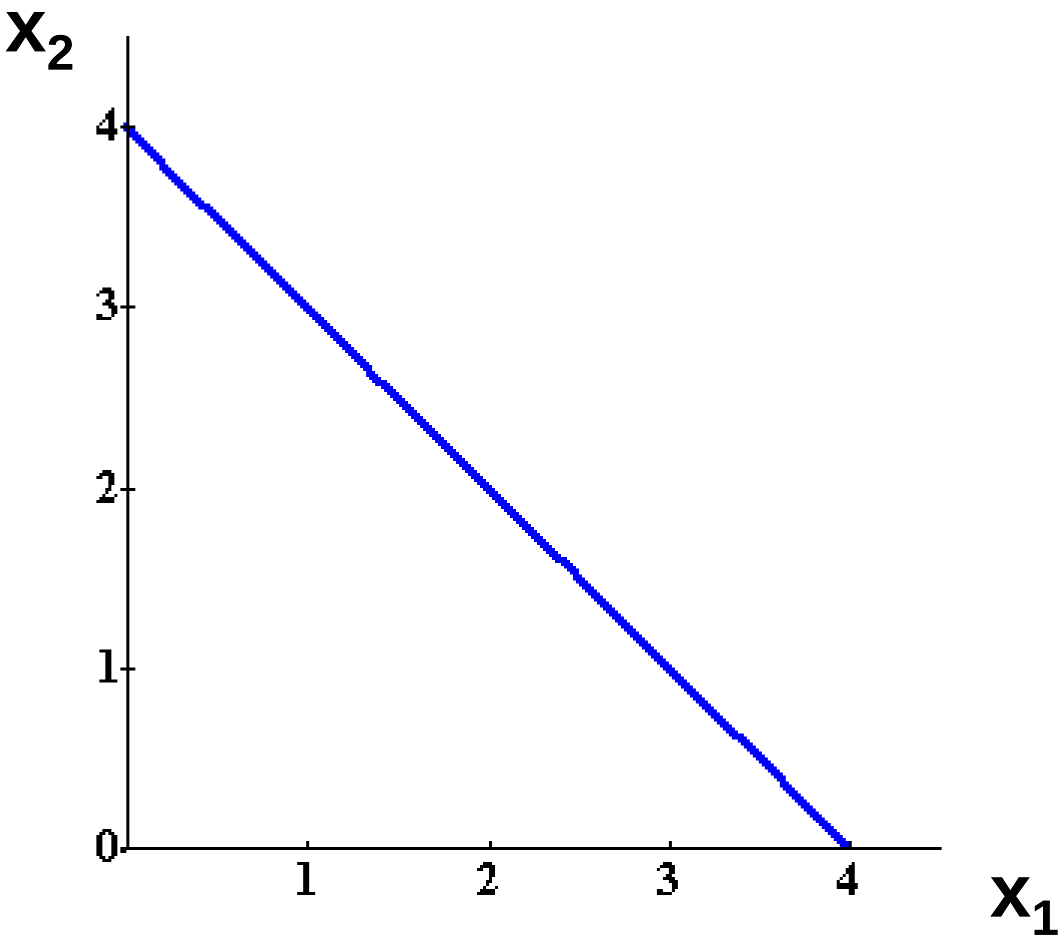
Chapter Five

Choice

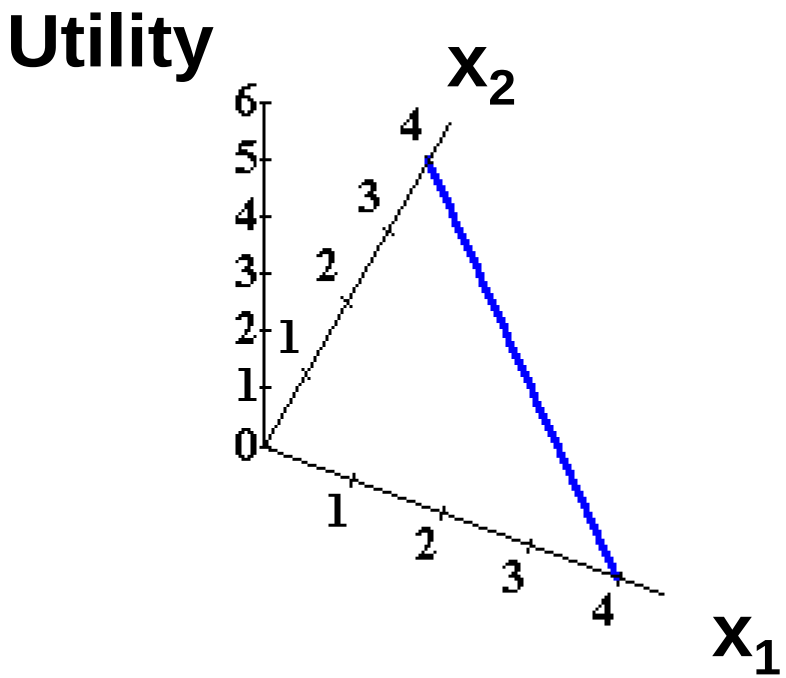
Economic Rationality

- The principal behavioral postulate is that a decisionmaker chooses its most preferred alternative from those available to it.
- The available choices constitute the choice set.
- How is the most preferred bundle in the choice set located?

Rational Constrained Choice



Rational Constrained Choice



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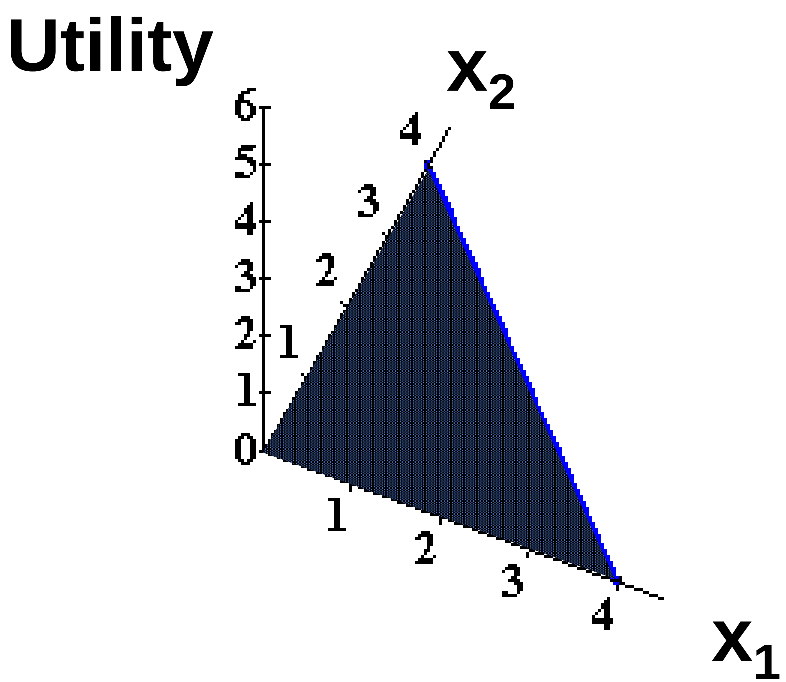

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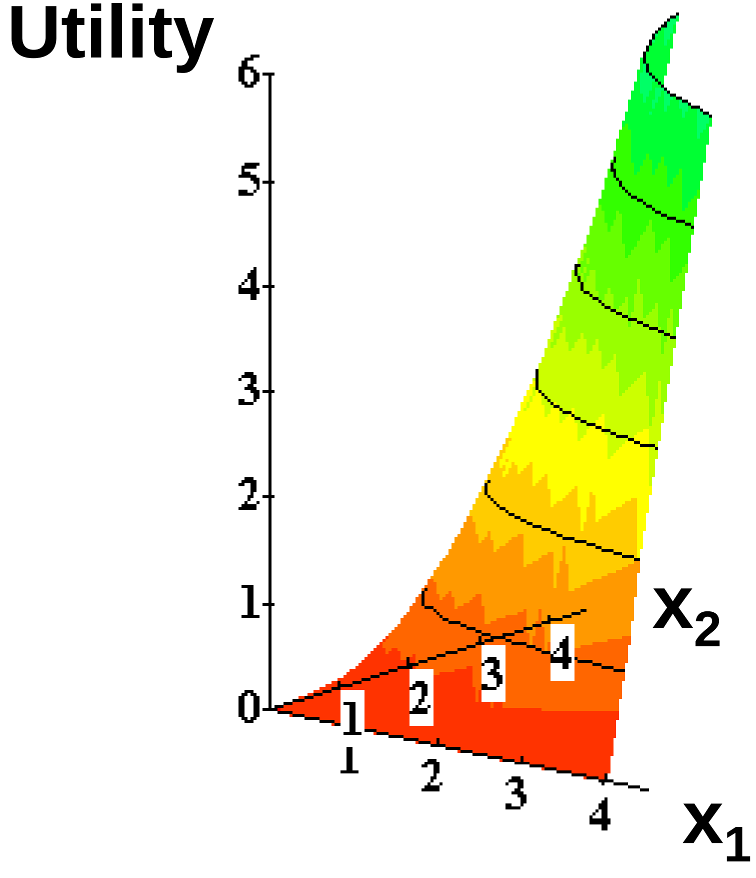

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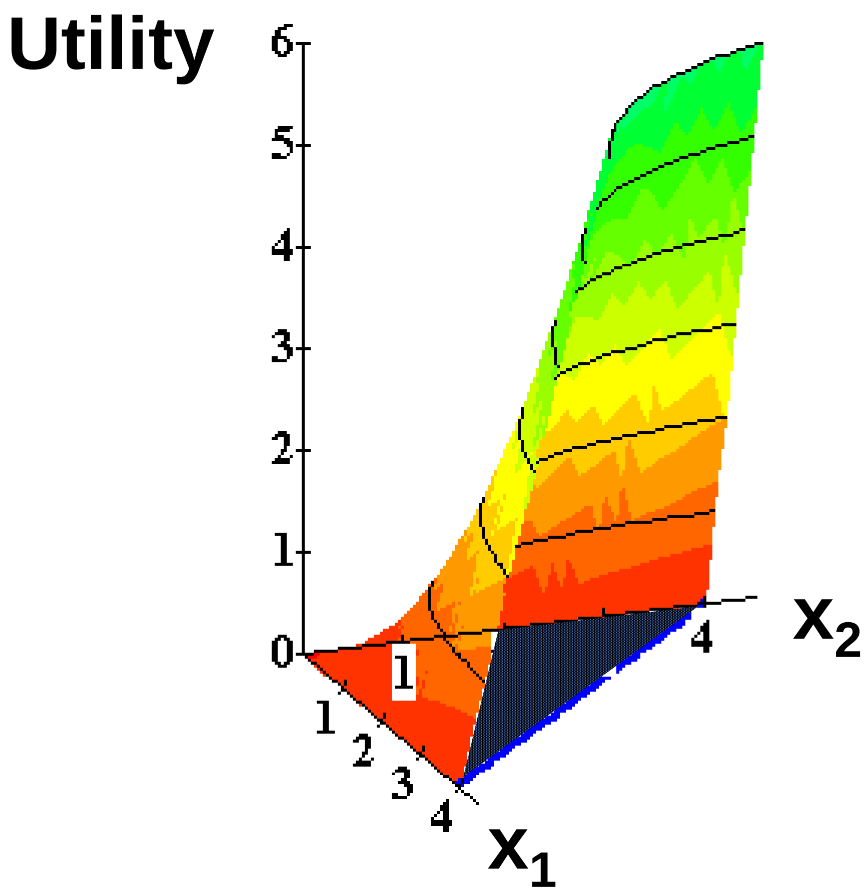

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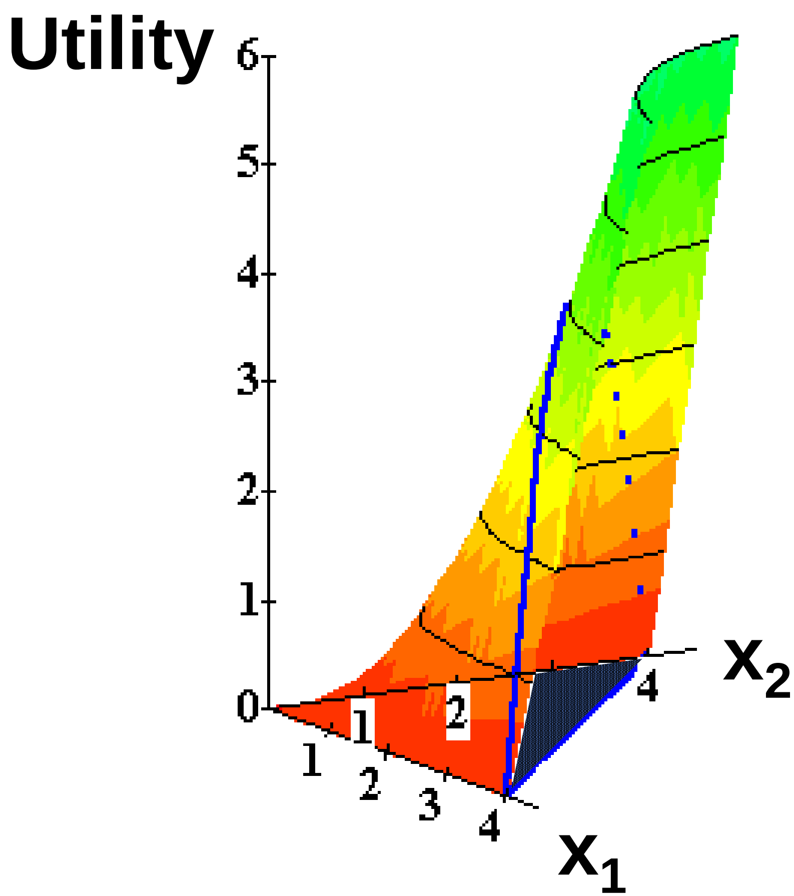

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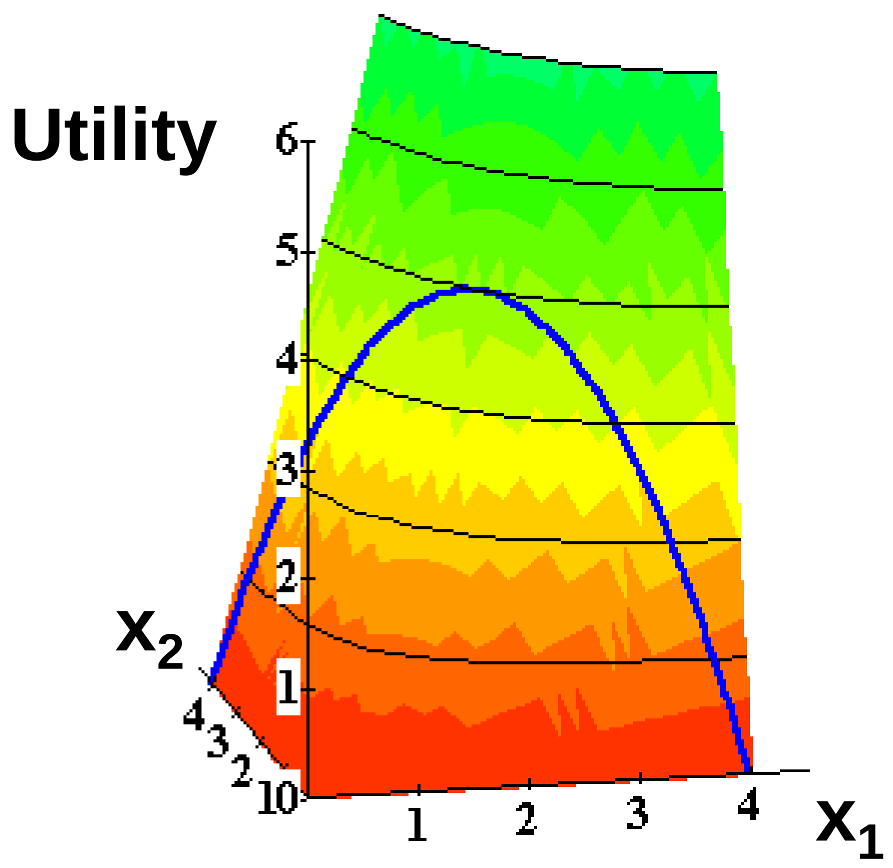

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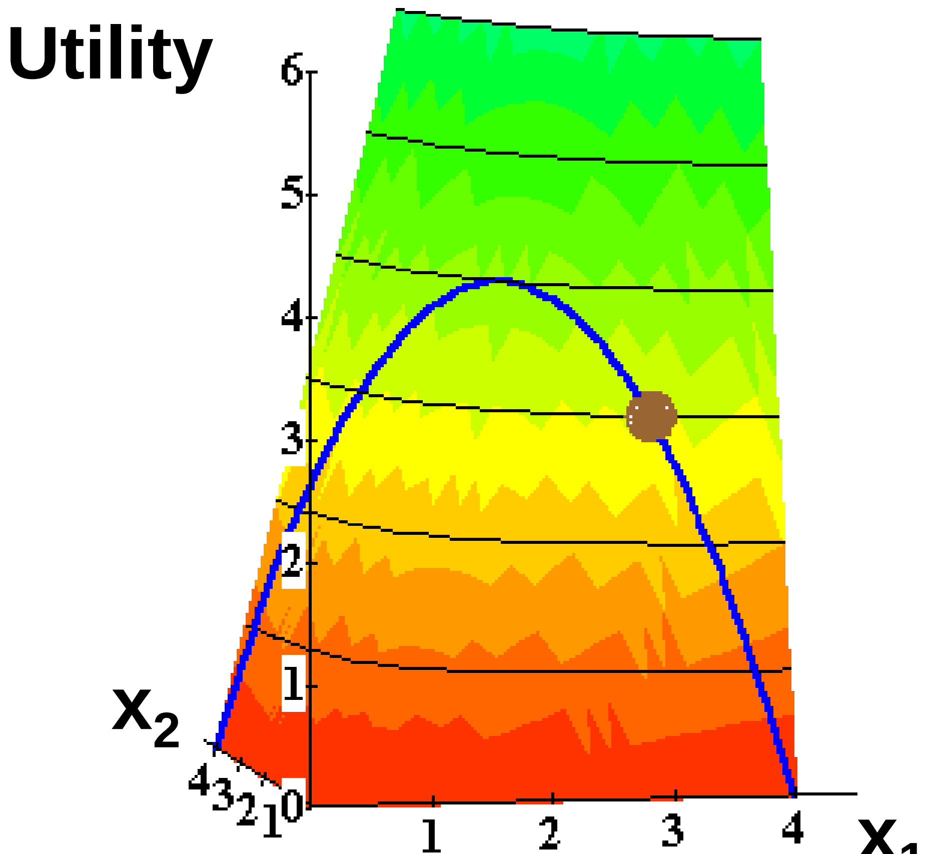

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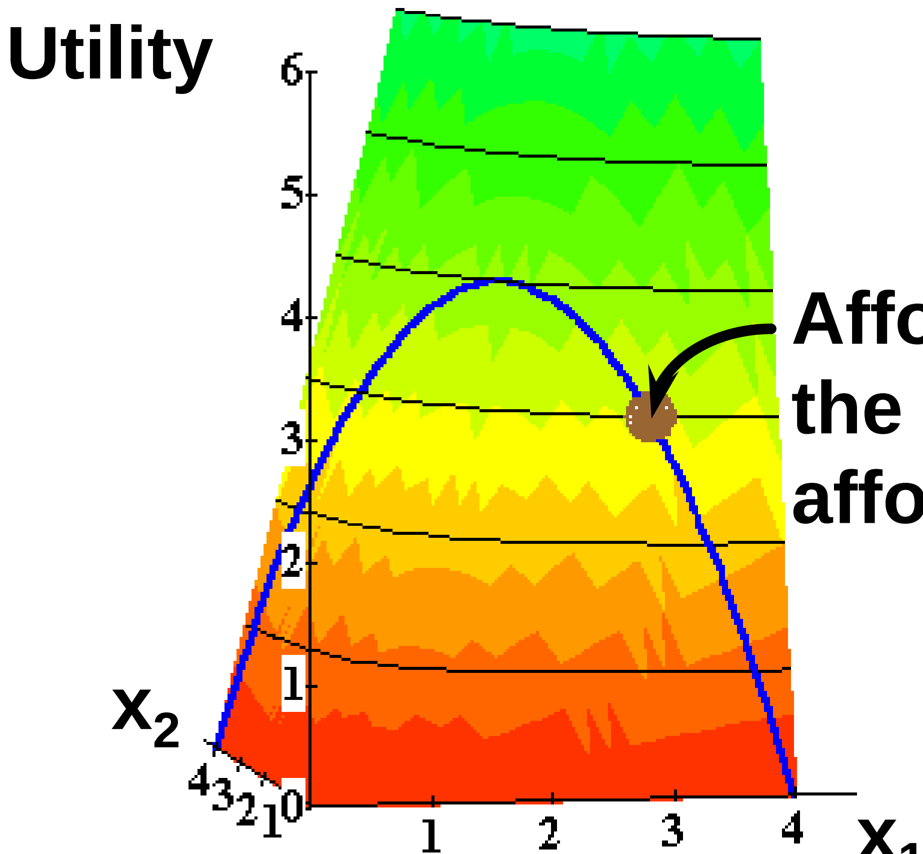
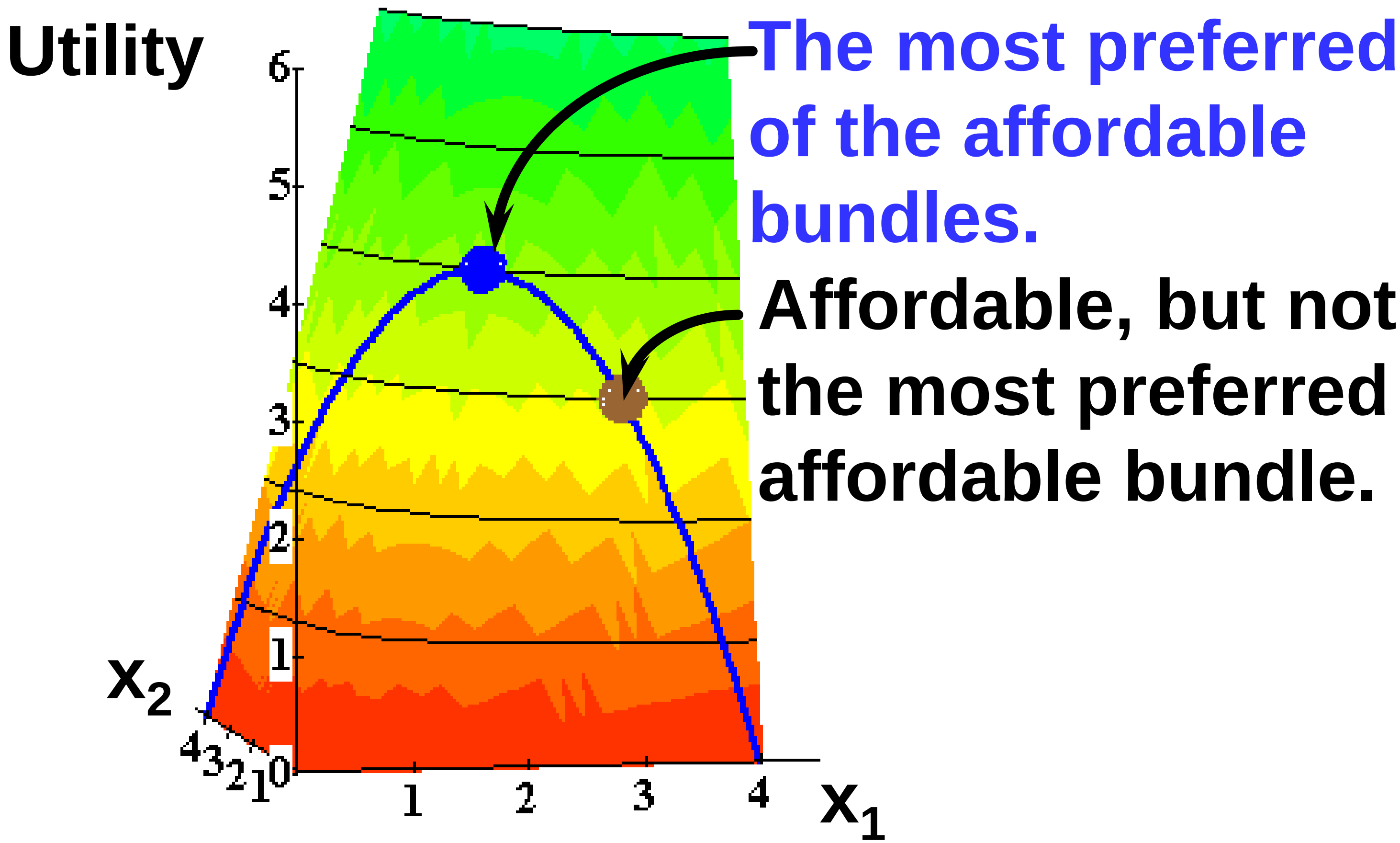


Affordable, but not the most preferred affordable bundle.

Rational Constrained Choice



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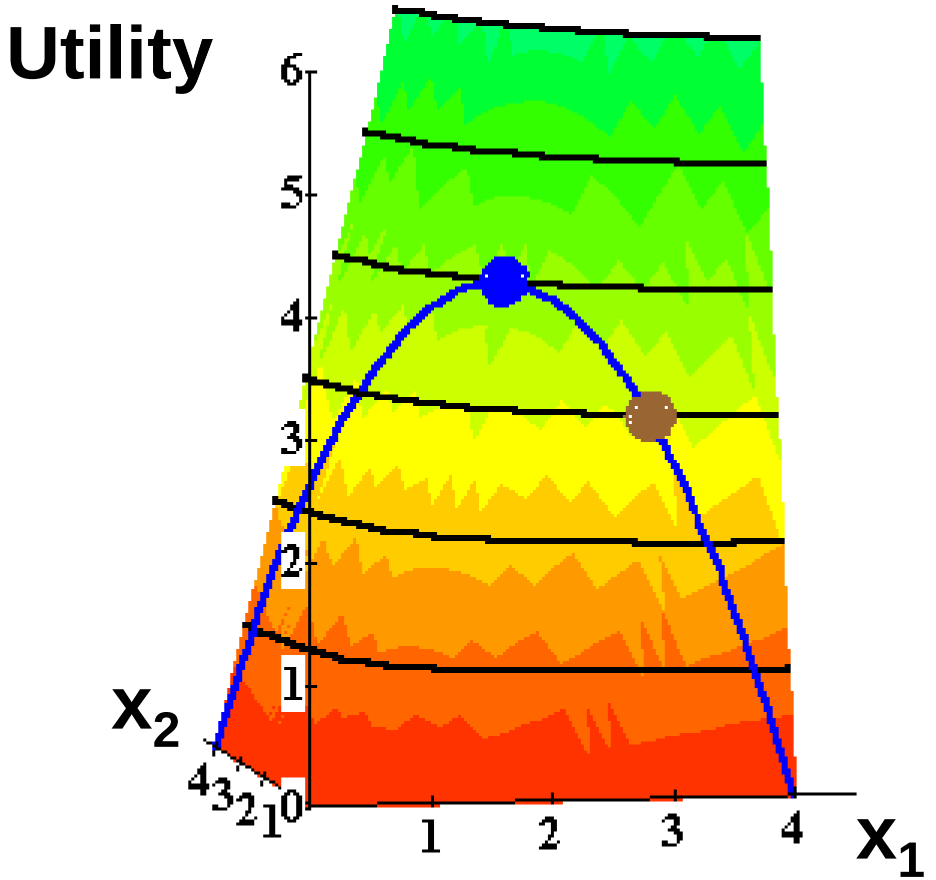

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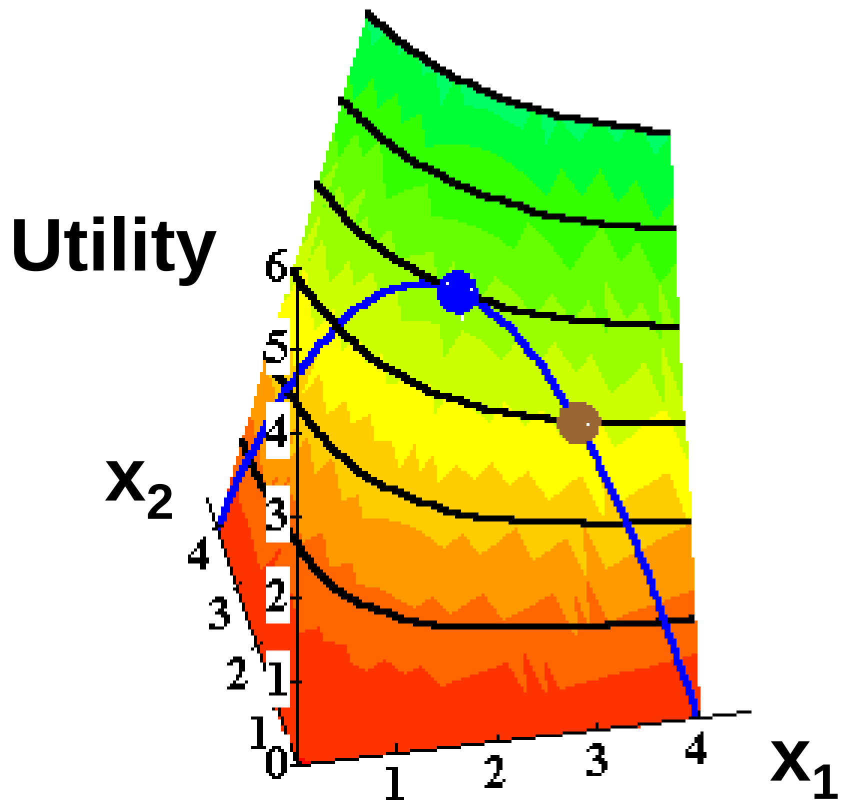

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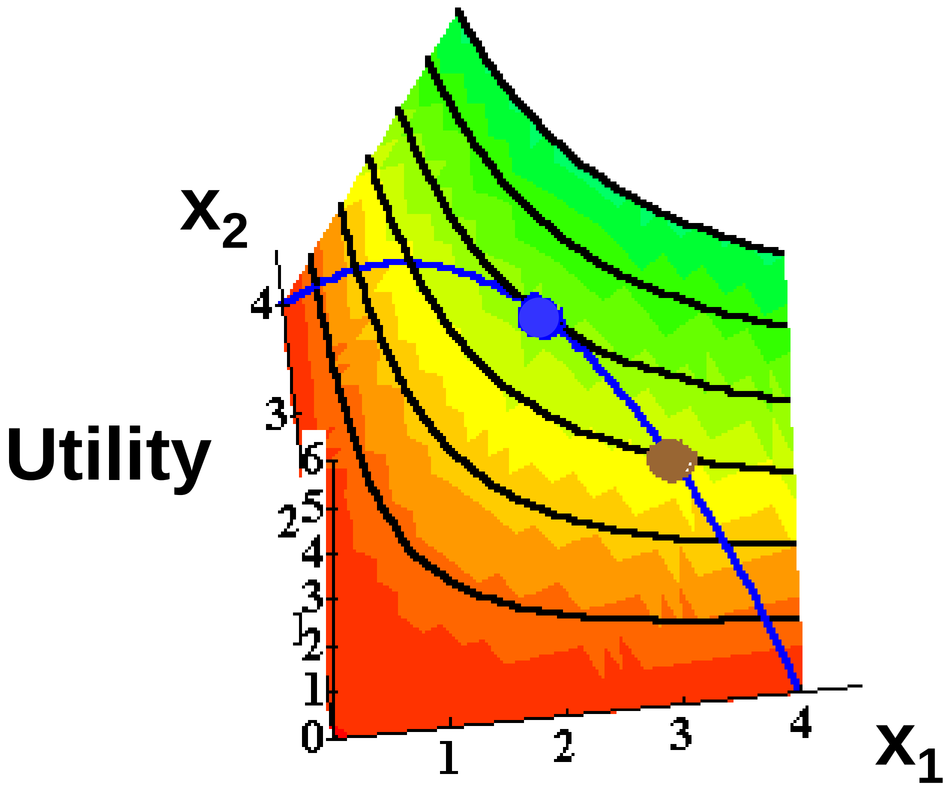

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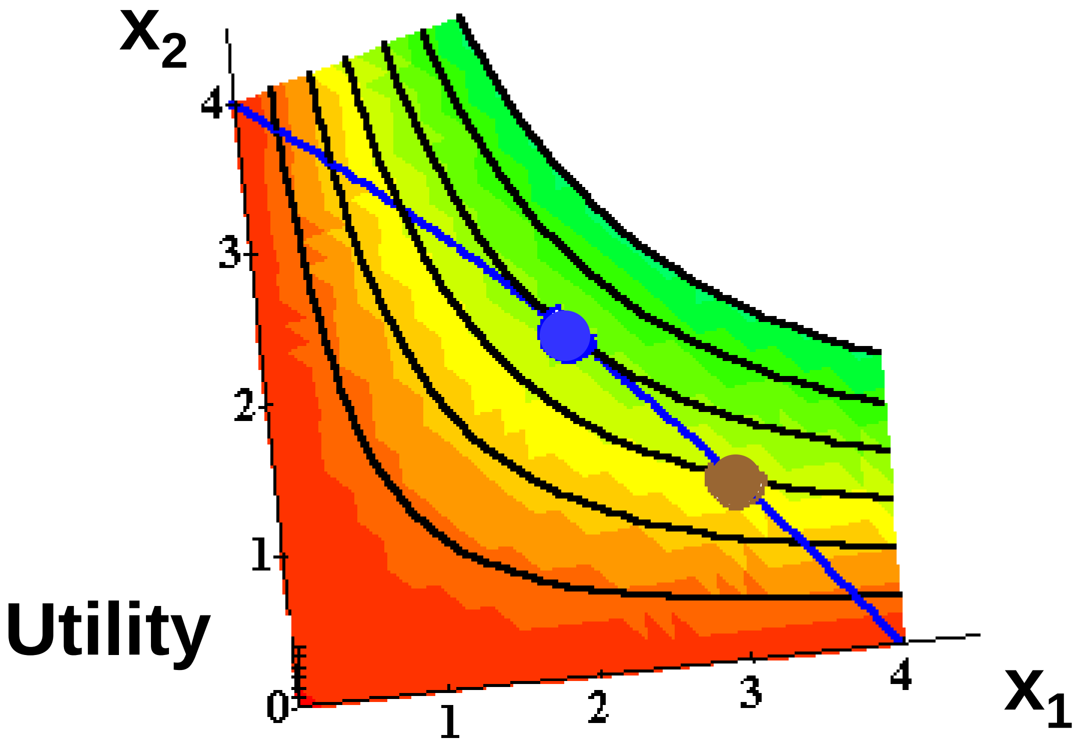

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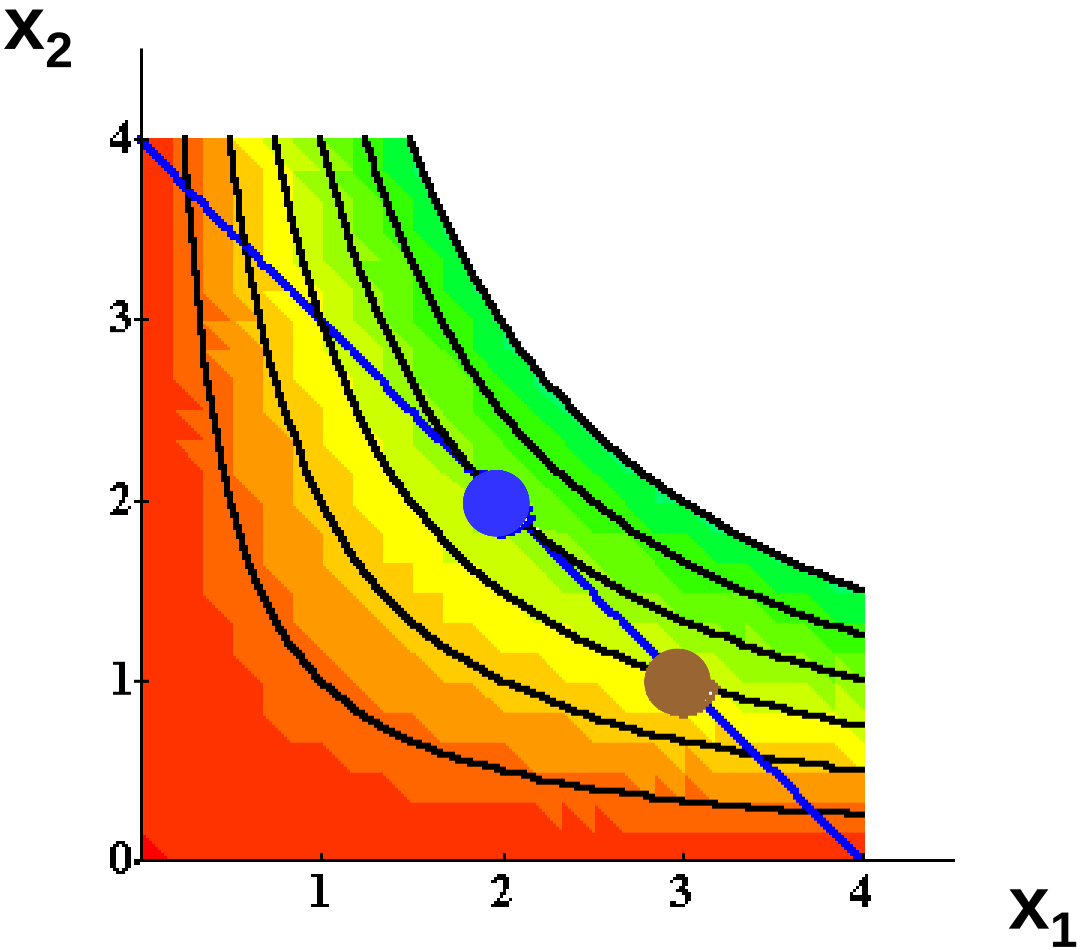

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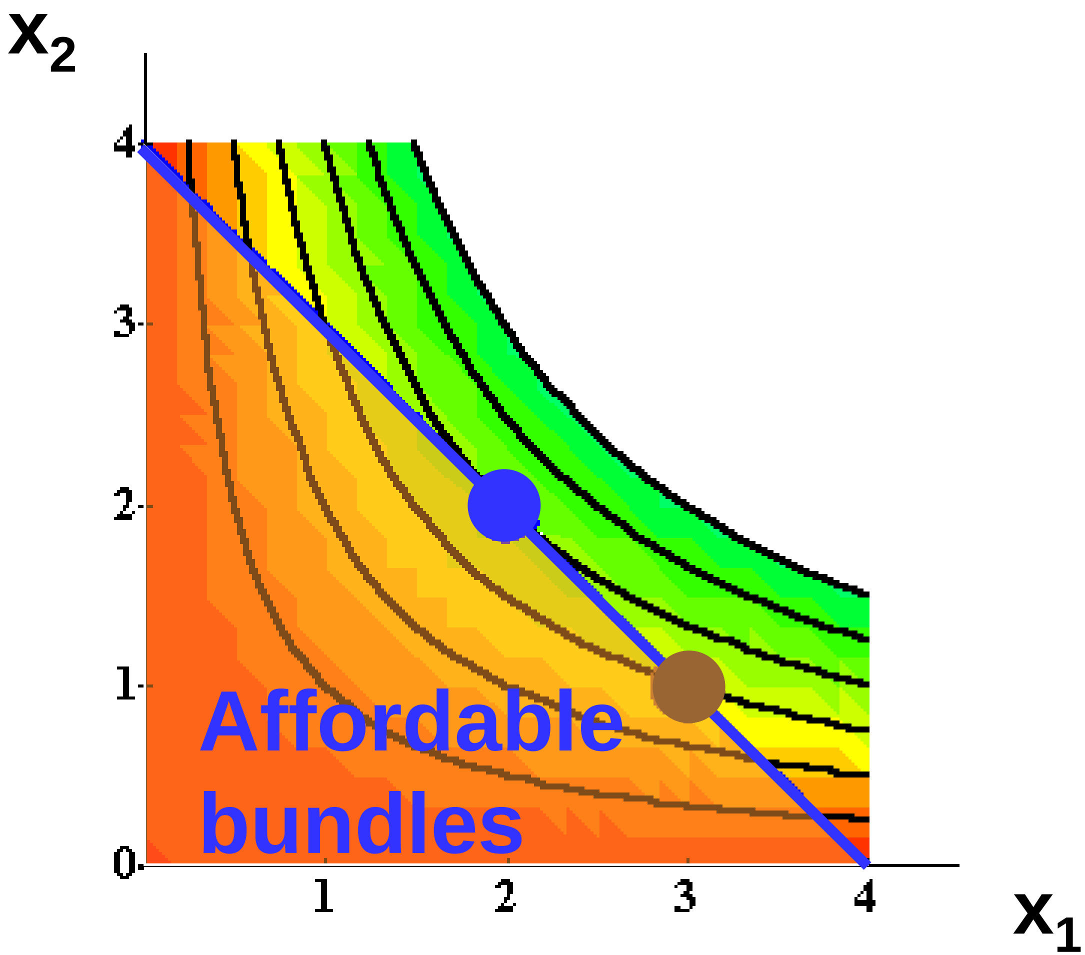

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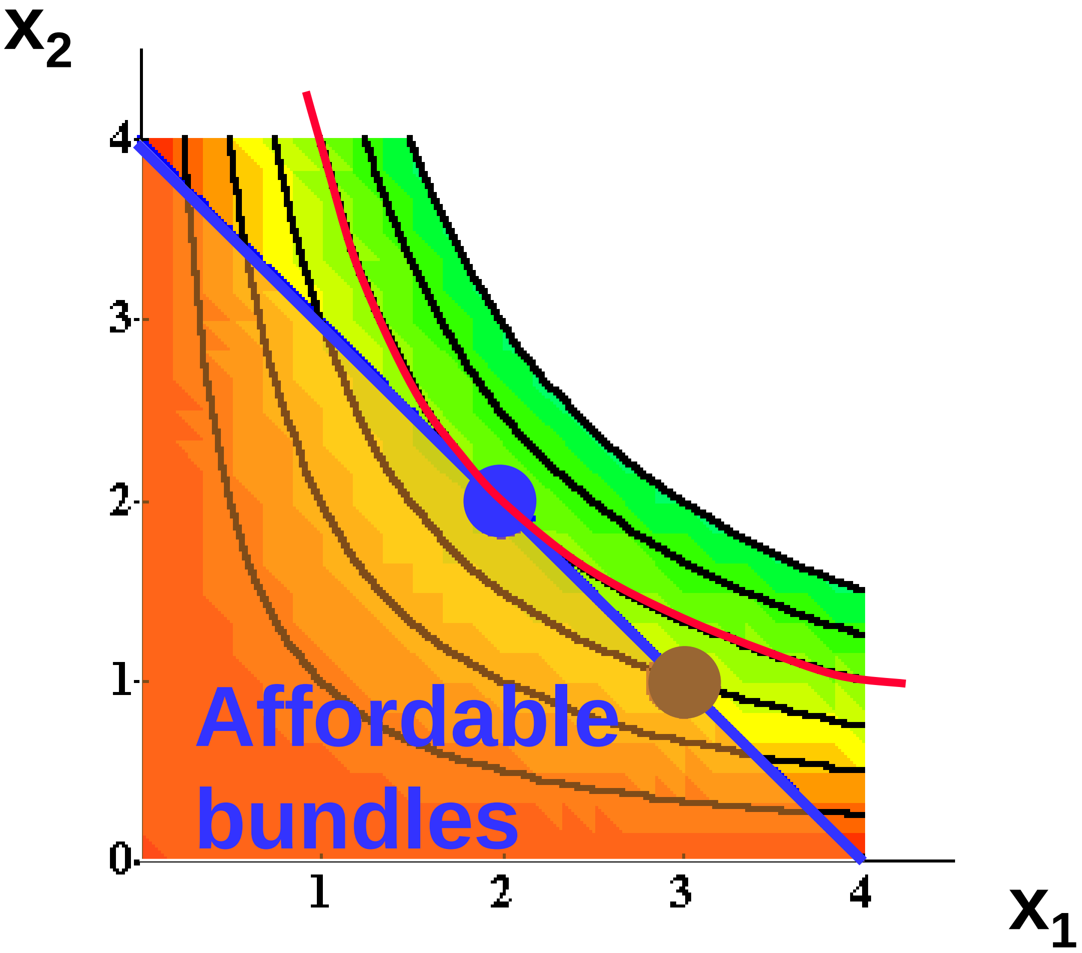

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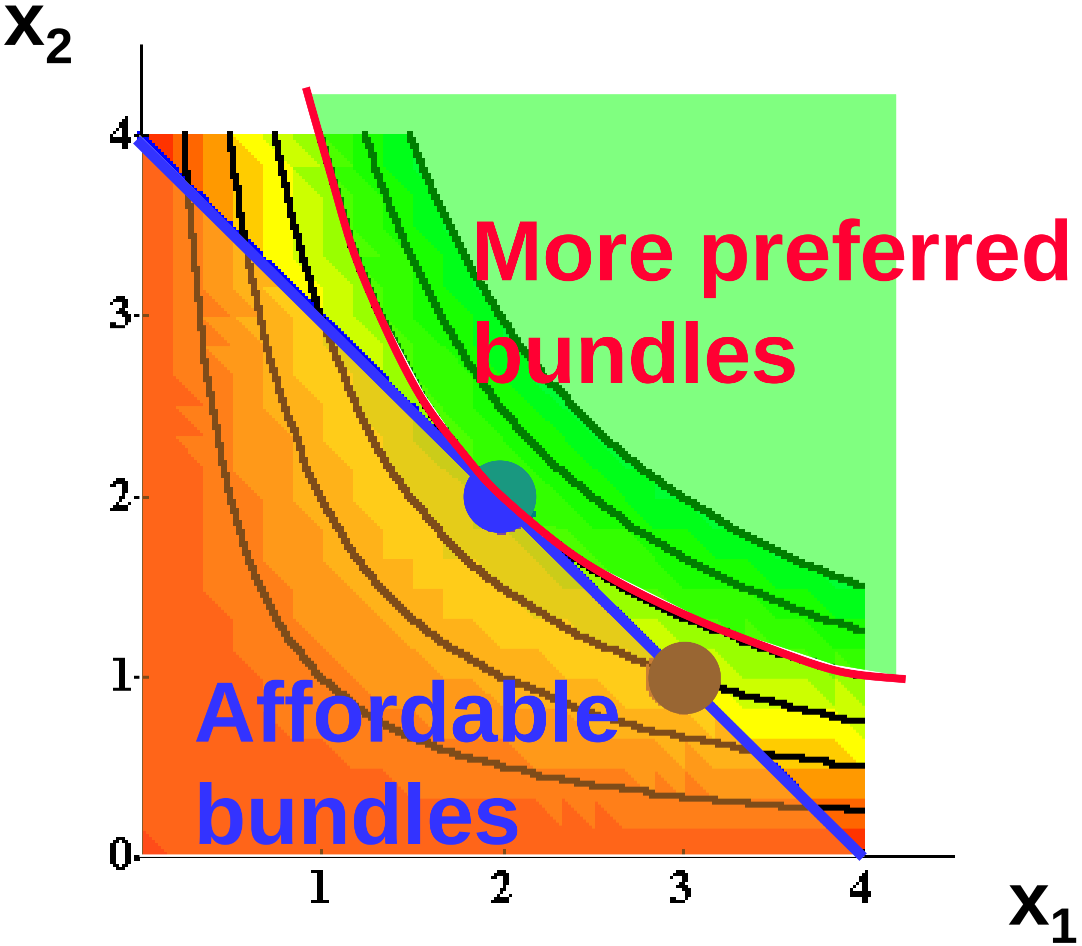

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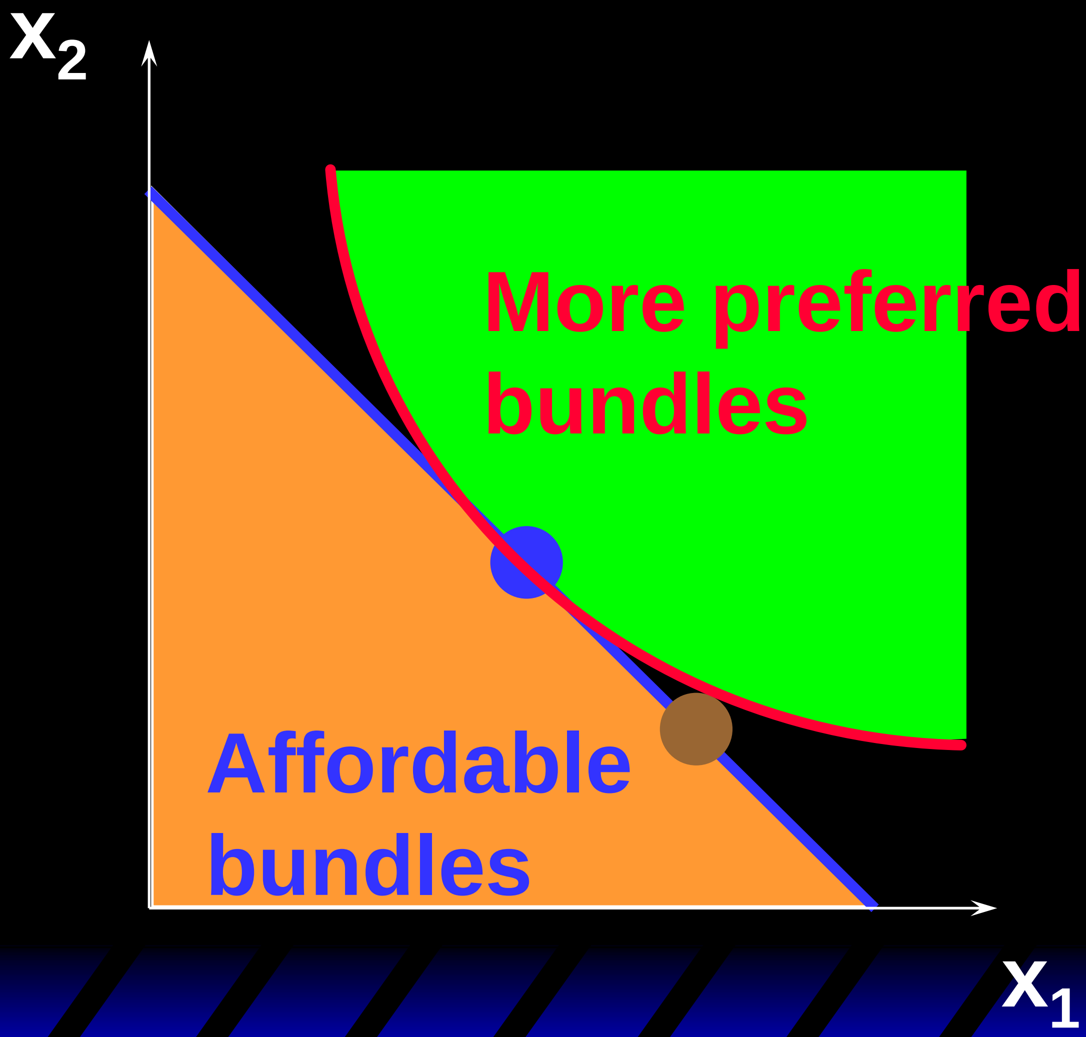

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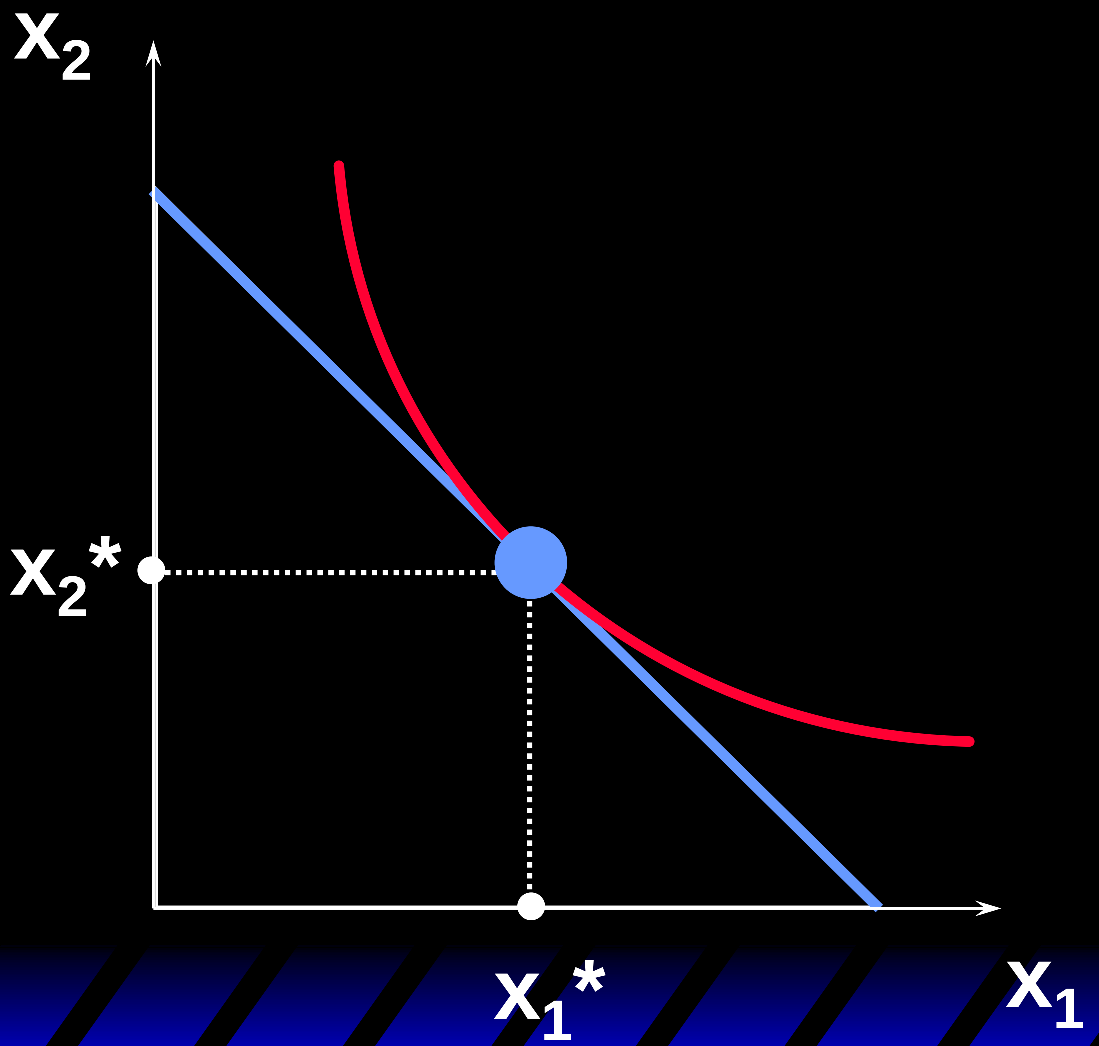

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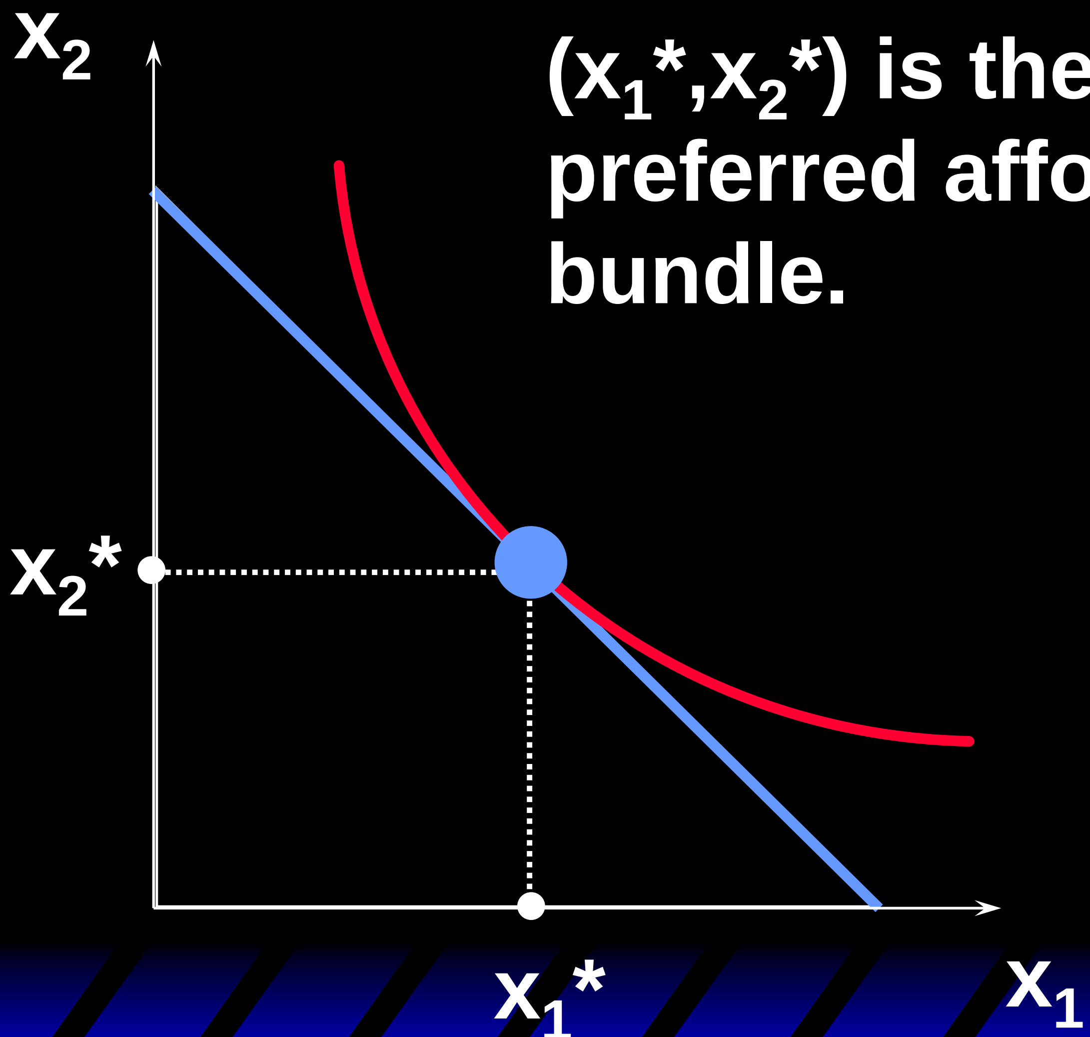


(x_1^*,x_2^*) is the most preferred affordable bundle.

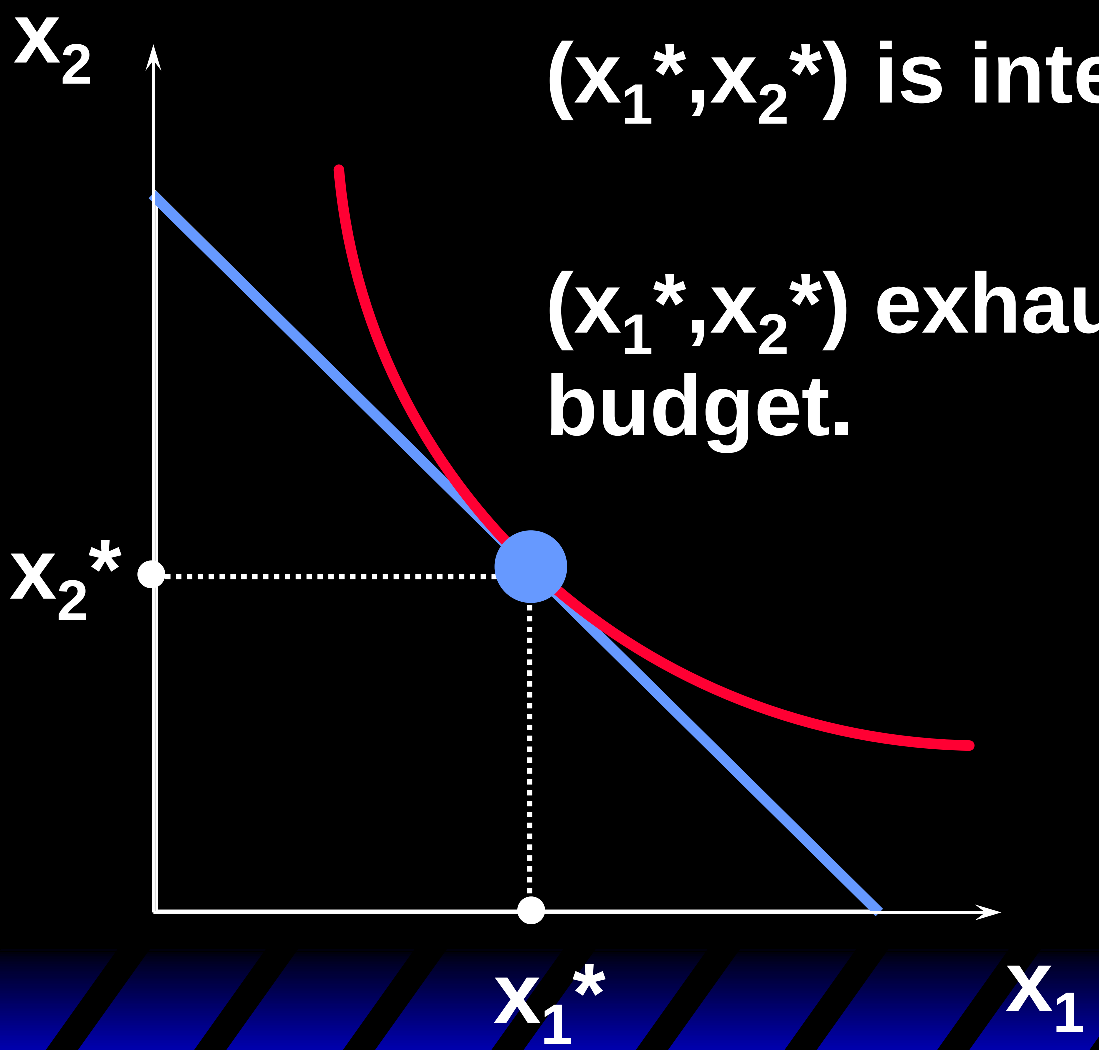
Rational Constrained Choice

- The most preferred affordable bundle is called the consumer's **ORDINARY DEMAND** at the given prices and budget.
- Ordinary demands will be denoted by $x_1^*(p_1,p_2,m)$ and $x_2^*(p_1,p_2,m)$.

Rational Constrained Choice

- When $x_1^* > 0$ and $x_2^* > 0$ the demanded bundle is **INTERIOR**.
- If buying (x_1^*, x_2^*) costs $m then the budget is exhausted.

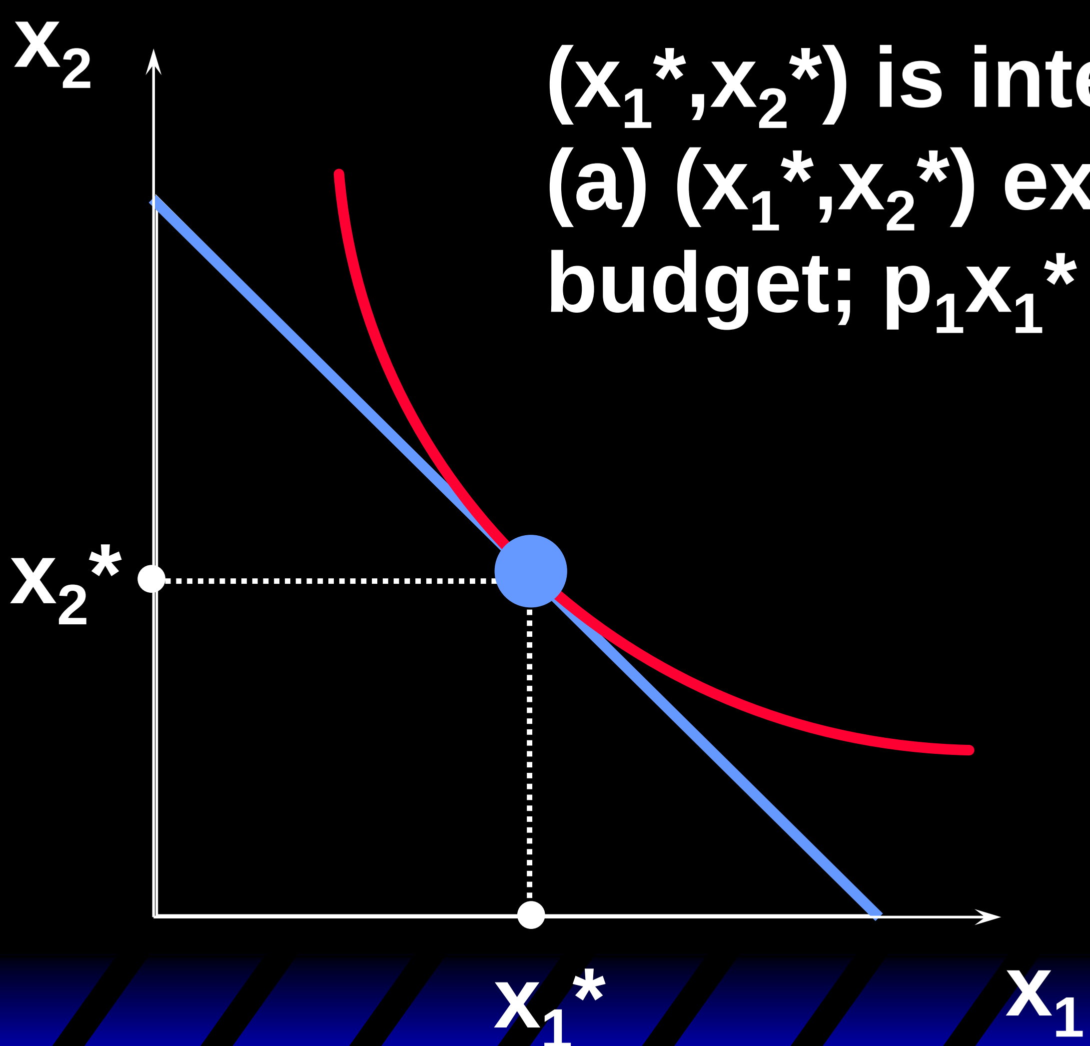
Rational Constrained Choice



(x_1^*, x_2^*) is interior.

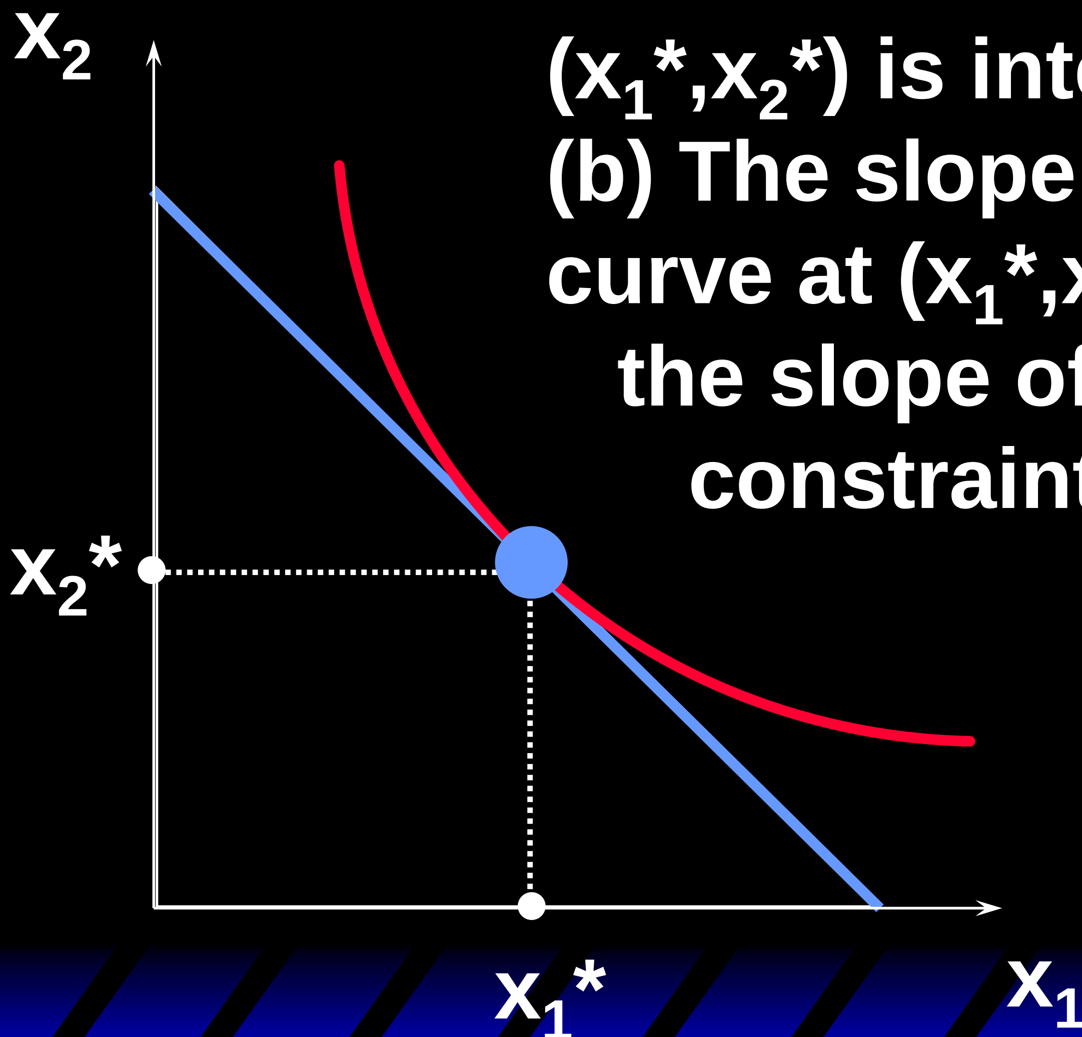
(x_1^*, x_2^*) exhausts the budget.

Rational Constrained Choice



(x_1^*, x_2^*) is interior.
(a) (x_1^*, x_2^*) exhausts the budget; $p_1x_1^* + p_2x_2^* = m$.

Rational Constrained Choice



(x_1^*,x_2^*) is interior .
(b) The slope of the indiff. curve at (x_1^*,x_2^*) equals the slope of the budget constraint.

Rational Constrained Choice

(x_1^*,x_2^*) satisfies two conditions:

(a) the budget is exhausted;

$$p_1x_1^* + p_2x_2^* = m$$

(b) the slope of the budget constraint, $-p_1/p_2$, and the slope of the indifference curve containing (x_1^*,x_2^*) are equal at (x_1^*,x_2^*).

Computing Ordinary Demands

How can this information be used to locate (x_1*,x_2*) for given p_1, p_2 and m?

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

Suppose that the consumer has Cobb-Douglas preferences.

$$U(x_1, x_2) = x_1^a x_2^b$$

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

Suppose that the consumer has Cobb-Douglas preferences.

$$U(x_1, x_2) = x_1^a x_2^b$$

Then

$$MU_1 = \frac{\partial U}{\partial x_1} = a x_1^{a-1} x_2^b$$

$$MU_2 = \frac{\partial U}{\partial x_2} = b x_1^a x_2^{b-1}$$

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

So the MRS is

$$\mathrm{MRS} = \frac{dx_2}{dx_1} = -\frac{\partial U/\partial x_1}{\partial U/\partial x_2} = -\frac{a x_1^{a-1} x_2^{b}}{b x_1^{a} x_2^{b-1}} = -\frac{a x_2}{b x_1}.$$

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

So the MRS is

$$\text{MRS} = \frac{dx_2}{dx_1} = -\frac{\partial U/\partial x_1}{\partial U/\partial x_2} = -\frac{ax_1^{a-1}x_2^b}{bx_1^a x_2^{b-1}} = -\frac{ax_2}{bx_1}.$$

At (x_1^*, x_2^*), MRS = $-p_1/p_2$ so

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

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At (x_1*,x_2*), MRS = -p_1/p_2 so

$$-\frac{ax_2^*}{bx_1^*} = -\frac{p_1}{p_2} \quad \Rightarrow \quad x_2^* = \frac{bp_1}{ap_2}x_1^*. \qquad \text{(A)}$$

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

(x_1*,x_2*) also exhausts the budget so

$$p_1 x_1^* + p_2 x_2^* = m. \qquad \textbf{(B)}$$

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

So now we know that

$$x_2^* = \frac{bp_1}{ap_2} x_1^* \qquad \text{(A)}$$

$$p_1 x_1^* + p_2 x_2^* = m. \qquad \text{(B)}$$

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

So now we know that

$$x_2^* = \frac{bp_1}{ap_2} x_1^* \qquad \textbf{(A)}$$

Substitute

$$p_1 x_1^* + p_2 x_2^* = m. \qquad \textbf{(B)}$$

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

So now we know that

$$x_2^* = \frac{bp_1}{ap_2} x_1^* \qquad \text{(A)}$$

Substitute

$$p_1 x_1^* + p_2 x_2^* = m. \qquad \text{(B)}$$

and get

$$p_1 x_1^* + p_2 \frac{bp_1}{ap_2} x_1^* = m.$$

This simplifies to ….

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

$$x_1^* = \frac{am}{(a+b)p_1}.$$

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

$$x_1^* = \frac{am}{(a+b)p_1}.$$

Substituting for x_1* in

$$p_1 x_1^* + p_2 x_2^* = m$$

then gives

$$x_2^* = \frac{bm}{(a+b)p_2}.$$

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.

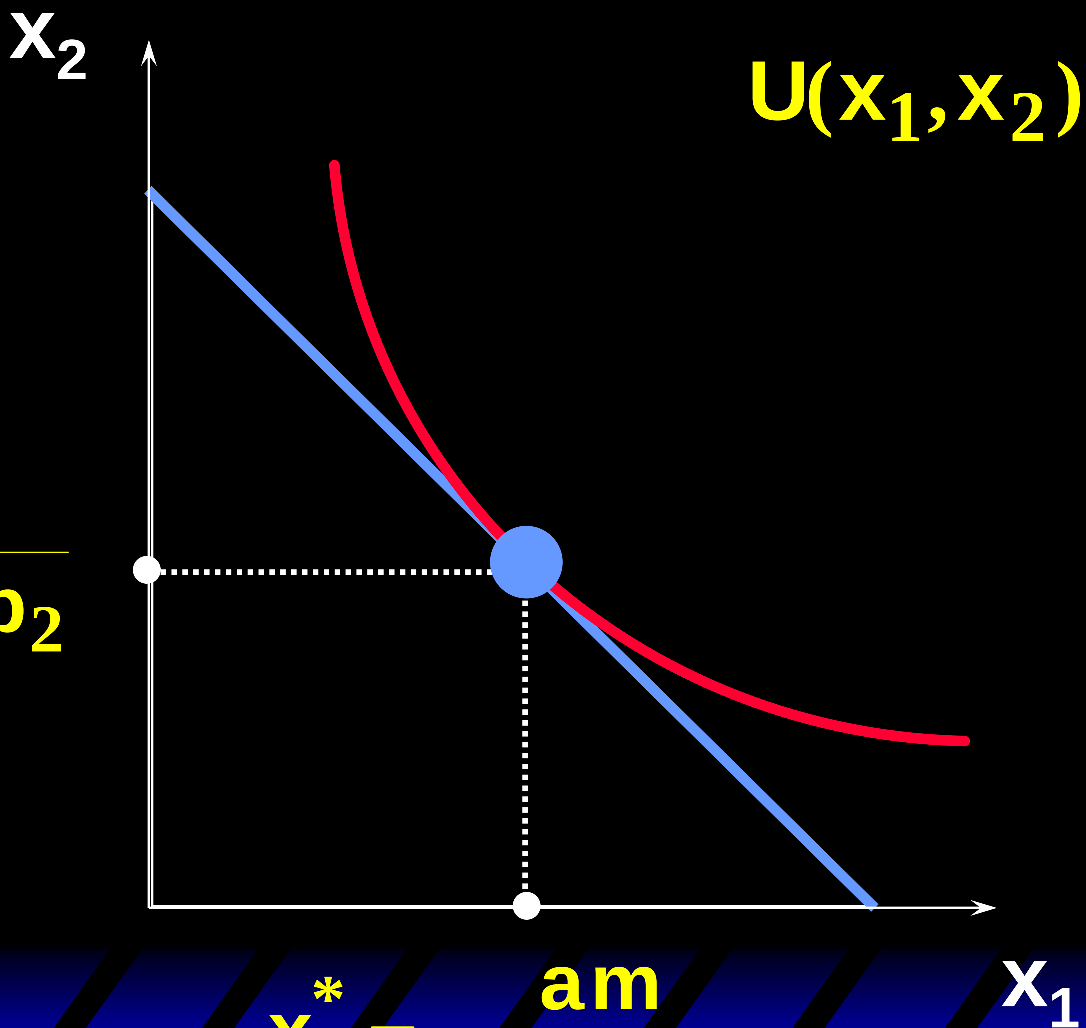
So we have discovered that the most preferred affordable bundle for a consumer with Cobb-Douglas preferences

$$U(x_1, x_2) = x_1^a x_2^b$$

is

$$(x_1^*, x_2^*) = \left(\frac{am}{(a+b)p_1}, \frac{bm}{(a+b)p_2}\right).$$

Computing Ordinary Demands - a Cobb-Douglas Example.



$$U(x_1, x_2) = x_1^a x_2^b$$

$$x_2^* = \frac{bm}{(a+b)p_2}$$

$$x_1^* = \frac{am}{(a+b)p_1}$$

Rational Constrained Choice

When $x_1^* > 0$ and $x_2^* > 0$
and (x_1^*,x_2^*) exhausts the budget,
and indifference curves have no 'kinks', the ordinary demands are obtained by solving:

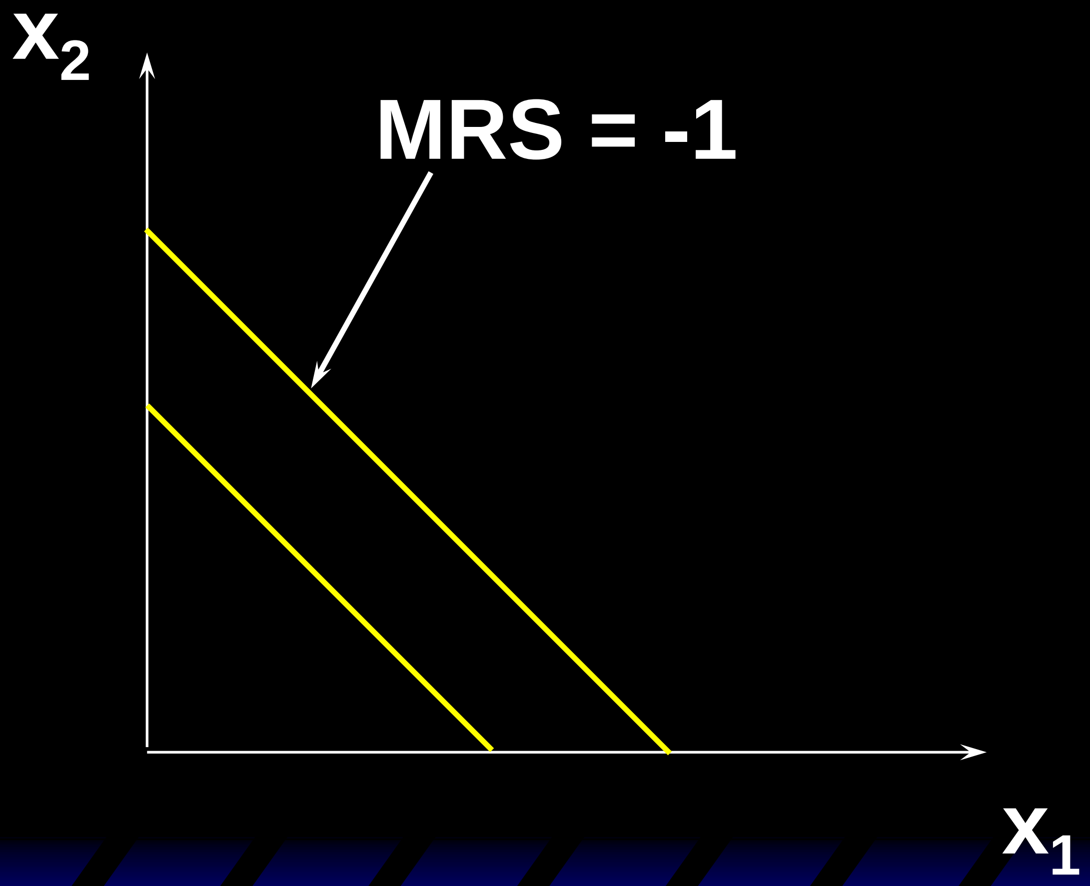
(a) $p_1x_1^* + p_2x_2^* = y$

(b) the slopes of the budget constraint, $-p_1/p_2$, and of the indifference curve containing (x_1^*,x_2^*) are equal at (x_1^*,x_2^*).

Rational Constrained Choice

- But what if $x_1^* = 0$?
- Or if $x_2^* = 0$?
- If either $x_1^* = 0$ or $x_2^* = 0$ then the ordinary demand (x_1^*,x_2^*) is at a **corner solution** to the problem of maximizing utility subject to a budget constraint.

Examples of Corner Solutions -- the Perfect Substitutes Case



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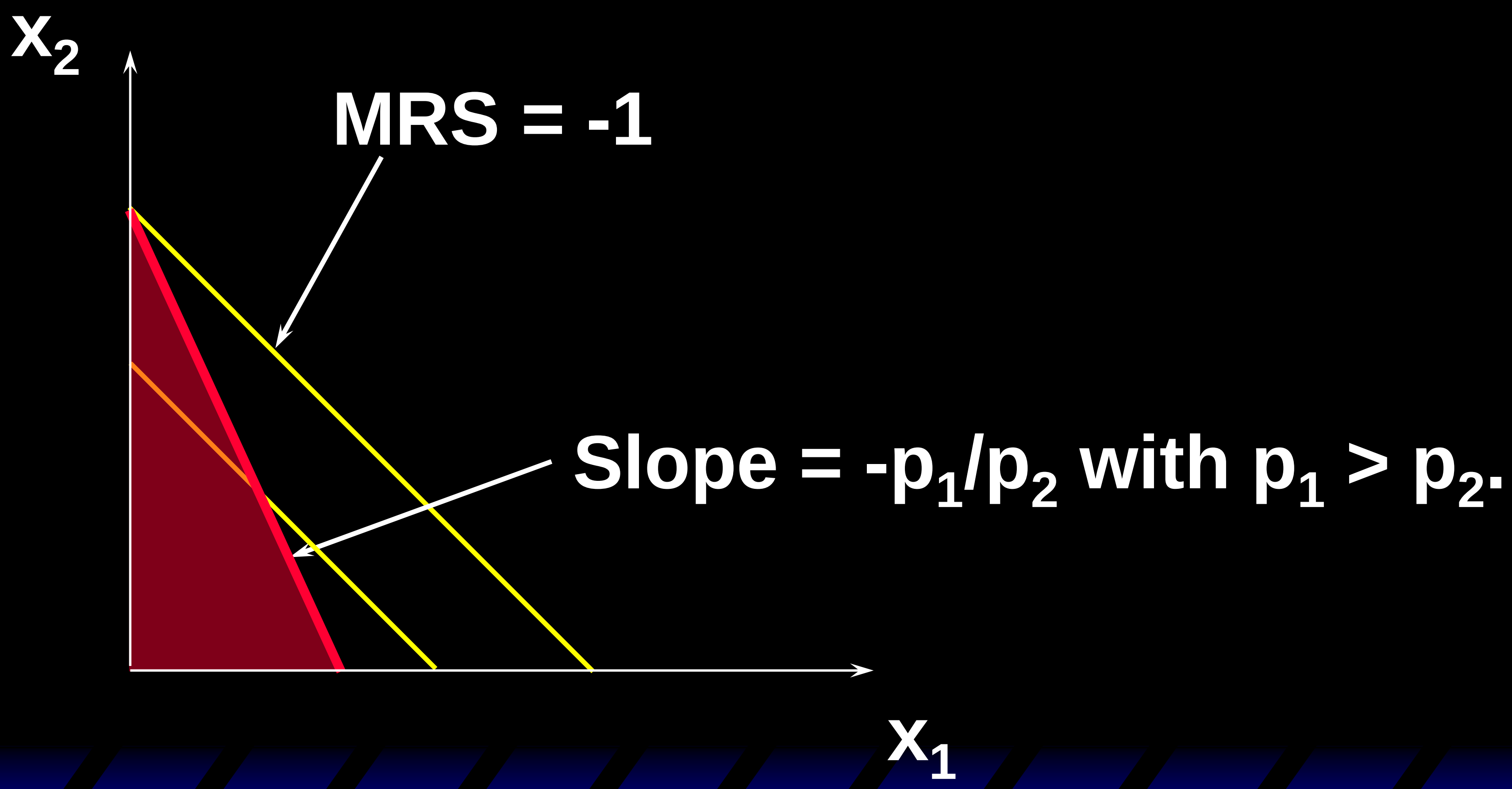

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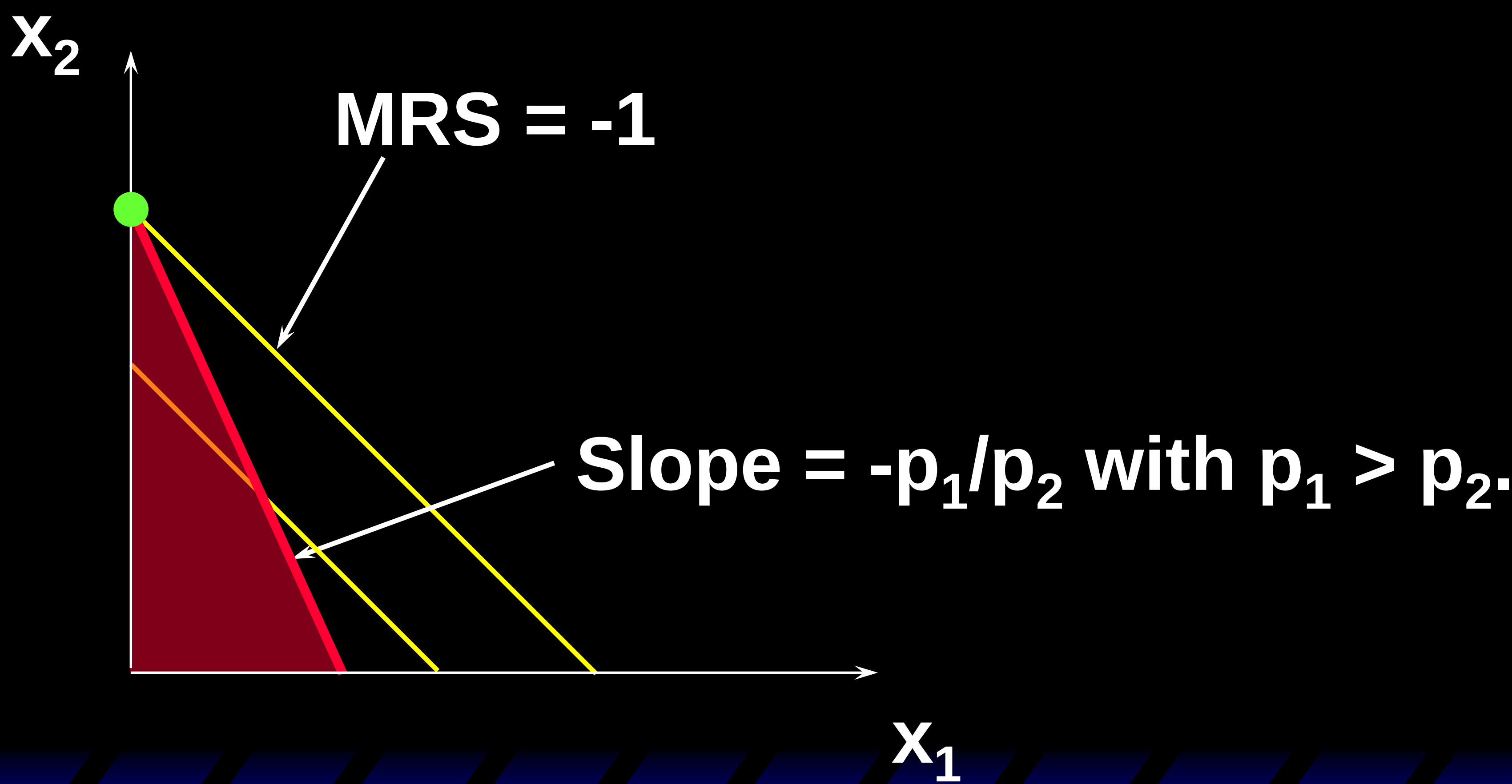

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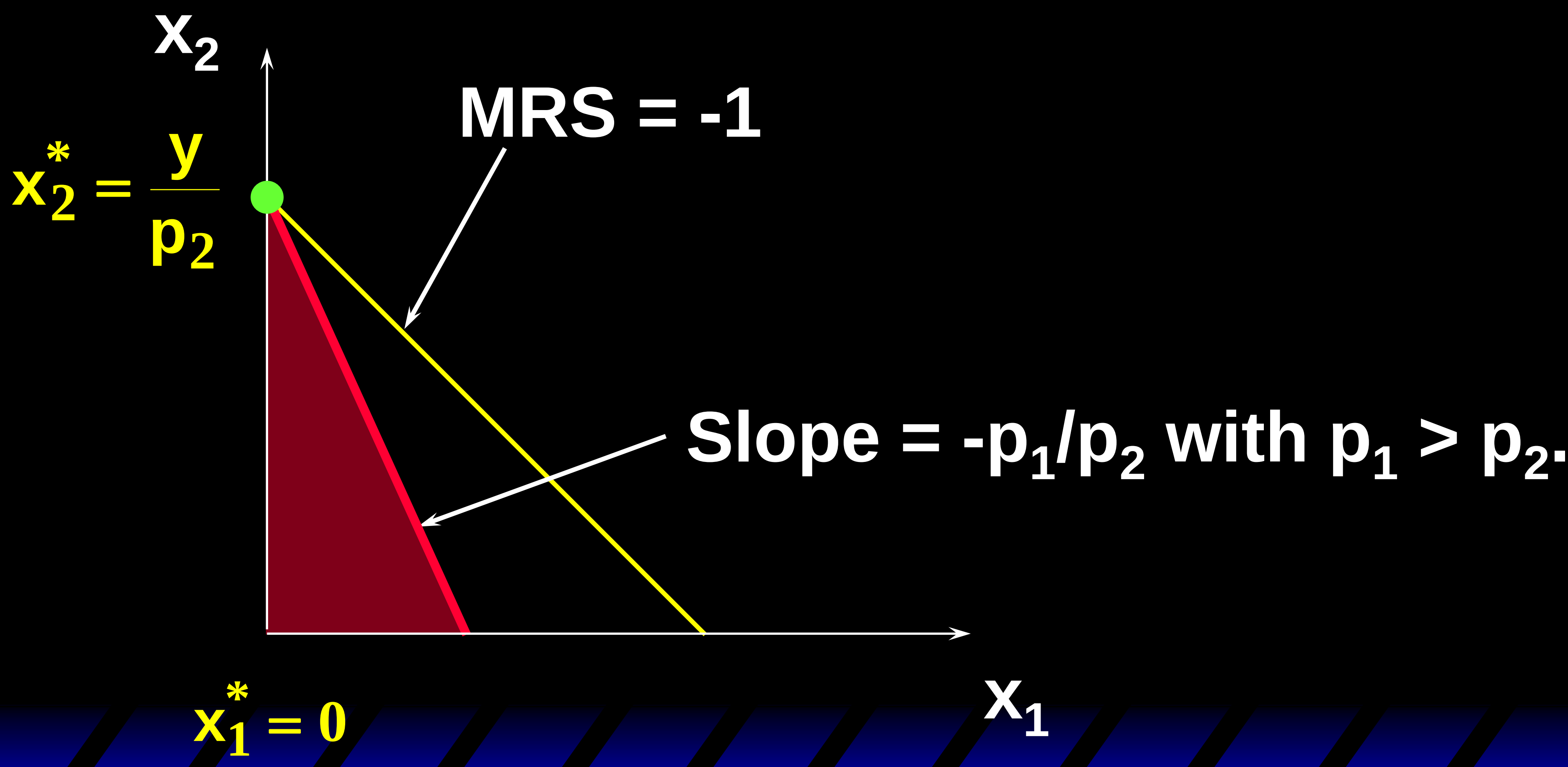

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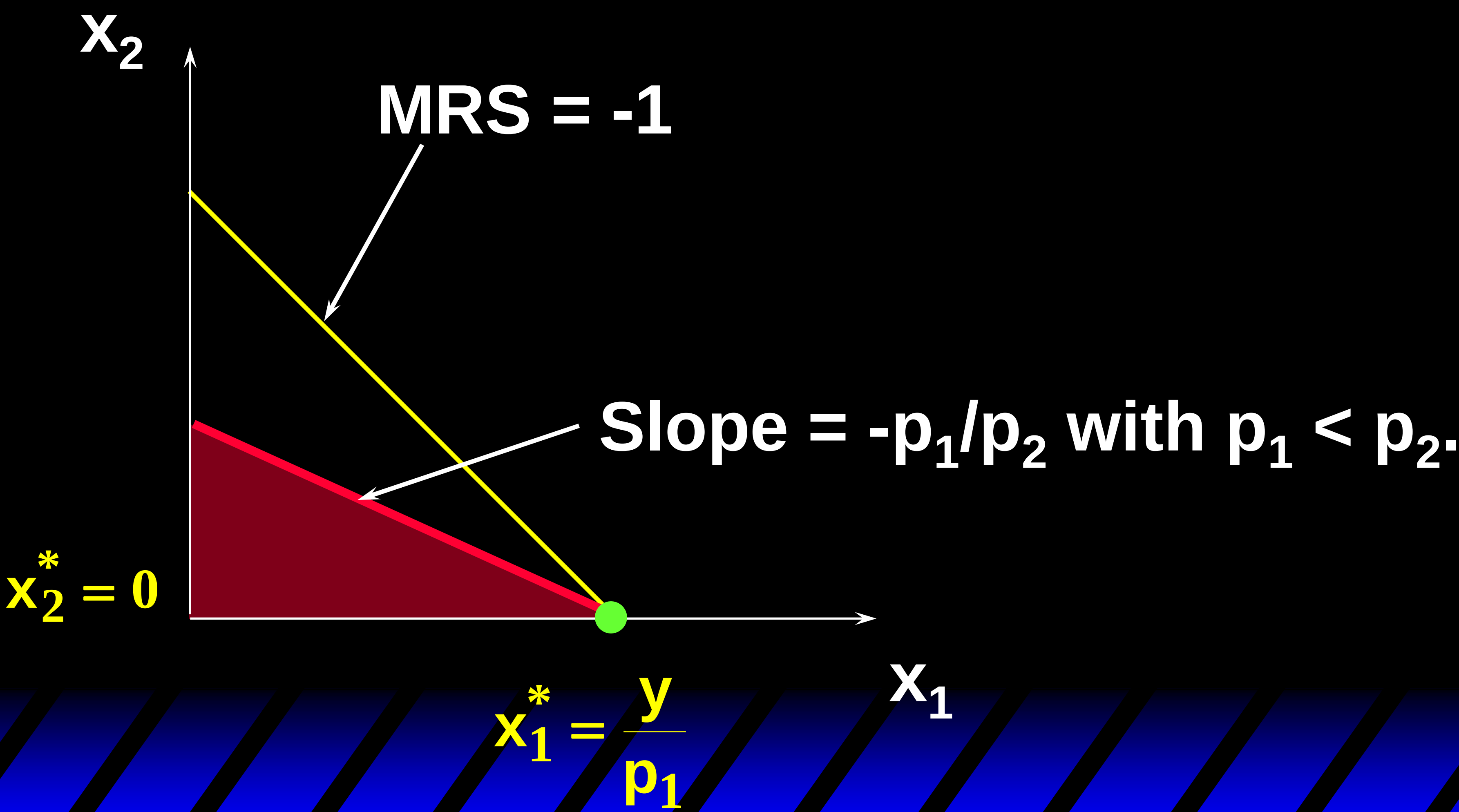

Examples of Corner Solutions -- the Perfect Substitutes Case

So when $U(x_1,x_2) = x_1 + x_2$, the most preferred affordable bundle is (x_1^*,x_2^*) where

$$(x_1^*, x_2^*) = \left(\frac{y}{p_1}, 0\right) \quad \text{if } p_1 < p_2$$

and

$$(x_1^*, x_2^*) = \left(0, \frac{y}{p_2}\right) \quad \text{if } p_1 > p_2.$$

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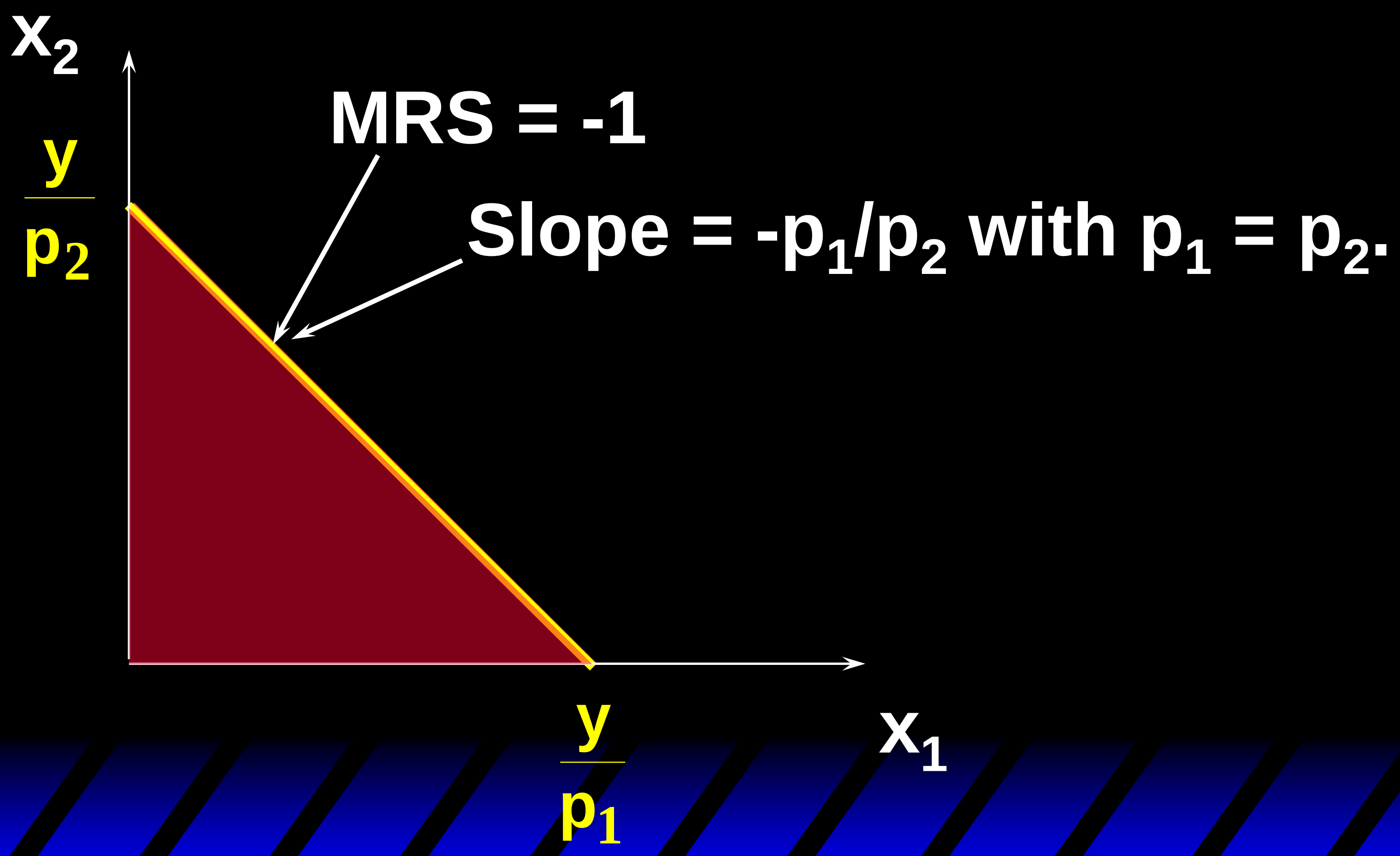

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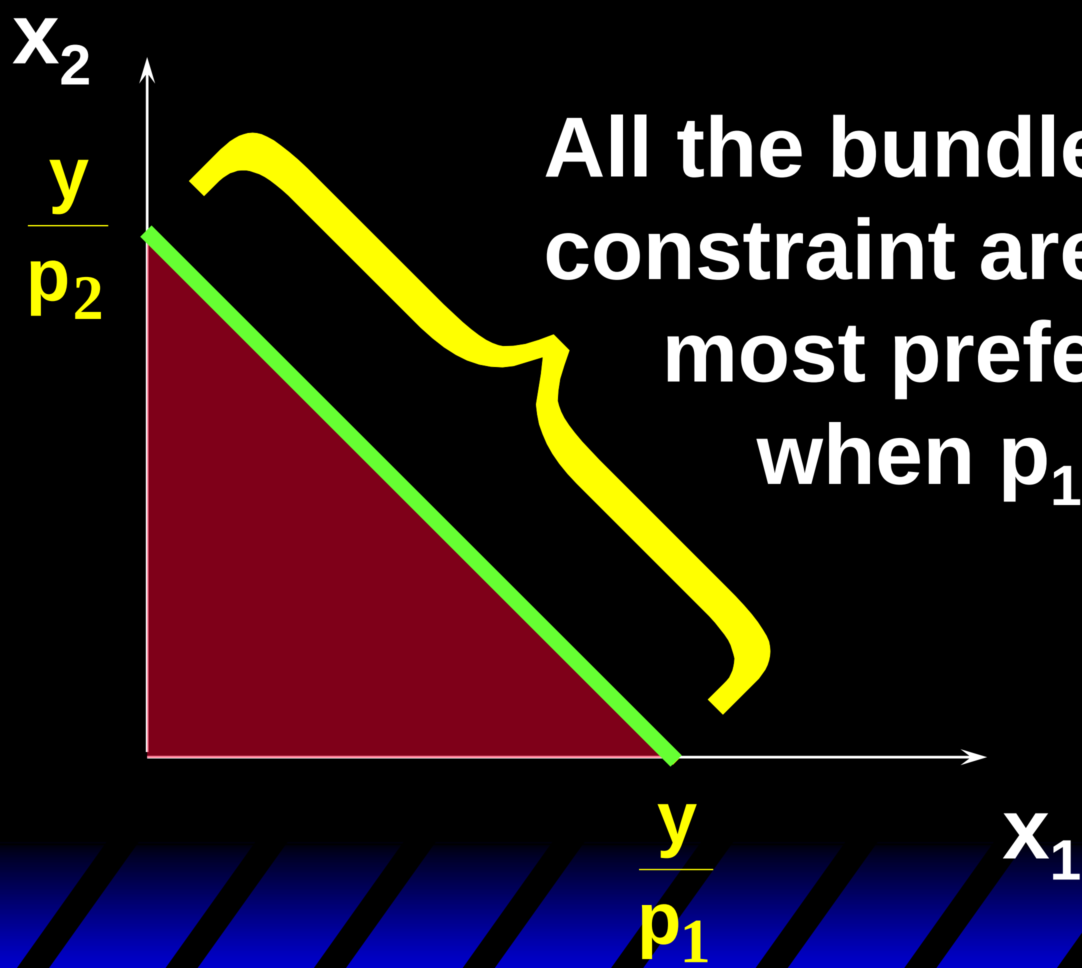
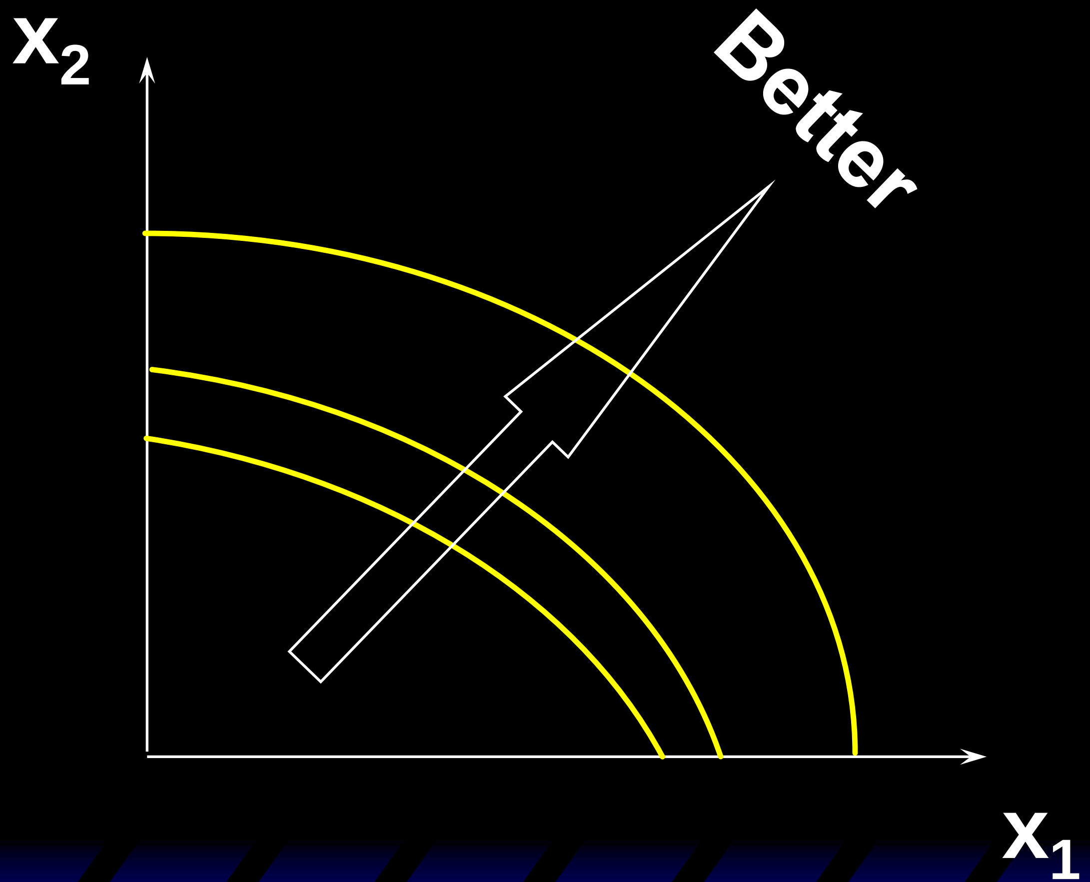


All the bundles in the constraint are equally the most preferred affordable when $p_1 = p_2$.

Examples of Corner Solutions -- the Non-Convex Preferences Case



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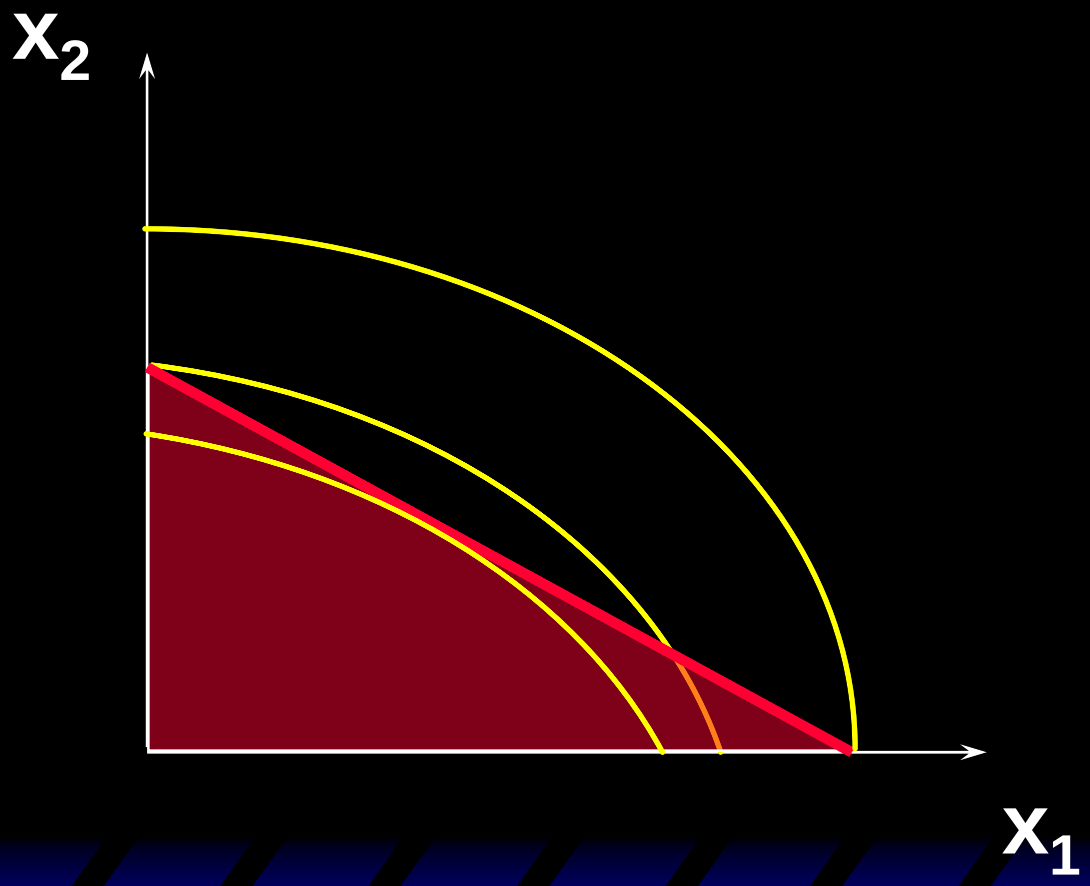

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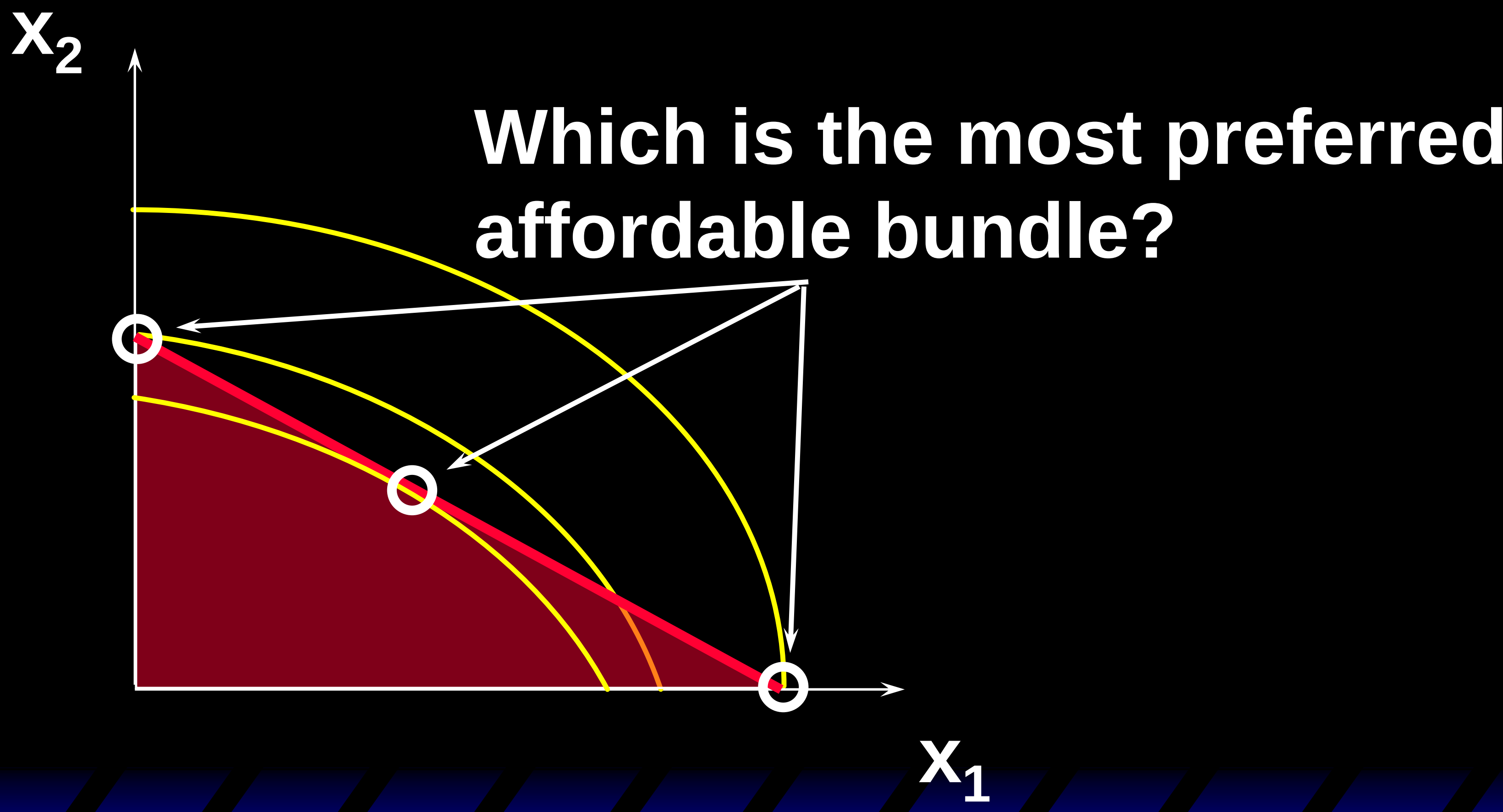

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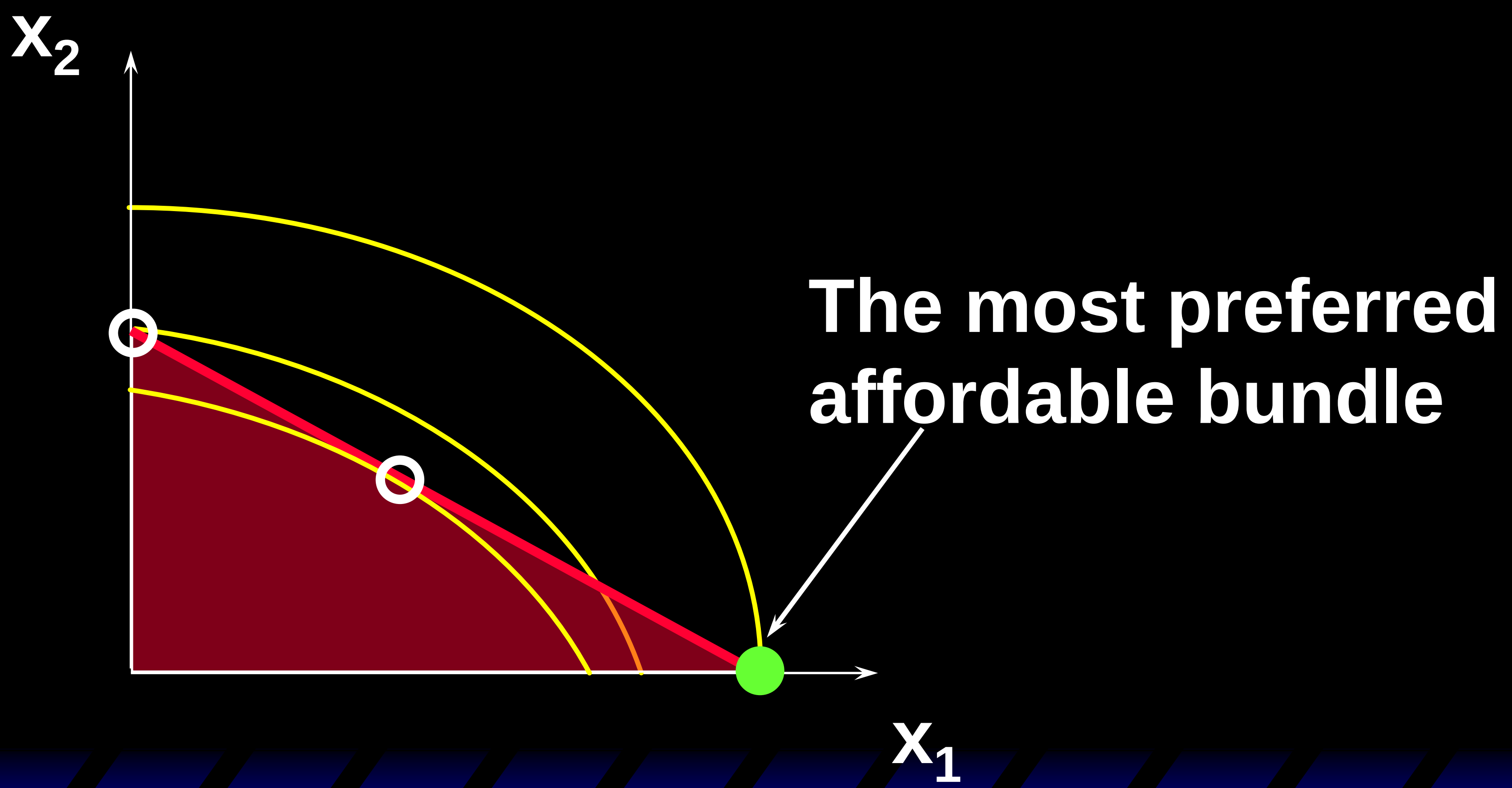

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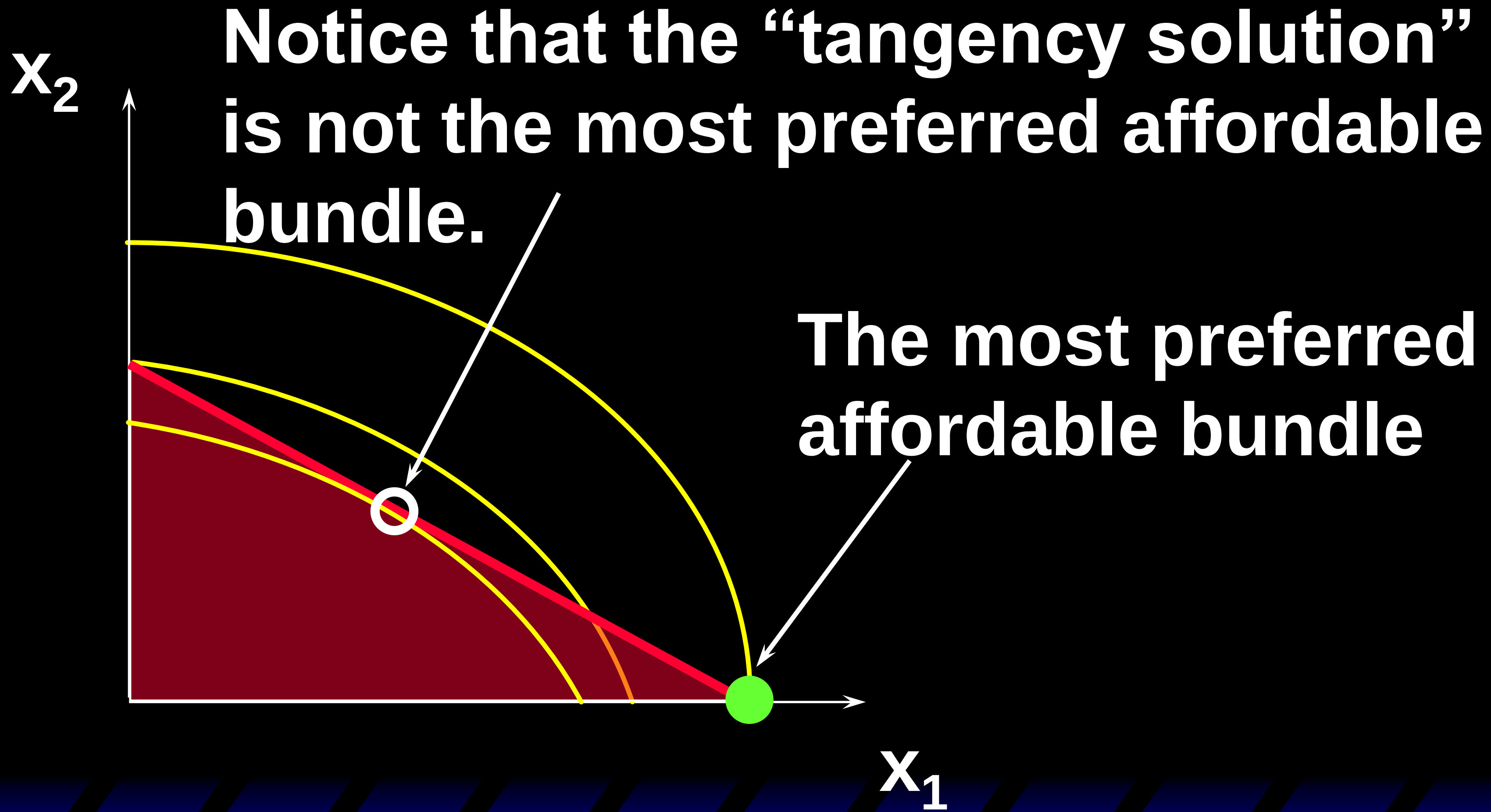
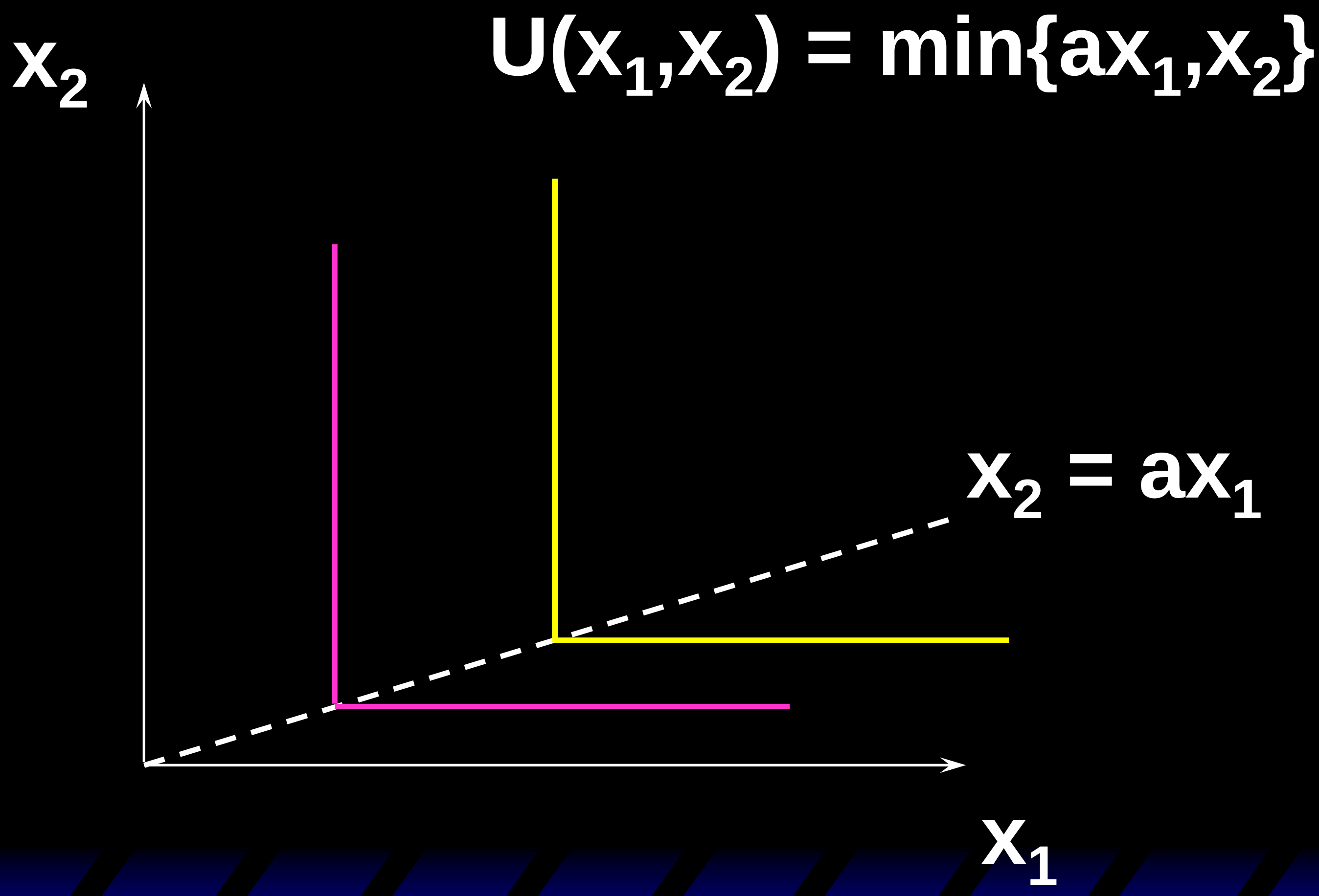


Examples of ‘Kinky’ Solutions -- the Perfect Complements Case



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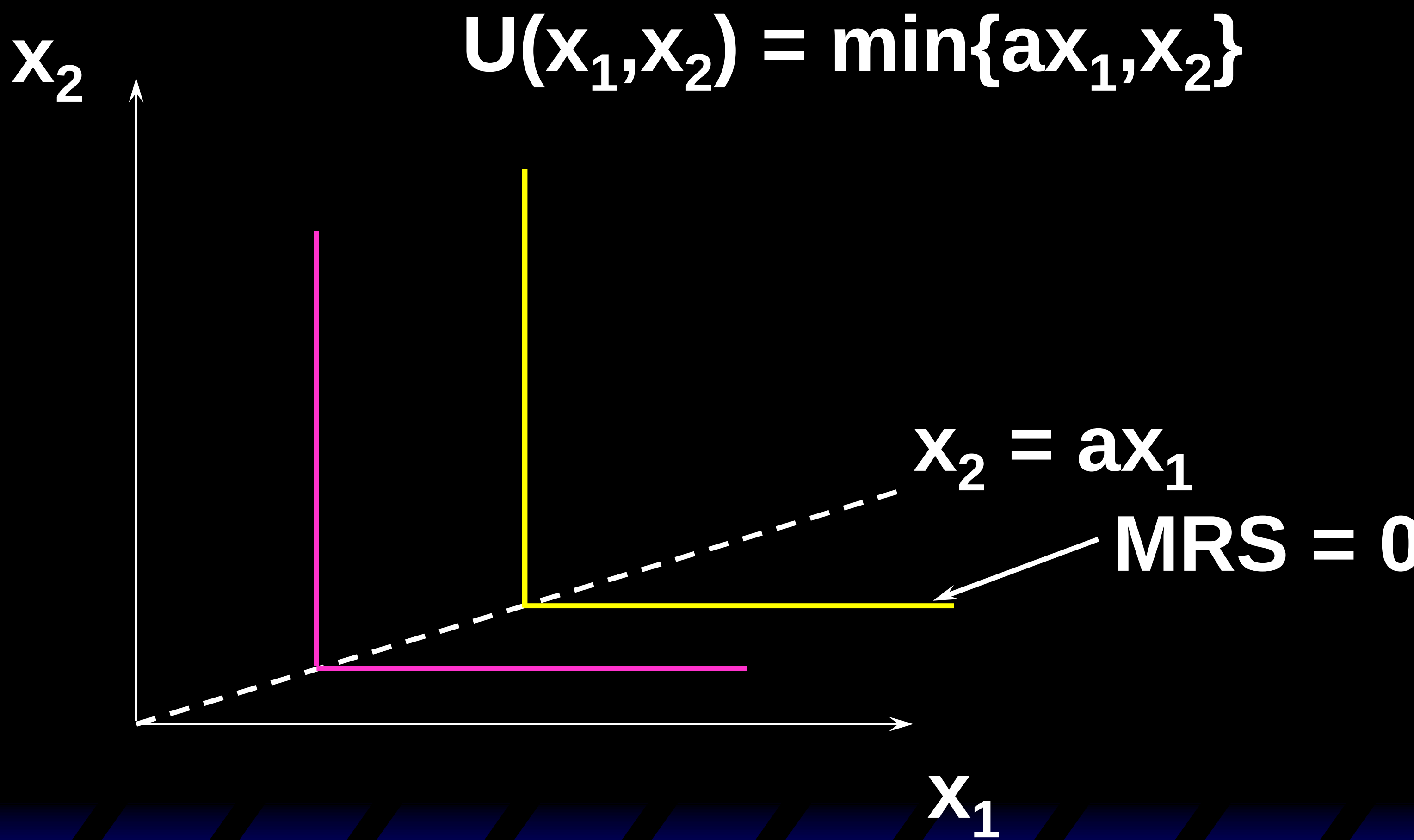

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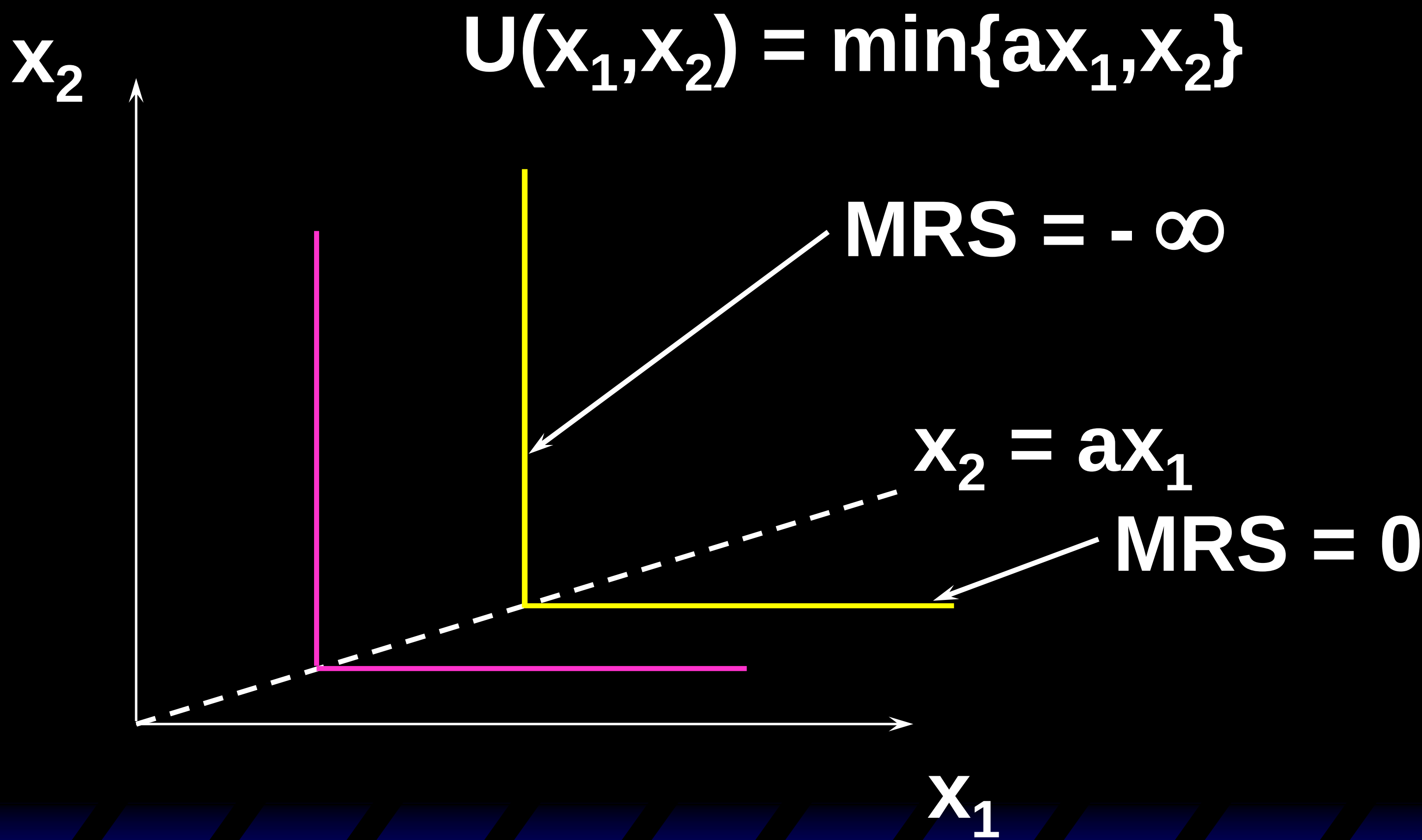

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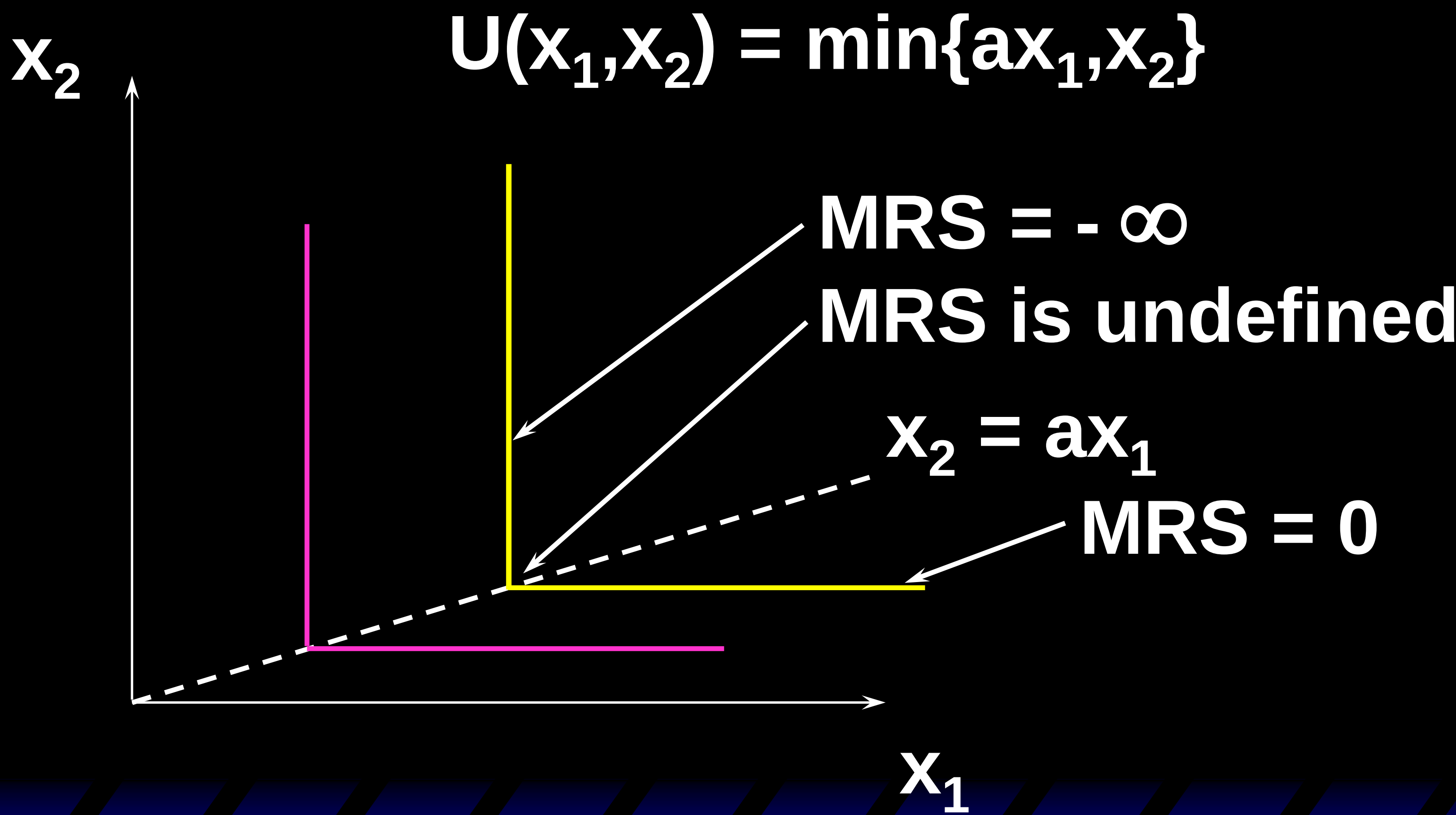

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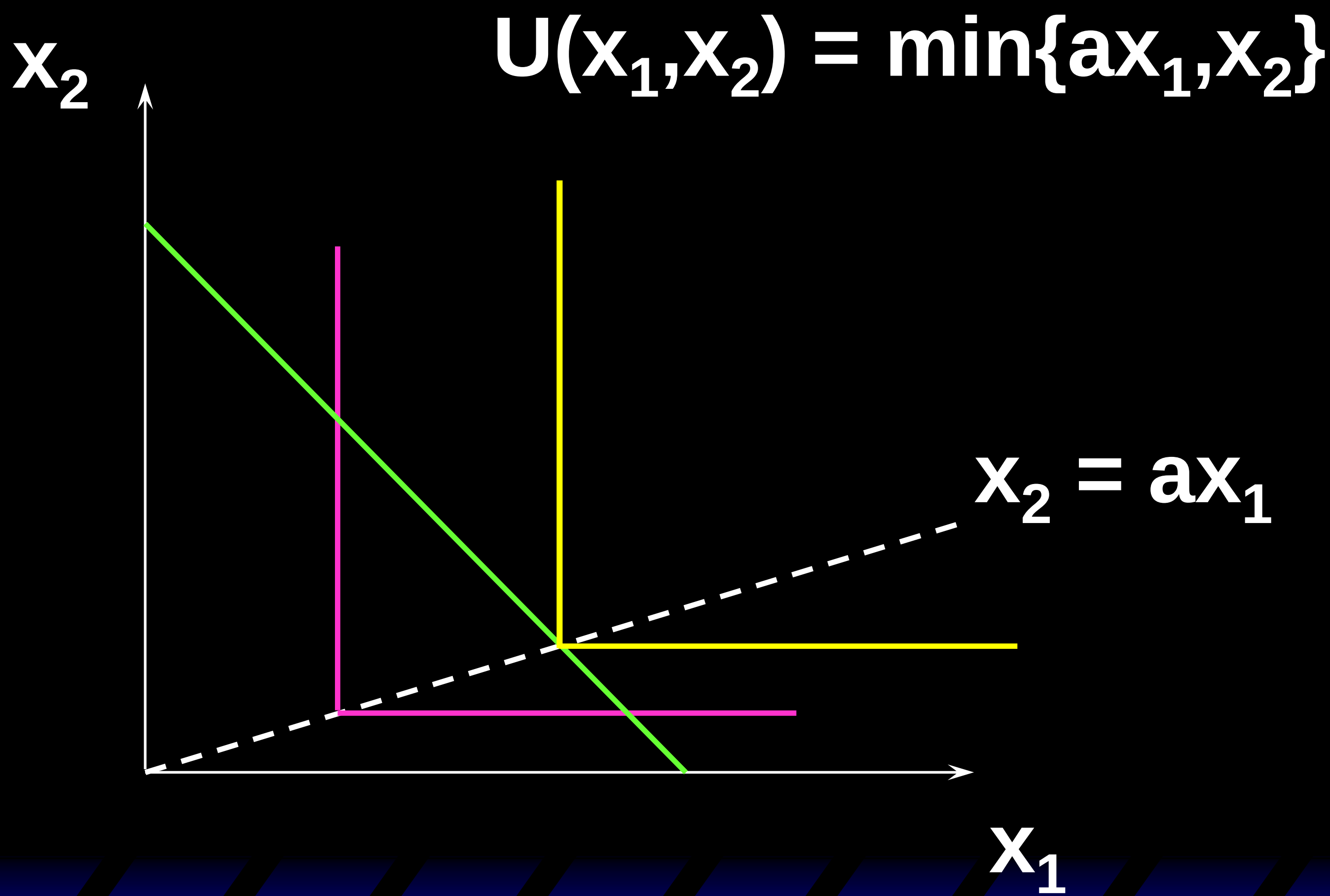
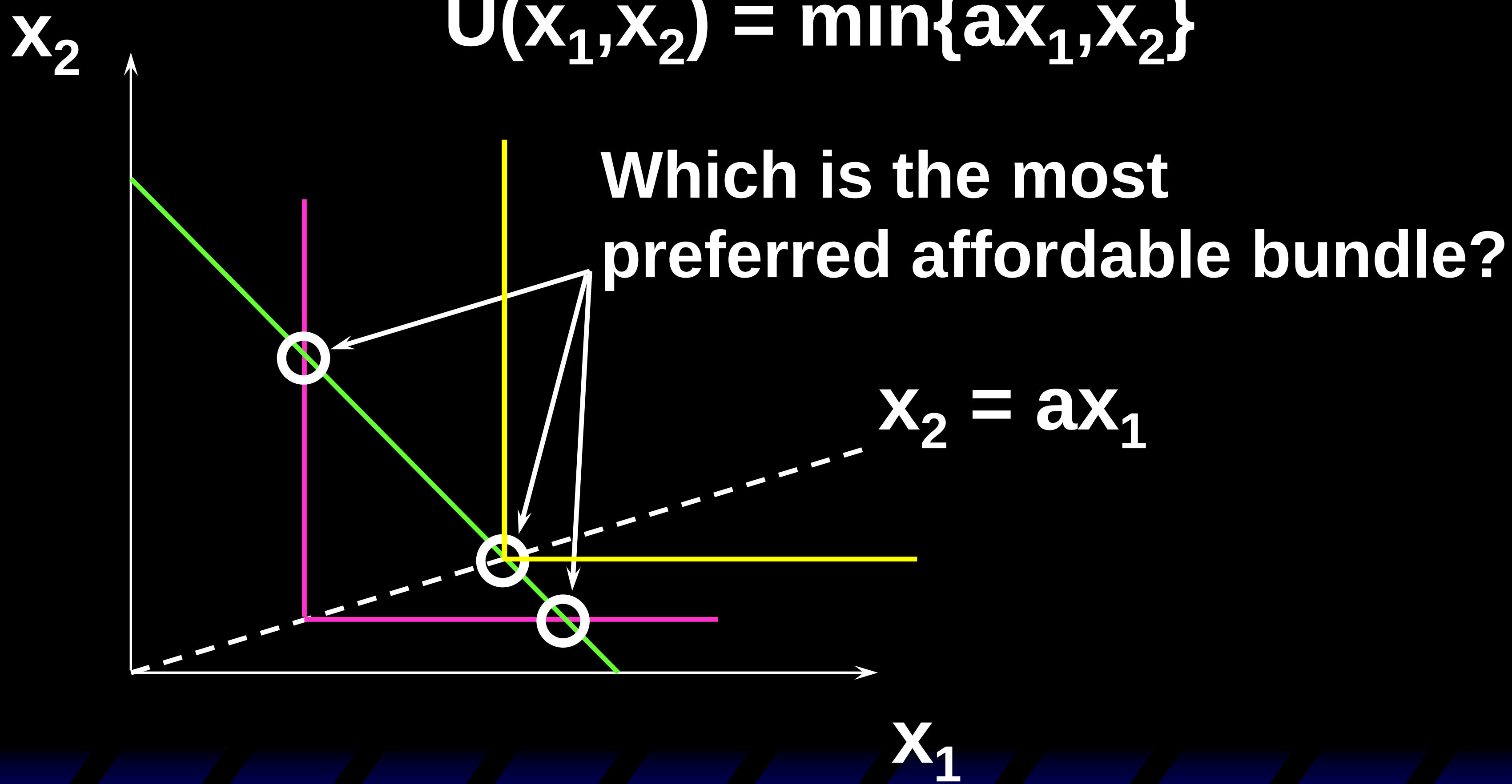


Examples of ‘Kinky’ Solutions -- the Perfect Complements Case

$U(x_1,x_2) = \min\{ax_1,x_2\}$



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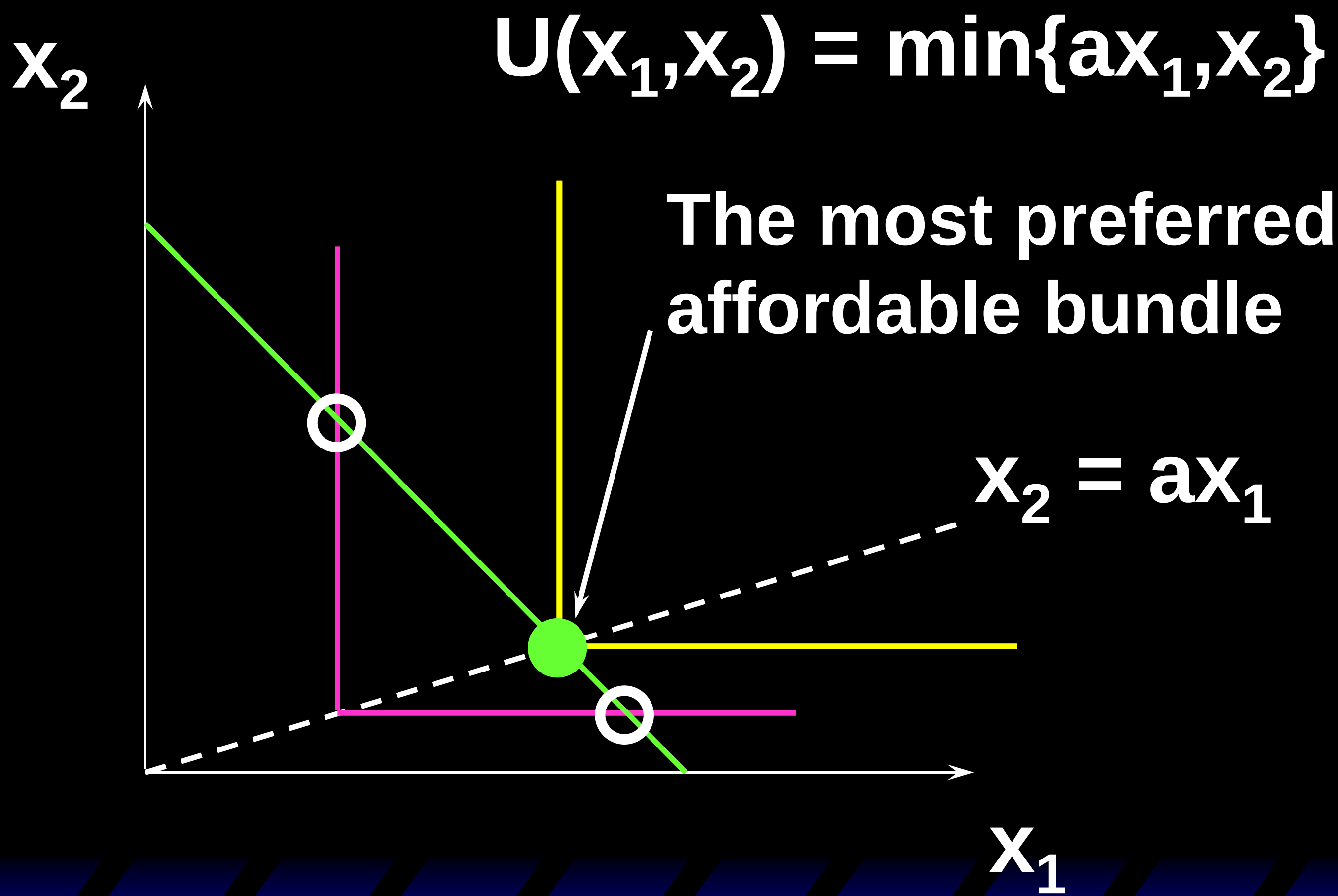

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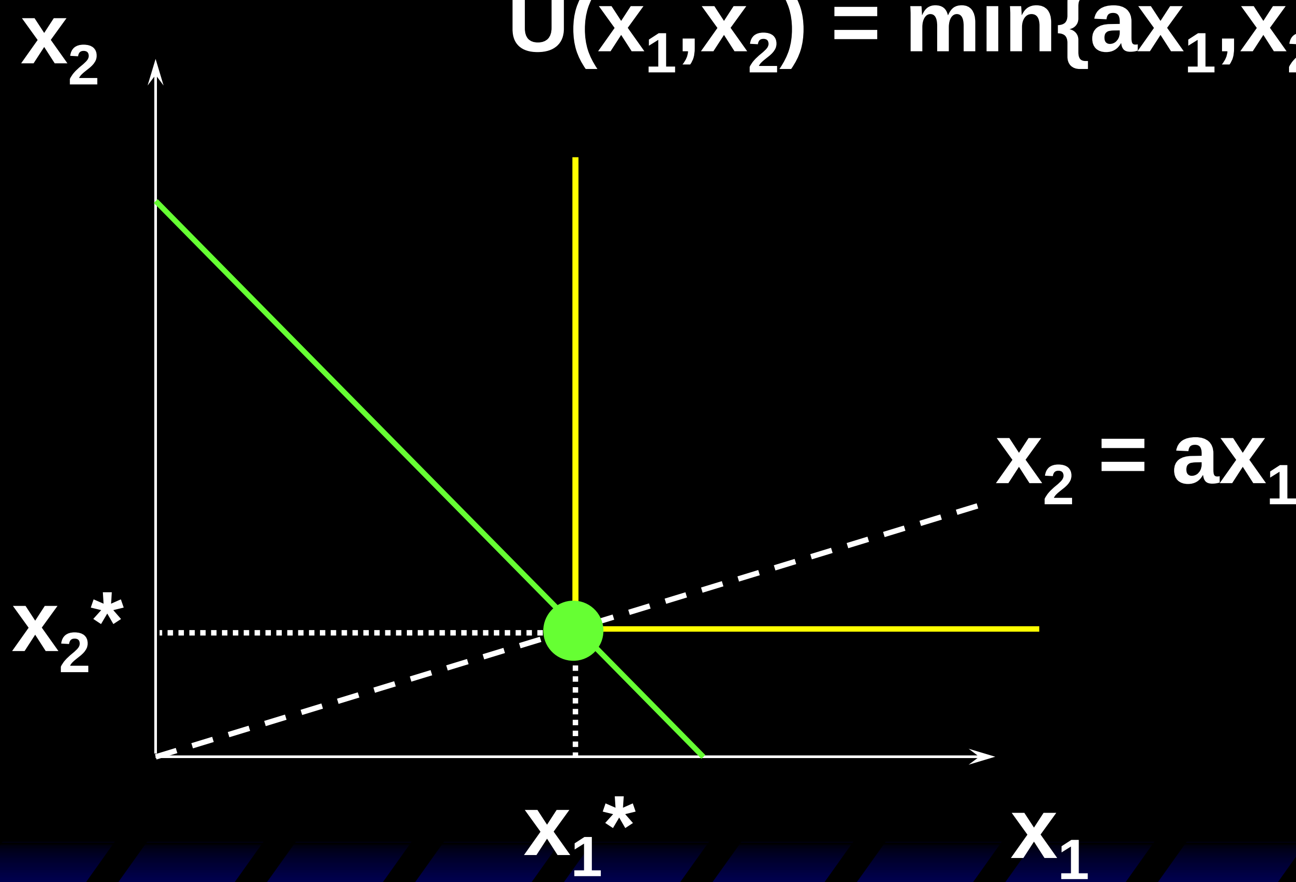
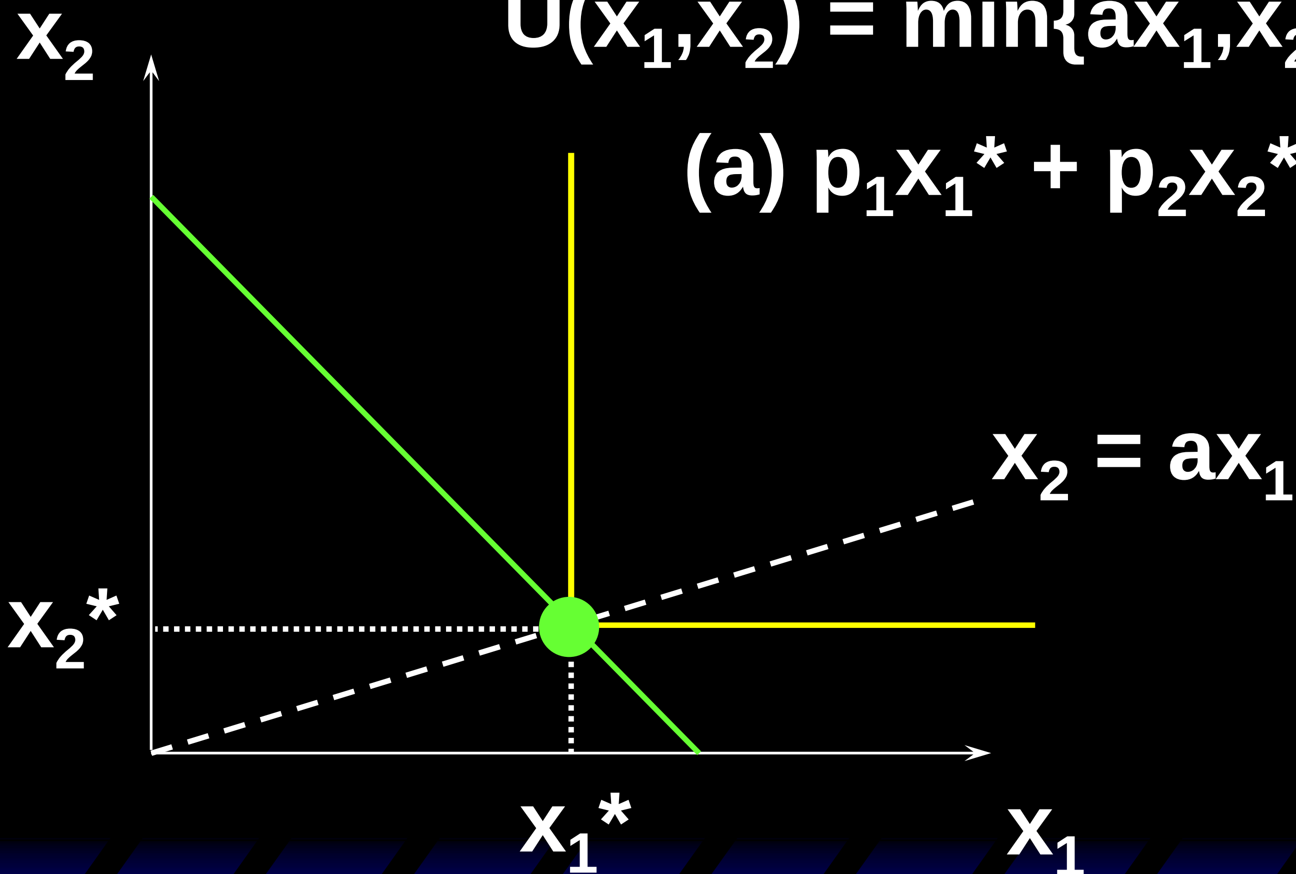


Examples of ‘Kinky’ Solutions -- the Perfect Complements Case

$U(x_1,x_2) = \min\{ax_1,x_2\}$

(a) $p_1x_1^* + p_2x_2^* = m$

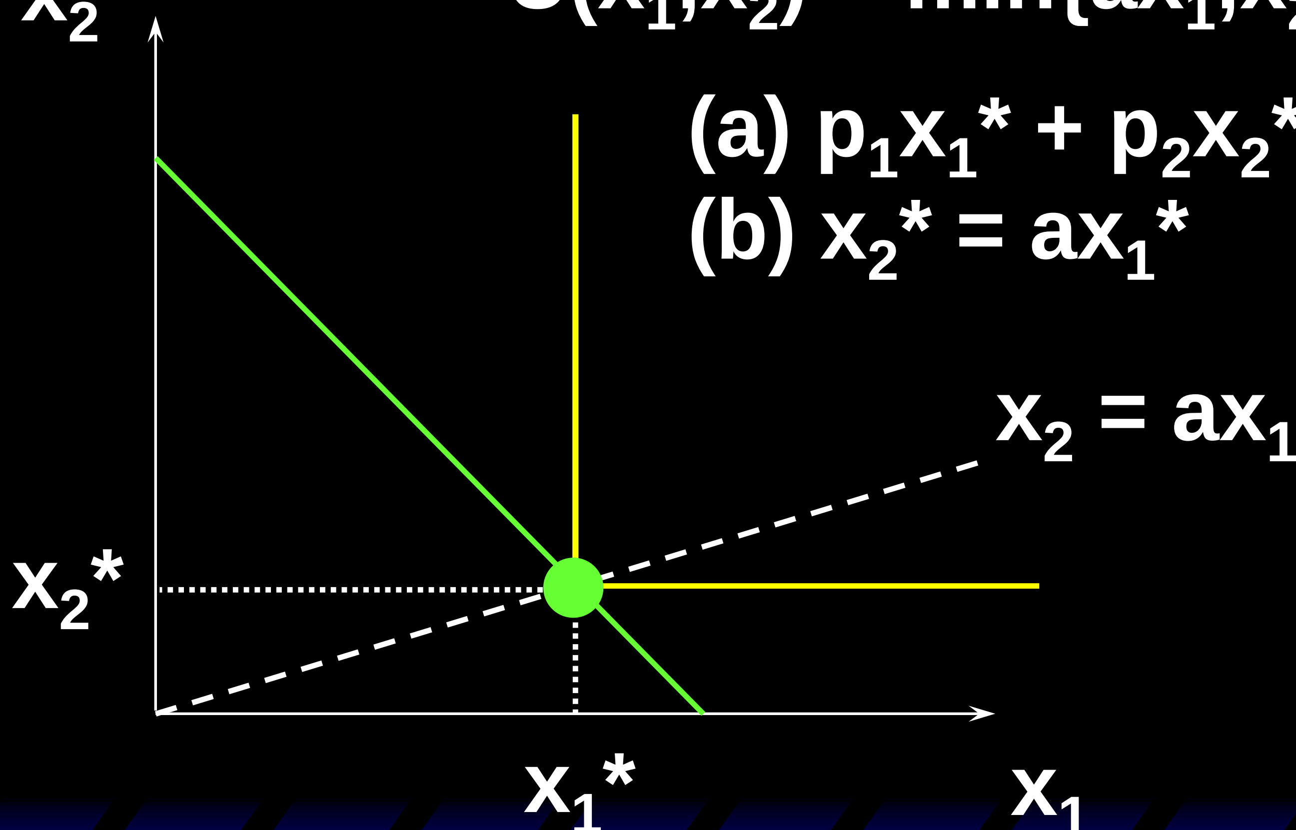


Examples of ‘Kinky’ Solutions -- the Perfect Complements Case

$$U(x_1,x_2) = \min\{ax_1,x_2\}$$

(a) $p_1x_1^* + p_2x_2^* = m$

(b) $x_2^* = ax_1^*$



Examples of 'Kinky' Solutions -- the Perfect Complements Case

(a) $p_1x_1^* + p_2x_2^* = m$; (b) $x_2^* = ax_1^*$.

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Substitution from (b) for x_2^* in (a) gives $p_1x_1^* + p_2ax_1^* = m$

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$$x_1^* = \frac{m}{p_1 + ap_2}$$

Examples of 'Kinky' Solutions -- the Perfect Complements Case

(a) $p_1x_1^* + p_2x_2^* = m$; (b) $x_2^* = ax_1^*$.

Substitution from (b) for x_2^* in (a) gives $p_1x_1^* + p_2ax_1^* = m$ which gives

$$x_1^* = \frac{m}{p_1 + ap_2};\ x_2^* = \frac{am}{p_1 + ap_2}.$$

Examples of 'Kinky' Solutions -- the Perfect Complements Case

(a) $p_1x_1^* + p_2x_2^* = m$; (b) $x_2^* = ax_1^*$.

Substitution from (b) for x_2^* in (a) gives $p_1x_1^* + p_2ax_1^* = m$ which gives

$$x_1^* = \frac{m}{p_1 + ap_2}; \; x_2^* = \frac{am}{p_1 + ap_2}.$$

A bundle of 1 commodity 1 unit and *a* commodity 2 units costs $p_1 + ap_2$; $m/(p_1 + ap_2)$ such bundles are affordable.

Examples of 'Kinky' Solutions -- the Perfect Complements Case