Subject: Re: Incorrect behavior of /NAN
Posted by James Kuyper on Fri, 05 Apr 2002 22:53:40 GMT
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Kenneth Bowman wrote:

> In article <onu1qpzubn.fsf@cow.physics.wisc.edu>,
> Craig Markwardt <craigmnet@cow.physics.wisc.edu> wrote:
>
>
>> I could easily argue the other way, in terms of reasonableness. The
>> sum of "no" numbers is zero.
>
>
> Zero is a number. How can the sum of no numbers be a number?
> If there are no numbers how can there even be a sum?
>
> Ken

The number of ball bearings produced in a given city during a specified time period can be expressed as a sum over the amounts produced by each ball bearing plant in that city. What should the value of that sum be, for a city that has no ball bearing plants? I'd say that it's definitely a number, and definitely 0. I think that this is the most reasonable value for the sum of almost any variable-length list, when that list happens to have a length of 0. It's also the natural result of the most obvious algorithm for calculating the sum.