

Absolutely!

Chuck Domehead never goes anywhere alone, except the potted meats shop on 12th Street. "I never go anywhere alone!" he proudly proclaims, inserting his thumbs beneath the waistband of his polyester pants and puffing out his chest. "Except Maynard's Mushy Meats. I always go there alone ... except when Mother visits."

Chuck is an absolutist—

"But within limits!"

Thank you, Chuck. And that brings us to today's topic: absolutists.

Here are just a sampling of absolutist statements I carefully curated from the vast imaginary crowd of absolutists that occupied my front stoop earlier this afternoon:

"I'm a Raw Foods absolutist, except carrots."

"I'm a 'Refer Madness' absolutist, but marijuana should be legalized."

"I'm a Graowf's Wisdom absolutist, as long as I agree with him."

"I'm an anti-clown absolutist, except when they bleed."

"I'm a Freedom of Peanut Cookery absolutist, but not boiled."

I've never seen a clown bleed. I don't think clowns have blood inside them, just a rainbow of liquid latex. Or maybe just rainbows. Or gas.

My 2nd cousin's aunt, on my mother's dad's uncle's side, once punctured a clown. She decorated a cake.

When Chuck goes to Maynard's Mushy Meats, with or without his

mother, he always takes a list. Chuck is a chronic list maker. He believes that a list ensures the best possible outcome to any outing. "I always make a list, except when I don't need one!" Maynard fills Chuck's reusable grocery bag with the meats on Chuck's list while Chuck waits. "I'm a Go Green absolutist! Well, except when it comes to the A/C. My palmist says I have Thermal Cloud Syndrome, so any warmth is extremely uncomfortable – debilitating even – for me. I'm like the planet. That's why I'm a Go Green absolutist!"

We did not eat the cake, even though it didn't go stale in the mail.

Chuck is also a moral relativist. "I believe that morality is absolutely relative. Right and wrong is different for each person, except for a few obvious things, like murder and cutting in line. Those things are always wrong, because of science."

The cake was pretty.

Science has yet to entirely fathom the mysterious depths of clown humor. People laugh at clowns, but the reasons why people find clowns – or anything – funny are not entirely clear, though Carl von Haigerbund, imminently a psychologist, has posited a theory (in his 2nd go at his doctoral dissertation) that it has to do with the uncanny quality of clowns to remind every living person of his/her father. Doug Stramboleeny, astrophysicist, asserts that it is due to social peer pressure, where the preconceived, even if false, cultural notion that clowns are funny causes people to laugh so they don't look foolish to the guy in the next seat with the chili stain on his "Breadboards and Circuitses" t-shirt. "Dr. Stramboleeny has PhD's in astrophysics and physics, so he's an expert in sociology, too," Chuck explains, "but he's wrong, because of biology."

Chuck finds clowns funny because of evolution. "Well, sure,

there doesn't *seem* to be a survival advantage to finding clowns funny, but once you toss a few million years in the recipe, well ... there you go!" Chuck believes the human species is the result of natural selection guided evolution. "I'm an Evolution Absolutist! Except for abstract reason. That can't possibly be a product of pseudo-random mutation, or we couldn't trust even our theories about evolution. But thank the universe we've had all that time, or where would we be then? Still sucking the slimy skin off the primordial ocean, I'd say!"

Get your good-natured elbow out of my ribs, there, Chuck. "Sorry." It's OK.

Chuck explains, "Certain things are so clearly non-negotiable, that they must be treated with absolutitude. You know, like $1+1=2$ and experts are always right – well, except Dr. Stramboleeny – and, ... uh ... $2+2=4$, and ... oceans! You know, stuff like that."

I asked Chuck, "So, what sets those absolutes in stone, so to speak, would you say?"

Chuck chuckles. "I'm an absolutist," he says, "except when I'm not."

Here, Chuck, have some cake.