



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Advanced Database Systems

Spring 2026

Lecture #13:

Query Evaluation: Processing Models

R&G: Chapter 14

PROCESSING MODEL

Processing model defines how the DBMS executes a query plan

Different trade-offs for different workloads

Three main approaches:

Iterator model

Vectorised (batch) model

Materialisation model

ITERATOR MODEL

Each query plan operator implements three functions:

open() – initialise the operator's internal state

next() – return either the next result tuple or a null marker if there are no more tuples

close() – clean up all allocated resources

Each operator instance maintains an internal state

Any operator can be input to any other (composability)

Since they all implement the same interface

Also called **Volcano** or **Pipeline** Model

Goetz Graefe. Volcano – An Extensible and Parallel Query Evaluation System. IEEE TKDE 1994

ITERATOR MODEL

Top-down plan processing

The whole plan is initially reset by calling **open()** on the root operator

The **open()** call is forwarded through the plan by the operators themselves

Control returns to the query processor

The root is requested to produce its **next()** result record

Operators forward the **next()** request as needed. As soon as the next result record is produced, control returns to the query processor again

Used in almost every DBMS

ITERATOR MODEL

Query processor uses the following routine to evaluate a query plan

```
Function eval(q)
```

```
q.open()
```

```
r = q.next()
```

```
while r != EOF do
```

```
    /* deliver record r (print, ship to DB client) */
```

```
    emit(r)
```

```
    r = q.next()
```

```
/* resource deallocation now */
```

```
q.close()
```

Output control (e.g., LIMIT) works easily with this model

EXAMPLE: SELECTION σ_p (ON-THE-FLY)

A streaming operator: small amount of work per tuple

Predicate p stored in internal state

```
open()
```

```
child.open()
```

```
close()
```

```
child.close()
```

```
next()
```

```
while (r = child.next()) != EOF do  
  if p(r) return r  
return EOF
```

EXAMPLE: HEAP SCAN

Leaf of the query plan, often includes a selection predicate

```
open()
```

```
heap = open heap file for this relation      // file handle  
cur_page = heap.first_page()              // first page  
cur_slot = cur_page.first_slot()          // first slot on that page
```

```
next()
```

```
if cur_page == NULL return EOF  
current = tuple at (cur_page, cur_slot)    // tuple to be returned  
cur_slot = cur_slot.advance()                // advance slot for subseq. calls  
if cur_slot == NULL                          // advance to next page, first slot  
    cur_page = cur_page.advance()  
    if cur_page != NULL  
        cur_slot = cur_page.first_slot()  
return current
```

```
close()
```

```
heap.close()
```

EXAMPLE: NESTED LOOPS JOIN

Volcano-style implementation of nested loops join $R \bowtie_p S$

```
open()
```

```
left_child.open()  
right_child.open()  
r = left_child.next()
```

```
close()
```

```
left_child.close()  
right_child.close()
```

```
next()
```

```
while r != EOF do  
  while (s = right_child.next()) != EOF do  
    if p(r,s) return <r,s>  
    /* reset inner join input */  
    right_child.close()  
    right_child.open()  
    r = left_child.next()  
return EOF
```

EXAMPLE: SORT (2-PASS)

```
open()
```

```
// first, all of pass 0, a blocking call  
child.open()  
repeatedly call child.next() and generate the sorted runs on disk, until child gives EOF  
// second, set up for pass 1, assumes enough buffers to merge  
open each sorted run file and load one page per run into input buffer for pass 1
```

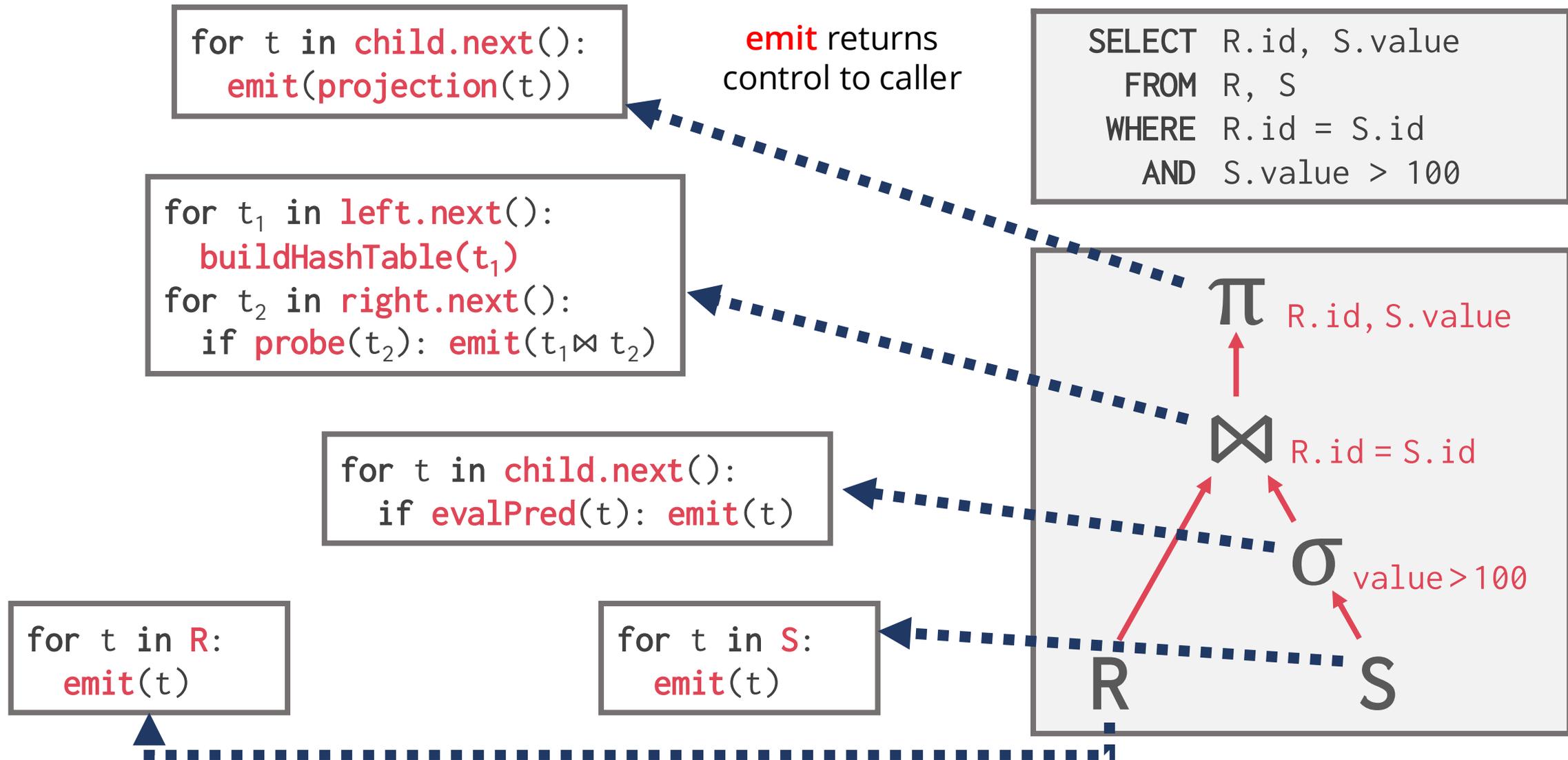
```
next() // pass 1 merge (assumes enough buffers to merge)
```

```
output = min tuple across all buffers  
if min tuple was last one in its buffer  
    fetch next page from that run into buffer  
return output // (or EOF if no tuples remain)
```

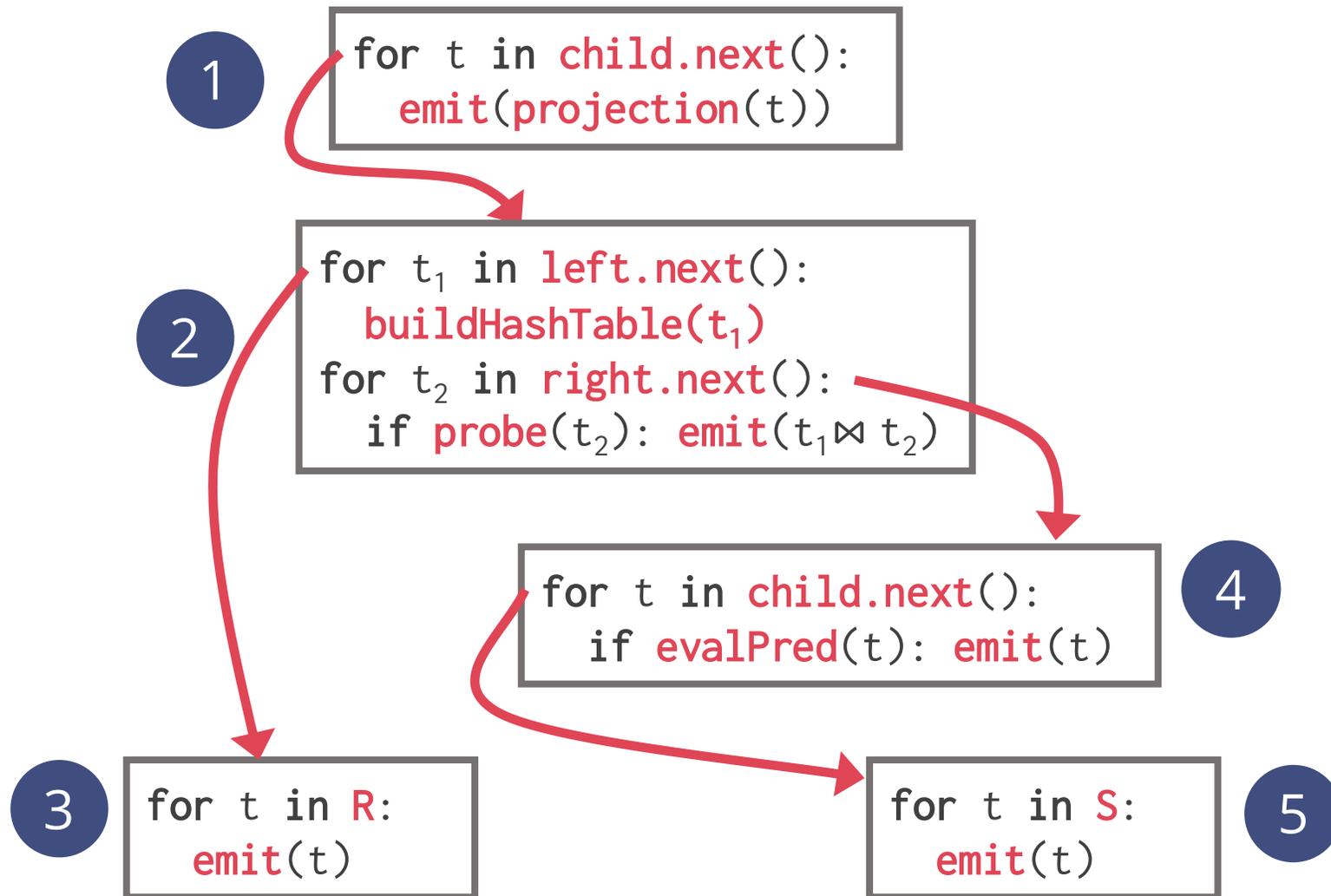
```
close()
```

```
deallocate the runs files  
child.close()
```

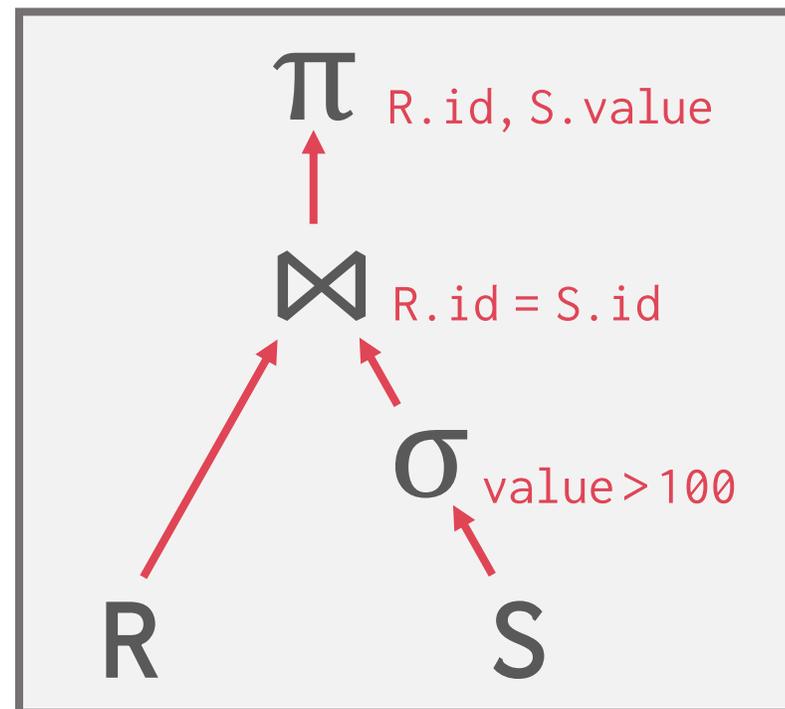
ITERATOR MODEL



ITERATOR MODEL



```
SELECT R.id, S.value
FROM R, S
WHERE R.id = S.id
AND S.value > 100
```



ITERATOR MODEL

Allows for tuple **pipelining**

The DBMS processes a tuple through as many operators as possible before having to retrieve the next tuple

Reduces memory requirements and response time since each chunk of input is propagated to the output immediately

Some operators will **block** until children emit all of their tuples

E.g., sorting, hash join, grouping and duplicate elimination over unsorted input, subqueries

The data is typically buffered (“materialised”) on disk

ITERATOR MODEL

- + Nice & simple interface
- + Allows for **easy** combination of operators
- Next called for **every single** tuple & operator
- **Virtual** call via function pointer
 - Degrades branch prediction of modern CPUs
- **Poor** code locality and **complex** bookkeeping
 - Each operator keeps state to know where to resume

VECTORISATION MODEL

Like Iterator Model, each operator implements a **next()** function

Each operator emits a **batch of tuples** instead of a single tuple

- The operator's internal loop processes multiple tuples at a time

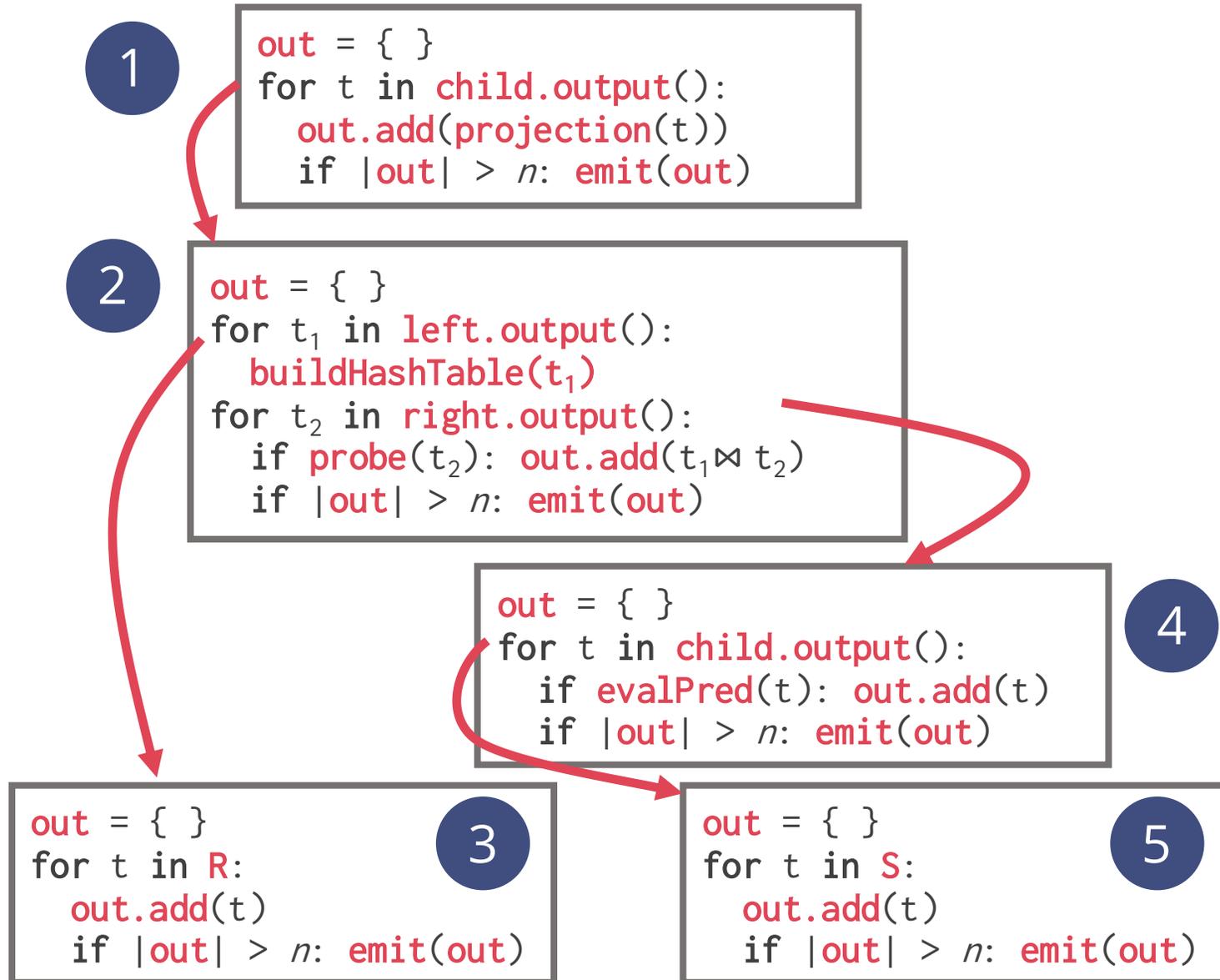
- The size of the batch can vary based on hardware and query properties

Ideal for OLAP queries

- Greatly reduces the number of invocations per operator

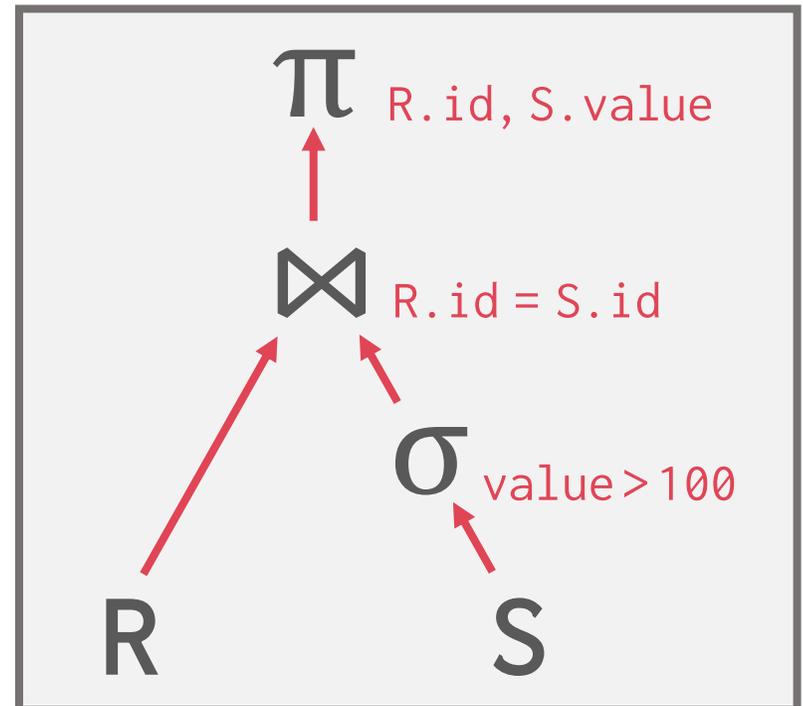
- Operators can use vectorised (SIMD) instructions to process batches of tuples

VECTORISATION MODEL



```

SELECT R.id, S.value
FROM R, S
WHERE R.id = S.id
AND S.value > 100
  
```



MATERIALIZATION MODEL

Each operator processes its input all at once and then emits its output

The operator “materialises” its output as a single result

Bottom-up plan processing

Data not pulled by operators but **pushed** towards them

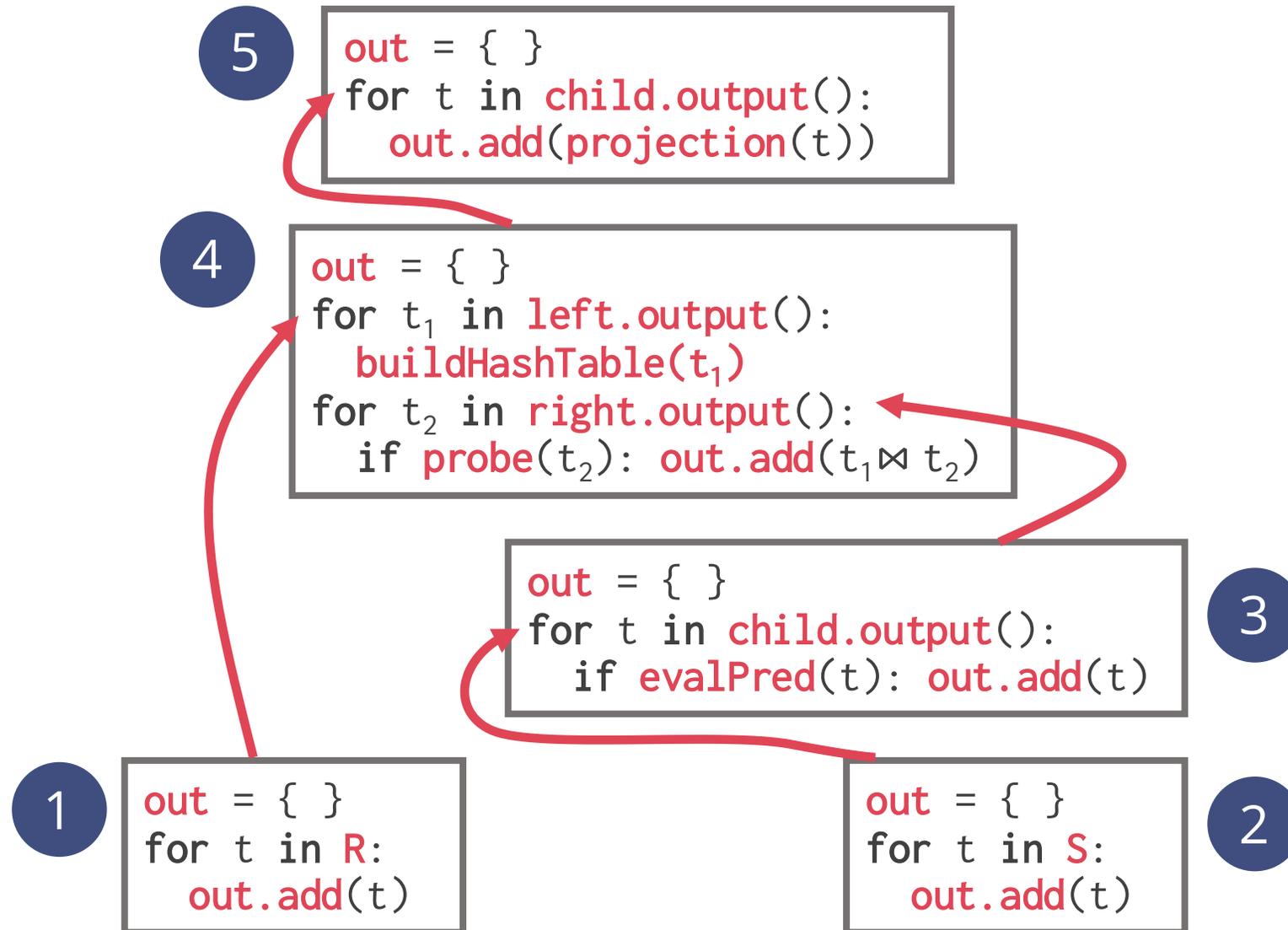
Leads to better code and data locality

Better for OLTP workloads

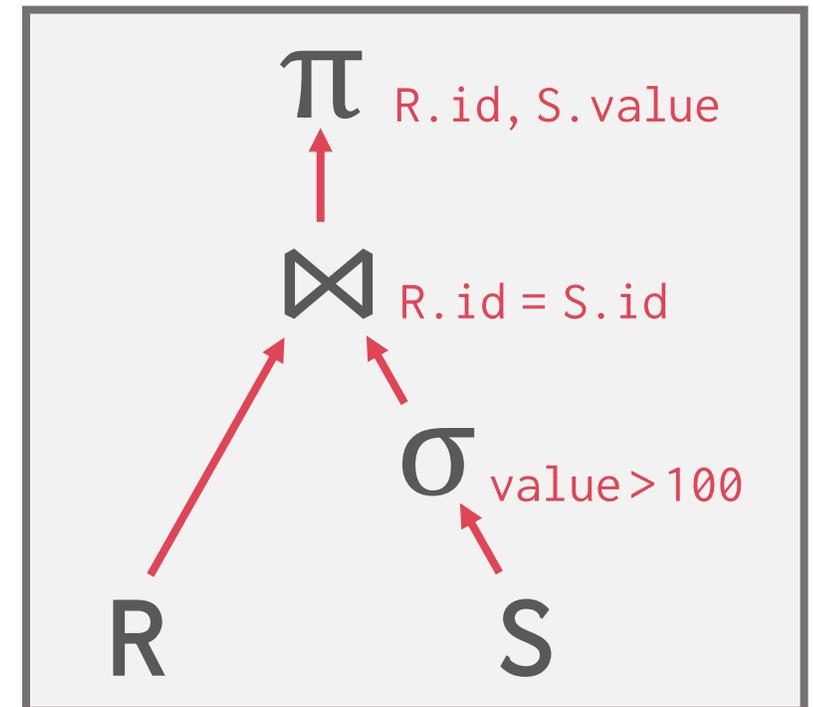
OLTP queries typically only access a small number of tuples at a time

Not good for OLAP queries with large intermediate results

MATERIALIZATION MODEL



```
SELECT R.id, S.value
FROM R, S
WHERE R.id = S.id
AND S.value > 100
```



PROCESSING MODELS: SUMMARY

Iterator / Volcano

Direction: Top-Down

Emits: Single Tuple

Target: General Purpose

Vectorised

Direction: Top-Down

Emits: Tuple Batch

Target: OLAP

Materialisation

Direction: Bottom-Up

Emits: Entire Tuple Set

Target: OLTP