Table of Contents Page

Two Great Proofs everyone should know	Monday, October 09, 2006	2
Free Trade: An analysis of economic efficiency	Sunday, October 22, 2006	5
Physics: A matter of fact, we have a question on matter!	Wednesday, October 25, 2006	7
Dreams	Monday, November 06, 2006	13
Emotional Forces	Sunday, November 12, 2006	15
Fast Food Nation	Wednesday, November 22, 2006	17
Public Education and School Vouchers	Saturday, December 02, 2006	19
I AM NOT A VEGAN!	Sunday, December 10, 2006	23
Socialism and Efficiency	Friday, December 15, 2006	25
Hedonism, Individualism and Our Childhood Toys	Wednesday, December 20, 2006	28
If Not God, Then What? Alternative Ethical Bases	Wednesday, January 10, 2007	31
Logical versus Physical	Monday, January 15, 2007	33

Two Great Proofs everyone should know (Monday, October 09, 2006)

Doing poorly on a recent exam for mathematics I felt I should make it up to myself by establishing that I do know how to do these proofs and how to utilize the valuable skill set involved in doing so. Also, as my teacher makes sure to elaborate, these are two proofs that probably everyone should know because of how simplistic yet powerful they are. I will also include a couple other topics at the end as well.

Prime numbers are infinite

This proof is done by use of reductio ad absurdum or simply put a reduction to the absurd. This is called "proof by contradiction" because we assume the opposite of our claim and show it leads to a contradiction thus it must be absurd and our original claim must be true. Just to note, a prime number is essentially a number which cannot be divided by any other number but itself and 1. Such as 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, ..., etc. Also, all numbers in the scale of the number line can be produced through the use of these prime numbers such as 15 is 3*5 and 21 is 7*3, etc.

Step 1: Suppose Prime numbers are finite. Assuming this means we can then list them out. Not that we need to do so numerically. Simply I will say...

Step 2: Thus I can list out all the prime numbers, P1, P2, P3, ..., Pn; thus we can say there is some prime number n at which they end and we cannot produce anymore on the number line beyond that.

Step 3: Let us multiply all of the prime numbers together thus we get some number N = P1*P2*P3*...Pn. We know that with these counting numbers we can always add one to them thus:

Step 4: N+1=(P1P2P3...Pn)+1 This new number is one more than the multiple of all prime numbers and because it is one more than them all I cannot factor out P1, or P2, or P3 or any Pn. Thus, the only factor of this new number N+1 is 1 and itself! Thus it must be, by definition, a new prime number.

Step 5: This contradicts our supposition, thus it must be true that prime numbers are, in fact, infinite.

The greater consequence of this realization is not only that we can continue to produce prime numbers, you can thus continue to produce more natural numbers that are generated from prime numbers. We also have shown how to produce these prime numbers by what is called the "prime number generator." Essentially, you can multiply prime numbers together and add one to create a new prime number on the number line. Neat, huh?

The square root of 2 is irrational

This proof is also done by the use of contradiction but it also utilizes the proof of contraposition. Essentially if we know some proposition is true such as P and it implies Q to be true then we know that P>Q is true when P is true and Q is true. However, it is not always easy to prove P is true so we make use of a neat trick called contraposition, which any fundamental truth table demonstration can show you to be a tautology (always true), is that if we supposed the opposite of our consequence (Q) and show it leads (implies) the opposite (negation) of our original antecedent (P) then we can assume P>Q is also true. It is written like this (P>Q) is equivalent to (~Q>~P).

Also, this proof works for the square root of any number really but two is the easiest to show; however, to demonstrate the use of contraposition effectively, I will do the square root of 3!

To begin this proof I will introduce a lemma I will call Alpha to show that (and it will become obvious when I use it in the proof) that x^2 (x-squared) is divisible by 3 (or 3 divides x^2 which is written as 3|x^2). Also, when I state something is divisible by something else such that 2|x or y|x it also means that x=2k or x=yk for some k being an arbitrary number. This will be used later on.

Alpha: Prove if x^2 is divisible by 3 then x is divisible by 3 [3|x^2 implies > 3|x] by contraposition.

Step 1: Suppose x is not divisible by 3. This would mean that there is no arbitrary number k such that x=3k. Instead, we have to show two cases: that x=3k+1 and 3k+2. Essentially, there are remainders if something is not divisible by some number. In this case, in between every factor of 3 there are two numbers that are not. 3 is divisible by 3, but 4 and 5 are not. Then 6, but 7 and 8 are not, etc. Thus, let me show in both cases that these will produce the contraposition we are looking for.

Step 2: Case one, we show that x=3k+1.

Step 3: x^2 = (3k+1)^2 =9k^2+6k+1 by basic algebra.

Step 4: This implies x^2=3(3k^2+2k)+1 by our ability to factor out a three, but not fully. We see just as x is not factorable by 3, neither is x^2 (there is a remainder of 1 in this case and we can write 3k^2+6k as some other arbitrary number since under the rules of these integers we're dealing with, it will continue to be another integer that is factorable by 3 still).

Step 5: Case two, we show that x=3k+2

Step 6: x^2=(3k+2)^2=9k^2+12k+4 by basic algebra

Step 7: Just as before, this implies x^2=3(3k^2+4k)+4 which is means that x^2 is not divisible by 3 either.

Step 8: Thus through contraposition, if we assume x is not divisible by 3, x^2 is not divisible by three; we can assume that if x^2 is divisible by 3, then x is divisible by 3. **QED**

Proof: The square root of 3 is irrational. By contradiction, let us assume then that the square root of 3 is rational. The rational numbers is defined as P/Q where p and q are some integers and q is not equal to 0. Also, AND VERY IMPORTANT, p/q is in lowest form (or p and q have no common factors).

Step 1: This implies that the square root of 3 is equal to P/Q: by our assumption

Step 2: 3=P^2/Q^2 by algebra (squaring both sides of the equality)

Step 3: P^2=3Q^2 by more algebra (multiplying both sides by Q^2 to get an equality statement for P^2)

Step 4: P^2 is divisible by three: By definition (Q^2 is just another integer and remember that if something is divisible by thee it means 3|X is equal to X=3k for k being some integer. In this case k=Q^2)

Step 5: P is divisible by three: By ALPHA! (we just proved that if P^2 is divisible by 3, so is P!)

Step 6: This implies if 3|P then P=3k for some k that exists in the set of integers: By definition

Step 7: P^2=(3k)^2=9k^2 By algebra

Step 8: [Remember: The equality we had before that P^2=3Q^2] This implies that 9k^2 is equal to 3Q^2 By substitution.

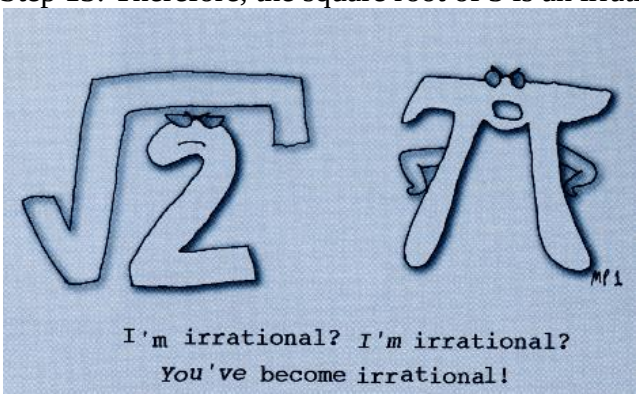
Step 9: Q^2=[9k^2]/3=3k^2 By algebra (divide both sides by 3 to get an equality statement for Q^2)

Step 10: Q^2 is divisible by 3 By definition (such that k^2 exists in the set of Integers)

Step 11: Q is divisible by 3 By ALPHA

Step 12: If both Q and P are divisible by three they have a common factor and are not in lowest form (contrary to our supposition). Thus, if the square root of three is rational it produces a contradiction.

Step 13: Therefore, the square root of 3 is an irrational number **QED**.



This goes to show us a great method for proving irrational numbers because there is absolutely no way to directly prove anything with them. We have no methods of mathematics with irrational numbers so there are no identities or operations usable. With rational numbers like integers we can add them together and multiply them together and they're still Integers. We can derive proofs then that if we multiply two consecutive Integers we get a set result (a proof you can try on your own!). Irrational numbers on the other hand do not give us consistent results and are impossible to prove without using contradiction. Say we multiply two irrationals, do we get another irrational? Not always! If we add two irrationals do we get another irrational? Not always, it might become an integer! They are not closed under any operations thus we have no tools to work with them. They are tricky little fellas, but because of Pythagoras, who proved the square root of 2 is irrational , we have a way of dealing with irrationals ... on a rational ground! (which is easy because you just have to show they are both even or divisible by 2 which is much easier to show than proving something that has a great many remainder such as 3. Or even 5! or 19! you'd have to prove 4 or 18 cases respectively to show their divisibility)

I was thinking of discussing quickly some neat things about number theory and set theory, mainly how we produce the counting numbers at all! By utilizing the null set of set theory only, we can show how all the numbers are generated. However, that is much more writing and I think I have captured enough space with just these two basic proofs! Enjoy.

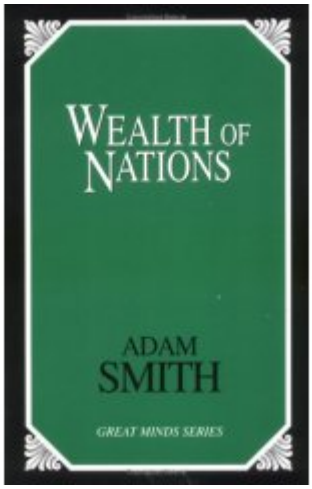
ADD ON:

Oh hell, I'll do a quick say on sets. Mainly, there is a thing called the null set. It has nothing in it. A set is a collection of abstract elements such as I can have a set A = {1, 2, 3, 4, 5}. It has 5 elements the integers 1 through five. But apparently we describe or ascribe the value of numbers by using the null set I'll denote as 0. Such that 0={} (there is nothing in there, not the number zero, just nothing!). We can now ascribe some values to numbers say:

1 = {0} one is one null set
2= {0,{0}} (two is the null set and THE SET of the null set. This is not the same as {0,0} that would be the same thing stated twice.
3={0,{0},{0,{0}}} as you can see, this will get messy ... VERY fast, but you can think of 3 being made up of the null sets before it, obviously, but this is how we can look at numbers as generated by sets .. actually, just one set! the null set! It's crazy stuff I tell you, but this is what I'm doing in school .. yah me! Now imagine writing out the number 25!

For more on set theory check out the wiki at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Set_theory
[Chuck Norris can divide by zero.]

Free Trade: An analysis of economic efficiency (Sunday, October 22, 2006)



It is a maxim of every prudent master of a family, never to attempt to make at home what it will cost him more to make than to buy. The tailor does not attempt to make his own shoes, but buys them of the shoemaker. The shoemaker does not attempt to make his own clothes but employs a tailor...

What is prudence in the conduct of every private family can scarce be folly in that of a great kingdom. If a foreign country can supply us with a commodity cheaper than we ourselves can make it, better buy it of them with some part of the produce of our own industry employed in a way in which we have some advantage.

from "The Wealth of Nations" by Adam Smith

This classical perspective on free trade, that people should be completely free of restrictions on economic exchange with others, drives home the idea that others can do things better than we can and we can do things better than others so why not exchange with them. His second paragraph presents this concept to a national level. If china can grow a product better than we can why not have them produce it and sell it abroad. No one can argue that trade is good and improves the lives of everyone involved. This is the idea behind free trade and why we should be allowed to peruse globalization.

I am not against globalization or free trade of markets or even markets themselves. The problem I do find, however, lies with total exchange involved. No one can argue that what price someone sells something at is the price at which I buy it at. Thus, in economics, when I buy something at quantity X am paying the price Y and the seller is selling at price Y. There is a one-for-one exchange. The problem I find in looking to foreign lands for goods that can be constructed here is the relative value and the consumer price. Lets say that country B can produce product X better than country A. By that country B's production of X may only require half the labor force and half the capital than it would take country A to produce X. The price that the consumer, or lets just say the country A, pays for X will not reflect directly the value of the product. This is because businesses want to maximize profits. However, on the global level we are a closed economy. If we take country A and B as under a closed system (the involvement of net exports plays no roll in global GDP), we can simply this model. Regardless of how the system is modeled, though, the product needs to get from point B to A in this case.

The question now comes, does the price the purchasing entity pays reflect the value the seller is selling it at? The complexity of these questions escapes the scope of this discussion and I am not afraid to admit, my expertise (so far, I am an Econ major). Still, my answer to this question is, superficially, no. The market determines the price of the item. Do tomatoes from Asia cost less than the tomatoes grown locally (seasons depending of course)? The answer would be yes, provided they can grow them and they are easier to make in that country. This is why oranges from Florida will be cheaper than California's even though I live in California! Intuitively, I cannot see how anyone does not recognize the glaring absurdity. Essentially, it is cheaper for me to get my product X from country B which is 1000 miles away than from country A which is 0.5 miles away.

Why would the price not reflect the actual cost of producing, packaging, transporting and selling the product? Because then its true value in respect to price could not compete in other markets. Instead, they transport and package in conjunction with other products through a string of networks we have developed but there is still an unaccounted loss in this type of structure. The question I had asked was if the consumer price reflects the actual value and the answer is no. This concept of externalities is involved in that there are costs which are not reflected in the price the consumer pays for a product. These can be pollution, the wear on the road which governments have to pay to fix

through taxes it collects from the consumers, etc.

With that in mind, remember, we live in a closed global system. If a country is in debt $5,000 than another country must have a surplus of $5,000 (if there were only two differing national bodies, but you get the idea). Ultimately, we must look at a macro-scale of resources and analyze the efficiency of globalization or whether locally produced consumption has its benefits. I am also not even talking about other problematic effects with globalization, but just the fact inefficiencies and externalities not present in the numbers of national accounting systems (for GDP and stuff) do not reflect the actual state of global resources. One might even wonder if it would be possible for us to even formulate a model to come close to analyzing that state. Maybe I will attempt that for my Ph.D work some years from now, but until then I can still question if we take Adam Smith's advice on commerce, then does that mean we should simply let trade occur uncontrolled and regulated over national distances or should we consider the fact Adam Smith lived in a completely different era than ours where questions of these externalities and scarce resources were hardly as dire as they are today.

I myself am a supporter of Fair Trade (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_trade) which seeks to minimize the effects of problems with free trade that cost the health and well being of people and nations too poor to do anything against corrupt and brutal corporations and lax trade laws. I am also a supporter of Community Supported Agricultural Farms (CSA Farming http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_supported_agriculture) who try to keep things fairly prices and are not big business trying to get the maximum amount of profit for share-holder's or owner's pockets but are supported by the community; hence, the name, obviously. These are just two options among a number trying to be implemented in our global society to attempt to improve our efficiency of our resources and the well being of the organisms living on this planet. In the end, we are all connected and if we grow and grow and grow and suck up every available resource then we will all die by the lack of renewable resources and disparity between the allocation of these resources. There is a lot more to this broad topic, but this is just a taste of one aspect of it I hope to bring to light. Only through knowledge and experience can we spread these good ideas to seed the change required to improve life on this planet.

[When Chuck Norris sends in his taxes, he sends blank forms and includes only a picture of himself, crouched and ready to attack. Chuck Norris has not had to pay taxes, ever.]

Physics: A matter of fact, we have a question on matter! (Wednesday, October 25, 2006)

Ironically, after posting my simple statements on the nature of existence and the possible eternal nature of the universe and matter, I come across a group that leads me to run into a number of people abusing the concepts physics have given us. Who are these mad people? The AAMN. I think the name is contradictory, but I'm not the one putting it to use. However, I do have a problem when people spread around ideas that teach others the wrong impressions. I write this article mainly in response to SaxyMan who postulated the idea that the eternal nature of matter, by any reasonability and all our experience, cannot be possible. I now will present to you, not any definitive answer, only the actuality of our science and where we stand today with our "reasoning."

[Update: After more debating with SaxyMan and reviewing his arguments, plus his recorded questioning of Richard Dawkins, I have to say I have come to understand his position. However, do not mistake that as me saying he is right. On the contrary I think SaxyMan has presented himself and his ignorance of science to the world. The problem with his position is specifically that he expects science to provide definitive and complete answers. One must remember that science is an evolving process that is continually changing, adapting and growing. Science is also not absolute. Simply because science has no provided the answers to all our questions does not mean you get to fill the gaps with what you believe on faith to be correct and utilize those presumptions to criticize science. That type of argument, by its very nature, makes no sense! Reason depends on our common system of knowledge, which today we consider by and large to be science itself. If you believe in something outside of this realm, then you are believing in it purly on faith and without reason for reason depends on this system of knowledge I am referencing. The mistake theists like this tend to make is that to acknowledge their new system that they assert over our old one not only requires them to deny and denounce our reason, but to prove in some manner why they can do that. If they cannot, then they present no position of reason, but instead misrepresent everything reason stands for (especially when they are a student of science) and demand us to believe in their faith with no reason for us to make that leap from believing in our empiricism to believing in God. Thus, no amount of me, or anyone for that matter, telling and presenting reasonable appeals to science will ever change his mind.]

I did not clearly define matter because there really is no clear definition. It is an ambiguous term. I refer to it as matter-energy as some other physicists do. The reason for this nomenclature is that whatever our concept of matter may be, at the root of everything in our universe is energy and thus they are closely related. When we do speak of matter it is usually in the common terms of solids, fluids, gas and plasma. However, as should be obvious to our nuclear age, these "states of matter" do not define matter. At the heart of everything we still find subatomic particles and beyond particles we can still find wave patterns of energy. Thus, from this time on, when I refer to any object as a whole I will refer to it as matter-energy.

Newton's Laws of Motion

It is often difficult to explain, in detail, the workings of physics concepts because they build upon the history of physics. However, I will not skip passed the details you do need to understand. The first thing any student learns in physics is Kinematics or the mathematics of motion. These are the fundamental concepts of calculating forces and understanding how things move and then why. Newton's Laws of motion describe why things are moving.

1) First law of motion: An object with constant or no velocity(speed) will have an acceleration(derivative of velocity) that is equal to zero. Thus, the sum of the forces acting on the object will equal zero.

2) Second law of motion: The sum of the forces will equal mass times acceleration: $\Sigma F=ma$. The first law is just a special case of the 2nd law (when a=0).

3) Third law of motion: Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Do not confuse this, however. If we are looking at Object A I do not care about what reactive force Object B is doing to A unless I am studying A. They are unrelated in calculating the forces on one object. Also, they are not always equal. If I am pushing at an angle the x and y directions of an angular force will depend on the angle.

These laws explain why an object is moving. Essentially, an object experiences forces such as weight (mass times gravity) or a normal force which is the resistance to gravity usually; it's the electroweak response to our body's atoms interacting with other object's atoms. Keeps us from falling through the ground and chair, etc. The classic example of

using Newton's laws if "free fall." Neglecting air resistance if I drop a rock of mass 5kg from a height of 10m above the ground (assume ground is y=0) then the only force acting on it is weight. Thus the sum of the forces is mg which equals ma. Obviously we can see in this case a=g so it is accelerating at the rate of gravity. A simple example and a simple problem, it helps me illustrate the next area of physics.

Work

What is work? Work is the amount of change I put into something (power is that change in work over some time interval, so very powerful if I work quickly). Work is another exciting principle which allows us to calculate how and why objects are moving. It builds upon the concepts of Newton's Laws because work has a simple calculation:

Work(w) equals the change in Kinetic energy [**w=ΔK=K2-K1**]

What is kinetic energy? That is the amount of energy that has made the object move. But that equation I gave just a second ago assumes we are referring to the total work done on the object. Just like Newton's Laws of motion presented us with a way of looking at the forces acting on an object, we can also take into consideration different work being done by these forces. Again, I will keep this system but I could have the work of some force of me throwing or pushing an object and the work of gravity on the object and maybe the work of friction if it's sliding against something. However, lets just get back to free fall!

Work equals the Force vector dot product the displacement vector [**w=Fs**]

For those non-calculus people a dot product essentially asks "how much is this one vector affecting this other vector." However, we're only talking about one force now that is constant and not changing direction. So the force (mg) times that distance it was lifted times the cosine of 0 degrees (equals one) is the work done by gravity and the only work done on our object. Thus, thanks to Newton I can easily say that the work done by gravity on a rock lifted up some height (h) is equal to mgh. As I stated before, the total work, which in our case is only the work of gravity is also equal to the change in kinetic energy. K=(1/2)mv^2. The initial k being zero because the object wasn't moving so mgh=.5mv^2. The mass cancels out so the velocity of our object then is the sqrt(2gh). The velocity of our object is independent of its mass which if you ever do kinematic problems you do not deal with mass specifically for this reason. Work is only so useful though because kinetic energy is just one side of our coin. The other side will get to the original point.

Potential Energy

What allowed our rock to have the amount of kinetic energy it got when dropped? The answer is that at the height we had it, there was the potential to have that much speed and thus that much kinetic (moving) energy. The potential energy(U) is simply the opposite of our kinetic energy **ΔK= -ΔU**. At the initial height the rock was held the potential energy (assuming ground level is 0 potential energy) was mgh. At the bottom it was -mgh. So the change in potential energy went from max at its peak to zero on hitting the ground because all its potential energy went into the kinetic energy when K started at 0 and ended up with mgh worth of energy. Simple enough? There's more!

The Law of Conservation of Energy

The important part of our discussion is the fact that we are talking about energy. As I have had to say to a lot of people as of late **energy cannot be created or destroyed.** Critics like to say things like "the Earth couldn't have been

here for millions of years, entropy says so!" Well, sure, if the Earth was a closed system, but we're powered by the sun. This is also the simple mistake that a lot of lay people make in other context, just as Saxyman has made in trying to describe our universe as "dying."

The laws of conservation are clear. **The total energy is always conserved.** When we discuss of systems like I have shown in physics the energy of free fall have always stayed constant, transferring from one energy to another (potential to kinetic). That is not all there is to this story. I purposefully left out air resistance. If the object fell encountered air resistance the potential energy would not have equated the kinetic energy when reversed because that energy was dissipated. This air friction is a non-conservative force which makes a system lose energy. There are also non-conservative forces that add energy. For instance, chemical energy cannot be reversed in an explosion; however, an object at rest that gets blown in two had no movement (kinetic energy) and no ability to move (potential energy) but the system received energy from a non-conservative force (chemical). It is considered non-conservative because you cannot replace it. Just try and reverse an explosion!

Note the error people assume is that when these things occur that we are losing energy. I cannot make this any clearer to some people but **total energy is always conserved.** Returning to my rock example, the rock may "feel" the loss of that energy from air friction in the way of heat. This heat is the lost energy leaving the system (our free falling rock.) This heat is now worthless to the movement of the rock but the heat is still apart of the universe. All energy in the universe, as we have assumed it to be, is conserved.

E=K+U (mechanical energy equals kinetic energy plus potential energy)

This equation is important because it explains the mechanical energy that will help us move our system. This is when the problem of entropy exists. If I have a closed system with non-conservative forces in it draining the mechanical energy than I cannot keep the system going unless it gets energy added to it somehow. In the whole of the universe, however, the whole system is conserved. **Total E=K+U+NC** where NC is the non-conservative forces or the work of other forces.

The Eternal Nature of Matter

I can now, with that established background of the physics as they apply to this discussion, tackle the idea that some people have about the nature of our universe. Matter-energy can be summed up as all the energy of the universe and agreeing that physics is correct, all this energy is conserved and cannot ever be destroyed or created. What we have to use for ourselves is here and now. The problem critics have ultimately comes to four different cases. Is our universe finite or infinite and is our universe a closed system or not?

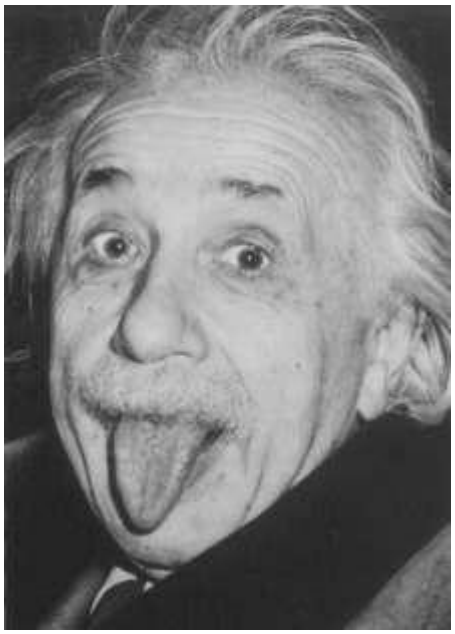
Case 1: Finite universe/Closed system

If we assume our universe is closed (that is there is nothing beyond the scope of our lone universe thus nothing can leave it or come into it) then by definition our energy must be conserved and thus will exist as long as the universe does. The problem with claiming the universe is finite is that assumes somehow it will end. If we are assuming it is closed then to assume it had a starting point and ending point would be to assume it and all the matter-energy that formed it came from nothing. That is nice to suppose but our science has no definitive assumption on the start or end of our universe in that case. In fact, our assumptions lead us to assume there was a "start" that occurred at the Big Bang. This assumption can leave us with 1) an oscillating universe (Big Crunch into Big Bang for infinity) or 2) an open system where matter-energy came from somewhere else violently exploding into what then became our universe. However, in this case if we are finite then the matter-energy is here as long as the universe is. Again, there is no assumption that it is finite and no reason to assume it is. Furthermore, there is no reason to assume the universe will just blink back into the void again because the matter-energy that makes it up cannot be destroyed and if we agree the universe is expanding (presumably forever) there is no reason for it to end. The idea of a finite universe is then not very likely, even if you assume a starting point. Because it also is unlikely to assume it will never end we can assume the matter-energy that is here, regardless of how it got here, is eternal.

Case 2: Infinite Universe/Closed System

As I have already postulated, the universe is expanding and most likely forever as far as we can tell. However, that may not be the case. Theories like Dark Matter may suggest, to keep it simple, the universe will reach a "critical point" and turn in on itself into a Big Crunch. I am sure someone at this moment went "ah ha!" trying to point out a contradiction but this could not be considered an end to our universe because for one, this is the concept behind an oscillating universe and another factor to consider is the law of conservation of energy. It would be true that in a Big Crunch the universe falls back to the Big Bang again but the energy cannot be destroyed! All the matter-energy of the universe can be condensed to the Planck length (1.6×10^{-35}) creating a singularity like a black hole and if that were the case the universe would not just blink out of existence but most likely explode back in another Big Bang. There is no way to calculate this, however, because our physics cannot deal with things at this small of a space and that great of energy (all the energy of the universe!). The basic assumption under the laws we have is that we can assume there was a beginning (universe started somehow from nothing, because it's closed!) or we can assume there wasn't. Regardless, again, it has no effect on the matter-energy of the universe. It's still going to be around even if the universe expanded as far as it possibly could and temperatures reached absolute zero (no kinetic energy). Remember, that would be 0K but there'd still be 100% of the universe as potential energy! Nothing could exist in our universe. It would be like having an air tight bag full of "stuff" stretched to infinity or to "the end of the universe". Eventually everything would be completely separated but if you put it back to its original position all the stuff is still there. The matter-energy remains eternal!

Case 3: Finite universe/Open System



In this situation anything is fair game. Why? Because the laws of conservation and thus our physics are thrown right out the window. If we live in an open system we could just assume there is a multi-dimensional space (M-Theory says 11 dimensions) that our universe came from. It would explain somewhat of how we got here, but until we have a working theory with applicable mathematics we cannot unravel the Big Bang and find out. One could also just say that that hyperspace is just heaven where god lives and he created the universe and will end it when the time comes. We could also, then, just assume there are aliens who did it too! Even with all of this, however, one could argue that the matter-energy that we have is still conserved and is bound even though we live in an open system there is no reason to assume energy leaves and enters our system. It still does not matter. In logic an implication is only false when your antecedent is true and your consequence is false. This case is like assuming your antecedent to be false so we can just make our implication true!

Case 4: Infinite Universe/Open System

Much like case 3 this one is open for anything. Essentially we can just assume we have no idea what is going to happen. Our universe could be oscillating or not. It could be created or other universes created and destroyed all the time. Just like case 3 as well, we can just assume that our implication is true. Ultimately we are falling back on what our science has in the present and right now the best we can assume is that our system is closed and that the laws of conservation apply. Even if M-Theory is correct and we live in an open system where the 11 dimensional space ripped into a pocket called our universe where 3 spatial dimensions and a dimension of time became what we experience and the rest curled up to the Planck length tightly interacting with each other to form strings that form the foundation of our physics as we know them, it does not mean that matter-energy will have some sort of time when it would end.

Genesis

How did the universe come into motion? How did life start? These are some of the tough questions people have

trouble trying to grasp. The first answer is the Big Bang started everything in motion, but people still insist on the idea that there must be a first mover. To quote Michio Kaku from his book Hyperspace(194-195) states:

...gas molecules may bounce against the walls of a container without requiring anyone or anything to get them moving. In principle, these molecules can move forever, requiring no beginning or end. Thus, there is no necessity for a First or Last Mover as long as mass and energy are conserved."

In our case, the universe happens to be our container. Even if everything were at a stand still, referring to quantum mechanics, we could see the strange behavior that would give rise to the conclusion Dr. Kaku made on the fact our universe need nothing to "get it started." Even if that is the case, we still have the problem of life in the planet, and though this is not as paramount a question anymore, some still have trouble accepting life from a lifeless universe. Dr. Kaku after the first quote stated on this:

Ultimately, we can trace the origin of life itself back to the spontaneous formation of protein molecules in the early earth's oceans without appealing to a higher intelligence. Studies performed by Stanley L. Miller in 1955 have shown that sparks sent through a flask containing methane, ammonia, and other gases found in the early earth's atmosphere can spontaneously create complex hydrocarbon molecules and eventually amino acids (precursors to protein molecules) and other complex organic molecules. Thus, a First Designer is not necessary to create the essentials for life, which can apparently emerge naturally out of inorganic chemicals if they are given enough time.

Dr. Kaku is a leading figure in the hunt for the Theory of Everything ... a theory of unification to answer the questions of the Big Bang. They sometimes refer it to searching for the Face of God. If you want to know more about him and some of his writings I suggest checking out his website at http://www.mkaku.org or you can visit his myspace where he has a lot of Q&A to read in his blogs on a number of subjects, even some relating to this.

I leave a quote he has in his book from Issac Asimov's "The Last Question" in which he describes events of the future as we see the universe slowly fade into a "death by ice" in which the universe expands until reaching absolute zero:

The story begins in 2061, when a colossal computer has solved the earth's energy problems by designing a massive solar satellite in space that can beam the sun's energy back to earth. The AC (analog computer) is so large and advanced that it's technicians have only the vaguest idea of how it operates. On a $5 bet, two drunken technicians ask the computer whether the sun's eventual death can be avoided, or for that matter, whether the universe must inevitably die. After quietly mulling over this question, the AC responds: INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

Centuries into the future, the AC has solved the problem of hyperspace travel, and humans begin colonizing thousands of star systems. The AC is so large that it occupies several hundred square miles on each planet and so complex that it maintains and services itself. A young family is rocketing through hyperspace, unerringly guided by the AC, in search of new stars to colonize. When the father casually mentions that the stars must eventually die, the children become hysterical. "Don't let the stars die," plead the children. To calm the children, he asks the AC if entropy can be reversed. "See," reassures the father, reading the AC's response, the AC can solve everything. He comforts them by saying, "It will take care of everything when the time comes, so don't worry." He never tells the children that the AC actually prints out: INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

Thousands of years into the future, the galaxy itself has been colonized. The AC has solved the problem of immortality and harnesses the energy of the galaxy, but must find new galaxies for colonization. The AC is so complex that it is long past the point where anyone understands how it works. It continually redesigns and improves its own circuits. Two members of the Galactic Council, each hundreds of years old, debate the urgent question of finding new galactic energy sources, and wonder if the universe itself is running down. Can entropy be reversed? they ask. The AC responds: INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

Millions of years into the future, humanity has spread across the uncountable galaxies of the universe. The AC has solved the problem of releasing the mind from the body and human minds are free to explore the vastness of millions of galaxies, with their bodies safely stored on some long forgotten planet. Two minds accidentally meet each other in outer space, and casually wonder where among the uncountable galaxies human originated. The AC, which now is so large that most of it has to be housed in hyperspace, responds by instantly transporting them to an obscure galaxy. They are disappointed. The galaxy is so ordinary, like millions of other galaxies, and the original star has long since died. The two minds become anxious because billions of stars in the heavens are slowly meeting the same fate. The two minds ask, can death of the universe itself be avoided? From hyperspace , the AC responds: INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

Billions of years into the future, humanity consists of a trillion, trillion, trillion immortal bodies, each cared for by automatons. Humanity's collective mind, which is free to roam anywhere in the universe at will, eventually fuses into a single mind, which in turn fuses with the AC

itself. It no longer makes sense to ask what the AC is made of, or where in hyperspace it really is. "The universe is dying," thinks Man, collectively. One by one, as the stars and galaxies cease to generate energy, temperatures throughout the universe approach absolute zero. Man desperately asks if the cold and darkness slowly engulfing the galaxies mean eventual death. From hyperspace, the AC answers: INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

When Man asks the AC to collect the necessary data, it responds: I WILL DO SO. I HAVE BEEN DOING SO FOR A HUNDRED BILLION YEARS. MY PREDECESSORS HAVE BEEN ASKED THIS QUESTION MANY TIMES. ALL THE DATA I HAVE REMAIN INSUFFICIENT. A timeless interval passes, and the universe has finally reached its ultimate death. From hyperspace, the AC spends an eternity collecting data and contemplating the final question. At last, the AC discovers the solution, even though there is no longer anyone to give the answer. The AC carefully formulates a program, and then begins the process of reversing Chaos. It collects cold, interstellar gas, brings together the dead stars, until a gigantic ball is created. Then, when labors are done, from hyperspace the AC thunders:

LET THERE BE LIGHT !

And there was light -- And on the seventh day, He rested...

[Scientists have estimated that the energy given off during the Big Bang is roughly equal to 1CNRhK (Chuck Norris Roundhouse Kick)]

Dreams ... (Monday, November 06, 2006)

I find the topic of dreams to be a very interesting subject of discussion. Not only do we have fantastic situations in our dreams, but their origins, purpose and supposed meanings could say a lot about who we are. I am not going to impose to know that dreams even have meaning or what those meanings might be. I am also not going to imply they might have a purpose such as a "defrag" of our brains while we sleep so we can function better. If such topics arise in discussion I will attempt to approach them with what I know. Instead, I want to tell you my fantastic stories of some of the dreams I have had for better or worse.

Evil

I find myself walking aimlessly down a street in a warm sun drenched city. So drenched, everything in this city actually appears a shade of yellow. The buildings are claustrophobically close to each other that no space actually seems to exist between them. This street I am walking on appears to just be one long building structure with no side avenues to give pause between the different store fronts. After a stroll that goes without time I come across a peculiarity.

Almost out of no where I come across a break in the stores to what appears to be some sort of water park. The only construct of an entrance is a small waist high turn gate that leads to some walkways that travel out to an expanse as far as the eye can see. Not like any water park I have ever seen before it looks like a series of plateaus of different sizes and heights with water arriving from no where but cascading down a fall no one could surely live. Still, I seem interested in going in here. I find myself drawn to enter. Maybe not out of enjoyment of water parks, but because I feel I have a purpose. I need to get to the closed structure and get a better look of this place. The nearest one appears to be occupied, however. In that moment I see that a very large man, bald and mean looking, is being restrained and led out of the park by two cops. This man is intent on watching me, even as they lead him out the gate as I am walking now to the structure. I feel power in this person. I do not feel fear. I continue up a ramp that leads to the top of this plateau like structure and I get a sense of what is occurring behind me.

Like a movie vision switching to another scene I see the man effortlessly break away from the restraint of the police officers, and he throws them against the car knocking them out. This man, like me, has a purpose and it appears we have a common interest. He returns to the park now coming up to where I am and that is when it begins. I know I must defend myself. I know this man of power is harboring some evil inside him that he wishes to put against others. I find myself seeing this event outside of myself. I, standing in contrast to my surroundings, am covered from head to toe in black. I am like a Neo of the Matrix and feel just as powerful. I lunge forward turning into a side kick aimed at his torso. I expect to eliminate my opponent with great ease. I feel no one can stand against me. I was wrong.

At twice my speed the man reacts throwing a kick of his own toward my chest that throws me clear across the top of this structure. My sun glasses shatter as I impact the ground. I get back up, partly shocked, partly pissed, but completely intent on finishing this fight. Slowly removing my glasses I tell him, "those where my favorite pair..." and without hesitation I throw off my long coat, whipping it around like a bullfighter manipulating the bull. I throw my coat at him and follow behind it perfectly with another side kick. Again, I imagine a successful blow to render my opponent unconscious. Again, I was wrong. He blows through my diversion as if it was not there and connects a punch and a kick that, again, throw me clear across the top of this structure. My confidence and arrogance removed, I quickly return to my feet and engage this man again in a series of blows that connect or are blocked, but ultimately have no obvious effect. All the while his attacks are strong and fast and though I continue to defend myself they are taking their toll. Then, with another one of his mighty kicks, I find myself sliding to the edge of this structure, almost sliding out from underneath a railing that apparently was there, and looking around I find an idea.

Grabbing what appears to be a stage light with a long cable I leap at the antagonist once more. Throwing a futile kick I jump off the shoulders of this man while wrapping the cable around his neck and over the railing I fall. As I drop

what looks an impossible distance I collide knee and hand down in a small pool of water, throwing waves out from my impact. In another view I see the cable whipping through the man's neck clearing his head from his shoulders in an instant. Still in my position, recovering from the fall and the fight, the head makes its way of the decent behind me, then it impacts the ground. My fight is over.

As the head splashes into the water and the blood flows out, I feel as if the evil has not been weakened. I know something is wrong. Looking back, the water runs red with his blood. As the cloud of bloody water pushes out and touches this sun bathed structure it immediate absorbs the blood turning a bright red that quickly dashes up and out changing it and all of the structures around me red. I am backed against a corner. There is no way out of here. The blood is moving closer. Closer. It is at my feet and then I feel it. Darkness grips me.

I wake up breathing hard to a moon lit room, a cold sweat washed over me. The evil of my fantasy still clings at me. I don't feel safe. Looking around my room everything is fine. Getting up I walk out in the hall. No one is awake. There are no lights on. Still, the house is bathed with moonlight, just enough I can easily make my way to the kitchen. Slowly, step by step, I creep down the hall expecting something to just pop out at me. That evil I felt is still around me, making my hair stand on edge. I walk across my cold floored kitchen to the back window to see outside. As I reach my counter top I feel it! Whipping around I see a small figure dash from the hall to the living room. It was only a passing glance, but I know it is what I have been looking for. I charge forward to find myself without movement. Darkness and pain fill my vision. I see an assortment of colors -- reds and purples and black. All feeling is gone but this darkness that has caught me.

I wake up for real this time, and I do have a slight cold sweat going on, but the sensation of the evil I was hunting vanished. I did not feel safe, and my heart was beating like drums at a concert. I was sleeping on the floor (I don't think I had a bed at the time or just didn't want to sleep on whatever it was I was sleeping on) and I imagined looking up at the big chair beside me and seeing a skeleton or crypt keeper looking at me or something. I must say this was one of the more terrifying dreams I have had and can really recall to great detail, even to this day. This dream had to have been about 7 years ago more or less. If anyone wants to analyze this dream, by all means. I cannot say I was really scared as my flight or fight response was activated and just like in my dream I would not run from evil. In fact, after it, I went out into the backyard, being like 2 in the morning and practiced some martial arts till I was tired and relaxed enough (drained) to go to bed. All I knew was I wanted to fight something, anything! It is also not a unique dream to me, in that I have had a number of dreams where something that I can only describe as pure evil was after me or fighting with me or something. Usually, in my dreams, I am powerful enough to fight off amazing enemies with ease, yet against this evil I seem powerless. In the end I always tend to succeed, but it is a stark contrast to the battles I fight in my "normal" or shall I say average dreams. I think it brings up a great question of what I think of evil and if evil really does exist. Dream analysis can be interesting, but ultimately, I have not thought that much about what these dreams mean, either literally or metaphorically to my life or if there is a mystical aspect to them either.

In the end, it is just an interesting story to tell. These experiences we have in our dreams are no less an experience that impacts our lives as do our waking experiences. With that said, we could assume there probably is something behind all this, regardless of what science shows dreams to be (and still has no real good consensus on them last time I checked.) I can only wonder what others think of my dreams in comparison to theirs, because we all dream. I don't think everyone dreams like I do!

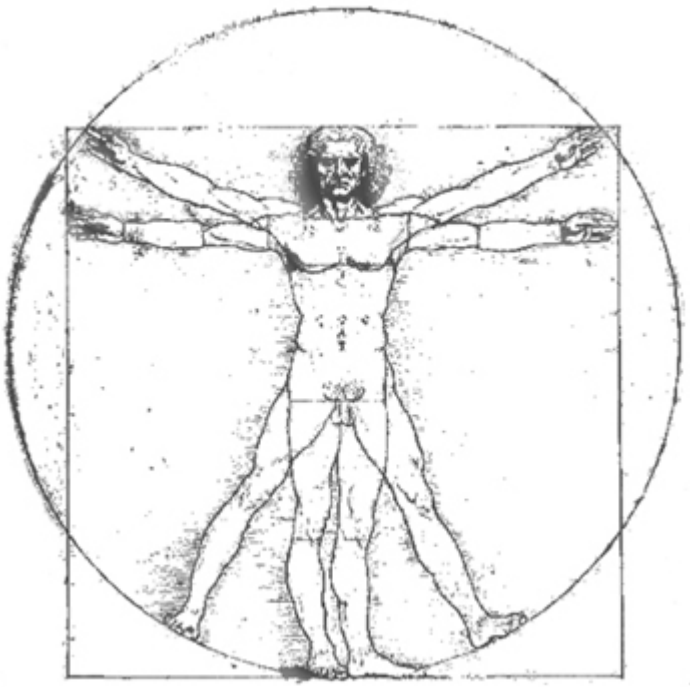
[Jean-Claude Van Damme once kicked Chuck Norris' ass. He was then awakened from his dream by a roundhouse kick to the face.]

Emotional Forces (Sunday, November 12, 2006)

Let me delve into a topic that can probably be considered philosophical psychology .. or psychological philosophy! Whatever we care to call it, it is not something science can answer at this time, but is something that is observable in our daily lives. I think it is interesting, because we presume to know a lot about ourselves, whether through our first-hand knowledge of experiencing what we experience, or through assume science has figured out that everything is contained within our brain. Whatever perspective we have, I have to ask these questions of us. However, because of the psychological aspect of this, I fear I will not get much of a response to this (Just look at how many people wanted to discuss dreams)

We know that forces can be either direct or distant in how they effect us. For instance, a force can be tension directly pulling on an object, or we can have gravity effecting us from hundreds of miles away. I am often considered one of those "people watchers" because I tend to just sit back and watch behavior and see how people interact with each other and in different groups, et cetera. Still, I have to wonder about those effects that are not as direct as when someone physically touches another person, or when someone directly says something to another person, or when someone acts a certain way to elicit a certain response. I call these reactions emotional because we only "feel" a reaction to something that is not a physical sensation. When we remove seeing, hearing and feeling physically we are left with a response that comes about due to something else. We certainly are not tasting it and we certainly are not smelling it necessarily. Thus, again, I consider it to be emotional, more of a "gut feeling" that we just intuitively feel.

You may be lost at this moment, but let me give an example (by far not the best, but I cannot think of anything else at this moment). A couple is walking home after a movie late at night, and while the couple is walking down the street they are coming upon a dark alley. The gentleman senses, in his gut, not to go that way, so they cross the street and continue on their journey home. They read in the paper the next day that someone was mugged last night at that alleyway. This is a story of events a professor has given me. Maybe he is full of crap, but that is a large assumption to make of a man who is otherwise an honest philosopher. Permit me another example. If I am not waking up throughout the night due to stress (school, work, whatever) keeping my mind active, I tend to sleep straight through like a rock, and maybe have some nice dreams (see previous blog).
Sometimes, however, I tend to wake up at some point in time for no apparent reason. This happens quite often to me, but one time that was very interesting was when I was living in a, not so nice place to be, and the police were about to do a raid. I woke up just as they were walking up to the house (quietly with guns drawn, mind you). I awoke, as I have a number of times, just knowing something or someone was going to require my attention. This also happens before the phone rings for me and my roommate is going to have to wake up and bring it to me (the portable is in his room). Still not seeing anything? Allow one last example. This one is more general. You find yourself walking somewhere, or maybe just sitting down somewhere but you know someone is looking at you. You look to your side or behind you and what do you know, there is someone staring at you.



All of these examples (and there are others) share a common theme. That there is no physical interaction or stimuli to cause a reaction whether in our behavior or what we consider emotional. My professor did not see bad people and assume bad things might happen. It is just that eerie feeling you get that makes you know better than to go into places you might not want to. I also did not hear anything in the case of the police or that the phone was going to ring a few minutes after I woke up, yet I still keep waking up for things before they happen. You also don't have any observable sensation that someone might be looking at you, yet we all have those situations where we know someone is! I am calling these emotional forces because like gravity, they do not require direct interaction but can effect us from a distance. My question is, what is their origin and how are they effecting us?

At this point, you might think I am trying to apply some kind of supernatural aspect but that is not the case. The other argument is that there is some kind of observable aspect we just lack the conscious ability to recognize it. In my example of the phone ringing, one might say I just heard the first ring in my sleep. That is not the case, one time I remember waking up and laying in bed thinking about something, partly why the hell am I not just rolling over going back to bed and what time is it. Then a couple minutes later, the phone rings. My phone does not have a minute in between rings! There are a multitude of possibilities. There are no absolute answers at this time. It still makes us have to wonder, though, is there more to our senses than what we commonly think? Is there more to intuition than just "luck?" Have you had experiences like this?

[There is endless debate about the existence of the human soul. Well it does exist, and Chuck Norris finds it delicious.]

Fast Food Nation (Wednesday, November 22, 2006)

It is that Turkey time of year and in honor of the new movie that came out last week about how terrible our nation is becoming with fast food, I thought I would offer you some information. Here are some links to the informational web pages for a number of popular fast food chains:

http://www.mcdonalds.com/app_controller.nutrition.index1.html McDonalds
http://www.yum.com/nutrition/documents/kfc_nutrition.pdf KFC
http://www.arbys.com/nutrition/printable.php?type=nutrition Arby's
http://www.jackinthebox.com/ourfood/dynamic/nutrition.php?cat=9 Jack in the Box
http://www.carlsjr.com/content/downloads/nutrition.pdf Carl's Jr
http://www.bk.com/Nutrition/PDFs/brochure.pdf Burger King
http://www.yum.com/nutrition/menu.asp?brandID_Abbr=5_TB Taco Bell (see upper-right corner)
http://www.yum.com/nutrition/documents/ph_nutrition.pdf Pizza Hut

I've compiled the two main facts that we should be most aware of. The highest listing Trans Fat and Total Calories

Company :: Trans Fat :: Total Calories
McDonalds :: 9 :: 1270
KFC :: 14 :: 1210
Arby's :: 6 :: 852 (2751 for Pecan Sticky Bun 4pack-outlier)
Jack in the Box ::12 ::1310
Carl's Jr :: n/a (high!) :: 1520 (all $6 burgers over 1000)
Burger King :: 4.5 :: 1260
Taco Bell :: 7 :: 860
Pizza Hut :: 1 :: 890

Fast Food Nation

[Note: I have now seen this movie. It is the worst put together movie I have ever seen. They have a LOT of very good actors partake in it. I'm sure they signed on for the good message that was trying to be sent. However, they failed miserably. They would show scenes that were utterly pointless, should not have been at that moment and pulled away from the main storyline to say NOTHING. Then they'll just flash to some sex scene which, too, was absolutely pointless. It basically tries to get you in "touch" with different aspects of this issue by showing you a worker for a fast food place, a marketing executive who is investigating one of the plants, and some mexicans who cross the border to work at the plant. If you've ever seen one of those vegan videos on what it's like in the meat processing business (very disgusting), it was like that (especially at the end) but with two hours of repetative boring bullshit that ruined anyone's interest in seeing it. I'm all for what they were trying to do, they just failed at it miserably.]


Eric "Badlands" Booker tackles the burger

I have not seen this movie myself, but if you have, let me know what you think. I plan to see it this weekend. If any of you do eat fast food I urge you to learn the basics of nutrition. There is no reason we should have to support this junk food culture with our dollars. It is no more expensive to eat healthy and natural food that taste great. We have the option of farmer's markets, Community Supported Agricultural farms, and health food stores that are popping up all around this country. The problem is, people remain ignorant, lazy and rushed. Take the time to plan your meals, cook your meals and enjoy eating for the joy of the food and the joy it brings to your body. If you don't know how to life this lifestyle then find someone who does, ask me or take a class. Ignorance is no excuse for bad habits. We evolved eating what nature gave us. These processed foods come packed with nothing but garbage that destroys your body and increases the damage to your cells/genes and ultimately weakens your body. Open your eyes, read the food labels on what you buy. Take that time to learn what it is you are

putting into your body. If you don't know what it is, look it up. If there are more ingredients on the label then you have on your receipt at the end of shopping, you probably don't want to be eating that. The less ingredients something has, the more likely it is going to be good for you. Again, don't be ignorant. Read the links I provide. If there's more you want, google it! These nutrition sheets are out there in one form or another. These places and producers cannot hide their shady habits anymore. Take back your life, take back your health!

Have a happy and blessed T-day folks. I'll have pictures on my Myspace afterward to show you what I cook!

[ADD ON: I've compiled a small list from my local grocery store I shop at (Safeway) to show a lot of food for not so much money.]

Bags 4-5lbs apples, oranges, mixes :: 2 for 5 bucks special $2.50 each
Tomatoes :: approx. $1.00-$1.50 per lb
Lettuce (various) :: about $1.50 each
5 lb bag carrots :: $3.00
Medium bundle celery :: $1.30
10 lb russet potatoes :: $4.00
5 lb red potatoes :: $4.00
5 lb onion bundle :: $3.00 ($2.00 special)
1/2 lb mushrooms :: $3.00
2 lbs of green beans pre-trimmed :: $7.00

Approx. Total Pounds: 34
Approx. Total Cost: $30
Price per Pound of food: $1.13

[Chuck Norris invented Kentucky Fried Chicken's famous secret recipe, with eleven herbs and spices. But nobody ever mentions the twelfth ingredient: Fear.]

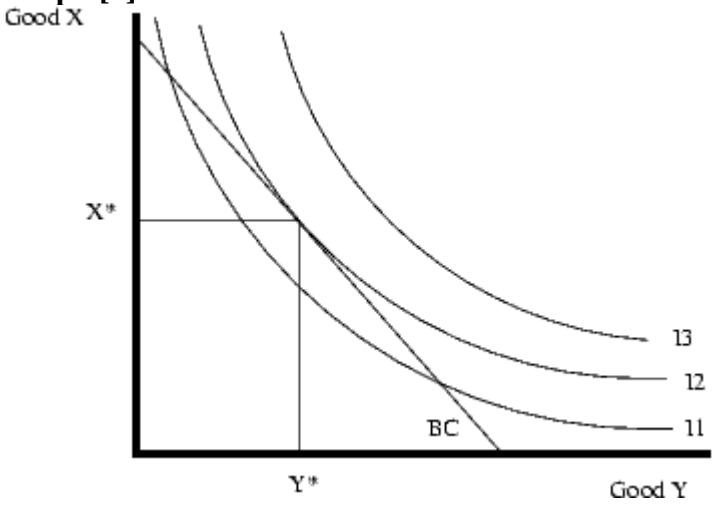
Public Education and School Vouchers (Saturday, December 02, 2006)

Preface: The intent of this post is to present the positive economics involved with school vouchers or what can be considered a government subsidy that alters a consumer's choice. The choice in this case is the choice of education. I will begin with a discussion on consumer choice theory in a very simplified manner and progress toward some normative economic considerations. This post is also going to be the start of a series of topics in Economics that I want to present that will ultimately move toward readdressing my original theory and original intent of this entire use of this blog site, and that is the topic of socialism, specifically, my Wolf Socialism. This is not necessarily related, but the topic of consumer theory will always be important.

Consumer Choice Theory

The basics of consumer choice theory relates three different elements with each other, usually graphically but also algebraically. For simplicity and relevance I will try to stick to the graphical illustrations. The first of these elements is some kind of constraint on our choice. Monetarily it is studied in economics as a consumer's budget. A budget constraint is a straight line showing the possibilities of arrangement of preferences one can attain. Therefore, the second element of this theory are the preferences. We can study this as one-to-one or one-to-many. By that, the prior would be comparing two options while the other would be comparing one option to that of everything else. Thus, the first two examples will be based off of this graph.

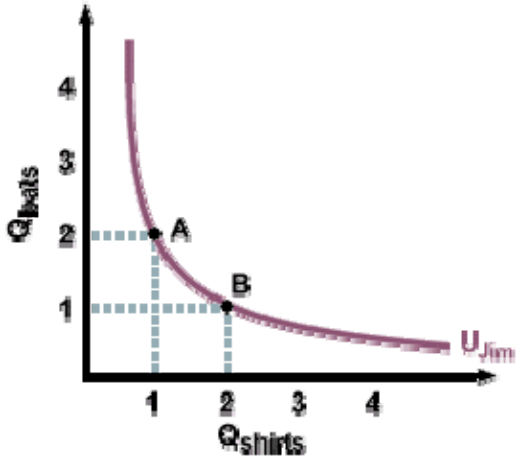
Graph [1]



[1] Good X is Ice Cream; Good Y is Yogurt; In this example the Budget Constraint (BC) would cross the relative axis of a good at the amount they could buy if they spent all their money on that good. For example, if Ice Cream cost $10 a cup and the Yogurt cost 20$ a cup and the consumer's budget is $100 we have an equation for this as 10X+20Y=100. If Y=0 such that we are not going to have any Yogurt then we are left with 10X=100 or X=10. We will purchase 10 cups of Ice Cream if we spent all our money on that. Thus, the point where the line BC crosses the Good X axis is at 10. A similar play of algebra will result in Y=5. The slope of this line is price (P) of X (Px) divided by the price of Y (Py) [Px/Py] which results in $10/$20 which is a ratio of 1/2. Since we can see it is downward sloping, of course, this is a negative slope. The real question is the third element which I will get to in a moment.

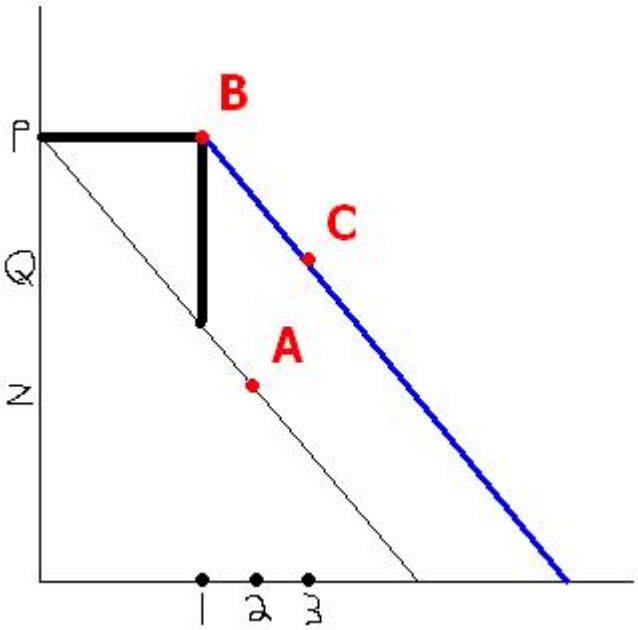
[2] Good X is called a Composite Good which means it is a basket of choices (everything else != Good Y). Good Y in this example will be Operas seen each week. The difference from example [1] is that BC crosses the Good X axis at the amount of Income. Why? Because if you don't spend anything on Good Y and all your income on everything else then it can only cross that line at the amount of your income. Where BC crosses the Good Y axis is the same as the first example because if you were to spend all your income on Operas, then that is how many you would buy. In this

example I shall say the income is still $100 and that Operas cost 25 each, thus they can see 4 in a week. The slope of the curve is still the relative price difference. The slope is best understood this way. If you wanted to get another Good Y (opera) you would need to give up what of the composite good? One opera cost $25 so you will have to give up $25 or 1/4th of the composite good to get one more opera. So it will be a drop of -25 on the outlays (composite good) to get one more opera. The slope is the price of the Good under analysis.



The Indifference Curve (not necessarily a curve mind you) is the last component and really the thing of analysis here. In the graph above it is the curve labeled with I. For now, they are arbitrary but theoretically they represent indifference to any combination of goods that appear on that line. In the example to the right both A and B represent the same "utility" to the consumer. They do not care which one they get because they both provide the same amount of satisfaction, happiness or utility. In the first graph there are three IC curves labeled appropriately. For our argument we will only consider normal goods so those curves that are more up and to the right will be positive and of more value. Such that I3 > I2 > I1 for the consumer. If we have a point P on I3 the consumer would want that point rather than a point on I2. However, with the relationship previously discussed, and as is demonstrated in the first graph, the consumer cannot reach I3 due to the budget constraint.

Thus, the definitive choice a consumer will make is to choose some combination of the preferences such that they will receive the greatest utility constrained by their budget. This point is where the Indifference curve is *tangent* to the Budget Constraint. There is no other point they can get to that is of more utility than that point. The next question is where and how do we find that point? Well, mathematically speaking it is where the slope of the BC is the same as the slope of the IC at that tangential point. This point is the utility maximizing point found by some kind of utility maximizing function usually. For the sake of argument, I will just say in example [1] the point will be such that the marginal benefit of Good Y divided by the marginal benefit of good X is equal to the slope the BC. The marginal benefit of good Y is MRy and likewise we have MRx. The Marginal Rate of Substitution (MRS) is MRy/MRx (**Note:** I do not like graph [1] because good Y should be on the vertical and vice versa for X. The numerator is always the horizontal preference). For those who like math, if you are given a Utility Function like 2X^2+Y^3 the MRx and MRy are simply the partial derivative with respect to that relative variable. Then their ratio equated to the ratio of the prices of the two goods gives you a value for X and Y called X* and Y* (see graph) such that you can substitute them into the Budget Constraint function and find out exactly how much of X and Y the consumer will choose to maximize their utility (star position). Then, though completely pointless and arbitrary, you can plug those values into the utility function and get a value of utils. Of course, utils mean nothing *unless* you say under the first BC U=1000 and under the second BC U=2000 then with a BC of the second situation will obviously be a better result for it produces more utility. This is what will be important in our discussion of vouchers now.



School Vouchers or Public Education Subsidies

Graph [3]

1) Disregard initially the bold black line and the blue line. Without the indifference curves assume they exist such that A is on IC_1 B is on IC_2 and C is on IC_3. The initial state of education without a public infrastructure is one where the consumer faces education costs or "amount of education" valued along the x-axis. The y-axis is the composite good such that point P is the amount of income

the consumer has. Point A is the point at which they will consume S2, the amount of school at the point 2 along the x-axis and point z of everything else (the outlays).

2) Included a public infrastructure is essentially a subsidy saying you can now "have money" to the amount that is point B. This point gives more utility because it allows a certain amount of schooling at S1 but also allows the consumer to spend all of their income on other stuff. Essentially, with this kind of subsidy, the BC would be the thick black line out to B and down to where it hits the unsubsidized BC and then continues along that line. Thus, there is nothing stopping a consumer from purchasing more education, but anything above S1 comes out of the consumer's pocket and is less utility than point B offers. It is also illogical for anyone to consume less education for no benefit, therefore we do not consider rational consumers to purchase anything to the left of S1 with public education (essentially a subsidy).

3) The useful tool of consumer theory is, in the normative sense, what we can say about if the government gave money directly for the purchase of education. This produces the thicker blue line. The amount of the voucher is the disparity between the thin black and the thicker blue lines. This is also evaluated at where the blue line crosses the y-axis such that the difference from P to where it crosses is the amount of the voucher; however, because you cannot use the voucher as an increased income you cannot go above the amount of P. The voucher, though, is essentially like an increased income otherwise. This is a rightward shift of the BC line keeping the same slope and moving out the amount of the voucher. This has two effects. The first is, the consumer can still go with the choice of public education, not use the voucher and be in exactly the same situation they would be without that voucher. However, point B is on an indifference curve that is less education than the consumer was originally willing to get to with a little bit of decrease in income (point A).

Positively speaking, point C with the voucher is the most satisfying choice the consumer can achieve. Normatively speaking, we can look at the original case considering that consumers value education and are willing to spend money for it (we do after high school obviously). Without the voucher consumers get less education but do not have to pay directly for the education (they do in taxes). With the voucher system the consumers individually can either stick with the public education or spend the money they were originally willing to with no public education to get not only a better education than on both previous accounts, but also maintain a high enough level of income such that their utility is on indifference curve three.

This analysis is not to say there is not more we have to consider and that there are not other effects that can play in. From a basic analysis from the positive economics involved, we can see that choice C is the most rewarding on all accounts involved in this relationship (preferences, indifference curves and budget constraints). The questions of interest is how much should government spend on public education (to extend the thick line horizontally further or less) or should it be offered at all and just the voucher given. If the voucher is given does the public education decrease and if so, by how much? How many will use the voucher?

I argue that the voucher system is a benefit that gives the consumer more choices to improve their lives. The questions of how the voucher is problematic with the public education system is inaccurate. I say this because if someone goes to a private institution on a voucher they are then not involved in the public system. Let me extend this analysis as thus:

If public education takes away from each person 2% of their income then each person essentially is paying that 2% no matter what to fund public education. This is not represented in the graph but could easily be by adjusting the budget constraint as such. Thus, public education is unaffected by the financial ramifications of a voucher system. However, the voucher system now allows the consumer to get a better education using some of their own money. The voucher, however, is another cost from somewhere (given by the government of course). This, however, does not have to, for any reason, come from the consumer. Instead, the private institution pays for it in their taxes (and other taxes could as well, but none new) by their profits made by what the consumer does pay out of pocket. In this case, there is no loss to the consumer, none necessarily to the business and the only loss to the government is the reallocation of their funds towards the voucher instead of somewhere else. Furthermore, the consumer gets a better education, the business gets

more business and the only detrimental effect is the opportunity cost the government faces in supporting the voucher with its allocation of funds by what it could have otherwise done (the forgone cost) if allocating those funds elsewhere.

Thusly, this conclusion I present is that the only real question is does society value education enough to make government (because we are/should be in control of our government choices for society) reallocate some of its funds from other projects (maybe war!) to something more valued (education!). If we do value education over some other choice the real problem is how effective can we make the change occur? This then leaves the realm of economic analysis completely and goes towards public policy and politics. In conclusion, I would like to note all my research in economics and future plans are thusly, to produce an economic model that not only analyzes the monetary relationships involved in the allocation of resources, but a social model of what kind of governments are more effectively representative of the society's choice. If choice theory holds as analyzed economically consumers want choice C. However, if the government is too corrupt or too misguided or the ability for consumers to effectively move government to choose what the aggregate choice of society is, then choice theory fails for the aggregate consumer choice does not equal or reflect what the arbitrary or representative consumer really wants.

[The United States could save billions in defense funding if they trade the Military for Chuck Norris]

I AM NOT A VEGAN! (Sunday, December 10, 2006)

But I cannot help but sit here today and talk about topics that are similar to "animal rights."

I love meat. I body build. I play sports. I am a very athletic person, and therefore I know nutritionally I need a lot of protein, probably around 1.5g times my bodyweight in kilograms. I have also been involved with many vegans personally, usually telling them how their conception and belief in animal rights is fallacious and stupid. However, that is not to say I think it is completely pointless or without merit.

The common concept of eating animals stems from our naturalistic behavior of survival and that we are omnivores in need of protein and other nutrients. The usual vegan counter to this is that you can get your protein from other sources and with some work all the amino acids you could need (or through supplementation). I do not believe we, as a species, need to live like that with our current level of technology. I do, however, believe not all animals should be harvested. This concept, though, has a problem. How do we decide what is allowable to eat or not?

To expand on the common concept of eating animals it usually becomes something along the lines that we are on top of the food chain, we are more intelligent and other animals are then okay for us to eat. However, what is intelligence? Many animals have complex ways of accessing information and utilizing it. This marker for what is right to eat has many problems. How about self-awareness? Does this mean only humans, dolphins, elephants, primates and some other animals might be off limits? This too has problems because it would require us to have knowledge we do not have.

What is wrong with eating animals? I hear the critics cry.

Lets return to the common concept for eating animals. If we utilize the markets of intelligence of self-awareness we have to then, to remain consistent, accept if there were aliens who come visit us. They are more intelligent, more powerful and likewise the way we treat our animals, these aliens treat us. We must then surrender to these hierarchical superior animals because now we are simply lower on the food chain. No rational being would surrender to this idea and accept it as somehow justification. A priori, we must remain consistent in our reasoning. Though this circumstance has not happened, it is quite a possibility if such creatures existed (and there is no natural reason why such should not, it is more of whether the circumstance of aliens like this visiting us would ever happen than the possibility of such things existing). To remain consistent, we should not let the idea of intelligence or self-awareness play a role in deciding what animals are okay to eat and which are not, unless we draw a line that is completely spans the gray area such that we do not eat anything that exhibits intelligence and awareness, but might not be near a "good enough" level. I mean, cuddle fish and squid are magnificent creatures, yet we have, in some parts of the world, hundreds to thousands of them being fished at times in a night. It is a massacre by any measure. And I love my calamari, but I am willing never to touch it to keep them from being harvested in such large numbers. But are the numbers caught and killed a measure then? Is it okay if we just do it on a nominal basis per capita to some measure of acceptance or does that not have the obvious problems with it as well?

So we should let them all live! I have heard the vegans cry.

Well, I kind of like my chicken and fish and see no problem with eating them. In fact, I'm eating a chicken pizza as I write this. This brings me back to what I said previously. I don't think we should remove such things from our diet, yet. I think as we advance in the future, well passed my generation I'm sure, we would be able to technologically and genetically live healthy, enjoyable (food wise) lives without having to kill to make it happen. Is this because killing is wrong? Is hunting bad? In part I think hunting for game is bad. Hunting for food is our natural "right" since we've existed. It is apart of being in nature. However, just like we have dominion over our bodies in the sense our instincts are not the absolute rule of our lives, neither should we be absolutely ruled by such ancient practices. As we advance, later, we should eventually become vegan out of necessity and reason and moral appreciation.

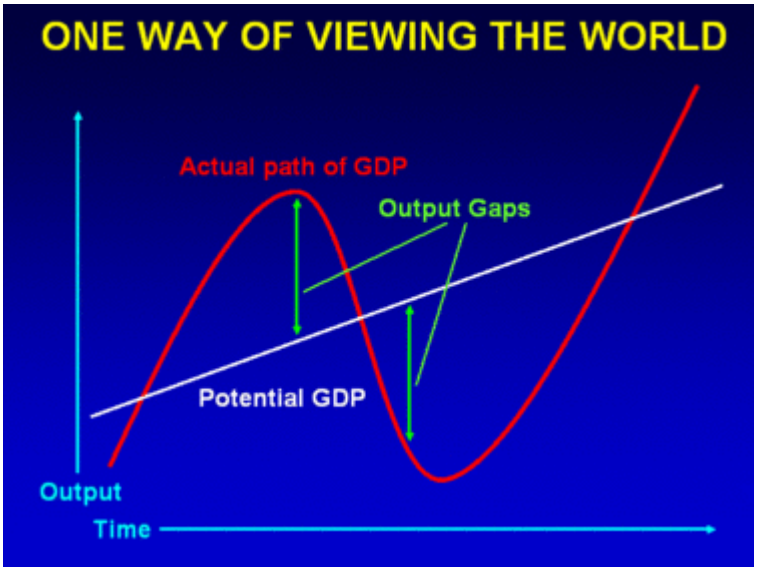
This idea I present has problems, mainly there is no objective validation. Of course not. However the golden rule and Kant's Categorical Imperative can also be extended in some respect to animals. If we were being harvested in large numbers for consumption by something else we would not want that. Likewise, we cannot exert that same kind of dominance on animals. The problem is how do we make the leap from us to them. This draws back on the common concept of intelligence and self-awareness. The only acceptable way to make that work is to make the separation large enough so that the gray area is not touched. Fish and chicken are pretty dumb animals. Squid and some other animals we do consume are quite smart and complex. In this way we have a clear contrast from eating "simple" animals and leaving "complex" ones alone.

Let me present this in a differing empathetic way. Lets say we can consume other humans without any problem and there is no legal problem with this. Would we do it or do we place value in humans over other animals? There is a misconception often accepted that humans *are not* animals. This is obviously very wrong. Thus, to conceive of any difference it is only on the basis that we are more complex than other animals and again, the problems I have stated still exist.

I think there is still much we have to discover about the animals we coexist with on this planet and the limit of our mass consumption. I don't think animals deserve to be treated in the ways we treat them. Likewise, I don't think it is okay for a dog to be abused by its owner. Yet we have no problem eating beef from a place that literally tortures and abuses animals on a large scale (not including the workers!). I think the problem has two areas. This mass consumption and our dependence on eating meat. I am not vegan nor would I want anyone to be. Like I said, I think as we evolve as a species we will ultimately turn toward such a type of diet, but for now we need our meats and there is nothing wrong with that. I am not for "animal rights" I simply do not wish any animal to be exploited, harmed and abused simply because a human is "smart enough" to do such things (**see dolphin massacre photo**, Japan). Such behavior is no different than a child with an art farm, a magnifying glass and sunlight and the same mentality. We are not children, yet we still seem to have the desires like one and feel justified in our ignorance. If you feel empathetic toward any animal being harmed in exploitation then there is no reason why one cannot feel empathetic toward our mass consumption that slaughters animal life on land and in the sea to great numbers simply because we like to eat a lot. Make better choices in what and where you buy your food. We support agro-business every time we buy that McDonald's or Carl's Jr. Hamburger. Buy organic (as if other stuff isn't organic ....), or buy from a local grower you can get information on and know how they treat and feed their animals so you know what's in them and what you're putting into your body. This stuff is not beyond us, we simply are lazy. Laziness is no excuse for allowing what we could simply call injustice. If we are "higher" beings, then we should also be held to a "higher" standard for morality. I think these ideas I presented here should fit in that.

[Chuck Norris is a vegetarian. Meaning, he does not eat animals until first he puts them into vegetative state with his fists.]

Socialism and Efficiency (Friday, December 15, 2006)



In Classical Economic Theory we evaluate the economy in the *long run*. That is to say, in the long run, as opposed to the short run, the price level of the economy is able to adjust to accommodate fluctuations to aggregate demand and aggregate supply. This is because in the short run, prices, for the most case, are *sticky*. In the long run, however, prices are flexible and output will return from the business cycles to the potential GDP or the general trend of the economy in the long run (See Fig.). Therefore, in the long run the overall output GDP (Y) does not adjust to the fluctuations as in the short run, but is determined by the factors of production. A simple function that evaluates this pretty accurate is the Cobb-Douglas production function:

Y=F(K,L)=A * K^(x) * L^(1-x)

A: Technological and institutional supports
L: Labor
K: Capital
x: Marginal Product of capital (MPK)
(1-x): Marginal Product to labor (MPL)

This simple, yet powerful, equation represents the major components of what the output of our economy will be. It is pretty straight forward. The MPK is simply how much extra product is produced with one more additional unit of capital, while the MPL is the same, but for labor. The Cobb-Douglas function is important because it has constant returns to scale. That is to say, if you increase both labor and capital by some amount, then output will increase by that same amount. This is because the MPK+MPL is equal to one. A simple mathematical substitution would show that if they were less than one, then the additional amount added to K and L would be raised to that less than one value giving an ultimate result that is less than if you just added that amount directly to the previous output. That would be diminishing returns. Increasing returns would occur if the MPK+MPL were greater than one. There are other conditions and other functions, but these are the important characteristics of the Cobb-Douglas function.

The key variable I wish to discuss is A. This is an arbitrary variable that evaluates the amount of technological and institutional support to labor and capital. Other functions might evaluate an equation for the educational or human capital additions, but this function is simplistic and evaluates my goal well enough and is accurate enough based on historical data. The point I wish to bring to light is that in Classical Economics, especially in the very long run, the *growth* of an economy is *only* determined by A. It is a misconception for us to think because output might increase steadily for a year or two during a business cycle that the economy is improving. These are just short run fluctuations in Y. In the long run they will always return to the trend line of potential GDP (as the price level, and thus inflation, adjusts to set Y back to potential GDP). The goal most economies attempt to achieve is to improve the quality of life through an economic indicator such as GDP by increasing the growth rate of GDP. This is where improvements to A are most important.

Most economists and especially popular thought and literature represents socialism in a poor light and the name itself carries negative connotations. Though this perspective is slowly changing in our current times, I wish to elaborate on why people are realizing the benefits of socialism. First, allow me to address the criticisms I have to the claims against socialism and those for our current economic indicators.

(i) Economists will state that the data shows a strong correlation between increased GDP and the "quality of life." This quality of life, they will conclude, is because the society with a high GDP has available funds to put toward social welfare programs such as health care, proper nutrition, education, etc. High GDP on que with the Golden Rule for steady output, in the Solow Model, allows citizens to consume at the best level while saving at the best level for the economy to maintain its steady-state of growth in the long run.

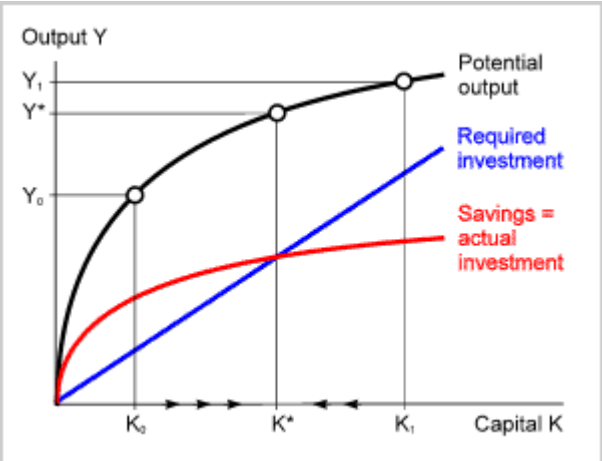
(ii) The traditional criticism of socialism is that it lacks the ability to adapt to sudden changes, cannot handle the informational requirements that the market and its components do inherently, and just overall has an inability to be efficient and maintain sustained and competitive growth.

Economic Indicators of Quality

The problem with (i) is that it makes a claim new perspectives are attempting to analyze, through development economics and other studies, which show it is not *necessarily* true or even directly correlated. Economists such as Amartya Sen has expressed in *Development as Freedom* explains, societies can have (a) increased social welfare programs while having a low GDP and (b) countries with a high GDP do not necessarily have strong improved social conditions. The reasons for these are numerous and are better examined in their own right. However, I simply wish to express the shortcomings that this narrow perspective on using GDP as the main or only indicator carries. It does not account for the conditions of (a) or (b), nor does it address the allocation of resources within an economy, nor does it address the political structure that is beneficial to a fair social structure that, by any indicator, shows a quality society i.e., lower death rates, controlled birth rates, higher per capita income on average, social welfare and education programs, appropriate medical facilities for everyone to prevent unnecessary morbidity or malnourishment, etc.

Relying on GDP as a primary means of evaluating how well off a society is falls short of giving any kind of real analysis of the vast complexities a society has. It also does not show that a society with low GDP can have people with high life expectancies, and high literacy rates. To have a worth while evaluation we simply must consider more than simply how efficient an economy is based on GDP. This is a mistake many economists accept blindly.

Another problem with GDP as an evaluative measure is a simple contrast of what is expressed in GDP and what is not. If I do things free such as tutor for free, build a house for free, clean up a neighborhood, or any kind of welfare program without financial exchanges. These would intuitively be considered a good thing for society and beneficial. The only cost is the labor and opportunity costs the people involved are putting in. These activities, in an economic perspective, are inefficient and are not expressed in GDP and in fact take away from time and labor that could have been spent in activities that could show up in GDP. This might be, to some, an economic bad! I find that absurd. The other absurdity is just the opposite. Things that will raise GDP, improve the condition of the relative level of GDP and thus make us consider the economy is "booming". These, however, can occur because of natural disasters, war, accidents, oil spills, etc. Why? Because they require economic exchange and economic activity which will eventually result in some kind of involvement with GDP going up. Yet, these are obviously what we might intuitively consider bad things. Thus, GDP as a measure can be fallacious.



Efficiency and Growth

The last area I wish to address is the claim that socialism is inefficient and does not achieve growth, is stagnant and without market competition to drive it, it will falter in comparison to capitalism and capitalist free markets. This carries some truths but many misconceptions, especially today. Remember that variable A? In the long run, the only way for long term growth to occur is through an increase in technological advantages, by increases in A. Steady-state growth is determined by capital-accumulation at point K* (see Fig. 2).

Changes in Y that cause output to move one way or another will ultimately, through economic forces, return to K*. Therefore, long term growth requires increases to A from our original Cobb-Douglas production function. What bearing does this have on socialism? Most, if not all examples of socialism have remained stagnant and fell apart in the global economy because they lacked the ability to improve A. Socialism, by any standard (dictatorships are not socialist countries), most will agree takes care of the quality of a society. It promotes egalitarian ideology in its conception and provides for fair allocation of resources through social welfare and all those social indicators of quality previously mentioned. However, the problems of efficiency are in its ability to adapt and develop new technology and grow its educational and institutional infrastructure to keep the economy advancing. The nearsighted perspective against this has more to do with the fact technological advancements are a *new* occurrence.

Socialism has thrived, historically, in conditions where one resource and one technology was utilized extremely well. In fact, in most cases socialism did better by economic efficiency standards and in social standards. However, a sudden change in the global demand to another resource cripples that country. This happened to Britain when it was socialist for awhile dominating in coal production if I recall correctly. This historical perspective cannot be applied today where technological and research advancements are changing at rapid rates previously inconceivable. Are these gains in A due to the market? I would say no. The market helps, but the market with patent laws and inherent inefficiencies (such as multiple companies doing the same research until one of them comes out with the new product, then the rest just model after it) also has its problems. If government controls the incentives and the direction of research or if research is combined with the educational arena so both technology and educational institutions are improving in unison, then socialism can achieve increases in A far greater, and far more efficient and faster than a capitalist market could. This has not been present because the faculties that could allow socialism to thrive in today's global market were not present before. I suspect this is changing and will change rapidly and will become more apparent in the future as our mentalities as a global society shifts to concerns of social welfare and how the market does not address them and socialist aspects will begin to shine more and more until we migrate toward being one.

Classic claims against socialism are going to fail and are already losing the ground they once held. Now that the Cold War era is drifting from our generation's memories, we are left with a new generation more concerned with social welfare and more concerned with fairness and democracy. Socialism provides for this in ways capitalist competition and individualist perspectives just cannot. Attacks that socialism lacks efficiency or the ability to maintain itself or improve the quality of life is simply wrong. It was wrong in the cases that socialism did exist in our history and it is wrong from an analytical standpoint of current economic theory. Furthermore, current economic theory insists on using poor indicators for social quality of living and to use such fallible systems of analysis does not provide for a proper critique or argument against socialism in light of the new research being done in development and political economics. The more we realize, as economists if you are one, or as a member of a society (which we all are of course) that we have the power to determine our future, to determine our governance, and to determine how our resources are allocated, we will realize that a democratic socialist system geared toward the benefit and survival and sustainability of itself, even in a global level, is what we not only need, but should also desire. It is also just the right thing to do in any concept of justice or responsibility both socially or environmentally. Intuitively and empathetically many young people are realizing there is just something wrong with the world today. We have the power to correct it. It begins with understanding first. I hope this gives you some of that power in knowledge.

[Contrary to popular belief, America is not a democracy, it is a Chucktatorship.]

Hedonism, Individualism and Our Childhood Toys (Wednesday, December 20, 2006)

As a child, I remember my older half-brother once criticized my elaborate storytelling displayed throughout the house with my action figures and other such toys. I loved my toys. I could have epic battles taking place from inside to outside of the house, which on their scale would be equivalent to the size of New York with television entertainment centers and couches as mountain landscapes, and the kitchen sink as a great lake. The criticism, though, was that I would not play with them for too much longer. He gave me that old story about how "you will grow out of your toys." I denied this passionately. I told him I would never stop playing with my toys. As the Toys R Us slogan says, "I don't want to grow up." I was a Toys R Us kid!

Sure enough, not but a couple years after that I, for some reason or another, just stopped playing with those toys. They ended up in a box with all the other useless stuff my parents had bought me over the years, eventually to disappear from my life forever.

What, then, was the cause of this? Did I not like playing with them anymore? Did I grow tired of spending long hours playing with these? Did I just replace one form of enjoyment for another?

I believe we grow out of these things because they lack the necessary characteristics to supplement our lives. As I grew up, as all children do, I get busy with other things. My toys were something I could play with, but not really with my friends, though we did in some cases which was actually amusing because we'd get in fights over who's character did what, and it took a lot of toys!. However, because of their inherent exclusiveness, video games became the next big craze. Whether I was doing it alone or with friends it beat the toys. It was more efficient. I could play my epic stories told by someone else, so I did not know the ending or what was going on and had to discover it instead. I had simply found something *better*.

No longer did I need my brother to tell me about this addiction. In my teenage years I had the thought to myself. "Will I grow out of my video games?" I thought this an impossibility. I could play games for *days* if I had the time. I beat Final Fantasy VII after it just came out in less than a week! Sure enough, and to my own amazement, I simply drifted from playing video games. Eventually, I just stopped playing them altogether.

Today I do enjoy video games. Hell, I can even enjoy playing with toys. But these are not of desires to me anymore. With the new advertisements for games like Gears of War, or systems like the Wii or PS3 my interests were peaked for these. However, I wont spend a penny on them. I have no need or even want to pay for something I am hardly going to use. "You can make time for it." I have been told. That is true. But the fact is I simply know, as I have matured, I don't *want* to make time for it. This is because *we have power in our choices*. I choose not to make such time; instead I rather utilize my time for other things. This is the classic economic principle of opportunity costs. If I choose to play a game instead of studying, then what I would have gotten out of studying is the foregone cost for choosing the video game. It is the opportunity cost. We place value in things by what we choose to do. If I choose the game over studying, or everything else for that matter [1], then I am placing value that the game is more important, better or simply just more valuable in respect to my life than studying, or any other thing I could have otherwise been doing. This is an often overlooked fact in our lives we neglect to be aware of. Our choices have power. They are what evaluate things and give merit to our actions and our lives.

This brings me to the main topic, that of Hedonism. In a very general summary I will refer strictly to hedonism in the sense of satisfaction as the highest value and should be sought after. My concern is that hedonism, whether people know of it or think they believe in it, exists quite strongly in our society and culture. Whether it is just sitting in front of the television for hours or going off drinking, smoking pot or doing any kind of substance, or even spending nights with one or multiple sex partners simply for the enjoyment of the sex (not in a relationship) all point toward a belief in that these pleasures rank of more value than other things. As I just explained, if we choose to do these actions we are saying they are of more value, more satisfaction or simply better for us than anything else would could have otherwise

done. If this were not true, then these activities would be put off for other things like our toys and video games are. Instead, our new enjoyments are more complex, more socially involved and draw more attachment. However, this does not change the fact they are still evaluated on a hedonistic perspective that the enjoyment we get from them is of more value to the individual pursuing it, than if they were to chase after some other activity. Thus, in this context, we are all hedonist in the sense that we pursue that which we find value in and don't do things that are counter to this. [2]

Allow me to digress for a moment and speak of another perspective on hedonism. Lets consider this mechanism or ideology in a larger term. It seems very familiar if we speak of choosing that which is most satisfying for a larger body of people as being that which the larger body seeks. This is because this ideology has already been constructed and often utilized in terms of Utilitarian ethics. We see the usage of utility often in economic discussions because it is very strong aspect of Consumer Theory. However, I am speaking of the individuals here and this individualism is the key aspect that differentiates utilitarianism from hedonism. In fact, one might even say hedonism is a subset of utilitarianism that applies to the internal workings of a larger utilitarian body. Then, we might consider, utility to be nothing more than the common aggregate of the individuals of this larger utilitarian body. A discussion of how this aggregate affects the persona and culture of the larger body, however, escapes the scope of this discussion.

What purpose this serves should be obvious if we consider that these evaluative qualities inherently contain what is discussed in the context of morality and ethics. I must note, however, that simply because one person or group carries different ethics and perceives different things morally does not explain or contain any kind of interrelated measure of what is better. It is simply that one agent chooses and thus values one choice while another agent chooses and thus values that one less or not at all. One cannot say that the one agent is better than the other unless that evaluation is made in agreement with that respective agent's choice. In other words, if I think Chris is better for not choosing to smoke pot while Jane does, it is because I am in agreement with Chris' choice and believe that smoking pot has less value than something else. [3] Subsequently, there is no way to measure this interrelation objectively (without the subjective individualism agreements and perspectives) to say that one thing is better or worse than another.

The contrast between this individualist utilitarianism we call hedonism and that of a group utilitarianism leads me to consider an imperative. This is because the collectivist view does not necessarily suffer from the inherent problem of interrelated ethics that I just alluded to. When we take the group as the agent itself we assume the mechanisms functioning internally. In either scope, the choices we make are the sole mechanism for evaluating our ethics. Thus, I must consider that the social inclination carries with it a greater importance than that of the individualist one [4]. This allows us a way to analyze the individualist choice with a context of something "greater". For instance, if I buy and drive a Hummer (a gas hog) simply because I have the available funds to purchase it, it gives me an ego boost or status appeal and provides me with vehicle capabilities other cars don't have I am making this choice off my individualism. If, on the other hand, we evaluate this from the societal context then this gas hog is utilizing large amounts of available scarce resources, polluting and offers no benefit to the greater whole, but in fact, only offers negative externalities. From these comparative perspective the imperative choice is that which benefits most [5]. The individual would be more inclined to purchase a vehicle that suits his needs and does not conflict with the societal needs (which include clean, healthy air, an abundance of available resources, etc that all go counter to what that purchase would counter).

The real question is, how often does this occur? Not as much as it should I speculate. Instead, we evaluate things hedonistically. When we, as an individual, choose to do acts that only consider our own interests we are, in essence, being narcissistic. Narcissism is a perspective that plagues children because we only see the world, when we are young, in terms of how it affects us. It is only later, as we develop and mature, that we realize our actions and behavior and choices influence more than us. I find that hedonism, individualism and thusly narcissism are themselves interrelated in our lives and in our choices. As anything matures it is essentially "developing towards what it potentially is." A plant develops to be a plant, a dog to be a dog, etc. We, as a human, thus develop to be what? More human? Maybe a better way to put it is more humane. I consider in that definition the quality of being concerned for this imperative. Thus, I can contrast both the hedonistic, the individual and the narcissism with the imperative of utilitarianism, society and maturity.

By this imperative we can evaluate that the mature choice is that which looks beyond our self involved or immature gratification. This is seen as a natural occurrence as we develop from being children playing with our toys to adults who might strive in their education and lifestyles to find ways for humanity to thrive and live together and live happily. I find there is a great divide, especially in American culture, between those that don't consider this imperative, either through ignorance or apathy, and that of those who strive to mature and evolve as a human being and a species to do what is simply *best*, by this imperative. If we do not consider this imperative, as I believe too many don't, we as a society are no different than a child playing with his toys having a good time, narcissistic and unaware that there is more to life than themselves and that their actions and choices can have a great impact on the rest of the world. To put it another way, we need to grow up, put away our damn toys and realize there's more to life than simple pleasures we have the opportunity to enjoy [6].

[**footnote 1**] Everything else, the aggregate of other goods, could be considered the composite good/choices forgone -- see my Consumer Choice Theory for more on this

[**footnote 2**] This takes the assumption that we are free to choose. If one only had the choice between smoking pot or getting drunk then in this sense, regardless of whether we consider both of these acts to be vice or not, these are the only available choices to the agent. Consequently, we must assume the hedonistic mechanism that is inherent in our ability to choose exists even if it is between the "lesser of two evils."

[**footnote 3**] The interesting aspect of this is that Chris chooses not to smoke pot and to do something else, thus evaluating the other available composite choices as better than pot, my agreement would in no way reflect the same composite choices. I may or may not have more or less available choices than Chris does and yet I am in agreement solely on the negation of smoking pot. This inherent act segregates our choices into moral categories. We develop that some things are just simply bad and not considered at all while others are to be considered. This has important implications on how we apply this to the larger scale of utilitarianism as the aggregate of choices may not reflect this inherent trait or not.

[**footnote 4**] I am saying that the "greater good" has greater importance than the individual good. This does not necessitate that the greater good should come at the cost of the individual themselves, nor their well being or interests. Only that the good the individual seeks should be toward that which is of greater importance. Nor does it require anything to even be considered when the individual good has no bearing or interaction with the greater whole. This only dictates that when our choices have influence and effect on a scope beyond ourselves we must weigh that in. Not only should it be addressed, but a perspective on where to go with that type of analysis is that which is on the greater scope which inherently removes or takes care of any issues with the interrelated ethical perspectives. For a contrast, consider an analysis of light. I don't need to know all the quantum and other effects going on when it passes through light. I simply can analyze the end result and understand the principle of how it is bending (of course a more in-depth analysis gives us more to understand, but in the context of these interrelated ethics, as I said, it does not work so the consequent outcome is what we can use instead)

[**footnote 5**] I do not say all because to say such would mean that everyone needs to be satisfied with each and every group choice and that not only lacks practicality and is in most cases impossible, but it will consequently lead to an analysis that can only evaluate a very small scope of concerns.

[**footnote 6**] I would like to elaborate on this final point. Some might consider this imperative I put forth evaluates those choices we do that have no or little consequence beyond ourselves. This would be a grave mistake in analysis. The real question is *which actions and choices we make have externalities, or external consequences, and what, or how much, those consequences are.* We may think "having a good time" doing certain things might be okay, but in light of what may occur, they may also not be. This analysis is not definitive or necessarily objective. Nor does this imperative incline us to decide that we just cannot have fun *per se*. The ultimate conclusion is that (1) The imperative I put forth provides a key element in the analysis by which to gauge the effective relevance that the externalities of our choices have on society and (2) if we have the possibilities or opportunities it would be a better choice to do something that is benefitting to others than to simply and consistently and abundantly choose that which benefits ourselves e.g., choose acts in accordance with charity or social responsibilities. This does not mean we still cannot act to benefit ourselves because if we did not, that would simply just be foolish. The further extent of this analysis I highlight in this footnote is to be addressed in another discussion itself on the scope and effectiveness of this imperative and a utilitarian analysis.

[As a teen, Chuck Norris had sex with every nun in a convent tucked away in the hills of Tuscany. Nine months later the nuns gave birth to the 1972 Miami Dolphins, the only undefeated and untied team in professional football history.]

If Not God, Then What? Alternative Ethical Bases (Wednesday, January 10, 2007)

I've been watching Beyond Belief 2006 over the past few days, and have found it quite thought provoking on a number of subjects. One of the subjects they attempt to discuss is about ethics. One such theme was "If not God, then what?" This brought about topics such as "can science give us a basis for moral behavior?" If you are interested in a number of the scientific research going on with the brain, consciousness, psychology and other related topics I suggest watching this program on Google Video.

There are three statements and two alternatives I wish to present. The key here is not to define or systematize an ethical theory, but simply to propose some axioms and general ideas.

(i) Ethics of Suffering (hedonism? utilitarianism?)
Fact: Certain objects in the universe can suffer (e.g., animals), while other objects cannot (e.g., rocks).
Axiom: The minimization and choices that promote the minimization or removal of suffering are ethically positive.

(ii) Ethics of Social Sustainability (humanism?)
Fact: Humans are social animals
Axiom: Choices that benefit the social group, the societal cohesion and other social factors ia n ethical positive.

(iii) Can there be a moral *science*? (ethical objectivity? relative vs absolute vs universality)
Is it possible to create a methodology to measure and gauge and predict and systematize ethical choices and moral behavior?

I believe (i) presents itself as an alternative, maybe a converse, to that of hedonism and utilitarianism. By that I mean hedonism's prime factor is that a choice should be made toward improving satisfaction or some other similar word, and it is implied then that those things that reduce satisfaction are bad. Instead of the emphasis on the satisfaction, I am supposing the emphasis be on the negation of satisfaction which I will consider suffering, or some other similar word can work. I think this type of presentation lends itself to a philosophy of not concerning itself with, "if I have $1 million, then I should try for $2 million because it is better." Instead, it should be concerned with "if I have $1 million more than I need to end my suffering, then I ought to put my surplus toward ending other's suffering."

Of course, the question is, why the ought? Because that's the assumption. I also have the implication that will come with (ii) that we live in a society and if my friend is suffering, it has a direct relation to my life since we are all interconnected and interdependent *on some level*. Therefore, if I act to improve the lives of others (directly or indirectly) it will have an affect that will come back to me. I believe this, like hedonism, does fall under some utilitarian context. The main point is the emphasis, such that the alleviation of suffering of ourselves and the "greater good" (extending it to an aggregate like utilitarianism) ought to be our behavioral goal under ethical considerations.

In respect to (ii), this is sort of a perspective of humanism, or as some like to consider it secular humanism. I think this perspective lends itself to give a basis for why the aggregate concern that utilitarian contexts often assume should be warranted. This perspective can also be considered as derived from a naturalistic perspective from ideas of animal behavior and evolution. Thus, we know humans, as other animals are, are social creatures. Therefore, living in a society we should make the assumption that what improves the function or purpose or mentality or groupthink of the society for a better cohesion and, in essence utility, should be of ethical concern to the individuals that make up the society (the moral agents).

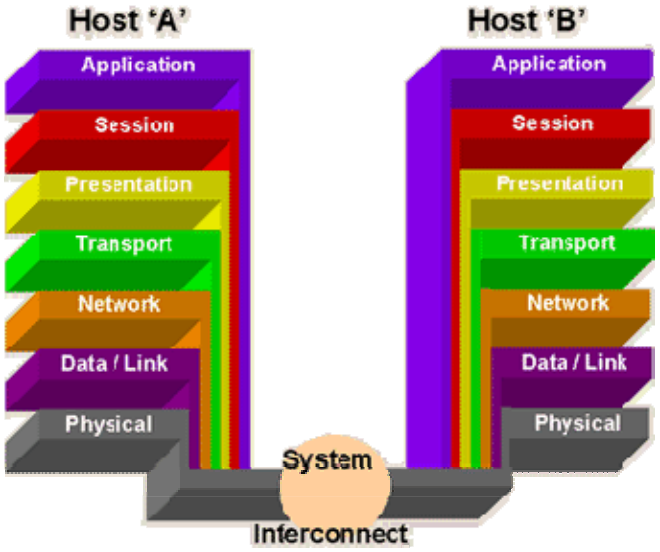
In (iii) I kind of wish to address that idea of if it is possible to even have some kind of objective or functional or analyzable context to ethics. I think we can and this kind of develops into a third ethical alternative or perspective I have come to think about. I would call it Progressive Ethics. The reason for this is that over the history of all human societies we develop certain rules and laws, etc. It is through these "justices" that a society creates what is and is not

the moral choice, in essence. Similar to science, these are tested and adapted and changed over long periods of time. The difference is that there are no experiments and it isn't just a straight line progression and it is highly relative to the group that adheres to those social justices. Regardless, for a society (which we are growing into a global one), the evolution of our social law provides a very good basis by which to consider that we do adapt and change our ethics to match what the people agree upon to live by and make their choices. Of course, this is also limited in it does not address everything. It does provide a basis for society though.

Note: After writing this, and with a little research, I found, as I figured did exist, a description of utilitarian theory that covers what I labeled as ethics of suffering (as opposed to ethics based on satisfactions). The wiki link provided covers it briefly in terms of *negative utilitarianism* (NU).

[Two wrongs don't make a right. Unless you're Chuck Norris. Then two wrongs make a roundhouse kick to the face.]

Logical versus Physical (Monday, January 15, 2007)



In computer science there are two clear examples of when we look at how something physical is laid out or transfers data contrasted with the logical framework and outcome of the process. The first example is network topology. You can have your network laid out in any number of physical infrastructures from having your servers in one building, to having them spread out over a number of buildings. You can have your network in one city or across the globe. The logical framework, on the other hand, is how the network actually functions. You might have heard of the *star*, or *token ring*, or *bus* topologies. These are just examples of how the data actually transfers with no relation to how the network cable and computers are physically laid out. Any LAN or WAN utilizes this fact when giving services, etc. The second example is the OSI model for network communications. Again, without regard to how the data physically (in the computer sense) moves down the *layers* of the OSI model, they logically relate to their counterpart on the other side of the transmission. In other words, the application layer communicates with the other application layer, the presentation layer communicates with the other presentation layer, etc. But physically that isn't what is happening. Physically the data is going down the layers on your computer loading with the appropriate data to work its way up the model on the other side giving the data to each layer as appropriate so everything matches. Again, this contrasts the actual path versus the logical or apparent path.

I wish to extend this mentality to contrasting what is *actually* happening with what we *appear* to have happening in our lives. Take for instance, the brain versus the mind. Most reasonable people realize that the mind is an abstract concept for all the things going on in our brain that give us self-identity, reason, thoughts, et cetera. Most reasonable people will not think we exist as some abstract entity in our mind or soul separate from the functioning of our body. If we take this mentality I have described, then we can reasonably compare the fact that we may be actually having everything going on in our brains physically, but the apparent happenings we consider something else, as an abstraction. I wish to call these most appropriately a manifestation.

The problem some people have with reducing our mind and self-identity, et cetera, to the physical happenings of the brain is they feel it diminishes the value or merit of those manifestations. I beg to differ. The logical frameworks in those two examples I gave in computer science are of paramount importance, just as the physical aspects are. They allow us a better way to deal with what is actually going on. Likewise, why would I care what is going on physically in my brain at every moment? I wouldn't. That would be absurd and a waste of my brain juice. Instead, we manifest things into our consciousness, into our mind and into our thoughts. When I talk of my mind, it is no less important than the fact it is all happening, my entire manifestation and reasons and identity, right there in my brain. In fact, I find utilizing the concept of my mind a wondrous thing that is no more a pejorative concept than comparing any logical construct with its physical or actual construct.

With all that said however, I do find a problem with those few who claim to be rational and then are willing to say they have a soul because their mind and thoughts and identification of their self is not the physical body. This would be like a computer application having some intelligent qualities saying it's sending its data directly to another computer's application. No, it doesn't. It has to follow a complex and messy process and route to get from point A to point B. In this perspective, it is like trying to compare a vector with a path. A vector measures the displacement directly from point A to point B regardless of whatever path was taken. The path could be a complete circle ending up one step in front of the starting point. In that case, the vector is from the starting point to one step in front. Likewise, our manifestations are just a direct link from the actual happenings to the end disregarding all the messy complex and

unknown things going on in between that don't matter when we measure and gauge and try to understand our output.

One might question "how do you know the mind isn't the soul and it's not all separate from the physical body?" Because that's assumptive and irrational to claim it without any basis. We know there are directly physical links between our thoughts and feelings and what we see and how our mind and self-identity work when physically tampered with. There is a mountain of evidence that our manifestations are very much related to our physical brains. Therefore, there is no mind separate from the brain. They are one and the same. One is simply our manifestation. The other is the physical workings. Both are equally important and valuable to us.

[There is no Control button on Chuck Norris' computer. Chuck Norris is always in control.]