Title: A Science Less Dismal: Welcome to the Economic Manhattan Project

Date: May 01, 2009 09:15 AM

URL: http://pirsa.org/09050047

Abstract: An unexpected economic crisis provides an excellent opportunity to better understand the state of Economic theory as a science. While there appears to have been a broad systemic failure within the community of professional economists to predict the current collapse, it must be noted that there have been scattered successes which appear striking and demand our attention. The goal of this conference is to bring together economists, biologists, mathematicians, physicists, programmers, and financial professionals to explore the opportunities for bringing economic theory into closer contact with the more traditional sciences as the basis for ongoing work, partnership, and collaboration.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 1/85



The Financial Crisis and its Intellectual Parent

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 3/85

The Financial Crisis and its Intellectual Parent

 We are in the middle of a financial crisis being managed by the small elite group of people with direct access to closely guarded information.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 4/85

The Financial Crisis and its Intellectual Parent

- We are in the middle of a financial crisis being managed by the small elite group of people with direct access to closely guarded information.
- There is a second small group of people who were outspoken or otherwise active in moving for a debunking of the intellectual movement which precipitated the crisis. [e.g. Abdulali, Janeway, Roubini, Taleb, etc... at this conference]

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 5/85

The Financial Crisis and its Intellectual Parent

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- This conference is about the argument between these two groups seen from a scientific perspective.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 6/85

Alpha vs. Schmalpha

VS.

Timothy Geithner, Systemic Financial Crises: Fall 2004

"These developments can have both positive and negative impacts. In many respects, they help to reduce risk. In some ways, they increase risk. On balance the positive aspects dominate the less positive. Shocks may act more quickly, but they can be more easily diffused and absorbed. Institutions and markets seem better positioned to handle a substantial degree of stress. Shocks may be less likely to result in the type of trend amplifying, selfreinforcing dynamic for sustained periods of time that can threaten the stability of the financial system. "

E. Weinstein, Quant Congress: Fall 2004

"Schmalpha: Excess value extracted from investors in capital markets."

Prediction: [The] Influx of Hedge Fund investors [will] demand absolute return, low correlation and low volatility in an increasingly crowded space. Without improved analytics, this may be expected to accelerate a co-evolution of both Alpha and Schmalpha providers."

Note the Presentation explained why not to put much money with Madoff's fund which was renamed "BlackArts Capital" and called a 'performance mimic']

Overarching question: why would the world's governments systematically avoid the group which warned of disaster?

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 8/85

Overarching question: why would the world's governments systematically avoid the group which warned of disaster?

[Hank Paulson aide and Former Treasury economist Phillip] Swagel says that the Treasury came to realise that underpricing insurance for bank assets <u>roused less political opposition</u> than overpaying for assets precisely because the <u>insurance is less transparent</u>.

-The Economist Magazine

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 9/85

Swagel's View

"Many people in Washington, DC did not understand the implications of non-recourse lending from the Fed. This latter lesson was somewhat fortuitous, in that it took some time before the political class realized that the Fed had not just lent JP Morgan money to buy Bear Stearns, but in effect now owned the downside of a portfolio of \$29 billion of possibly dodgy assets. This discovery of the lack of transparency of non-recourse lending by the Fed was to figure prominently in later financial rescue plans."

- Phillip Swagel

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 10/85

Valuation of Illiquid Assets 2002: Removing uncertainty is not just a subsidy but a measurable one.



Por Hedge Fund Transparency: Quantifying Valuation Bias for Illiquid ...

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valuation bias for illiquid assets. Risk measures, such as the Sharpe ratio, used by investment professionals are only as good as the accuracy of the asset ...

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Allows measurement of a Hedge Fund Managers valuation bias. 10. "Towards Hedge Fund

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Valuation of Illiquid Assets 2002: Removing uncertainty is not just a subsidy but a measurable one.



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Indeed, 48 percent of the 114 asset managers surveyed by the valuation firm ... that are marked to what is, essentially, a non-existent or illiquid market. ...

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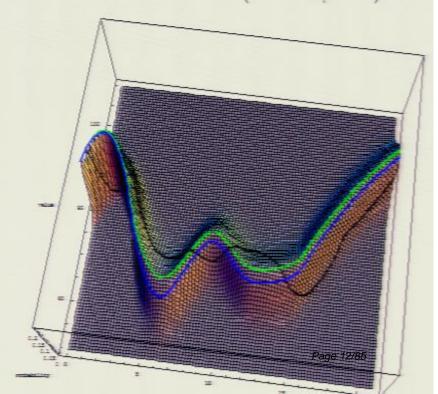
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$$\mathbb{P}_a^{\Gamma}(v_t) = \left(\frac{\sigma_t^2}{\mu_t}\right) \left(\frac{\Gamma\left[\frac{\mu_t^2 - (a-1)\sigma_t^2}{\sigma_t^2}\right]}{\Gamma\left[\frac{\mu_t^2}{\sigma_t^2}\right]}\right)^{\frac{1}{1-a}}$$



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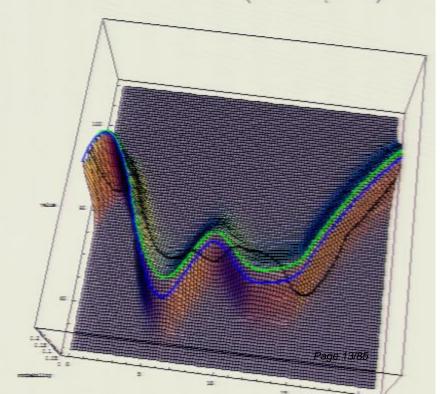
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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 14/85

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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 15/85

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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 17/85

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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 18/85

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- If we are invited in and given access and responsibility, we will put our talents to
 use in the public service akin to the aforementioned Manhattan Project.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 19/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 20/85

Failure focused: "Success is not an option" in systems this complex.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 21/85

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- Basic failure plan: failures to gain predictive power should be handled by increasing reserve and redundancy requirements.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 22/85

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 Our goal is to move great results from the periphery into the core.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 23/85

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- Focused on design: we seek to use a small group of core tools (like DNA, or Fiber Bundles) to avoid a baroque explosion of special cases.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 24/85

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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 25/85

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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 26/85

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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 27/85

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- We are interested in giving a voice to topics that others wish not to entertain (e.g. should we engage in national spite with a respectable budget?).

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 28/85

 The physicists here will subordinate to biologists on matters of agency.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 29/85

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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 30/85

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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 31/85

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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 32/85

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- Ideas will be competed without focus on authority and credentialism.
- We extend a hand to all reasoned critics regardless of initial differences.
- We are not SFI. Check the name. It's colder here.
 Great Institute, but different goals.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 33/85

Confrence Rubric: A.R.M. Agency, Regulation, Measurement

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 34/85

Confrence Rubric: A.R.M. Agency, Regulation, Measurement

 Agency: do we have accurate models for our basic actors.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 35/85

Confrence Rubric: A.R.M. Agency, Regulation, Measurement

- Agency: do we have accurate models for our basic actors.
- Regulation and Self-Regulation: When can we rely on self-regulation and when is external regulation essential.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 36/85

Confrence Rubric: A.R.M. Agency, Regulation, Measurement

- Agency: do we have accurate models for our basic actors.
- Regulation and Self-Regulation: When can we rely on self-regulation and when is external regulation essential.
- Measurement: If essentially all of our measurement gauges failed to catch a major financial disaster, how can we hope to do serious analysis with these measurements as inputs.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 37/85

The two richest tool kits in science have no mutual interaction to date

Selection (Natural and Sexual)

- Actors are differentiated by enormous combinatorial complexity.
- Interactions via a tremendous variety of ingenious mechanisms involving information and nutrient exchanges.
- Highest Level theory in hard sciences.
- Dominated by combinatorics and simple algebra due to absence of real valued variables

Geometric Dynamics (Classical and Quantum Field Theory)

- Actors are differentiated by a tiny number of parameters.
- Interactions via a small variety of canonical mechanisms involving real and complex numbers
- Lowest Level theory in hard Sciences
- Dominated by deep extensions of Calculus and Linear Algebra

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 38/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 39/85

 Market actors are initially differentiated by enormous combinatorial complexity subsequently reduced through markets.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 40/85

- Market actors are initially differentiated by enormous combinatorial complexity subsequently reduced through markets.
- Interactions via a tremendous variety of ingenious mechanisms involving information, tool and nutrient exchanges passed through a bottleneck of 'number'.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 41/85

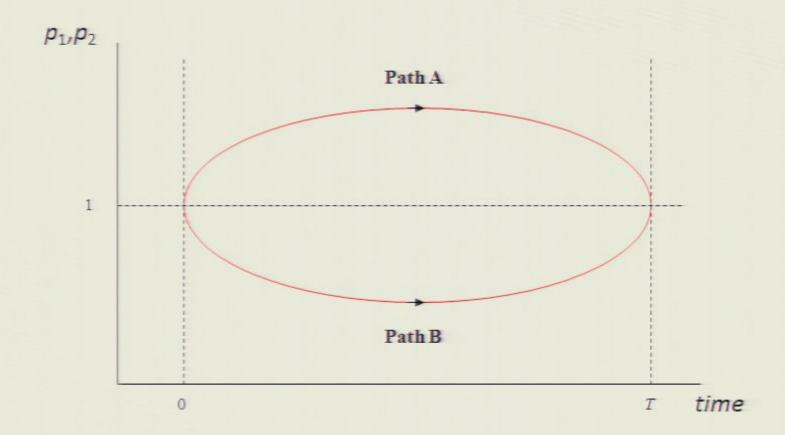
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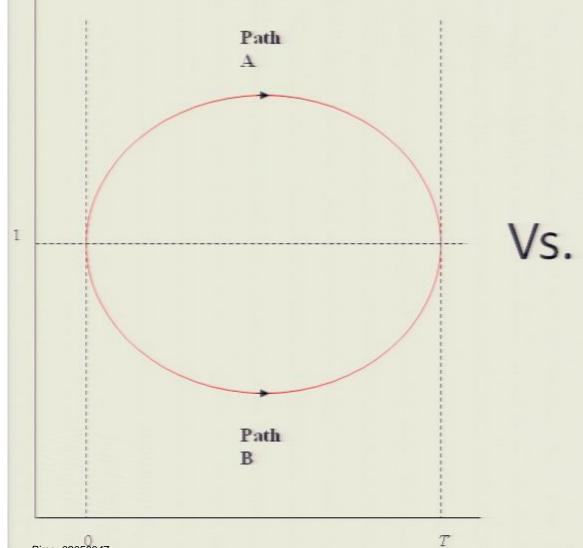
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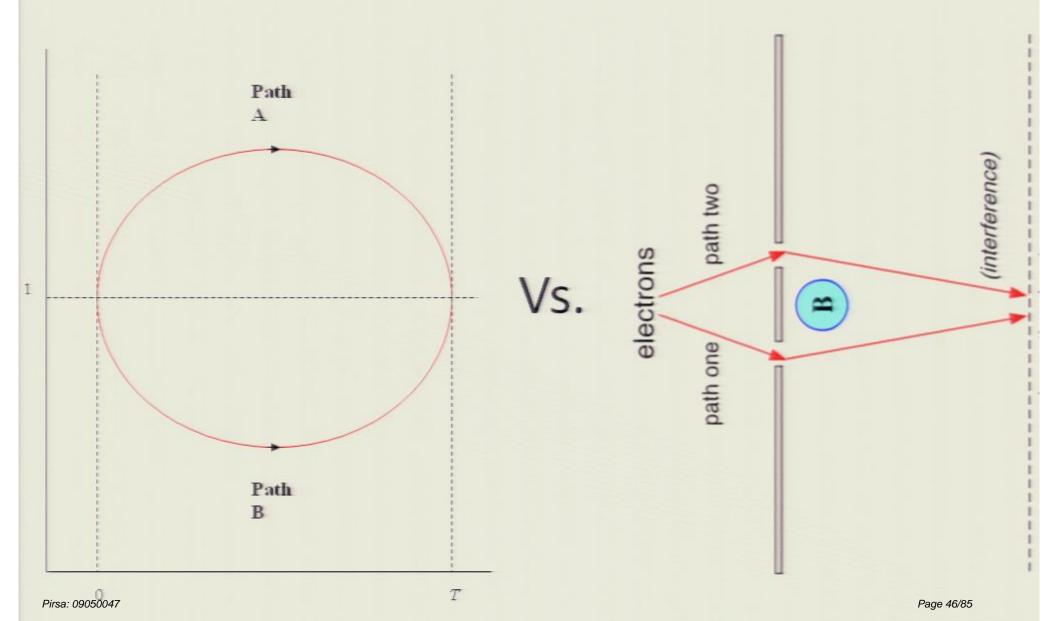
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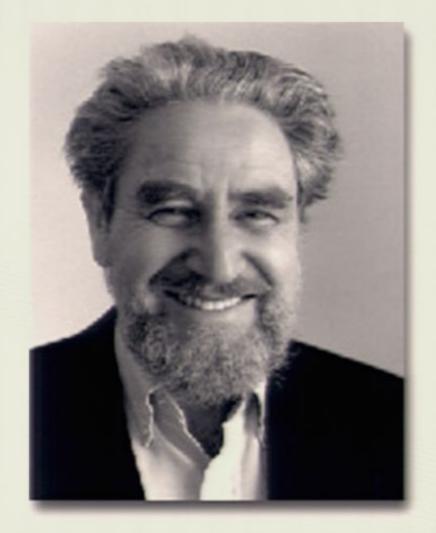
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Aharonov-Bohm effect



The Aharonov-Grilliches effect:





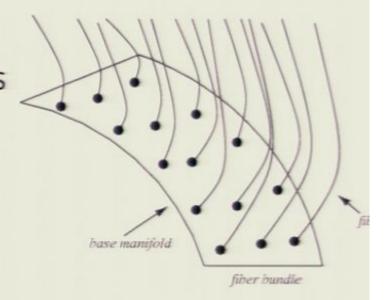
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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 48/85

 But how do you get economists to learn gauge theory on fiber bundles to understand the error?

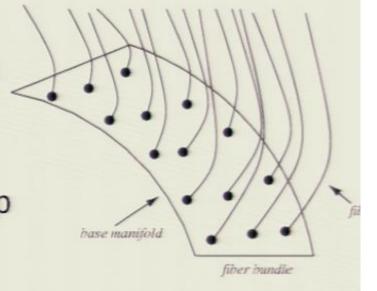
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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 50/85

- But how do you get economists to learn gauge theory on fiber bundles to understand the error?
- At this conference there is a twist:
 Enthought Computing has sent 3 top developers to 'translators' turning ideas into models and providing "a single-user (Basic) subscription to every conference participant" to its vast open source python based matlab-like environment.



Pirsa: 09050047 Page 51/85

Previous

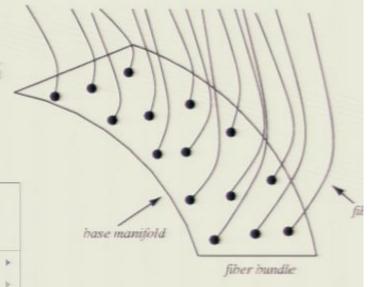
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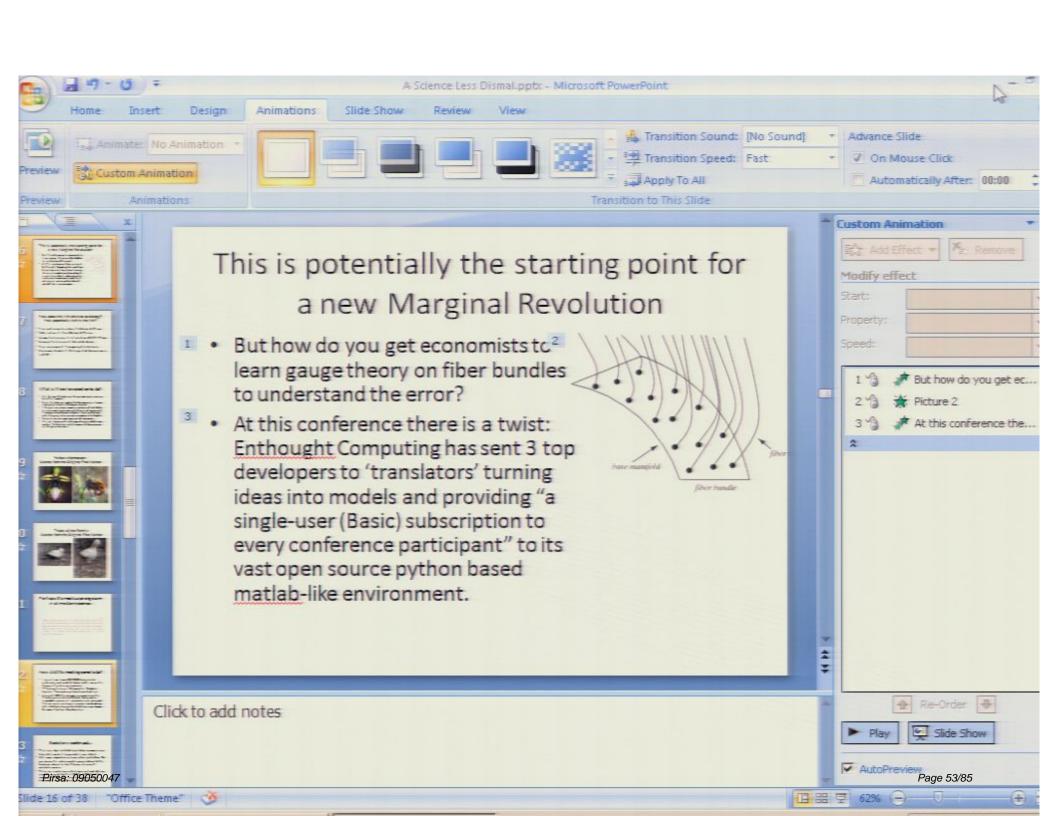
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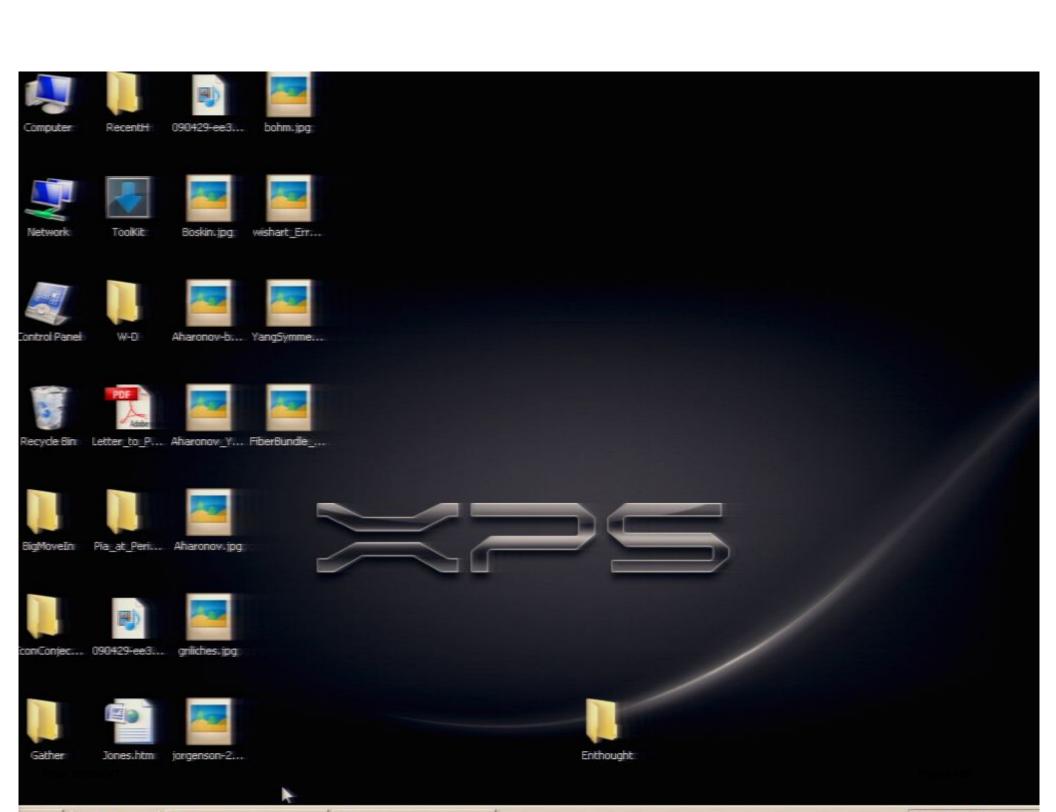
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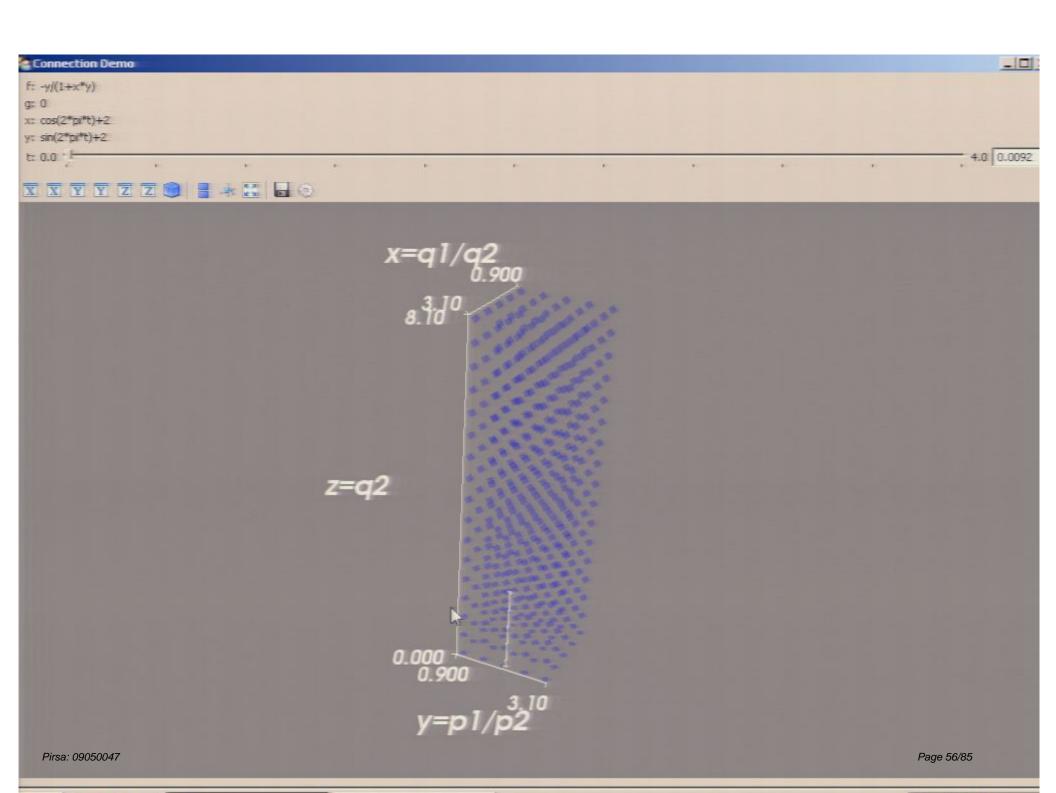


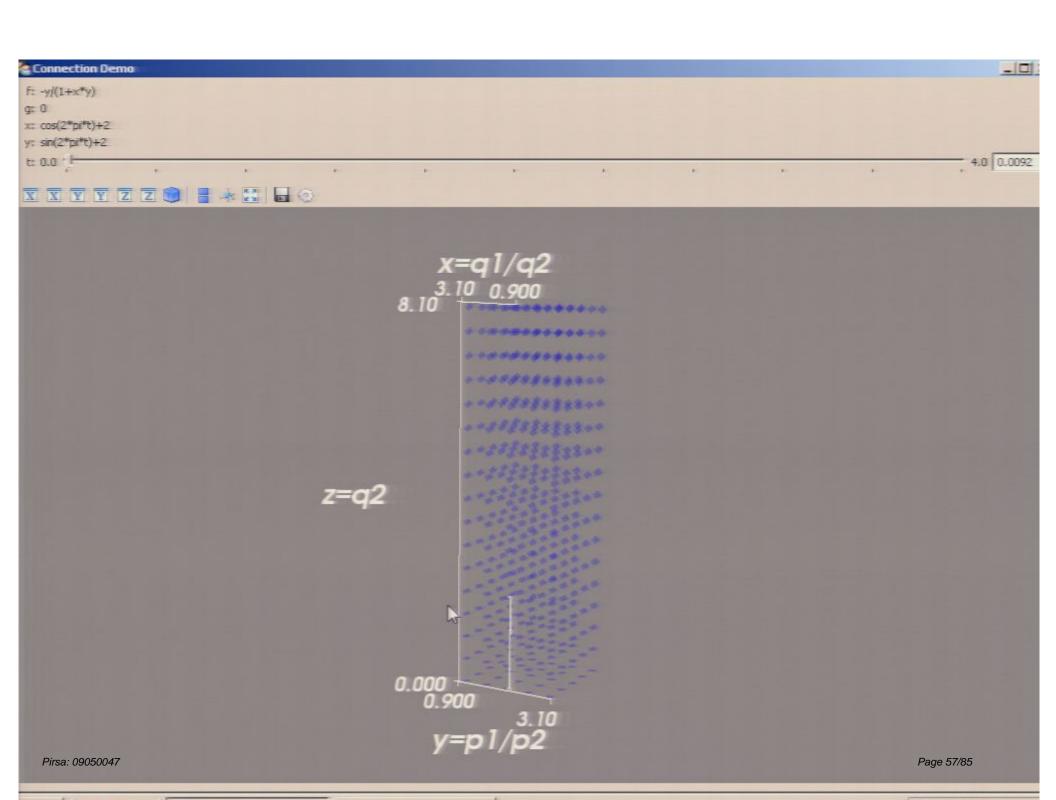
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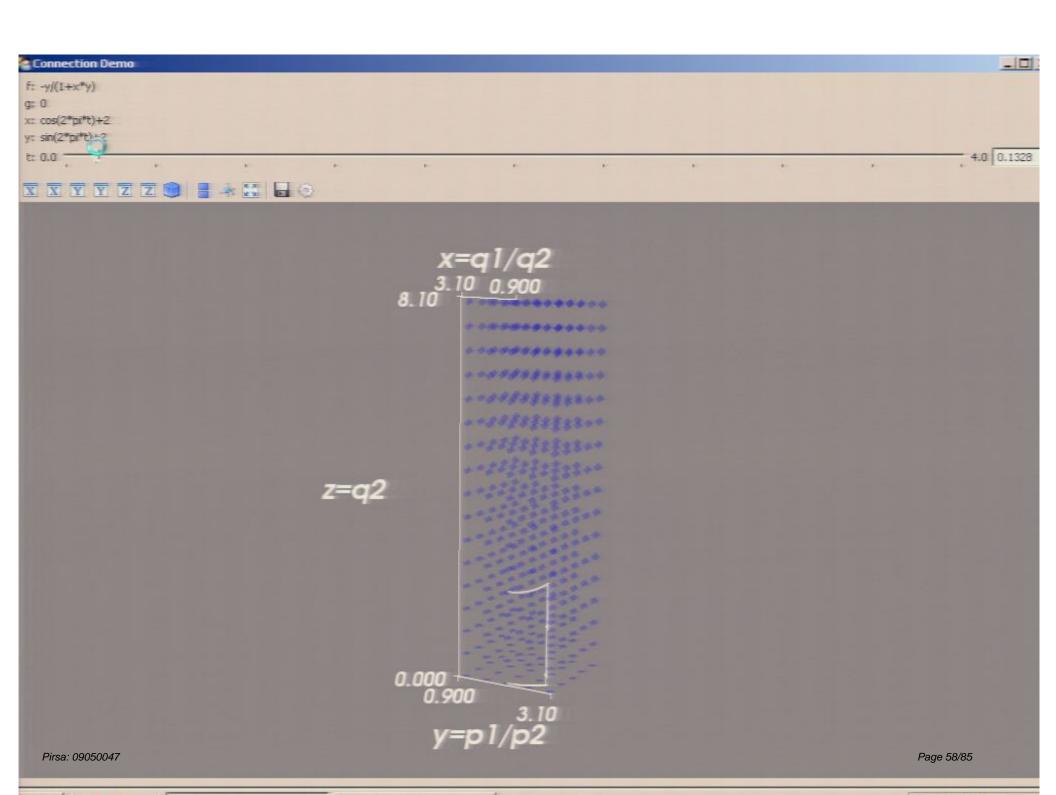












How does this link physics to biology? How potentially rich is the link?

- Price and quantity indices -> Abelian G. Theory
- Trade indices -> Non-Abelian G. Theory
- Human Preferences -> Infinite dim. Diff(S^1) Theory
- Seasonal Preferences-> Extended objects
- Rep. consumers-> Propagating distributions.
- Consumer Markets -> Distinguished Connections (a la BPST)

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 59/85

What is there for selection to do?

- We believe "Markets are the continuation of selection by other means".
- Core Neo-classical model, "H. Economicus", is forever emerging from it's a-biological origins.
- It begins as a purely somatic creature with total fidelity to proximate preferences which are unchanging and homogeneous. Germ, ultimate fitnesss preferences and changing tastes are put in weakly as afterthoughts.
- Corrections are sometimes called 'anomalies'.
- We are taking on the challenge of trying to build a new model "H. Selectus" which recovers "H. Economicus" as a degenerate case.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 60/85

Perfect Information: Scenes from the Original Free Market

 It is almost impossible for a biologist to work with a model which is a perturbation on 'perfect information' with 'rational expectations'

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 61/85

Perfect Information: Scenes from the Original Free Market



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Pirsa: 09050047 Page 62/85

Perfect Information: Scenes from the Original Free Market





Pirsa: 09050047

Page 63/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 64/85



Pirsa: 09050047 Page 65/85





Pirsa: 09050047 Page 66/85





Perhaps the most surprising claim in all modern science:

...tastes

neither change capriciously nor differ importantly between people. On this interpretation one does not argue over tastes for the same reason that one does not argue over the Rocky Mountainsboth are there, will be there next year, too, and are the same to all men." -Gary Becker and George Stigler, 1977, De Gustibus Non Est Disputandum

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 68/85

How did this meeting come to be?

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 69/85

Backstory continued....

- Then one day, I told Adil I spotted an anomaly in our data. Adil asked if I knew what it was. I didn't.
- Adil came immediately to our offices and told me: "Do you know the whole world is going to blow? All the banks are about to die. They are all sick with metastatic cancer."

• There are exactly two other times I've heard Adil say something wild like this: 1998 pre-ITCM and after

Last Slide

- Anyone can join. Could have been the 'apollo project'.
- Just send email to:
- economicmanhattanproject@gmail.com
- Send your name, specialty and how you would like to help.

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 71/85

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Anyone can join. Could have been the 'apollo

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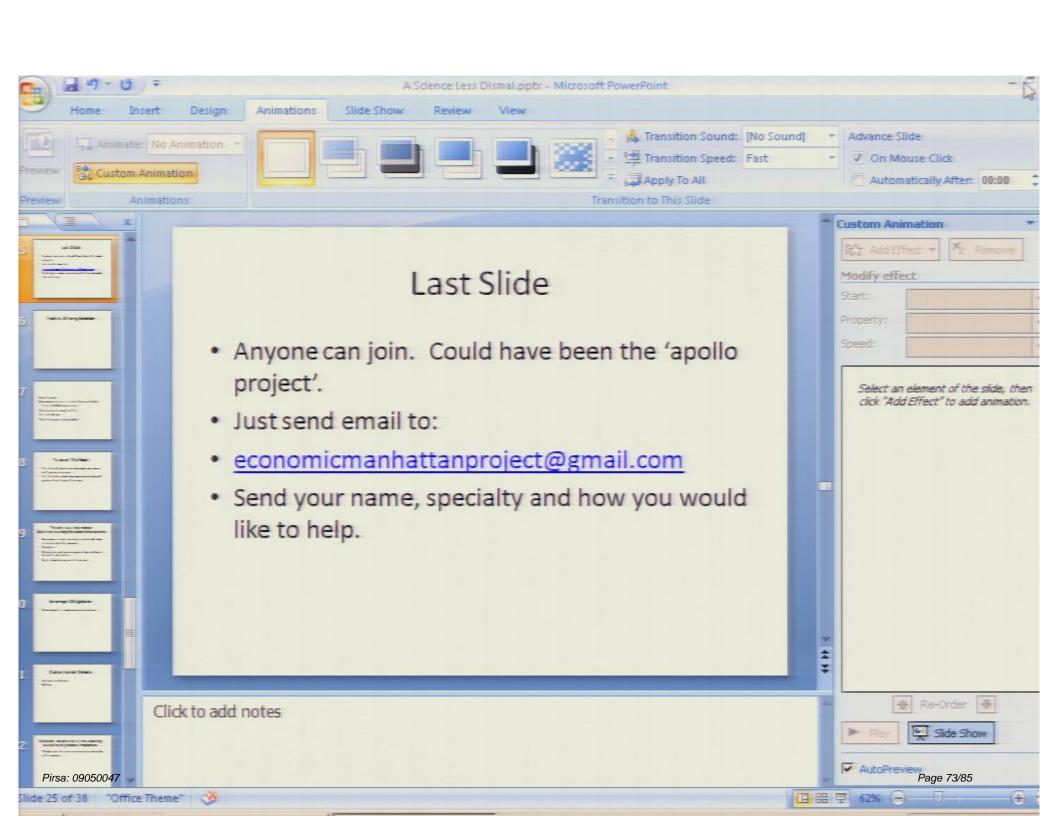
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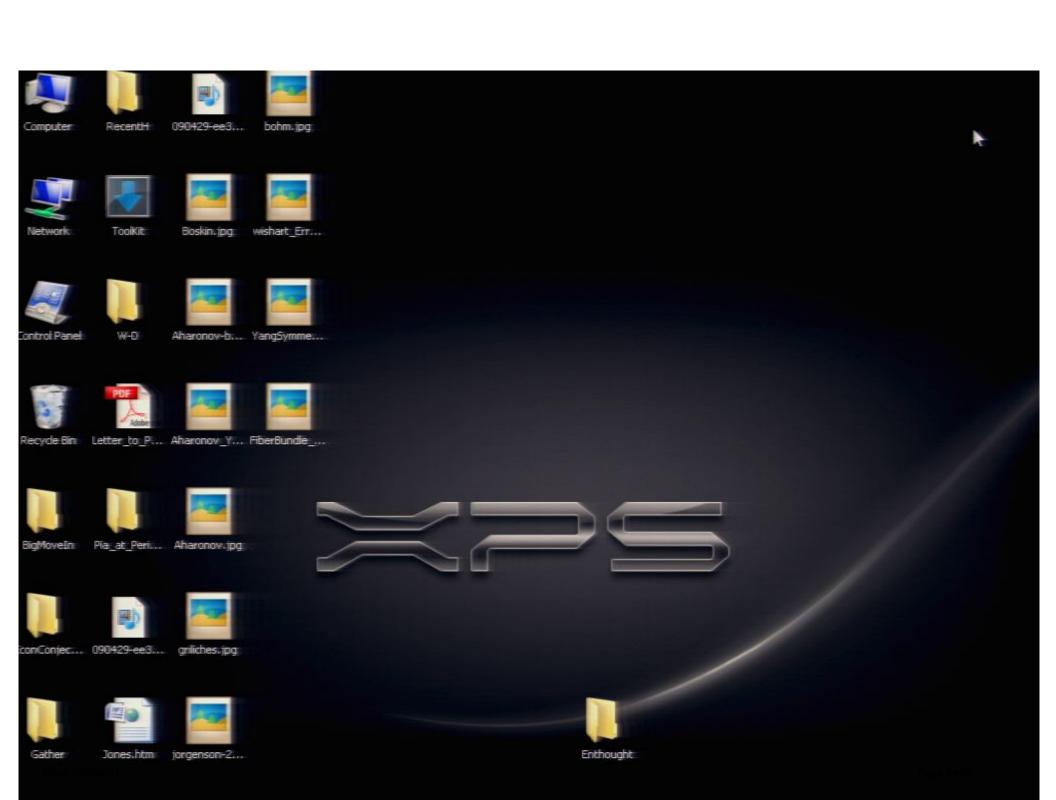
Just send email to:

economicmanhattanp

• Send your name, spec d how you would like to help.

Pirsa: 09050047





Pirsa: 09050047 Page 75/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 76/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 77/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 78/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 79/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 80/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Pirsa: 09050047

Page 82/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 83/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 84/85

Pirsa: 09050047 Page 85/85