM, and consequently defeated. Why?

Because "\* leads to maintenance nightmares, and [we are] not aware of any customer request or requirement for the feature" and "its use should be discouraged".

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## Why "Maintenance Nightmare"

Because of yet another violation by SQL of the relational model, which stipulates that there is no significance to any *order* in which the attributes of a relation might appear.

But for getting data out of and into a table, SQL uses

SELECT/FETCH INTO :v1, :v2,  $\dots$  and INSERT INTO target source

The mapping from source columns to target columns is by column number.

Defining the order means defining it for every query operator, including FROM and UNION, which thus fail to be commutative (as they should be, as relational counterparts of AND and OR). Are they associative?

The correct approach is to map columns to variables by name, not by order.

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## "Nobody Ever Asked For It"

A couple of other nice ideas from ISBL that "nobody has ever asked for":

SELECT all columns except specified one. In Tutorial D:

r { ALL BUT a, b, ... }

Very often you know the ones you don't want and there aren't so many of them either. (In 2005 a UK proposal to add \* EXCEPT ( ... ) to SQL was also rejected on the grounds that it would encourage use of the hated \*.)

Rename selected columns and keep the others. In Tutorial D:

r RENAME ( a AS x, b AS y, ...)

Handy for getting the right attributes to match up for JOIN, UNION, etc.

#### The Folly of "Structured Queries"

In old SQL, the WHERE clause could not be used on results of aggregation, so they had to invent HAVING (with same meaning as WHERE):

SELECT D#, AVG(Salary) AS Avg\_Sal FROM Emp GROUP BY D# HAVING AVG(Salary) >999

But would we ever have had HAVING if in 1979 one could write: SELECT \* FROM

( SELECT D#, AVG(Sal) AS Avg\_Sal FROM Emp GROUP BY D# ) AS dummy WHERE Avg\_Sal > 999

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?

## The Folly of Coercion

Consider the so-called scalar subquery, expressed by placing a query inside parentheses:

SELECT D#, ( SELECT E#

FROM Emp E WHERE E.D#=D.D# ) AS Emps

FROM Dept D

Scalar subquery or nested table?
I.e., is Emps an employee number or a set of employee numbers? (loosely speaking)

(Answer: an employee number)

Why The Flaws Are "Fatal"

- The Shackle of Compatibility (existing syntax cannot be deleted)
- The Growth of Redundancy (plugging holes gives new solutions where existing solutions already available)
- Desired extensions can be difficult or impossible to specify (e.g., because of nulls)
- Also shackled by existing style

## Errors Here to Stay

- \* Duplicate Rows
- \* NULL and 3VL
- \* Columns being ordered
- \* SELECT-FROM-WHERE
- \* Table types not data types

(and probably many others)

## The Growth of Redundancy

Since SQL:1992, the following features (e.g.) have been redundant:

- subqueries
- correlation names
- · doing joins in longhand
- the HAVING clause
- the GROUP BY clause

# **OBJECT SUPPORT**

#### **Object Oriented Databases**

#### A couple of good ideas:

- Database variable types available for local variables too (but a relational database *must* be restricted to *relation* variables)
- · User-defined types (classes)

#### A questionable idea:

 Type inheritance via extension rather than by specialisation (e.g., 3D\_POINT subtype of 2D\_POINT ???)

#### Bad ideas (for relational database purposes):

- "Persistence is orthogonal to type" (see first good idea)
- Object identifiers (because they are pointers)
   Class extents (when used for the purpose of relations)
   Operator ("method") definitions bundled with type definitions
- "Selfish methods" (I.e., the "distinguished parameter")

## Rapprochement

A bringing together of objects and relations. Widely sought, because:

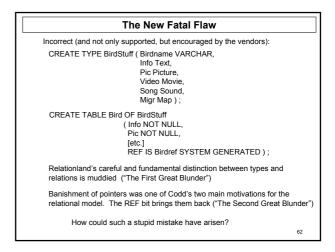
- \* Some Objectlanders wanted to be able to do what Relationlanders do with tables - specially ad hoc queries and declarative constraints.
- \* Some Relationlanders wanted to do some more complicated things that require user-defined data types of arbitrary complexity.

A Multimedium Relation BirdName Info Pic Song Migr Robin Thrush S Sparrow S

#### Predicate:

Info is information about bird BirdName, and Pic is a picture of BirdName, and Video is a video of BirdName, and Song is BirdName's song, and Migr is BirdName's migration route.

# SQL for The Bird Table Correct (and supported): CREATE TYPE Text ( T CLOB ); CREATE TYPE Picture ( P ROW ( R INT, G INT, B INT ) ARRAY ); CREATE TYPE Sound (...) CREATE TYPE Movie ( Vid PICTURE ARRAY, Aud SOUND ); CREATE TYPE Map ( ... ); CREATE TABLE Bird ( Birdname VARCHAR(30) NOT NULL, Info Text NOT NULL, Pic Picture NOT NULL, Video Movie NOT NULL, Migr Map NOT NULL, Migr Map NOT NULL, Migr Map NOT NULL, All fine and reasonable so far. BUT ...



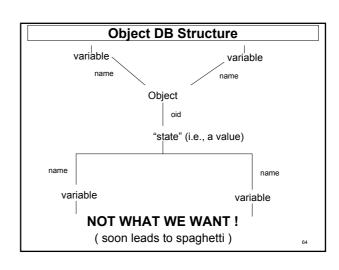
Possible Reasons for The "Great Blunders"

Object class definitions have components called attributes.

Hence the wrong equation, class extent = relation variable instead of the right equation, class = type (= Codd's "domain")

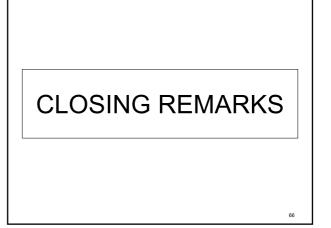
Objects have object identifiers (= SQL's REF values)

But oids are pointers (because they point). There are no pointers in Relationland (except possibly under the covers, where they can't be seen).



relation variable relation variable
name name
value value
(a relation)

What we want instead!
( cannot make spaghetti )



#### The Relationlander's Promise

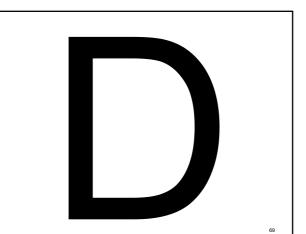
I solemnly promise ...

... *never* to use the word "relational" when I mean SQL, ...

... cross my heart and hope to die.

The Dream Database Language

- 1. faithfully embraces the Relational Model of Data.
  - NO EXTENSION
  - NO PERVERSIONS
  - NO SUBSUMPTIONS
- 2. supports user-defined types and user-defined operators of arbitrary complexity
- (3. allows SQL to be implemented in it for temporary use (until SQL finally expires)
- 4. provides unprecedented chivalry
- 5. is generically referred to by the name ....  $_{\tiny \tiny 68}$



#### Projects based on TTM

Rel: an implementation of **Tutorial D**by Dave Voorhis, University of Derby

D4: a commercial implementation by Alphora, Utah, USA front-end to SQL (so includes nulls, alas)

Duro: a C API for relational algebra and transactions, by René Hartmann

Further info at www.thethirdmanifesto.com

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#### Some Guiding Principles

Some important principles that we have become particularly conscious of, for various reasons.

Some have always been with us.

Some arise from a retrospective look at our manifesto.

Some may even be said to have informed our manifesto.

**Logical Differences** 

Principle #1 (our motto)

"All logical differences are big differences" (Wittgenstein)

So all logical mistakes are big ones!

And we think all non-logical differences are small ones. In the database context, at least.

#### Values and Variables

# Principle #2

"We retain and embrace a clear distinction between values and variables"

(Object Orientation seems to have blurred this distinction.)

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## **Data Types and Relations**

# Principle #3

Data types and the relational model are orthogonal to each other.

#### Corollary:

The relational model has no jurisdiction concerning which data types a relational system should support.

(except we must have relation types, and BOOLEAN!)

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# **Types are Not Tables**

# Principle #4

Types are to tables as nouns are to sentences!

So we cannot accept the equation object class = relation that some ORDBMSs (and SQL!) attempted to embrace.

"object class = domain" works fine. 75

# Conceptual Integrity

# Principle #5

"Conceptual integrity is *the* most important property of a software product" (Fred Brooks, 1975)

Of course, you must *have* concepts before you can be true to any. These had better be:

a.few

b.agreeable to those invited to share them

Reims Cathedral



**Conceptual Integrity** 

# Principle #5 (bis)

"This above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any user."

(from Polonius's advice to D, by WS with HD)

# Blank Slide (material from lecture not suitable for handouts)

