Subject: Re: Thought experiment & why sonic indistinguishability is not a bad thing
Posted by hurdy_gurdyman on Thu, 12 Jan 2006 14:35:01 GMT
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It seems like the history of most modern musical instruments has been to make them louder. I have examples of different historical instruments (origional and/or replicas) of the instruments I play, including fiddle (violin to you educated folks), banjo, mandolin, guitar and bagpipes. Over the last couple of centuries they have all gotten louder. Each new innovation has been to make the instrument louder so it can be heard better in an orchestra (even a four piece one). Unfortunately, all the other instruments are doing the same evolution. The drawback (sacrifice?) of all this is that the instruments get brighter and harsher sounding. An example would be the banjo (all banjo jokes aside). It started out with a gourd for a body and a fretless neck. This gave a nice mellow and thumpy sound. After a while someone replaced the gourd with a round wooden cheese box because it was sturdier and would take a beating better. It was noticed it became louder as well. Within a 100 year period all kinds of metal stuff was added, as well as harder wood, because each innovation made the instrument louder. It also made the instrument brighter and more metalic sounding. Frets were added, which added more brightness. Listen to a 1920's Gibson Mastertone like most Bluegrass banjos are patterned after, then listen to a 1850's minstrel banjo, then listen to an origional type gourd banjo (banjar). They don't even sound like the same class of instument. The modern one is almost unpleasant to listen to intimately. This seems to be similar to the evolution of the other instruments I'm very familiar with. I prefer the old styles for shear listening pleasure, just like I still enjoy tube amps and speakers that don't burn my ears off with etched detail. Sorry about the rant, but it's one of my pet peeves with music today and this seemed like a good place to vent. Dave