# Mechanisms for Generating Power-Law Size Distributions, Part 4

Last updated: 2025/10/08, 21:16:55 EDT

## Principles of Complex Systems, Vols. 1, 2, 3D, 4 Fourever, V for Vendetta


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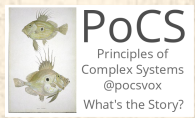
University of Vermont | Santa Fe Institute







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And the winner is ...?
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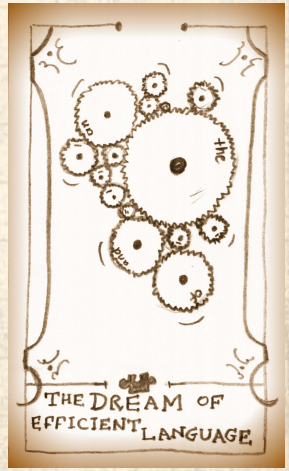

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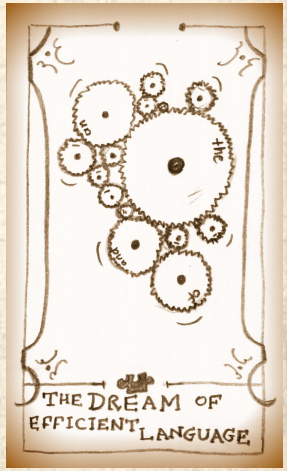

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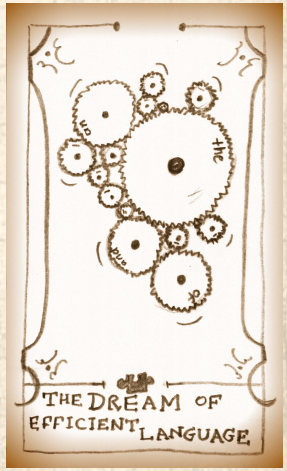

# Outline



Optimization
- Minimal Cost
- Mandelbrot vs. Simon
- Assumptions
- Model
- Analysis
- And the winner is ...?

Nutshell

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## Optimization

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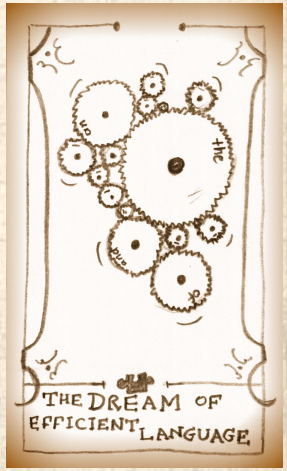
## References



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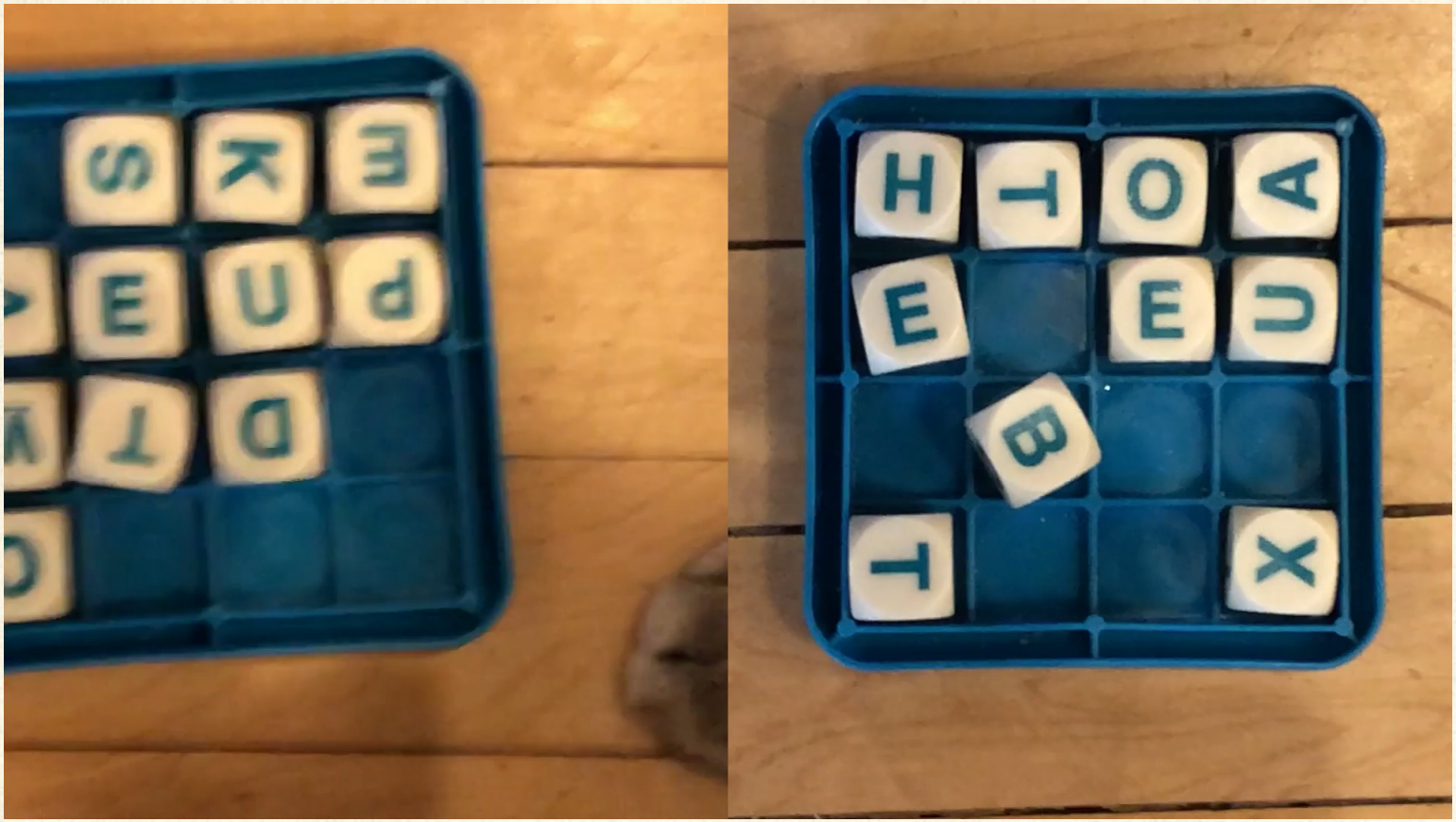
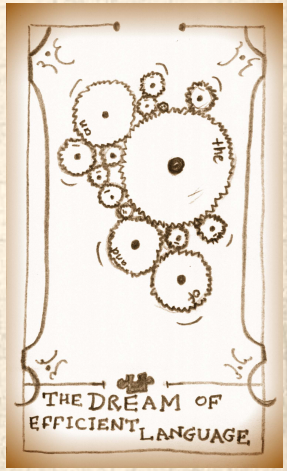
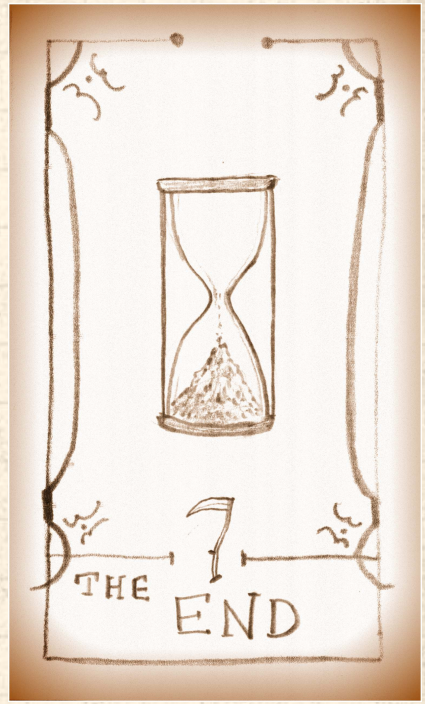



THE SUN
THE GOLDEN AGE OF REDUCTIONISM
THE MANIFESTO
THE WELL OF SCALES
THE LAWS OF DECAYING POWER
THE UNEXPECTED TRANSFIGURATION
MINISTRY OF RANDOM WALKS
THE RICH GET RICHER
THE DREAM OF EFFICIENT LANGUAGE
THE LAW OF DIGITS FIRST
THE SURPRISE OF BEING ROBUST YET FRAGILE
THE MISREADING OF THE BOOK OF SAND
THE MANY TAILS OF MANY TAILS
THE MEASURING
THE DATA POOR
THE PONDERING DATA
THE CHARMS OF THE MANY WITHIN PATHS
THE DOORS THAT SHOULD NOT BE OPENED
THE KNOWLEDGE OF DEAD MONKS
THE EMERGENCE OF STRUCTURE
THE EMERGENCE OF DESTRUCTION
THE EMERGENCE OF THINKING
It was the best of times,
THE EMERGENCE OF STORIES
THE MECHANICS STATISTICAL
TWO THRESHOLDS OF PERCOLATION
THE NETWORKS COMPLEX
THE ELEMENTS OF WEBS
THE BIRDS OF A FEATHER
THE BIRDS OF NOT A FEATHER
THE ARK OF THE RANDOM NETWORK
THE STRANGENESS OF FRIENDS
THE SMALLNESS OF WORLDS
THE THEORY OF SIX DEGREES
THE NETWORKS FREE OF SCALE
CLASSIFIED PHOENIX BIO HAZARD
THE CONTAGION
THE CONFUSION OF CONTAGIONS
THE DISEASE OF RANDOM MIXING
THE UNENDING PANDEMICS
THE THRESHOLDS OF THE MIND
THE SOCIAL WILD
THE SOCIAL CONTAGION
THE RATIO OF GAIN
THE MECHANICS OF FAME
THE TALK OF FAME
THE STORIES CONTAGIOUS
THE JOHN DORY
THE ADJACENT NARRATIVES
THE STORYTELLERS
THE FATED ASTRAL PATH
THE PATHS OF UNIVERSALITY
THE DEPENDENT PATHS
THE TROUSERS OF BIFURCATING REALITIES
THE UNKNOWN MECHANISM
THE LANDSCAPE OF FORKING PATHS
THE NETWORKS OF BLOOD
THE TREES OF REALITY
THE ORDERS OF STREAMS
THE LAWS OF BRANCHING
THE SCALING OF BROKEN HIERARCHIES
THE BRAID OR THE BRANCH
THE LAW OF OPTIMAL FORKS
THE CHURCH OF QUARTERPLAY
THE TRUTHICIDE
THE FAMILY OF PANCAKE COWS
THE FAMILY OF SPHERICAL COWS
THE IMPROBABLE TACHYDERM
THE ILL-SCALING OF ALLOMETRIC BODIES
THE SUPPLY MOST FAIR
THE SUPPLY TO THE MOST
THE DARK ART OF GENERATING FUNCTIONS
THE RANDOM SUM OF RANDOMNESS
THE TWO-SIDED WORLDS
THE STORIES AND THE TROPES
THE TRUTH OF DIFFUSION
THE UNVEILING OF HIDDEN POWERS
THE SCRYING OF THE SHAPES OF THINGS


THE END

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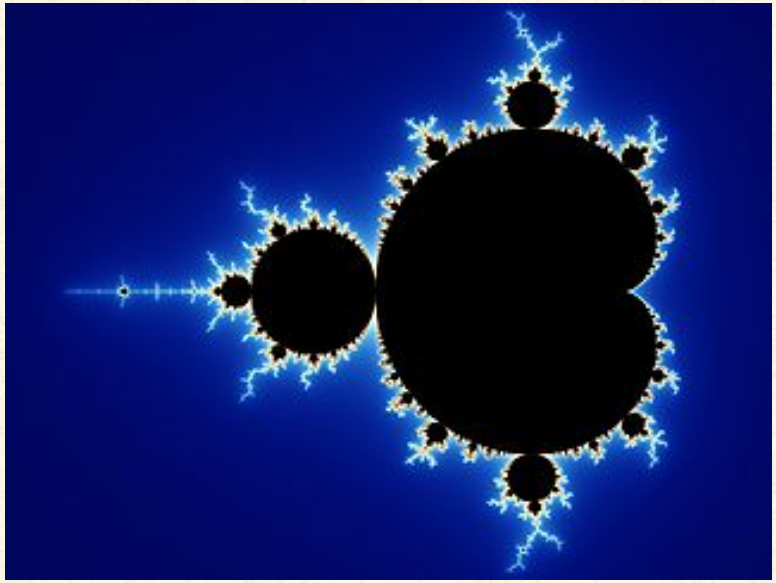
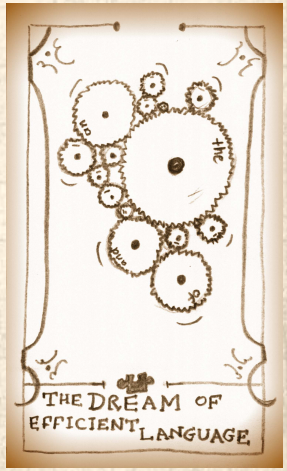
# Benoît Mandelbrot



- Mandelbrot = father of fractals
- Mandelbrot = almond bread
- Bonus Mandelbrot set action: here.

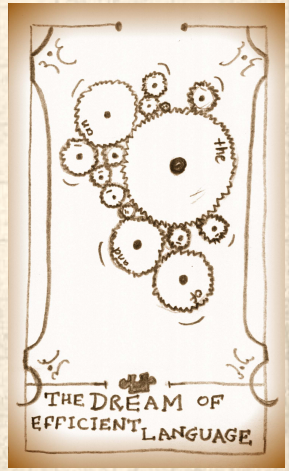


# Another approach:



## Benoît Mandelbrot

- Derived Zipf's law through optimization [8]
- Idea: Language is efficient
- Communicate as much information as possible for as little cost
- Need measures of information ($H$) and average cost ($C$) ...
- Language evolves to maximize $H/C$, the amount of information per average cost.
- Equivalently: minimize $C/H$.
- Recurring theme: what role does optimization play in complex systems?



# The Quickening—Mandelbrot v. Simon:



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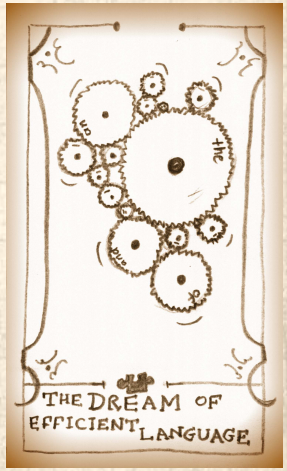
## There Can Be Only One:


- Things there should be only one of: Theory, Highlander Films.
- Feel free to play Queen's It's a Kind of Magic in your head (funding remains tight).



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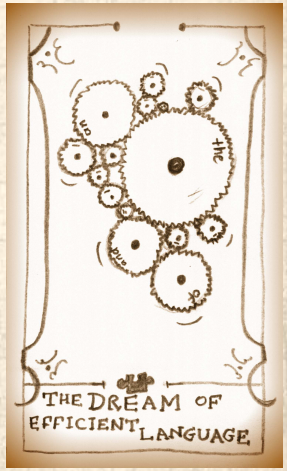
## Now let us "enjoy" the Trailer for Highlander:

## Or: Two theories enter, one theory leaves



*We were born to be Princes of the Universe*



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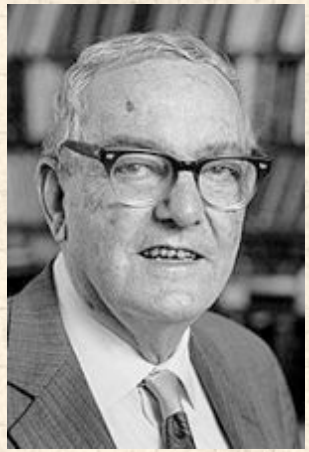
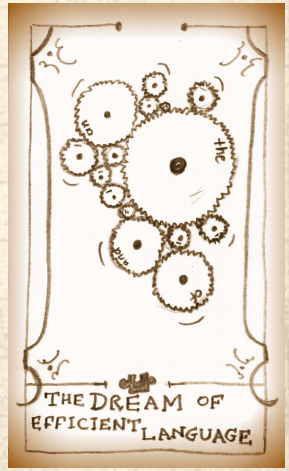
vs.



## Mandelbrot vs. Simon:

- Mandelbrot (1953): "An Informational Theory of the Statistical Structure of Languages" [8]
- Simon (1955): "On a class of skew distribution functions" [14]
- Mandelbrot (1959): "A note on a class of skew distribution functions: analysis and critique of a paper by H.A. Simon" [9]
- Simon (1960): "Some further notes on a class of skew distribution functions" [15]



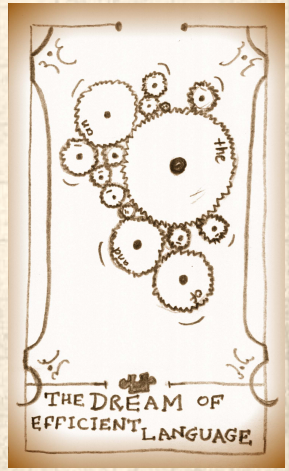
*I have no rival, No man can be my equal*



vs.

## Mandelbrot vs. Simon:

- Mandelbrot (1961): "Final note on a class of skew distribution functions: analysis and critique of a model due to H.A. Simon" [10]
- Simon (1961): "Reply to 'final note' by Benoit Mandelbrot" [17]
- Mandelbrot (1961): "Post scriptum to 'final note'" [11]
- Simon (1961): "Reply to Dr. Mandelbrot's post scriptum" [16]



## Mandelbrot:

"We shall restate in detail our 1959 objections to Simon's 1955 model for the Pareto-Yule-Zipf distribution. Our objections are valid quite irrespectively of the sign of p-1, so that most of Simon's (1960) reply was irrelevant." [10]

## Simon:

"Dr. Mandelbrot has proposed a new set of objections to my 1955 models of the Yule distribution. Like his earlier objections, these are invalid." [17]

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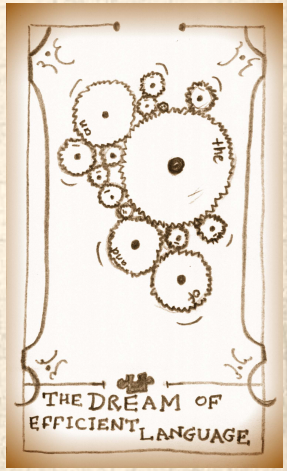

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**Dan T. said,**
August 5, 2010 @ 10:58 am

And even half a century after publication, those papers are locked up behind a paywall; academic publishing sucks.

[(myl) Weird, isn't it? Simon's 1955 paper is available here, and his first response to Mandelbrot is here, but I haven't been able to find accessible copies of the other episodes. Penn doesn't have an online subscription to Information & Control, and the physical copies of the bound journals are in remote storage. 25 years ago I made xerox copies of the exchange in the Bell Labs library, but lord knows which dusty box or folder those are in. I once took the trouble to get the relevant issues fetched for me at Penn, and made xeroxes, but I can't remember where I put those either. I would have liked to be able to find them today, in order to quote some of the extraordinary examples of formal academic invective in the exchange. As I recall, one of them accuses the other of an undergraduate error in calculus, and the other responds with a counter-accusation of a high-school level error in algebra. Or something like that.

You can get some of the flavor of the exchange from the abstracts of the last three contributions, which are available without paying $31.50 a shot:

Language Log blog post, 2010/08/05

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**A note on a class of skew distribution functions: Analysis and critique of a paper by H. A. Simon**

**Author:** Benoit Mandelbrot
**Publication:** Information and Control
**Publisher:** Elsevier
**Date:** April 1959



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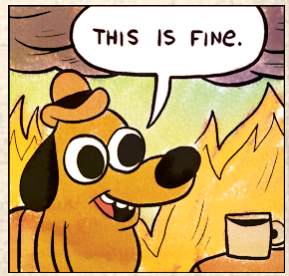


Language Log blog post, 2010/08/05

# Zipfarama via Optimization:



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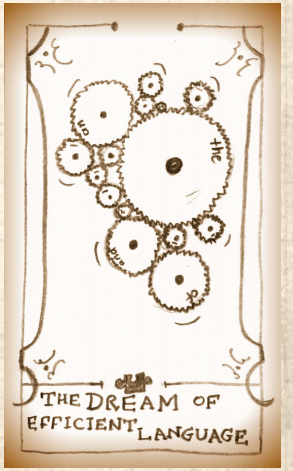
## Mandelbrot's Assumptions:

- Language contains $n$ words: $w_1, w_2, \ldots, w_n$.
- $i$th word appears with probability $p_i$
- Words appear randomly according to this distribution (obviously not true ...)
- Words = composition of letters is important
- Alphabet contains $m$ letters
- Words are ordered by length (shortest first)



# Zipfarama via Optimization:



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## Word Cost

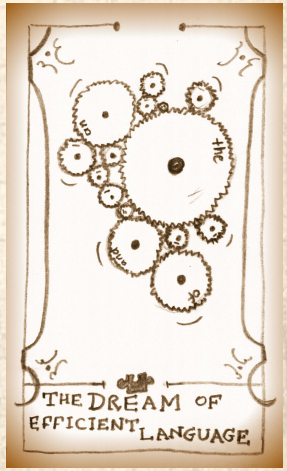
- Length of word (plus a space)
- Word length was irrelevant for Simon's method

## Objection

- Real words don't use all letter sequences

## Objections to Objection

- Maybe real words roughly follow this pattern (?)
- Words can be encoded this way
- Na na na-na naaaaa ...



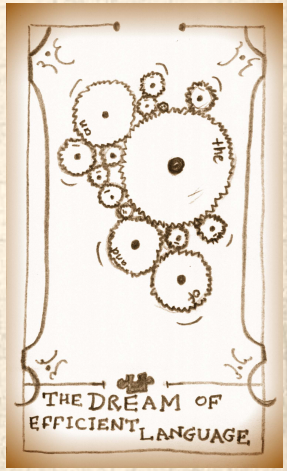
# Zipfarama via Optimization:



## Binary alphabet plus a space symbol

| $i$ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| word | 1 | 10 | 11 | 100 | 101 | 110 | 111 | 1000 |
| length | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| $1 + \log_2 i$ | 1 | 2 | 2.58 | 3 | 3.32 | 3.58 | 3.81 | 4 |

- Word length of $2^k$th word: $= k + 1 = 1 + \log_2 2^k$
- Word length of $i$th word $\simeq 1 + \log_2 i$
- For an alphabet with $m$ letters, word length of $i$th word $\simeq 1 + \log_m i$.



# Zipfarama via Optimization:



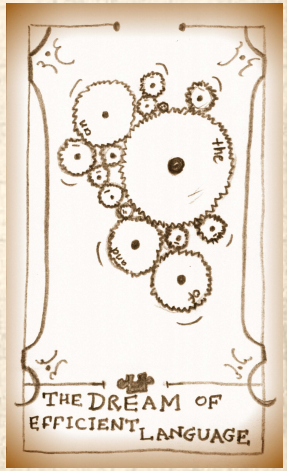
## Total Cost $C$

- Cost of the $i$th word: $C_i \simeq 1 + \log_m i$
- Cost of the $i$th word plus space: $C_i \simeq 1 + \log_m (i+1)$
- Subtract fixed cost: $C_i' = C_i - 1 \simeq \log_m (i+1)$
- Simplify base of logarithm:

$$C_i' \simeq \log_m (i+1) = \frac{\log_e (i+1)}{\log_e m} \propto \log_e (i+1)$$

- Total Cost:

$$C \sim \sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i C_i' \propto \sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i \log_e (i+1)$$



# Zipfarama via Optimization:

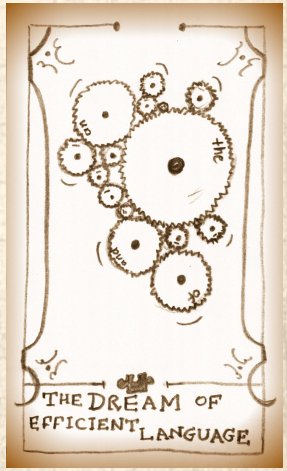


## Information Measure

- Use Shannon's Entropy (or Uncertainty):

$$H = \sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i \frac{1}{\log_2 p_i}$$

- (allegedly) von Neumann suggested 'entropy' ...
- Proportional to average number of bits needed to encode each 'word' based on frequency of occurrence
- $-\log_2 p_i = \log_2 1/p_i$ = minimum number of bits needed to distinguish event $i$ from all others
- If $p_i = 1/2$, need only 1 bit ($\log_2 1/p_i = 1$)
- If $p_i = 1/64$, need 6 bits ($\log_2 1/p_i = 6$)



# Zipfarama via Optimization:

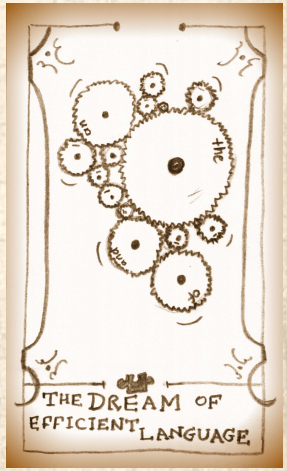


## Information Measure

- Use a slightly simpler form:

$$H = -\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i \log_e p_i / \log_e 2 = -g \sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i \log_e p_i$$

where $g = 1/\log_e 2$



# Zipfarama via Optimization:



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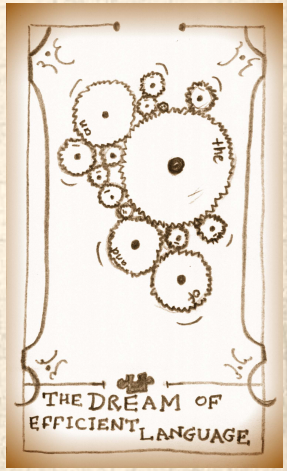
- Minimize

$$F(p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n) = C/H$$

subject to constraint

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i = 1$$

- Tension:
  (1) Shorter words are cheaper
  (2) Longer words are more informative (rarer)



# Zipfarama via Optimization:

## Time for Lagrange Multipliers:

Minimize

$$\Psi(p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n) =$$

$$F(p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n) + \lambda G(p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n)$$

where

$$F(p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n) = \frac{C}{H} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i \log_e (i+1)}{-g \sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i \log_e p_i}$$

and the constraint function is

$$G(p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} p_i - 1 \, (= 0)$$

Insert assignment question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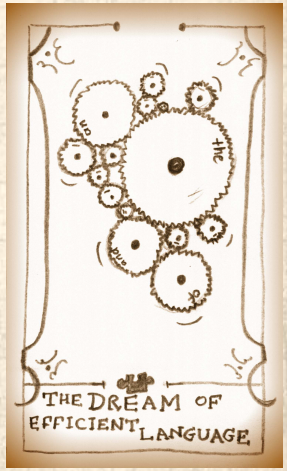


# Zipfarama via Optimization:

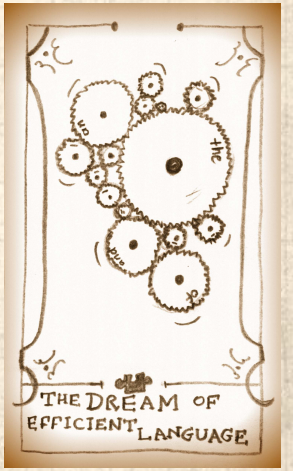


## Some mild suffering leads to:

$$p_j = e^{-1-\lambda H^2/gC}(j+1)^{-H/gC} \propto (j+1)^{-H/gC}$$

- A power law appears [applause]: $\boxed{\alpha = H/gC}$
- Next: sneakily deduce $\lambda$ in terms of $g$, $C$, and $H$.
- Find

$$p_j = (j+1)^{-H/gC}$$



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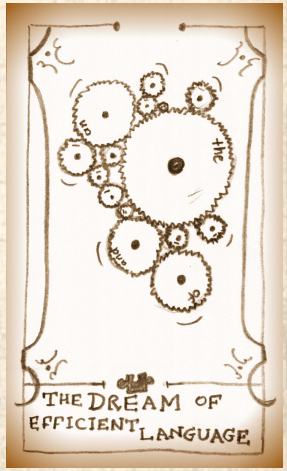
## Finding the exponent

- Now use the normalization constraint:

$$1 = \sum_{j=1}^{n} p_j = \sum_{j=1}^{n} (j+1)^{-H/gC} = \sum_{j=1}^{n} (j+1)^{-\alpha}$$

- As $n \to \infty$, we end up with $\zeta(H/gC) = 2$ where $\zeta$ is the Riemann Zeta Function
- Gives $\alpha \simeq 1.73$ ($> 1$, too high) or $\gamma = 1 + \frac{1}{\alpha} \simeq 1.58$ (very wild)
- If cost function changes ($j + 1 \to j + a$) then exponent is tunable
- Increase $a$, decrease $\alpha$



# Zipfarama via Optimization:



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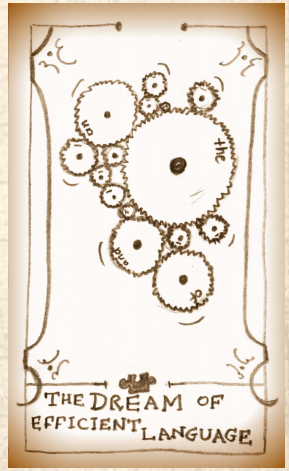
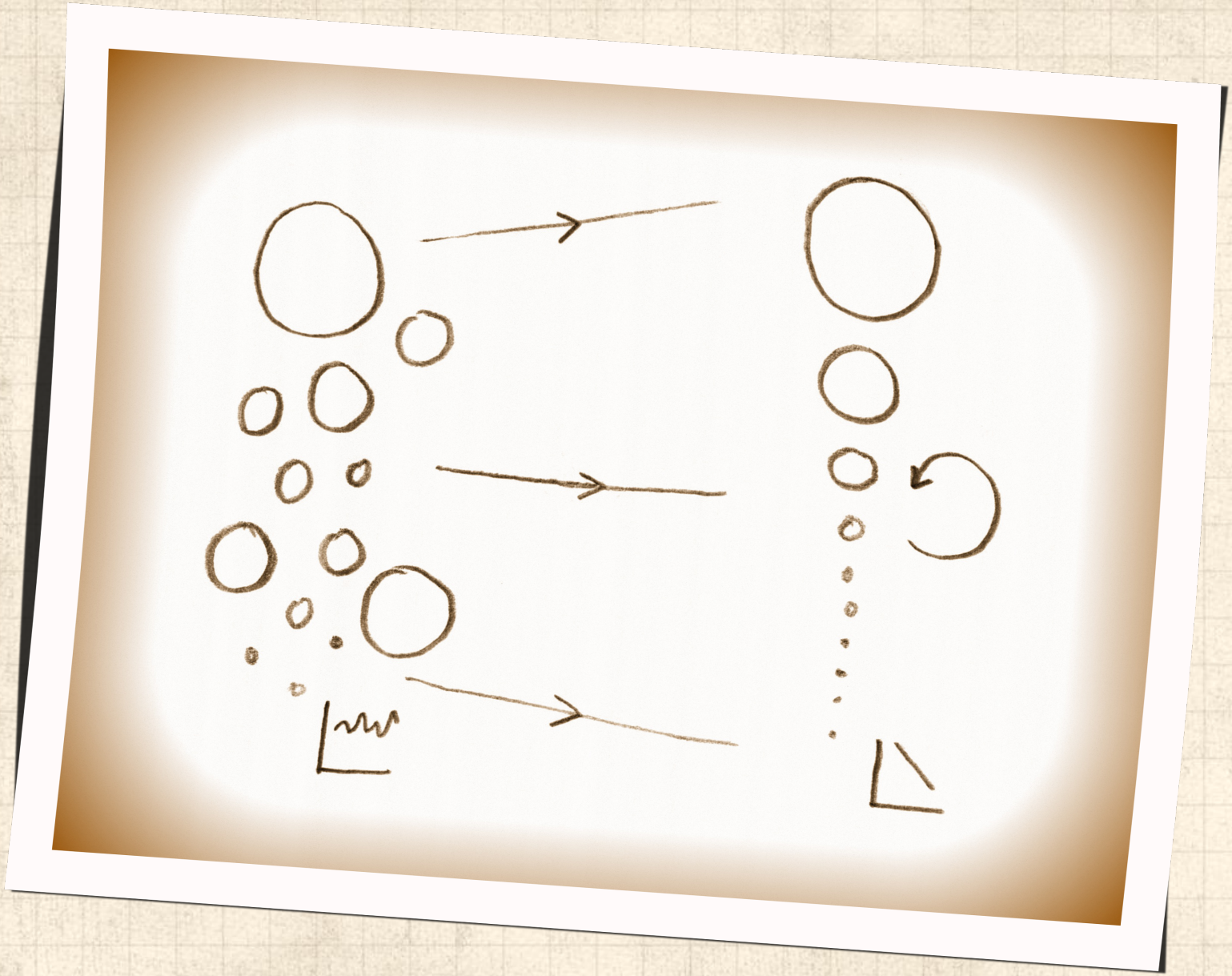
## All told:

- Reasonable approach: Optimization is at work in evolutionary processes
- But optimization can involve many incommensurate elephants: monetary cost, robustness, happiness, ...
- Mandelbrot's argument is not super convincing
- Exponent depends too much on a loose definition of cost







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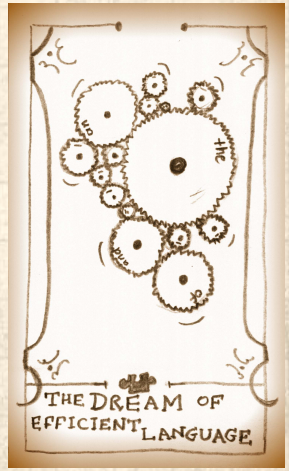
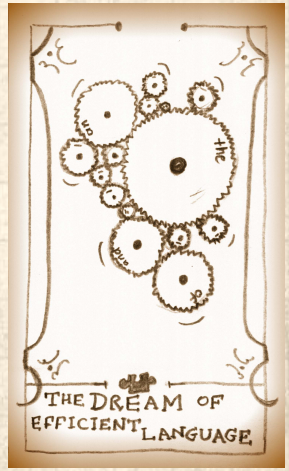


## From the discussion at the end of Mandelbrot's paper:

- A. S. C. Ross: "M. Mandelbrot states that 'the actual direction of evolution (sc. of language) is, in fact, towards fuller and fuller utilization of places'. We are, in fact, completely without evidence as to the existence of any 'direction of evolution' in language, and it is axiomatic that we shall remain so. Many philologists would deny that a 'direction of evolution' could be theoretically possible; thus I myself take the view that a language develops in what is essentially a purely random manner."
- Mandelbrot: "As to the 'fundamental linguistic units being the least possible differences between pairs of utterances' this is a logical consequence of the fact that two is the least integer greater than one."



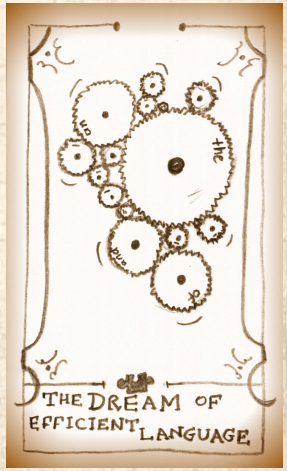
# More:



## Reconciling Mandelbrot and Simon

- Mixture of local optimization and randomness
- Numerous efforts ...

1. Carlson and Doyle, 1999:
   Highly Optimized Tolerance (HOT)—Evolved/Engineered Robustness [2, 3]
2. Ferrer i Cancho and Solé, 2002:
   Zipf's Principle of Least Effort [6]
3. D'Souza et al., 2007:
   Scale-free networks [4]



# More



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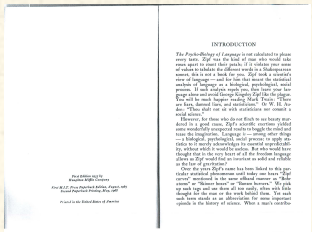
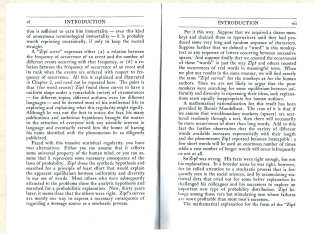
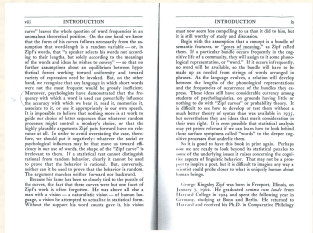
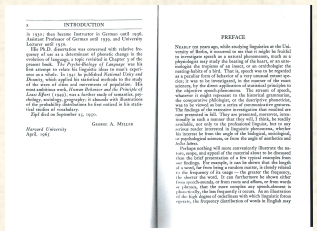
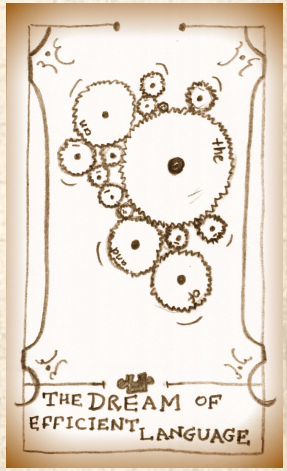
## Other mechanisms:

- Much argument about whether or not monkeys typing could produce Zipf's law ... (Miller, 1957) [12]
- Miller gets to slap Zipf rather rudely in an introduction to a 1965 reprint of Zipf's "Psycho-biology of Language" [13, 18]
- Let us now slap Miller around by simply reading his words out (see next slides):

- Side note: Miller mentions "Genes of Language."
- Still fighting: "Random Texts Do Not Exhibit the Real Zipf's Law-Like Rank Distribution" [5] by Ferrer-i-Cancho and Elvevåg, 2010.

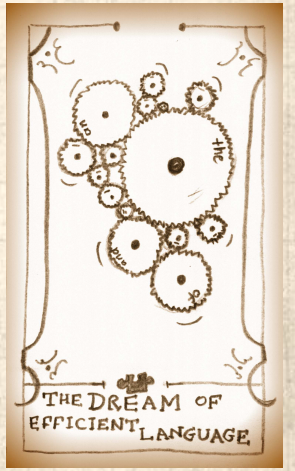


# INTRODUCTION

*The Psycho-Biology of Language* is not calculated to please every taste. Zipf was the kind of man who would take roses apart to count their petals; if it violates your sense of values to tabulate the different words in a Shakespearean sonnet, this is not a book for you. Zipf took a scientist's view of language — and for him that meant the statistical analysis of language as a biological, psychological, social process. If such analysis repels you, then leave your language alone and avoid George Kingsley Zipf like the plague. You will be much happier reading Mark Twain: "There are liars, damned liars, and statisticians." Or W. H. Auden: "Thou shalt not sit with statisticians nor commit a social science."

However, for those who do not flinch to see beauty murdered in a good cause, Zipf's scientific exertions yielded some wonderfully unexpected results to boggle the mind and tease the imagination. Language *is* — among other things — a biological, psychological, social process; to apply statistics to it merely acknowledges its essential unpredictability, without which it would be useless. But who would have thought that in the very heart of all the freedom language allows us Zipf would find an invariant as solid and reliable as the law of gravitation?





Put it this way. Suppose that we acquired a dozen monkeys and chained them to typewriters until they had produced some very long and random sequence of characters. Suppose further that we defined a "word" in this monkey-text as any sequence of letters occurring between successive spaces. And suppose finally that we counted the occurrences of these "words" in just the way Zipf and others counted the occurrences of real words in meaningful texts. When we plot our results in the same manner, we will find exactly the same "Zipf curves" for the monkeys as for the human authors. Since we are not likely to argue that the poor monkeys were searching for some equilibrium between uniformity and diversity in expressing their ideas, such explanations seem equally inappropriate for human authors.

A mathematical rationalization for this result has been provided by Benoit Mandelbrot. The crux of it is that if we assume that word-boundary markers (spaces) are scattered randomly through a text, then there will necessarily be more occurrences of short than long words. Add to this fact the further observation that the variety of different words available increases exponentially with their length and the phenomenon Zipf reported becomes inescapable: a few short words will be used an enormous number of times while a vast number of longer words will occur infrequently or not at all.

So Zipf was wrong. His facts were right enough, but not his explanations. In a broader sense he was right, however, for he called attention to a stochastic process that is frequently seen in the social sciences, and by accumulating statistical data that cried out for some better explanation he challenged his colleagues and his successors to explore an important new type of probability distribution. Zipf belongs among those rare but stimulating men whose failures are more profitable than most men's successes.



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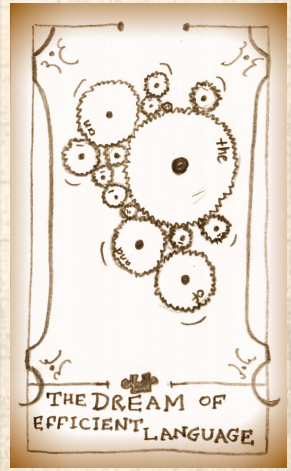
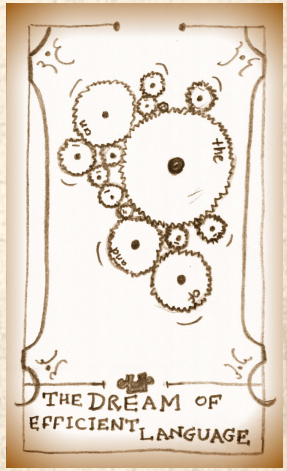


# So who's right?



Bornholdt and Ebel (PRE), 2001:
"World Wide Web scaling exponent from Simon's 1955 model" [1].

- Show Simon's model fares well.
- Recall $\rho$ = probability new flavor appears.
- Alta Vista crawls in approximately 6 month period in 1999 give $\rho \simeq 0.10$
- Leads to $\gamma = 1 + \frac{1}{1-\rho} \simeq 2.1$ for in-link distribution.
- Cite direct measurement of $\gamma$ at the time: $2.1 \pm 0.1$ and 2.09 in two studies.



# So who's right?



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## Recent evidence for Zipf's law ...

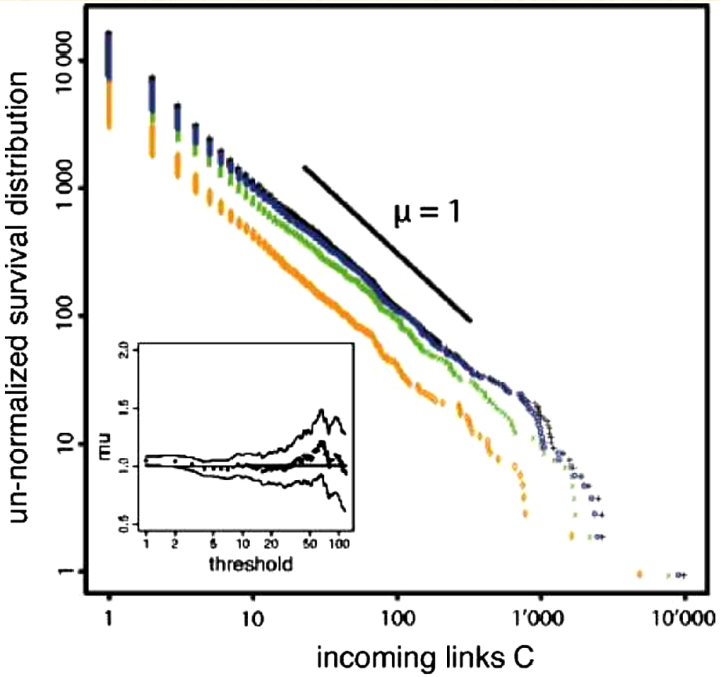
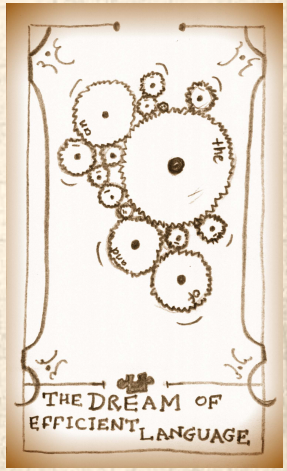



FIG. 1 (color online). (Color Online) Log-log plot of the number of packages in four Debian Linux Distributions with more than $C$ in-directed links. The four Debian Linux Distributions are Woody (19.07.2002) (orange diamonds), Sarge (06.06.2005) (green crosses), Etch (15.08.2007) (blue circles), Lenny (15.12.2007) (black+'s). The inset shows the maximum likelihood estimate (MLE) of the exponent $\mu$ together with two boundaries defining its 95% confidence interval (approximately given by $1 \pm 2/\sqrt{n}$, where $n$ is the number of data points using in the MLE), as a function of the lower threshold. The MLE has been modified from the standard Hill estimator to take into account the discreteness of $C$.

Maillart et al., PRL, 2008:
"Empirical Tests of Zipf's Law Mechanism in Open Source Linux Distribution" [7]



# So who's right?



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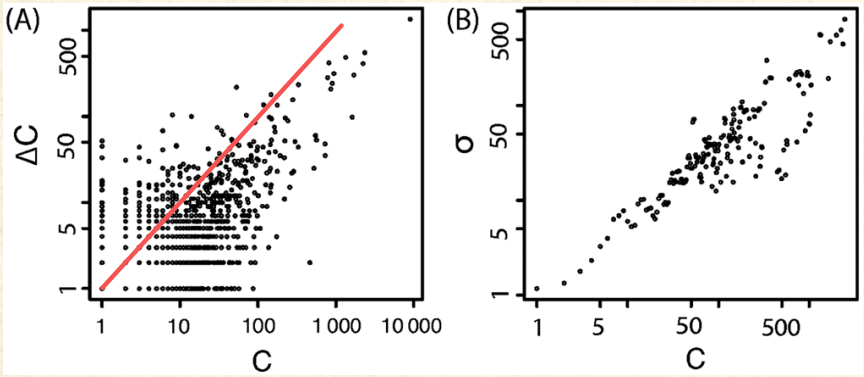
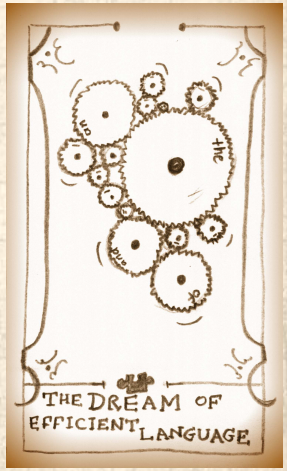



FIG. 2. Left panel: Plots of $\Delta C$ versus $C$ from the Etch release (15.08.2007) to the latest Lenny version (05.05.2008) in double logarithmic scale. Only positive values are displayed. The linear regression $\Delta C = R \times C + C_0$ is significant at the 95% confidence level, with a small value $C_0 = 0.3$ at the origin and $R = 0.09$. Right panel: same as left panel for the standard deviation of $\Delta C$.

- Red line added.
- Rough, approximately linear relationship between $C$ number of in-links and $\Delta C$.[1]

- More complicated mechanism: Packages are deleted, merge, get renamed.




[1] Breaks down for large $C$. These tick marks are a human rights violation.

# Nutshell:



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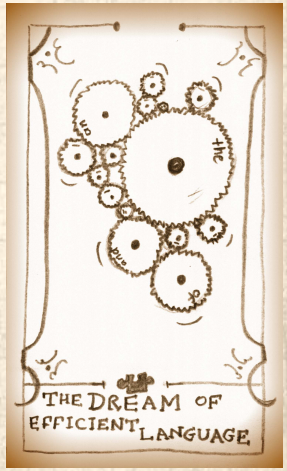
## Talking points:

- Simonish random 'rich-get-richer' models agree in detail with empirical observations.
- But it completely fails in the limit it is supposed to work (more later).
- Power-lawfulness: Mandelbrot's optimality is still apparent.
- Maybe optimality arises for free in Random Competitive Replication rich-get-richer models.



## Neural reboot: Walking with a baby robin

Tsubasa.

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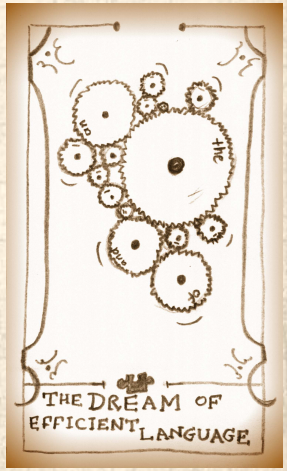

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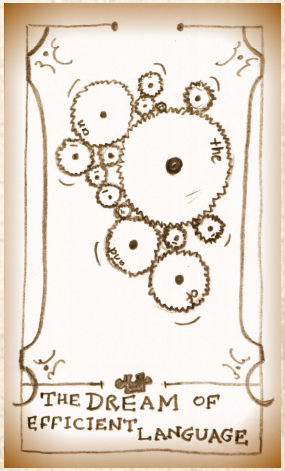

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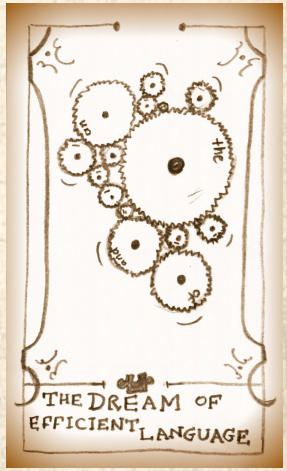

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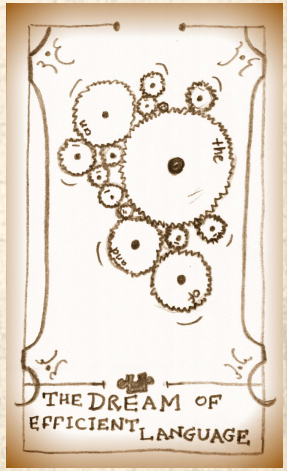

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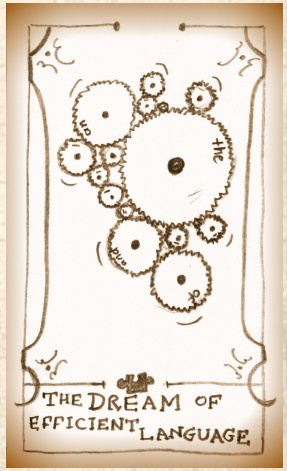

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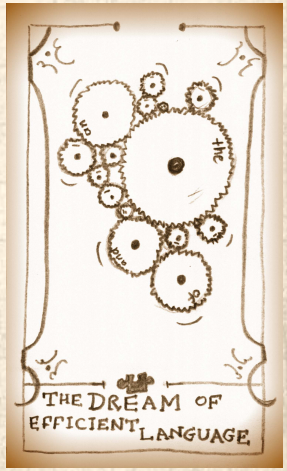

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