

Keith Marshall's Zen Mischief Weblog January-October 2006

The Life of Galileo

Uncharted territory for me -- well almost. I'm not a theatre go-er, largely because I'm not a fan of theatre (or film, ballet, opera). But last night we went to see Simon Russell Beale in Bertolt Brecht's *The Life of Galileo* at the [National Theatre](#).

I came away stunned ... at the simplicity, the brilliance, the power -- all portrayed with the lightest of touches.

Beale (as Galileo) is as outstanding as one would expect of one of the best actors of his generation. The churchmen are convincingly evil yet plausible. Galileo's extended family are divided and fearful: his house-keeper's son, Andrea, is with Galileo; Andrea's mother and Virginia, Galileo's daughter, are devout and terrified -- of what the church might do and of the plague. The young Andrea is brilliantly played by Ryan Watson. Watch for his boy in years to come? Oh and the science is accurate too!

It wasn't as blood-thirsty as I had expected -- I had imagined more overt use of instruments of torture. But it was probably the more powerful for their physical absence from the stage.

If you're lucky enough to get the chance to see it, do! It's only on for another three performances and they are sold out. Just hope that the National take the production touring, or perhaps revive it next year.

Sunday October 29, 2006 - 06:08pm (GMT)

Brave New 1984

There's a good piece in today's *Observer* (aka "the Sunday Guardian") about the encroachment on our civil liberties by the law. Going under the headline [The way the police treat us verges on the criminal](#) it covers much more than Police activity but highlights a whole panoply of stupid and subversive Government thinking. Worth a read.

Sunday October 29, 2006 - 01:50pm (GMT)

Zen Mischievous Moments #115

Wonderful quote from Tom Menino, Mayor of Boston, MA who is talking here about the shortage of parking in his city ...

"It's like an Alcatraz around my neck."

[With thanks to [KellyPuffs](#)]

Saturday October 21, 2006 - 10:15am (BST)

Zen Mischievous Moments #114

Letters to the Editor which were never published

The government tells us that we are eating too many pies and dying of heart disease, then in the next breath they're telling us we are living too long and there'll be no more pension money left for us. I wish they'd make their minds up.

John S, Manchester

I am married to a Taiwanese lady, and people often ask me if she was a mail-order bride. I find this very insensitive. The Royal Mail loose around 2 million letters and parcels each year, and to suggest that I would trust the delivery of my wife to them is insulting in the extreme. She was sent by DHL next day delivery.

Lennie P, London

The record companies would have us believe that the money made by CD pirates goes to fund the drug industry. But the money rock stars make from legal record sales ends up in exactly the same place.

Phil B, Ringway

The government says that there are nearly 50,000 people with HIV in Britain, a third of whom do not even know that they have it. Is it just me, or is it a bit harsh that the government know and haven't told the poor sods?

John C, e-mail

[With thanks to Jacky Searle]

Saturday September 16, 2006 - 02:42pm (BST)

Quote: Nakedness

Full nakedness! All joys are due to thee,
As souls unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must be,
To taste whole joyes.

[John Donne, 1699]

Saturday September 16, 2006 - 02:32pm (BST)

Quote: Education

The main end of education is to teach people to think.

[Lord CROMER]

Saturday September 2, 2006 - 04:26pm (BST)

Unborn Thugs

So Tony Blair thinks he can tell whether an unborn child is going to be dysfunctional or not, does he? See [here](#) for yesterday's BBC News story.

What a shame someone didn't decide before he was born that Tony Blair was going to

be dysfunctional and lock him up!

And anyway what on earth is it to do with the government? The more they meddle and make things happen for/to people the less responsibility people will take for themselves. Which leads to society disappearing up its own orifice.

Stop meddling, Tony! Try doing something useful like running the country.

If you're short of ideas here are three:

1. Start empowering people in the health service and in schools to do things for themselves; let them decide how to improve their environment -- after all they see it every day! I think if you do you'll find things start to improve.
2. Get rid of most of the bureaucracy in hospitals and schools, not to mention all these stupid tests for kids. That'll release time for people to be empowered.
3. Sack most of the administrators in the hospitals/health service; all most of them do is count buttons for you and you never needed that anyway. That'll save enough money that the health service won't be under funded.

Stand back. Look at the big picture. Try some sensible government. But above all:

STOP MEDDLING!

Friday September 1, 2006 - 07:04pm (BST)

Friday Five: September

I thought we'd have a Friday Five again this week. This one is from [the Friday Five](#) ...

1. This is the 1st of September, what do you want to accomplish by the 30th?

That £2M lottery win I haven't had yet.

2. What does September make you think about or feel?

Autumn, bonfires and the approach of winter.

3. September is the ninth month; can you name nine memories so far from this year?

Well let's start with a few holiday things: having tea on a beach in Devon, buying lots of new clothes, watching the Red Arrows, birdwatching at Axmouth. Then we can add more everyday things like a literary society pub meet, chairing a literary society book group, my father's funeral, seeing him at the funeral director's and also in hospital a couple of weeks before he died. I think that's nine.

4. What does September have in common with three other months and can you name them?

Well the obvious one is that April, June and November also have 30 days. And then March, June and December the month number is divisible by 3.

5. The first weekend in September signals the end of summer for many even though it doesn't really end for weeks. When does summer end for you?

Usually when I come back from my summer holiday in July -- but certainly around now in early September when the apples are being picked.

Friday September 1, 2006 - 06:44pm (BST)

Zen Mischievous Moments #113

From *New Scientist*, 15/07/2006 ...

The unusual paper title that follows is not for the squeamish. The paper appeared in the journal *Injury Extra* (vol 36, p 508), was authored by M Bemelman and ER Hammacher, and was titled "Rectal impalement by pirate ship: A case report".

And finally, to help you get over that, here is another title (for which we need apologise only to literate hedgehogs). It is from the *Journal of Exotic Pet Medicine* and is entitled "Wobbly Hedgehog Syndrome in African Pygmy Hedgehogs".

Wednesday August 30, 2006 - 07:58pm (BST)

Sentencing by Victims

Bystander in his weblog [The Magistrate's Blog](#) today quotes a letter from *The Times* about the advisability of victims having a say in the sentencing of miscreants. Rather than repeat everything here -- follow the link for the full item -- all I am going to say is that I entirely agree.

Indeed victim revenge is becoming far too prevalent in our society. There is another example of today, where the BBC are reporting that the government is going to [ban the possession of violent porn](#) having been persuaded to do so by an elderly mother whose daughter was killed by someone influenced by what we would all agree is a pretty sick habit. While one would never condone such a crime (or anything even remotely similar) and most of us wouldn't want violent porn, is the gratification and revenge of one individual a good basis on which to make law? I suggest not.

Wednesday August 30, 2006 - 06:52pm (BST)

Stop Panicking

There was an interesting article in the 19 August issue of [New Scientist](#) which suggested that because we all watch so much coverage of bad news we are all panicking too much and are making unreasonable risk assessments and thus decisions about our lives. Basically we are getting the risks of things like terrorism and air crashes out of proportion because we hear far too much about them compared with other risks. Just as one example reality check: the number of Americans killed by terrorism since the late 1960s is roughly the same as the number killed by lightning in the same period. We all know how likely it isn't that we will get struck by lightning and we don't have a "war on lightning" do we! The article is so worth everyone reading that I've put a PDF of the text [here](#) with due acknowledgement to [New Scientist](#) who own it.

Monday August 28, 2006 - 07:46pm (BST)

Naming the Family

We've recently returned from holiday at a small English seaside town, hence the hiatus. While we were away Noreen made a momentous discovery: all members of families have recently been renamed.

The female parent is now called "Look-Mum".

The male parent is "Ohw-Daad".

And children have hyphenated names after the French style as either "Don't-Johnny" or "Tyson-Don't".

Why did no-one tell us?

Monday August 14, 2006 - 10:12pm (BST)

Zen Mischievous Moments #112

Two items from the Feedback column in this week's [New Scientist](#) which amused me:

Water that can read

MEGA-funded Big Science is all very well, but Feedback has decided it is time to launch the Kitchen Science Unit, to bring the delights of Occam's razor home, next to the cheese-slice. We thank Mike Bennett for suggesting its first experiment.

Pondering the foundations of the claims made at www.willau.com for eSmog chips (Feedback, 20 May), Bennett came across further work by Dr Masaru Emoto at www.floweressencemagazine.com/nov05/emotowater.html - where Emoto hypothesises that if water can be "imprinted" by impurities that will affect the shape of the ice crystals it forms, perhaps it can read print too. Here is his full methodology section, so that you may attempt to replicate his work:

"I put the water into two glass bottles. On one bottle, I pasted a label typed, 'Thank you,' and on the other, 'You fool,' in such a way that water would be able to 'read' them. The water in both bottles was the same. I then froze the water in each bottle."

Emoto's finding: "The water in the bottle with 'Thank you' formed beautiful hexagonal crystals, while the one with 'You fool' had only fragments of crystals." We look forward to hearing if your findings reproduce his.

We naturally expect that the Kitchen Science Unit will attract creative collaborators who will investigate correlations with the language, colour and typeface of the writing on the bottles, the effect of the spoken word, of music, and so on. Feedback disclaims all responsibility for the contents of your freezer after the experiment, including but not limited to the presence of despondent lamb chops or hyperactive ice cream.

Avoid recommended route

TRANSPORT Direct is one of those websites that promises the world but delivers rather less. Set up by the UK's Department of Transport about a year ago, it offers users detailed directions for travelling from one postcode to any other in the UK. Motorists should, however, be wary of following its directions too closely.

A colleague of Feedback wanted to travel from his house in Brighton on the south coast to the local hospital. It is a 20-minute journey by bus, or a few minutes quicker by car - unless you follow Transport Direct's directions, that is.

These start by pointing the hapless motorist the wrong way down a one-way street. The site then instructs you to turn left and drive the wrong way down another one-way street. Finally, you end up going in the right direction but find the way ahead blocked by a barrier that can only be unlocked by the police and fire or ambulance crews. It is perhaps just as well that most motorists will never get beyond the barrier, for the next leg of the journey proposed by the site is down a bus lane, into which motorists who stray face a £50 fine.

Sunday July 2, 2006 - 01:31pm (BST)

Friday Five: Holiday Travel

This week's Friday Five is from the [Friday Fiver](#) ...

1. How many foreign countries have you visited?

Not enough: I live in England and have visited France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, oh and Scotland.

2. What do you always take with you on vacation?

A camera and a notebook.

3. Name something you've lost recently:

A handkerchief.

4. Do you prefer action packed vacations or relaxing ones?

I always want a relaxing holiday, but if I have it I feel I haven't done anything. So I have to have some gentle activity of my own making.

5. Other people's vacation photographs: do you really want to see them?

Only if they're good photography of interesting places/things. Snapshots -- forget 'em.

Friday June 30, 2006 - 04:41pm (BST)

Friday Five: New

This week's Friday Five is brought to you courtesy of [Friday Fiver](#) ...

1. What was the last new song you discovered?

Not a clue! Not in a listening to music (of any sort) at the moment.

2. What was the last new dish you tasted?

Probably something Chinese last time I went to a Chinese restaurant.

3. Where was the last place you visited for the first time?

Edinburgh, back in late April.

4. Who was the last new person you met?

Derek, one of our senior managers, on Wednesday.

5. What was the last new toy you played with?

Ah now that'll be the pinhole adaptor for my Olympus E-500 digital SLR camera.

Friday June 23, 2006 - 06:37pm (BST)

Quote: God's Favourites

Whoever imagines himself a favorite with God holds others in contempt.

[Robert Green Ingersoll, lawyer and orator, 1833-1899]

Saturday June 17, 2006 - 09:07pm (BST)

Zen Mischievous Moments #111

From *New Scientist* of 10 June 2006:

John Lennie in California was understandably perplexed when he received this from his local registrar of Democratic voters: "This is an official notice that due to a clerical error, the candidates for Member, County Central Committee, 14th Assembly District,

Democratic, are in the incorrect random order on the ballot for the June 6, 2006, Direct Primary Election. The correct random order for this contest should be as follows ..."

Saturday June 17, 2006 - 07:29pm (BST)

Friday Five: Candy

It's been a while since I've done a Friday Five: I've missed a few because of work, and many of the recent offerings from the regular providers haven't been at all tempting. But here is this week's from the [Friday Fiver](#).

Name your favorite...

- 1. Candy:** those mixed fruit boiled sweets you buy in a tin at the chemist
- 2. Cookie:** almost anything with chocolate
- 3. Donut:** has to be sticky red jam
- 4. Cold drink:** beer, English
- 5. Hot beverage:** Earl Grey tea

Friday June 16, 2006 - 09:03pm (BST)

Zen Mischievous Moments #110

First of all an apology to all our readers for something of a hiatus. Sadly life -- or rather death -- has gotten in the way of far more important things like this weblog as my father died three weeks ago today. While dad's death wasn't a huge surprise (he was 86 and ill) it doesn't mean there's any less to do especially as mum is 91 and now on her own after some 60 years -- luckily she's a tough old bird, hideously fit and still has all her marbles.

Anyway during the week Noreen brought my attention to this article in The Times: www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,20029-2201778.html. As usual the sting is in the tail. Enjoy -- or in the words of the late Frankie Howerd "Titter ye not!".

Saturday June 3, 2006 - 03:38pm (BST)

Poncy Menu of the Week

For a long time I have had the impression that chefs are indulging in dishes which contain "one ingredient too many", but suddenly in the last few months it has got worse. What follows is more like dishes with "six ingredients too many".

[Leek, potato and dolcelatte soup](#)

[Baked goats cheese and blackberry savoury cheesecake with red chard and onion chutney](#)
[Pavé of corn-fed chicken and Toulouse sausage with Serrano ham and tomato rosemary relish](#)
[Fresh rope grown mussels steamed in cider with shallots and pancetta bacon](#)

[Quail encroute stuffed with a wild mushrooms, black truffle and sausage meat farce on a root vegetable purée served with marquis potatoes and redcurrant jus](#)

[Moroccan style braised lamb shank with apricot and raisin cracked bulgur wheat and a confit of baby aubergine](#)

[Pan seared yellow fin tuna steak with fondant potato, wilted spinach and antibiose sauce](#)
[Roasted vegetable and nut terrine with rocket, parmentier potatoes, sun blush peppers and tomatoes with a balsamic reduction](#)

[Lemon and lime tart with raspberry coulis and clotted cream](#)
[Syrup steamed sponge pudding with vanilla crème anglaise](#)

Chef's selection of cheeses, biscuits and chutney Fresh platter of exotic fruits

Honestly! What can I say? Other than that this is genuine: it is the current restaurant menu from an organisation of which I am a member.

What is this fashion for "onion chutney"? Why "vanilla creme anglaise" and not "custard"? What on earth is "antibiose sauce" or even "antiboise sauce"? Even [Google](#) and [Wikipedia](#) don't know! Why does everything have to come with a "redcurrant jus" or a "raspberry coulis"? And what's the difference anyway? "Fresh rope grown mussels" indeed; how pretentious!

With all this pretentiousness around I fail to understand why the good old British "greasy spoon" is in decline. It's just so "Emperor's New Clothes"!

Thursday May 11, 2006 - 07:36pm (BST)

Zen Mischievous Moments #109

I've just come across this [story](#) on [Ananova](#):

Musical breast implants

Computer chips that store music could soon be built into a woman's breast implants. One boob could hold an MP3 player and the other the person's whole music collection. BT futurology, who have developed the idea, say it could be available within 15 years.

BT Laboratories' analyst Ian Pearson said flexible plastic electronics would sit inside the breast. A signal would be relayed to headphones, while the device would be controlled by Bluetooth using a panel on the wrist. According to *The Sun* he said: "It is now very hard for me to think of breast implants as just decorative. If a woman has something implanted permanently, it might as well do something useful."

The mind boggles. Guys: how about implanting a vibrator, or perhaps a strawberry flavour dispenser, into your penis extension?

Wednesday May 10, 2006 - 10:10pm (BST)

Blair's Week

What a good week for Tony "Something New Every Day" Blair!

- Patricia Hewitt trying to pretend the NHS is better than ever and folding in the face of angry nurses
- Charles Clarke and the debacle of the missing alien offenders
- Two Hags Jags Prescott having to admit enjoying his diary secretary in his office
- A cannabis find (albeit tiny and in a guest room) at the Scottish home of Defense Secretary John Reid
- And I also saw mention somewhere that Blair has been told to go within a year or face a leadership contest

In fact it has been such a good week that I've not noticed the usual "one a day" stream of new initiatives.

And next week we have the local elections. What jolly japes!

Monday May 1, 2006 - 11:52am (BST)

Worried about Scotland

When we were in Edinburgh the other day my wife and I visited the [Museum of Childhood](#) on the Royal Mile. While there two women of I guess early 50s came in; from their accents I'd say they were probably Canadians rather than Americans. They wandered round only the ground floor for 5 minutes and left. OK so nothing strange there. But one of them was carrying a book: *Scotland for Dummies*!!

Monday May 1, 2006 - 11:31am (BST)

Quote: Patriotism

To question your government is not unpatriotic -- to not question your government is unpatriotic.

[US Senator Chuck Hagel, 2005]

Saturday April 29, 2006 - 02:31pm (BST)

Zen Mischievous Moments #108



I spotted this street sign in Edinburgh and wondered what they knew that the rest of us didn't.

Saturday April 29, 2006 - 01:47pm (BST)

Fashion Victims #3



Spotted this young lady in Edinburgh's High Street yesterday. Mind you this was fairly tame compared to some of what was seen in Heathrow and Edinburgh airports -- I swear that if you sit in Heathrow Terminal 1 for more than 30 minutes everything will pass by. It's a shame I cannot make myself take photos while waiting to be called for a flight. Lots more photos on my Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kcm76>.

Friday April 28, 2006 - 07:17pm (BST)

National Head-in-sand Service

What are these idiots on? There's a report today on BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4935358.stm> of the Health Minister Patricia Hewitt, saying NHS is enjoying "*its best year ever*" and *has denied there is a crisis*. How can she be so ineffably stupid (or blinkered), when the *service faces a financial deficit of up to £800M and some 7,000 job losses have already been confirmed* and it appears to be totally mismanaged both at a local and national level? Any CEO who presided over a private corporation in such a mess would be very quickly removed and the company likely put into liquidation; yet this government can claim they are presiding over a triumph!

Hewitt also says "*We have just come through one of the coldest winters for decades and we haven't had any of the winter bed crises.*" What cold winter? If what we've just had was a cold winter -- even an English cold winter -- then all I can say is that people have very, very short memories. It felt distinctly like a mild winter to me.

Dreadful woman. Dreadful government.

Sunday April 23, 2006 - 11:41am (BST)

Fashion Victims #2



Second in this occasional series. This one was in WH Smith on Newcastle Central Station one early evening this week. The coat was made of heavy furnishing fabric. Not sure whether it was work attire on the way home or flash gear on the way out for the evening. Clearly she liked it; I thought it looked a dog's breakfast.

Saturday April 22, 2006 - 06:51pm (BST)

Friday Five: Photos

This week's Friday Five comes from <http://community.livejournal.com/thefridayfive/>.

1. What is your favorite photo?

Today *French Lavender*, www.flickr.com/photos/kcm76/110990229/in/set-72057594079892401/, but tomorrow well who knows?

But see also my favoutites by other people at www.flickr.com/photos/kcm76/favorites/.

2. Who took the photo?

I did.

3. If you could photograph anything or anyone what/who would it be?

Not a clue; I'd just like to be in the same league as the guys whose photographs are in my favourites, above.

4. What makes a good photo?

I don't think there is any one answer; its like asking what makes a good book or why you like a particular piece of music. For every photographic rule on what makes a good picture there are lots of exceptions. Ultimately what is a good photo is in the eye of the person looking at it -- I see lots of pictures on Flickr which people consider good and which I would have thrown away, and I'm sure others feel the same about my pictures. A photo may be good because you like/identify with the subject, the composition, or colour, or patterns, or special effects, or just because it does something to you inside. If it works for you it is a good picture.

5. Which do you prefer: digital or print?

Definitely digital; it is much more flexible, you can process your own without loads of extra kit and a darkroom and you can do your own special effects. Much more fun as well as being cheaper on running costs.

Friday April 14, 2006 - 07:34pm (BST)

Zen Mischievous Moments #107

A few helpful scientific equivalents ...

1. Ratio of an igloo's circumference to its diameter = Eskimo Pi
2. 2000 pounds of Chinese soup = Won ton
3. 1 millionth of a mouthwash = 1 microscope
4. Time between slipping on a peel and smacking the pavement = 1 bananosecond
5. Weight an evangelist carries with God = 1 billigram
6. Time it takes to sail 220 yards at 1 nautical mile per hour = Knotfurlong
7. 365.25 days of drinking low calorie beer because it's less filling = 1 lite year
8. 16.5 feet in the Twilight Zone = 1 Rod Serling
9. Half of a large intestine = 1 semicolon
10. 1,000,000 aches = 1 megahurtz
11. Basic unit of laryngitis = 1 hoarsepower
12. Shortest distance between two jokes = A straight line
13. 453.6 graham crackers = 1 pound cake
14. 1 million microphones = 1 megaphone
15. 1 million bicycles = 2 megacycles
16. 365.25 days = 1 unicycle
17. 2000 mockingbirds = two kilomockingbirds
18. 10 cards = 1 decacards
19. 1000 grams of wet socks = 1 literhosen
20. 1 millionth of a fish = 1 microfiche
21. 1 trillion pins = 1 terrapin
22. 10 rations = 1 decaration
23. 2 monograms = 1 diagram
24. 8 nickels = 2 paradigms
25. 2.4 statute miles of intravenous surgical tubing at Yale University Hospital = 1 I.V. League

26. 1 nostril = a semibreve
Sunday April 9, 2006 - 07:29pm (BST)

Quote: Education

An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you know and what you don't.

[Anatole France, 1844-1924]

Sunday April 9, 2006 - 07:04pm (BST) <

Fashion Victims #1



The first of an occasional series. A grab shot taken at London King's Cross. These two had just tumbled out of a taxi. The one on the left particularly looked like she'd been dragged backwards through a hedge - actually worse from the front. Hadn't spotted the horrid boots when I took the shot but somehow they sum it all up as does the one on right's obviously ill-fitting bra.

See my other photos at www.flickr.com/photos/kcm76

Saturday April 8, 2006 - 09:57pm (BST)

Knife Scanners

The police state moves a step nearer. There's a report today on BBC news under the heading [Knife scanners to be used UK-wide](#). Basically this says the British Transport Police are to deploy portable metal-detectors across the UK to catch people carrying knives. While I would be the last to condone anyone carrying any offensive weapon it seems to me that the current law makes no allowance for people to be able to genuinely carry a knife -- either as part of a functional multi-tool (Swiss Army Knife, Leatherman, etc.) or having been to the store and purchased a bread knife for use at home for, well, cutting bread. As I understand it both these activities are illegal at the whim of a police officer. That cannot be good law. And poor (interpretable) law, especially where it is actually enforceable, brings the police state several strides closer.

Worrying.

Sunday April 2, 2006 - 12:00pm (BST)

Friday Five: About Me

This week's Friday Five is brought to you courtesy of [Friday Fiver](#) ...

1. Name one of your flaws.

Impatience.

2. Have you ever won first place?

No.

3. Who is the last person to make you smile?

My solicitor this morning: just the sight of this small gnome-like man who should be a horse-racing jockey. Now whoever thought a lawyer would bring a smile to anyone's face!?

4. Describe a time when you should have tried harder.

When I was a student. OK, so I got my Chemistry degree and a doctorate -- but I still don't know how. If I had put my mind to it I could have done much better, and also made a go of being a post-doc. But I was lazy -- well no, more intersted in other things is probably more accurate; but isn't that what being a student is about? It isn't tho' what being a post-doc on a salary is about.

5. What are you good at?

Being one of the thinking workers, if not a working thinker, lots of things: as long as they don't involve using my hands. You want just one thing? Organisation.

Friday March 31, 2006 - 06:53pm (BST)

Zen Mischievous Moments #106

Ten more things to ponder when the going gets dull ...

1. If a turtle doesn't have a shell, is he homeless or naked?
2. Why don't sheep shrink when it rains?
3. Can vegetarians eat animal crackers?
4. If the police arrest a mime, do they tell him he has the right to remain silent?
5. Why do they put Braille on the drive-through bank machines?
6. How do they get the deer to cross at that yellow road sign?
7. Is it true that cannibals don't eat clowns because they taste funny?
8. What was the best thing before sliced bread?
9. One nice thing about egotists: they don't talk about other people.
10. Does the Little Mermaid wear an algebra?

To be continued ...

[With thanks to Chris Palmer]

Saturday March 25, 2006 - 05:59pm (GMT)

Quote: Criticism

Religious feelings cannot demand special treatment in a secular society. In a democracy one must from time to time accept criticism or becoming a laughingstock.

[Flemming Rose, Cultural Editor of Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*]

Saturday March 25, 2006 - 05:41pm (GMT)

Pix on www.flickr.com

I thought you might all like to know that you can now find my photo galleries on [flickr](http://www.flickr.com/photos/kcm76). You can find them at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/kcm76>.

Friday March 17, 2006 - 10:40pm (GMT)

Dino Bix



I always knew you could get dog biscuits, and even dried food for cats, but I'm surprised there is a market for dinosaur biscuits!

Friday March 17, 2006 - 08:20pm (GMT)

Zen Mischievous Moments #105

Tesco's signwriting department is putting the company catchphrase on the bottom of all their posters and signs.

In the car park at my local Tesco is a large sign reading:

Anyone parking for more than 3 hours will be clamped.

Every little helps ...

[With thanks to Chris Hicks]

Friday March 17, 2006 - 07:20pm (GMT)

Spiced Balls



Well not quite! There was an article yesterday on the BBC News website reporting that a group in the US had discovered that capsaicin (the hot chemical in chilli peppers) kills prostate cancer. Fortunately(?) they had done the reserach on cultured cells in the lab -- I dread th think how one applies capsaicin to the prostate in vivo except painfully. Full story at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4805190.stm>.
Thursday March 16, 2006 - 07:06pm (GMT)

Friday Five: Time in a Bottle

This week's Friday Five comes from <http://community.livejournal.com/thefridayfive/>.

1. 10 years ago what did you think you would be doing now?

Retiring with a decent pension. Why aren't I?

2. Where do you think you will be in 5 years from now?

I hope retiring, or retired. But given how wrong I've got so many such predictions over the years and the state of the pensions market I suspect I'll still be slaving away at some god-foresaken coal-face or other.

3. Do you live life one day at a time or look to the future.

I guess mostly one day at a time. I try to plan ahead in terms of pensions etc. but otherwise I've always drifted and never planned a career.

4. Do you wish you could go back in time and undo something in your life?

Nah; what's the point, I would only have cocked up something else. Anyway I'm where I am now 'cos of what i did/didn't do and it isn't all that bad; could be very much worse. I'd like to be able to redo many of the things I did but with my current knowledge and outlook; I could do them so much better now!

5. If you could send a message back in time and give a younger version of yourself some advice, what would it be?

Don't really know. **DON'T PANIC** might be a good start. Learn to let things flow over you. Concentrate on the job you're being paid for not what you'd like to be doing ('cos this cost me two jobs at the start of my working life).

Friday March 10, 2006 - 07:22pm (GMT)

A PC PC?



Says it all, really.

Friday March 3, 2006 - 10:07pm (GMT)

Friday Five

This week's Friday Five is brought to you courtesy of [Friday Fiver](#) ...

1. What color is your hair?

Mostly grey; what isn't is the original mid-brown

2. When is the last time you accepted a dare?

Not a clue, so it must be a long time ago.

3. Do you think you could have an affair?

Yes, I know I can, but I also know I can't keep it a secret. Interesting!
But then again why would anyone want to have an affair with me.

4. How often do you feel like walking on air?

Oh I guess about once a year, maybe.

5. How about despair

Every day when I have to get out of bed. :-(

Friday March 3, 2006 - 06:21pm (GMT)

Quote: Fear of Elephants

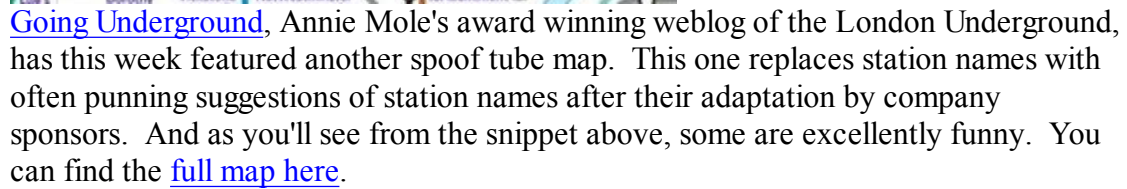
Another entry from [Quotation of the Day](#):

"Things get worse slowly. People adjust. The problem is assigning the correct degree of fear to distant elephants."

[David D Clark]

Thursday March 2, 2006 - 07:02pm (GMT)

Underground Sponsors



26/06/2010 19:13

And that was just the start! When asked to justify their English the aforementioned plod force responded, in part, with:

The cross-dimensional attributes of offence categorisation consistently generate detrimental uncertainty in practising criminalists.

I'll leave you all to read the rest of the piece which is at www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-2044670,00.html. Enjoy!

Sunday February 19, 2006 - 07:59pm (GMT)

Sunday Seven

I've been offline for most of the last 10 days due to a major hard disk crash, hence there was no Friday Five this week. So I thought I'd give you a Sunday Seven instead ...

Something I plan to do before you die: Take a naturist holiday

Something I could do (if I put my mind to it): Recycle more

Something I will not do: Ballroom dancing

An often repeated word: Tea

Something I hate: Absinthe

Something I like: Cats

Something you probably wouldn't guess about me: I wasn't baptised until I was 22

And I challenge anyone reading this to post their answers in a comment, or write a comment pointing to the answers on their own weblog.

Sunday February 19, 2006 - 07:47pm (GMT)

Perhaps to Ride the Lemon Patriot Line Today?

Annie Mole in [Going Underground](#), her award-winning blog about the London Underground, has today blogged about a brilliant new London Underground Map in which all the station names are [brilliant anagrams](#).

Sunday February 12, 2006 - 07:32pm (GMT) <

Zen Mischievous Moments #102

A few things to ponder when the going gets dull ...

1. Is Atheism is a non-prophet organisation?
2. If man evolved from monkeys and apes, why do we still have monkeys and apes?
3. The main reason Santa is so jolly is because he knows where all the bad girls and boys live.
4. I went to a bookstore and asked the salesman, "Where's the self-help section?" He said if he told me, it would defeat the purpose.
5. What if there were no hypothetical questions?
6. If someone with multiple personalities threatens to kill himself, is it considered a hostage situation?
7. Is there another word for synonym?
8. Isn't it a bit unnerving that doctors call what they do "practice"?
9. What do you do when you see an endangered animal eating an endangered plant?
10. Would a fly without wings be called a walk?

To be continued ...

[With thanks to Chris Palmer]

Sunday February 12, 2006 - 12:38pm (GMT)

Cross-Cultural

Today's Quotation of the Day, <http://ca.geocities.com/quotationoftheday/>, is appropriate in light of the Case of the Danish Cartoons:

1. Don't assume sameness.
2. What you think of as normal or human behavior may only be cultural.
3. Familiar behaviors may have different meanings.
4. Don't assume that what you meant is what was understood.
5. Don't assume that what you understood is what was meant.
6. You don't have to like or accept 'different' behavior, but you should try to understand where it comes from.
7. Most people do behave rationally; you just have to discover the rationale.

[Craig Storti, *Cross-Cultural Dialogues*]

Saturday February 11, 2006 - 08:03am (GMT)

Friday Five: Waiting for Godot

This week's Friday Five comes from <http://community.livejournal.com/thefridayfive/>.

1. Do you believe in God or a higher power?

As a working thinker, how can I believe in any higher power? Religion (and politics, which is only a form of religion which replaces God with "the Party" or self-interest) is the work of the Devil, and believers are Devil-worshippers. If people didn't believe in the Devil they wouldn't need God to save them from him. On the other hand, why should one deny a crippled man a crutch?

2. Are good and evil just concepts, or real powers in the universe?

Good and Evil are indeed just concepts; a human invention -- your Good God is another man's Evil Devil. But that doesn't mean there aren't powers in the universe: I feel sure there are many powers that we don't understand (and which thus appear to be some form of ethereal magic) but they ain't good and evil *per se*. To quote Arthur C Clarke: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic".

3. What is your view on forgiveness?

Forgiveness is basically "a good thing" if for no other reason than it is so much less personally destructive than its antithesis: revenge. My basic *modus vivendi* is "do as you would be done by"; and as I doubt any of us would want someone wreaking violence, revenge, hate on us forgiveness seems to be a good alternative. As Isaac Asimov has observed: "Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent".

4. Do organized religions do more harm than good?

Yes, very definitely. Religion has caused more wars, more hatred and more intolerance than it has prevented. I feel sure that if religion were invented today it would be banned, or at least marginalised, just as we try to do to other intolerant life-forms like the BNP.

5. If you had a day to spend playing God, what would you do?

As God I would of course be omnipotent. So I would use that power to dissolve all religions and politics, and their attendant organisations, in perpetuity; instil "do as you would be done by" as the basic human mindset; and having done that I would dissolve myself into the ether, irrevocably.

Friday February 10, 2006 - 06:38pm (GMT)

Danish Cartoons: A Question

Just back from a business trip and a busted PC. While away a question occurred to me, more about Islam than the currently furious cartoons:

If it is so blasphemous, in the eyes of Islam, to depict Mohammad in a cartoon (or indeed at all), how is it perfectly OK to name a child Mohammad? Is the child not a living picture; a representation? And given the ways of children is it not just as defamatory to Mohammad to have a truculent child bear his name as he is represented in a picture?

Thursday February 9, 2006 - 05:30pm (GMT)

Quote: Mistakes

"Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes.
Art is knowing which ones to keep."

[Scott Adams]

Saturday February 4, 2006 - 02:37pm (GMT)

At the Doctor's

Notice seen this week inside the toilet at my doctor's surgery:

Please supervise your children while using this patient toilet

Saturday February 4, 2006 - 02:31pm (GMT)

Friday Five: With an Egg Roll

This week's Friday Five comes from <http://community.livejournal.com/thefridayfive/>.

1. What is your favorite specialty restaurant?

For restaurant food probably Italian; much as I love Indian food, Indian restaurants are just too variable.

2. What do you order to eat there?

Depends what mood I'm in, but usually pasta -- sometimes carbonara, sometimes with seafood; just depends really.

3. What is your favorite specialty food or dish to cook?

Probably Pasta *a la mode d'ici* (in other words with whatever sauce I feel like at the time). Alternatives are Risotto or Curry.

4. If you could travel to the home country of your favorite specialty food, what would you do there?

In Italy? Eat and drink wine, of course; and in between look at the architecture.

5. What is your worst experience with a specialty food restaurant?

Not a clue -- yes I have: food poisoning from our local Indian take-away 20+ years ago; it completely stopped me eating curry for about 15 years.

Friday February 3, 2006 - 09:38pm (GMT)

More on the Danish Cartoons ...

Listening to this morning's TV news coverage of the furore here in London, it seems to me that all the reportage is missing the point somewhat:

1. These cartoons were originally commissioned and published as a test of freedom of speech. Clearly they are demonstrating that while this valuable commodity is, thankfully, still alive its hold on life is tenuous and many would wish it dead.
2. If these cartoons are so offensive to Islam, why was the Islamic world not up in arms about them when they were first published some months ago. Yes, there were protests in Denmark, but it seems only in Denmark and in a fairly small way, until other papers published the cartoons more recently.

Oh, and no newspaper here in the UK has apparently yet had the courage to print the cartoons in full. Only by reading foreign websites have we in Britain been able to see what the fuss is about. Is this censorship I see before me? Surely not in Britain?

Friday February 3, 2006 - 09:20am (GMT)

A Few Danish Cartoons



So Islam is getting its turbans in a twist over a few Danish cartoons of Mohammad, published months ago as a test of freedom of speech. If you want to see what all the fuss is about you can find the cartoons at <http://face-of-muhammed.blogspot.com/> (from where the above cartoon is taken) and www.brusselsjournal.com/node/698 where there is editorial comment and links to other European reporting of the furore. There is also reporting in *The Times*, www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,13509-2021464,00.html.

To quote Flemming Rose, Cultural Editor of Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* which first published the cartoons:

Religious feelings cannot demand special treatment in a secular society. In a democracy one must from time to time accept criticism or become a laughing-stock.

This has been a public service broadcast in the interest of freedom of speech.

Thursday February 2, 2006 - 07:40pm (GMT)

Zen Mischievous Moments #101



Had to chuckle at this roadsign seen this evening not far from home. It just has to be photographed next time I go that way.

Tuesday January 31, 2006 - 06:32pm (GMT) <

Words of My Father

Been to see my agéd and infirm parents today. I'm not quite sure what my father was on at lunchtime today! When finishing his pudding he came out with:

"When you know how to lick a spoon, you can take a spoon anywhere."

We agreed. Of course. :-)

Saturday January 28, 2006 - 08:59pm (GMT)

Friday Five: What I am to you is not real

This week's Friday Five is brought to you courtesy of [Friday Fiver](#) ...

Age? I've just had my 5th birthday for the 11th time.

Sex? Oh some of each but 95% the type with dangly bits.

Location? Somewhere up the nether bits of London.

Single? Nope; been married almost as long as I haven't.

How long have you been doing the [Friday Fiver](#)? Oh once in a while

Friday January 27, 2006 - 09:48pm (GMT)

Zen Mischievous Moments #100

A nice little conundrum for Zen Mischievous Moment #100 ...

A few days ago I was attempting to uninstall the Nokia phone software from my PC when I was confronted by the following:

"Installation found Nokia PC Suite on this computer. Because Nokia PC Suite and Nokia PC Suite cannot function flawlessly in the same computer, installation was cancelled. To use Nokia PC Suite in this computer, first uninstall Nokia PC Suite."

Doh?

Tuesday January 24, 2006 - 08:02pm (GMT) [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Permanent Link](#) | [0 Comments](#)

Quote: Fiction

"The role of fiction is to make you stare at something small, so it's not so small anymore."

[David Amsden, quoted in *Poets and Writers*, Jan/Feb 2006]

Sunday January 22, 2006 - 08:52pm (GMT)

Zen Mischievous Moments #99

In the little town of Sandwich on the UK's Kent coast, there is a small street called "No Name Street" complete with its own nameplate. Chris Moody, who notfod this, says: "Make of that what you will." But what would Moody make of the street sign that Russell Pearse spotted near Ararat in Western Victoria, Australia? If you understand French, "Sans Nom Road" has no name. Has it? But if you don't, it has. Hasn't it?

[New Scientist; 21/01/2006]

Saturday January 21, 2006 - 08:42am (GMT)

Friday Five: It's all a matter of principle ...

OK here's a Friday Five for you. Post your own on your weblog (and put a link in the comments) or post it directly in the commenst.

Something you wouldn't buy on principle:

Veal (I still don't agree with the way even so-called humane veal is produced).

Someone you wouldn't deal with on principle:

Richard Dawkins (he's as much a stranger to the truth and an open mind as any religious bigot)

A country you wouldn't visit on principle:

Zimbabwe (because of Mugabe's oppressive regime)

A company you wouldn't deal with on principle:

Palmers Brewery (because of the way they've closed many of their country pubs but won't sell them off to other entrepreneurs except under draconian conditions)

Something you would refuse to do on principle:

Wear evening dress (just how stupid a uniform is it?)

Friday January 20, 2006 - 08:18pm (GMT)

On Contempt

Given my well known lack of sympathy with religion I just have to post toady's entry from "Quotation of the Day", <http://ca.geocities.com/quotationoftheday/> ...

"Whoever imagines himself a favorite with God holds others in contempt."

[Robert Green Ingersoll, lawyer and orator (1833-1899)]

Thursday January 19, 2006 - 05:45pm (GMT)

What do you mean, I can't post my hamster?



Yet another curiosity courtesy of the BBC ...

A couple of Cambridge University students have been fined and banned from keeping animals for sending a hapless hamster through the post as a drunken prank. Apparently

First Class (the hamster, above) is safe and well having eaten his way out of his box.
Oh and since you ask, yes it is a criminal offence to send live furry animals through the post, and quite right too!

Full story at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4623754.stm>.

Wednesday January 18, 2006 - 06:30pm (GMT)

Drunk in Charge of a Cow

Did you know you can be charged for being drunk in charge of a horse, a cow or a steam engine? No? Well neither did I. There's more in an interesting piece yesterday on the BBC website about the strange laws which are still in force in this country.

Full story at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4619942.stm>.

Wednesday January 18, 2006 - 06:19pm (GMT)

State of the Nation



Super cartoon from *The Independent* on 11 January! I can't find the original on *The Inde's* website, so I had to do an illegal scan. :-(

You'll likely not be able to read the text on the bottle label; it says:

RESPECT Lite

A frothy, heady policy brewed with knee-jerk populism to create the clean, clear taste of short-term intoxication, but with no lingering real effects.

0% Worth by Volume

Contains Artificial Sweeteners

Tuesday January 17, 2006 - 07:40pm (GMT)

10 Things We Didn't Know ...

10 pieces of esoterica from the BBC's 100 things we didn't know this time last year which can be found in full at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4566526.stm>:

1. Mohammed is now one of the top 20 names for boys
2. WD40 dissolves cocaine
3. Baboons can tell the difference between English and French
4. One in 10 Europeans is allegedly conceived in an Ikea bed
5. It is possible for a human to blow up balloons via their ear
6. All the Smarties eaten in a year laid end to end would stretch more than 2.5

times round the equator

7. An Octopus can wrap six of its legs around its head, disguise itself as a coconut shell and escape danger by walking backwards on their other two legs
8. The Pyruvate scale measures pungency in onions and garlic
9. Koalas have fingerprints like humans
10. One in 18 people has a third nipple (nice to know I'm one in 5.5% of the population)

Sunday January 15, 2006 - 06:52pm (GMT)

Quote: Pandora's Horses

I always look at Quotation of the Day because it comes up with some wonderful items; for instance this from 05 January which is the current masthead quote on my main pages www.zenmischief.com:

"If you open that Pandora's Box, you never know what Trojan horses will jump out."

[Ernest Bevin (1881-1951), British Foreign Secretary 1945-1951, dismissing ideas of closer cooperation with Europe.]

If you wish to receive Quotation of the Day in your in-basket every day then email quotationoftheday_request@yahoo.ca for instructions or visit <http://ca.geocities.com/quotationoftheday/>.

Saturday January 14, 2006 - 09:46pm (GMT)

Zen Mischievous Moments #98

"Civil disobedience is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is that numbers of people all over the world have obeyed the dictates of the leaders of their government and have gone to war, and millions have been killed because of this obedience. ... Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war, and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves, and all the while the grand thieves are running the country. That's our problem."

[Howard Zinn]

Saturday January 14, 2006 - 10:56am (GMT)

Friday Five: Food

Friday Five brought to you courtesy of www.livejournal.com/community/thefridayfive/

1. What is the most adventurous food you've ever tried?

I really don't know, probably nothing more way out than frog's legs.

2. What is the most adventurous food you'd be willing to try?

Almost anything, I think, as long as it isn't alive, if meat it is cooked, durian fruit or tripe.

3. Would you have a problem eating dog meat and why or why not?

No problem at all; why should I have a problem?

4. For the most part, do you consider your diet to be balanced?

Yes, although less fat and more fruit and veg would be good for me.

5. Which is more appealing- being a vegetarian for the rest of your life or being a strict carnivore for the rest of your life?

If I really had to choose I guess I'd be vegetarian, tho' I don't think I could do vegan. Vegetarian would provide a much better variety of taste, flavour and texture.

Friday January 13, 2006 - 07:42am (GMT)

Zen Mischievous Moments #97

On Fruit

Many thanks to The Law West of Ealing Broadway
<http://thelawwestofealingbroadway.blogspot.com>) for the following ...

Did you know that it is an offence to sell anything that looks smells or feels like a piece of fruit but isn't? No, neither did I, but I do now. Novelty candles that look like strawberries or apples are a legal no-no, and shops that sell them can be heavily fined up to £20,000) because of the danger of children eating them. For the doubters out there, here's the law:

No person shall supply, offer to supply, agree to supply, expose for supply or possess for supply any manufactured goods which are ordinarily intended for private use and are not food but which

(a) have a form, odour, colour, appearance, packaging, labelling, volume or size which is likely to cause persons, in particular, children to confuse them with food and in consequence to place them in their mouths or suck them or swallow them; and

(b) where such action as is mentioned in (a) above is taken in relation to them, may cause death or personal injury

From the Food Imitations (Safety) Regulations 1989, since you ask.

Thursday January 12, 2006 - 07:51pm (GMT)

On Learning

"Whatever we learn has a purpose and whatever we do affects everything and everyone else, if even in the tiniest way. Why, when a housefly flaps his wings, a breeze goes round the world; when a speck of dust falls to the ground, the entire planet weighs a little more; and when you stamp your foot, the earth moves slightly off its course. Whenever you laugh, gladness spreads like the ripples in a pond; and whenever you're sad, no one anywhere can be really happy. And it's much the same thing with knowledge, for whenever you learn something new, the whole world becomes that much richer."

[Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*]

Thursday January 12, 2006 - 07:39pm (GMT)

Zen Mischievous Moments #96

Phrases encountered during 2005 which should become the new cliches of 2006. They are especially recommended to the likes of President Blair.

The flat-footed majesty of the law

Chocolate flavoured gonads

Artificial stupidity
Imaginative paralysis
Complete Horlicks
Indecision is the key to flexibility
The blind leading the deaf
Flocking sociology
Faultless inaccuracy
A rule governed muddle
Mocha flavoured moonshine
and finally ...

Smile ... tomorrow will be worse

ZMM entries will now appear in this weblog, along with other oddments. The old ZMM entries are all still available at www.zenmischief.com/blogs.

Sunday January 8, 2006 - 05:13pm (GMT)

In the Beginning - Again!

Here beginneth the all new Zen Mischief weblog.

I've decided to move this weblog from a system I maintain myself to [Yahoo! 360°](#). Not only does this relieve me of maintaining the system but it means I can add postings from anywhere I have web access rather than just from my main PC, and that is becoming increasingly important as I travel more on business. This also gives you the ability to post comments to items, which I assume will be an advantage to some.

While I can't easily add all the old postings here -- at least not in a way in which they'll make any sense -- but they can still be found [here](#).

Monday January 2, 2006 - 01:35pm (GMT)
