

New Orleans, Sept 2021

Professor Strogatz,

Please forgive my intrusion — we corresponded briefly by email, but if you're like me, the email screen is more an obstacle to be overcome than a present to be opened. I thought I would send you a letter that you could either enjoy or put on the shelf, or disregard.

There are places where mathematics and philosophy overlap, and there are places where they do not. It's possible that the most interesting places are where they overlap and we don't yet know how. When I read your book Sync this spring, I had been working for several years on this problem.

— How can one produce an explanation without building from examples? —

I had been led to the problem several years earlier by the book Beginning of Infinity by the philosopher and mathematician David Deutsch. In this book there is a splendid demonstration of the idea of induction, the notion that new theories come from picking up observations and generalizing from them. Deutsch, following Karl Popper, who was himself following David Hume, explains how this is impossible, since one must already have an explanation in mind to make the observations, and the only thing observations can really do is either fit the explanation or refute it.

1992
This is Popper's epistemology - conjectures and refutations. His view is that all knowledge is created by conjecture, and then either supported or refuted by logical argument and experiment.

This raises the question of creativity - where do conjectures come from? - that is Perle's real interest. He poses it in the context of artificial general intelligence. The struggle to discover how to make creative machines, which he insists has so far achieved no progress at all.

The trouble is that it's obvious that conjectures come from human bodies, but how?

This is the question my own paper, enclosed, was written to attempt to answer. For a long time the title of this idea was "The Human Body is a Guess," but that proved so confusing I abandoned it. After reading your book I realized there was another way to describe the idea I had in mind - The Human Body is a Synchronizer - which is what I was trying to say all along.

I hope you find the time to look it over - I've had a series of good editors but I think I could do an improving it quite a bit. Please let me know what you think -
charlie.mumford@gmail.com

Respectfully,

Charlie