

# Programming Paradigms

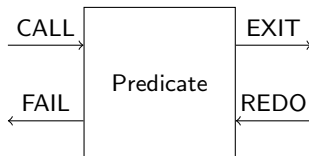
## Unit 7 — Debugging and the Box Model

J. Gamper

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano  
Faculty of Computer Science  
IDSE

# The Box Model

- The **box model** of Prolog execution provides a simple way to show the control flow
- A box represents the invocation of a single predicate (procedure)
- The box has **four ports** (with associated events)
  - **CALL**: The first call of a predicate; control enters into the box
  - **EXIT**: The goal has been proven
  - **REDO**: The system comes back to a goal, trying to re-satisfy it, i.e., backtracking
  - **FAIL**: The goal/predicate fails



# Debugging

- The box model is used to **debug** the execution of Prolog programs
- Predicate **trace/0** starts the **exhaustive tracing mode**
  - **notrace/0** stops the tracing mode
- The debugger then displays a line for every port and waits for a command
  - With **Return** or **c** ("creep") one steps to the next port
  - The command **a** (abort) stops the execution of the query
- Other debugger commands are available
  - Usually displayed when entering **?** or **h**

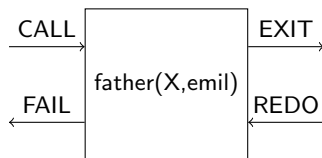
# The Box Model Example/1

- Consider the following facts (e.g., `emil` is the father of `jan`)

```
father(jan,emil).  
father(julia,emil).  
father(emil,arno).
```

- The goal `trace/0` activates "tracing"

```
?- trace, father(X,emil).  
Call: father(_16,emil) ?  
Exit: father(jan,emil) ?  
X = jan ? ;  
Redo: father(jan,emil) ?  
Exit: father(julia,emil) ?  
X = julia.
```

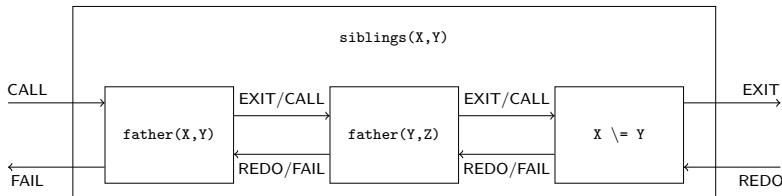


## The Box Model Example/2

- Now add the following rule

```
siblings(X,Y) :- father(X, Z),  
                 father(Y,Z),  
                 X \= Y.
```

- The box model for the goal `siblings(X,Y)` is nested
  - The CALL of `siblings` enters the CALL of `father`
  - The EXIT of `father` enters the CALL of another box for `father`, etc.



# The Box Model Example/3

- The debugger output for the query trace, `siblings(jan,Y)`

```
(1) 0 CALL siblings(jan, Y) ?
(2) 1 CALL father(jan, Z) ?
(2) 1 EXIT father(jan, emil) ?
(3) 1 CALL father(Y, emil) ?
(3) 1 *EXIT father(jan, emil) ?
(4) 1 CALL jan \= jan ?
(4) 1 FAIL jan \= jan?
(3) 1 REDO father(Y, emil) ?
(3) 1 EXIT father(julia, emil) ?
(5) 1 CALL julia \= jan ?
(5) 1 EXIT julia \= jan ?
(1) 0 EXIT siblings(jan, julia) ?
X = julia ? ;
(1) 1 REDO: siblings(jan,julia) ?
(3) 2 REDO: father(julia,emil) ?
(3) 2 FAIL: father(Y,emil) ? c
(1) 1 FAIL: siblings(jan,Y) ? c
no
```

# Remarks about the Box Model

- The exact form of the output depends on the Prolog system
- The above output contains a **box number** in the first column and a **nesting depth** (call stack depth) in the second column
- The asterisc "\*" before EXIT marks that there are possibly further solutions (**nondeterministic exit**)
  - Otherwise, the box is already removed, and not visited during backtracking (i.e., no REDO-FAIL will be shown)
  - Because of such optimizations, the debugger output might violate the pure four-port model.
- Tracing is switched on by the predicate **trace/0** and switched off by the predicate **notrace/0**.
- Another useful debugging predicate is **spy/1**, which allows to specify specific subgoals, for which the user wants to obtain detailed information of the box model

# Spy Points/1

- Tracing is doing exhaustive debugging of all subgoals
- Another useful debugging predicate is `spy/1`
  - Allows to inspect the execution for `selected subgoals` only
- The following predicate sets a "`spy point`" on the predicate `father/2`  
`?- spy(father/2).`
- If the `debug` predicate is now used, Prolog executes the program without interruption until the first spypoint is reached
- Then one can continue debugging as with `trace` or "`leap`" to the next spy point (usually with the command `l`)
- `nodebug` stops the debugger, `nospy` removes the spy points



## Spy Points/2

- The debugger output for the query `debug, siblings(jan,Y)` after setting a spy point for `father/2`

```
?- debug, siblings(jan,Y).  
* Call: (8) father(jan, _G3270) ? creep  
* Exit: (8) father(jan, emil) ? creep  
* Call: (8) father(_G3159, emil) ? creep  
* Exit: (8) father(jan, emil) ? creep  
Call: (8) jan\=jan ? creep  
Fail: (8) jan\=jan ? creep  
* Redo: (8) father(_G3159, emil) ? creep  
* Exit: (8) father(julia, emil) ? creep  
Call: (8) jan\=julia ? creep  
Exit: (8) jan\=julia ? creep  
Exit: (7) siblings(jan, julia) ? creep  
Y = julia.
```

- Notice that the CALL port of sibling is not shown!

## Spy Points/3

- The comand leap jumps to the next spy point

```
?- debug, siblings(jan,Y).
```

```
* Call: (8) father(jan, _G1003) ? leap
```

```
* Exit: (8) father(jan, emil) ? leap
```

```
* Call: (8) father(_G889, emil) ? leap
```

```
* Exit: (8) father(jan, emil) ? leap
```

```
* Exit: (8) father(julia, emil) ? leap
```

```
Y = julia.
```