

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 13 12/13/98 12:31 PM
Subject: Regretable
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

I'll be away on the East Coast for about two weeks so please hold the arguments until I get back, but I did want to get this out there....

Greta Christina's posts are very silly and fatuous. (As well as too long!!) This issue has been debated for millennia with no simple answer and yet Greta Christina expects to give one. Guess what? There aren't any.

"Morality" is an amorphous concept, which, if defined at all, is defined by a particular society or subsociety at a particular time and place, under particular circumstances. Trying to determine what is universally moral tends to come down (seems to in this case) to trying to universalize one's own morality. If the purpose of the original question had been to take a poll of a certain group (GOLers) and determine what was moral for that group, fine. But morality is generally a bottom-up, not a top-down thing, unless imposed by a ruling class. One can argue on the basis of utility, that certain rules of morality create a certain type of society, but that assumes everyone wants that type of society.

Greta Christina, I know what you are thinking; you probably pride yourself on having a personal sense of what is right and wrong outside of, and superior to, the general one. You see it as unfortunate, but not binding on you, that society tends to have a negative attitude towards certain things you find quite moral, such as pornography and sexual orientations other than the strictly hetero. Now, I suppose, you might understand how I feel in this GOL society, whose rules I am constantly accused of violating. If you argue utility, that dissent undermines a society, I will say that diversity improves it, or remind you that you are a dissenter yourself (from the larger one). Wouldn't you agree? Proudly?

The Golden Rule is essentially selfish, assuming as it does that what you like having done to you is the same as what others like. In other words, the Golden Rule says, live by your own rules. It's not the Categorical Imperative.

Even worse is Greta Christina's attempt to link morality to legality. Law may be designed to enforce morality, but all rules are basically designed by the rulers to favor themselves. Law is a pale approximation of morality. Do you think all laws are moral to follow? Or that they are immoral to break? Would you see morality as changing if a majority of a society changed the law?

Props. 187, 209, and Three Strikes are law; medical marijuana, apparently, is not. Sodomy is illegal in many states. There are many bad laws and bad uses of them. OJ Simpson got off legally. Bill Clinton still might. The fact is, the law does recognize intention. Sure you are prosecuted differently for attempting murder and succeeding, but for succeeding without trying, the charge will be manslaughter. Maybe the anglo-saxon originators of the common law figured that if someone really wanted to kill someone else with his broadsword or battleaxe, he really would, so that if he only wounded him, he never wanted to kill him in the first place. I learned this week that for perjury you must have intended to lie!! If you want to argue the law, it's fairly cut and dried (relative to morality, at least), and it's the province

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of lawyers. Morality is the province of everyone, not just philosophers, but there are no real answers.

The law does punish certain behaviors because they simply could have negative consequences. Drunk driving is prosecuted even absent an accident; the law does not just attempt to deter by saying, "Do what you like, but if something bad comes of it, we'll really throw the book at you," a general principle being that it is better to avoid harm than punish for it. But again, this is on a continuum, where the harm avoided is balanced against the harm done, that you can't drive home even when you've only had a bit and you're sure you wouldn't have an accident. Society, or rather government, is setting your limits, making the decision, not you, for your protection if you want that. In other cases, the law, and morality, say "No harm was done, so don't worry." This ignores that harm very easily could have been done, and that we had better learn that, or the next time we do whatever it is, we had better be a lot more careful. There is a flaw in the system, or a flaw in us. For some reason it did not express itself this time, but it is up to us to understand why, and not assume that our fortune will continue without good reason.

The big problem in being held accountable for all one's acts is that one has no way of knowing what all the consequences are. Now, one can take "reasonable" precautions, but what is reasonable is pretty doughey. If someone has wired up their computer to a submissive -- or an unwilling victim -- so that every time I post, it gives the victim a nasty electrical shock (not just giving everyone else a nasty mental one) -- am I at fault? Could I reasonably have foreseen that? By whose reason? Should I give an EKG to everyone I meet on the street, lest they have a heart attack and it have been my fault for not intervening? (When Jack Lint interrogated Buttle, thinking he was Tuttle, and not knowing about his heart condition, was it his fault when Buttle died?) When I see a severely disabled person in a chin-activated wheelchair striving bravely to control his or her own life, if I see him or her struggling spasmodically, apparently painfully, should I intervene, offer help, risk giving insult, when I know such contortions could just be a "normal" part of the malady? How can I know, without extensive research? If I live on a remote estate, it might be entirely reasonable to come zooming out of my driveway without looking. There is nothing wrong with laziness and carelessness and apathy, simply in their degree; except for Suzanne Harvey, we can't all care about everything in the world; we have to give ourselves the right not to worry about something, some mental leisure. It's not so much intention as a lack of attention, or not caring enough or trying hard enough to avoid something. When one backs out of one's driveway, one might worry about all the kids on bicycles who might be there, but not all the invisible dwarf aliens. There's no huge difference between harming by action and inaction (Isaac Asimov wrote a robot story about this); an action is often simply a failure to restrain an impulse. In each case, harm to the actor/inactor is taken into consideration: violence in self-defence is not culpable, nor is failure to help someone when the personal danger would have been too great. However, inaction is simply more open-ended. To the extent that one knows, can be expected to know, that there is an excellent chance of an action causing harm, and acts anyway, it is equivalent to positive action. But what it is reasonable to foresee is entirely arbitrary and societally determined.

In all of Greta Christina's examples, there is no absolute way to determine what someone "should have known", and what people "should do for themselves", except by polling. Otherwise, it's all taste, judgment, and relativism. (Or perhaps statistics, which I know people here don't much like. But even if one

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calculated probabilities of a child cycling by one's driveway, or a woman by a highway being pursued by an axe-murderer, it would still be up to the individual to take the gamble. A fifty-fifty cutoff level would rarely be met. A ten percent chance holds the overwhelming majority of cases hostage to a small minority. Is it worth it, all the time you would lose driving more slowly out of your driveway, all the pleasure you would lose not drinking? Cost benefit analysis is nice -- once you have identified all the costs, ALL the benefits.)

The only way to determine "morality" is the general consensus of one's society, if one is prepared to accept that, or one's own views (usually based on one's own interests) if one can get others to accept that, or doesn't care about lack of acceptance, or doesn't have to. Messengers assume all drivers and pedestrians are going to act like total idiots and scofflaws, and they ride accordingly. Their morality is avoiding mortality, the practical ethics of not getting themselves killed or arrested; they recognize physical force (and legal force backed up by physical force.) And immensely independent people (Y2K survivalists who can live off the woods, e.g.), wealthy ones, talented ones who can always find employment, attractive ones who can always get attention, ones very secure in the major aspects of their lives, or those with nothing to lose, prepared to accept the consequences, can live by their own policies, sleep with a clear conscience, sleep in peace.

There is nothing wrong with getting lucky. People get lucky all the time. Most of us are pretty lucky to be living in the wealthiest country in the world and one of the most free. We did not have much to do with that. We were born on third base and forget we did not hit a triple. We can only decide how wrong things are by their actual consequences. Who knows how bad it is to drive irresponsibly until experience has shown us? Who knows what the probabilities are except by actual observation? Who knows if it's luck that has saved us, or something else? Messengers who run red lights day after day aren't lucky; they know which lights to run and how. If a person seems like a fugitive from the law of averages, an exception to all the rules that say terrible things should be happening, maybe she is doing something right that we don't know about, or the laws of consequences we've assumed may not be correct. Maybe those points are off the curve; maybe we have to redraw the curve. There is no way to tell if you are the exception or part of the rule. A sure sign that is isn't luck is if it happens over and over.

I don't think random chance has much to do with human affairs at all. Too many things happen in our lives for the randomness not to average out; our lives aren't governed by quantum mechanics, and chaotic systems tend to be uncertain only within certain limits. At our level, Newton, and probability, prevail.

It's not that hard to control for coincidence; all possible things will happen given enough time; most coincidences are just incidences, anyway, quite independent. Things we do, things that happen, we do, and happen, for reasons, even if we don't know the reasons. (It's smarter to be lucky than it's lucky to be smart, sings Charlemagne in the musical "Pippin". And it's silly not to take advantage of every opportunity, no matter how apparently random. But one should never forget that, unless one can understand the reasons for such things, one can never count on them.) A modest example: the people here on GOL might seem like a random sample of Bayarians with computers. But that is not the case; we are all here because, and to the extent that, we choose to be, and there are many similarities. There is nothing random about meeting people

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here with whom one has much in common. If you are standing on a street (or running or riding) and get hit by a car, you can ask yourself, what was I doing here, and why? How can I avoid this in the future? You might not be able to come up with a ready answer. But there is no randomness, merely lack of information. The Beatles and IBM became popular for very good reasons and those who realized they would before everyone else were for the most part, smart, or if they guessed randomly, they realized they had made the right guess before they had time to make the bad guesses predicted by probability. The more information you have, the more sense everything makes. And then it's up to you to make use of it. Maybe the people who made killings on the market couldn't get published in Penthouse. Maybe they missed out on all the fun while they were reading Business Week, but that should not take away from their achievements or intelligence.

12:35. Restating assumptions: The information is out there. There may be a very small number of things that cannot be predicted or controlled for formal reasons, but the degree to which everything else can be predicted and controlled (or at least, dealt with to optimize the outcome) is dependent only how much time and energy we are willing to devote to understand it. In short, to blame things on random chance, and not to try to make sense of them -- well, some people may have that luxury, but to me, it's always seemed like a copout.

Message 10 12/15/98 6:28 AM
Subject: More Greta bull
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Greta Christina writes:

As for the rest of your post, I fear I have not read it. I fear that more of your brilliance may burn me, like Icarus flying too close to the sun.

Now Greta:

If I ever attempted, in arguing with you, to speak expertly on anything within the purview of your profession of pornography, and got my facts wrong, you would bring it to my attention with extreme prejudice, and swiftness and glee. So don't complain when I mock you for your lack of mythological mastery and metaphor mixing, and point out that Icarus was not burned by the brilliance of the sun (how can you be burned by brilliance, anyway? That's light, not heat -- you could only be blinded) but simply had his wing-wax melted, causing his precipitation, or at least, such was the verdict of the Hellenic Aviation Safety Board -- some conspiracy theorists may question it. Cause of death, according to the Chief Medical Examiner for the Southern Peloponnesus, was drowning due to injuries sustained in the impact.

So, while you are wishing me the same fate when I fly East on Thursday, you can actually learn some mythology before you quote it again!

terrible person (who thinks it's really ok that Greta, while protesting too much, secretly reads his posts all the way through)

Message 6 12/15/98 10:10 AM
Subject: Unremarkable
From: terrible person

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To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

I finally understand from what deficiency, and -y, J.M. Andrus' posts are so...anemic!!!

But I couldn't read his piece on airline disasters, despite the great effort he must have put into crafting it word by word. It was just too long!!

The beam in your eye blinds you blinder than either my brilliance or the sun ever could, so that you can't tell what color the kettle is, or even that it's a kettle.

I simply remind the kettle that it's one of fish, and thus quite different (from me), and starting to smell rotten after being allowed to sit around undisturbed too long.

Heyer writes:

Terrible person, having failed to win the approval and admiration he felt he deserved, quit posting on GOL for a while and now comes back primarily to air his grievances. The fact that he's quoting from arguments that happened back in July shows how long he's been nursing his wounded feelings -- and also is a rather sad commentary on his life, since most people would have gotten over it by now.

Well, that's certainly possible, Heyer, though, of course, given any person's severely limited ability to know another's motivations (see previous post), and your especially limited ability to know mine (because, after all, you would not claim motivations similar to the ones you attribute to me, would you? so how would you know what they are like), you could be quite wrong, and it could just as well have been that I got as much admiration and approval as I wanted or thought I could reasonably expect, and decided it wasn't worth it. Don't you think?

See, Heyer gave up extensive posting a long time ago, and even, it would seem, the moderatorship of and leadership role in the conference that bears her name, and now only appears only every few weeks to post some trivial observation, or attack people who never did her any harm, like the fieb (in film, about nine months ago.)

As for airing of grievances, once again, when someone doesn't like what I am saying (perhaps it hits too close to home?), he or she, rather than answering, simply denies my right to say it, my right simply to be discontented and say so. I don't know if Laura Deal's little maneuver was supposed to be a warning to me, but even if it's your party, I'll cry "foul" if I want to. Free speech is not just for *you* to talk about *your* favorite topics.

And as for my reference to an "old" -- a whole six months old! -- thread, I'm not the only one here who brings up the GOL past, either in seriousness (including in accusation) or in jest. It happened. Admit it. Or is it an unpleasant memory, are they embarrassed? People who are unwilling to reopen old arguments, or continue them, if they were never really closed, are generally unsure of their ability to win them. Their cases should still be valid now -- unless, dare I suggest it, they were not valid then. I guess this is what they're really afraid of!

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the real terrible person (accept no substitute)

Subject:

From: terrible person

GOL needs a tail gunner

or a ball-turret gunner?

"Well, are you gonna?" someone recently asked.

Maybe!

maybe on the LAST PLANE OUT:

Greetings from Gomorrah./How we wish you were here/ The weather's getting warmer/Now that the trees are all cleared./There's no time for a conscience/And we recognize no crime/Yeah we got dogs and Valvoline/It's a pretty damn good time.

Men of reason, not of rhyme/Keep the spoils and share your crime./Goodman, Badman, lost without/A hope for passage on the last plane out.

There was one repressed do-gooder/And a few who still believed/Yes, I think

there were five good men here yesterday/But they were asked to leave./So we've kept the good old vices/And laboured to invent a few/With cake in vulgar surplus/We can have it, and eat it too.

Men of reason, hid your face/Walking backward, plays his ace/Goodman, Badman, lost without/A hope for passage on the last plane out.

Here's a concept you can't dance to/An idea you cannot hum/There may not be an empty seat/When all is said and done/I'm not the guy who sings the hymns/No bleeding heart to mend/But I like the part where Icarus/Hijacks the little red hen.

Someone said the Big Man/May be joining us soon./But I never was the type to hang/With the harbingers of doom/And this party is addictive/Self-destructive, no doubt/So I hope that someone saves a seat for me/On the last plane out.

--Toy Matinee, 1990

The Bulletin was founded in 1945 by Eugene Rabinowitch and Hyman Goldsmith. The Bulletin clock, symbol of the threat of global catastrophe, stands at nine minutes to midnight.

"The enemy is in front of us, behind us, to the left of us, and to the right of us. They won't escape THIS time."

-- Colonel "Chesty" Puller, USMC, Korea,
December 1950

I could put this in Latin, I suppose....
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;

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He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.....

I do not know the man I should avoid

So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;

He is a great observer, and he looks

Quite through the deeds of men; he loves no plays,

As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;

Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort

As if he mock'd himself, and scorned his spirit

That could be mov'd to smile at any thing.

Such men as he be never at heart's ease

Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,

And therefore are very dangerous.

(Act I, Sc. 2, ln 194 --)

COMMON SENSE FROM T.P.

PERHAPS the sentiments contained in the following pages, are not yet sufficiently fashionable to procure them general favor; a long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defence of custom. But the tumult soon subsides. Time makes more converts than reason.

As a long and violent abuse of power, is generally the Means of calling the right of it in question (and in Matters too which might never have been thought of, had not the Sufferers been aggravated into the inquiry) and as the King of England hath undertaken in his own Right, to support the Parliament in what he calls *Theirs*, and as the good people of this country are grievously oppressed by the combination, they have an undoubted privilege to inquire into the pretensions of both, and equally to reject the usurpations of either.

Unfortunately for the good sense of mankind, the fact of their fallibility is far from carrying the weight in their practical judgment, which is always allowed to it in theory; for while every one well knows himself to be fallible, few think it necessary to take any precautions against their own fallibility, or admit the supposition that any opinion, of which they feel very certain, may be one of the examples of the error to which they acknowledge themselves to be liable. Absolute princes, or others who are accustomed to unlimited deference, usually feel this complete confidence in their own opinions on nearly all subjects. People more happily situated, who sometimes hear their opinions disputed, and are not wholly unused to be set right when they are wrong, place the same unbounded reliance only on such of their opinions as are shared by all who surround them, or to whom they habitually defer: for in proportion to a man's want of confidence in his own solitary judgment, does he usually repose, with implicit trust, on the infallibility of "the world" in general. And the world, to each individual, means the part of it with which he comes in contact; his party, his sect, his church, his class of society: the man may be called, by comparison, almost liberal and large-minded to whom it means anything so comprehensive as his own country or his own age. Nor is his faith in this collective authority at all shaken by his being aware that other ages, countries, sects, churches, classes, and parties have thought, and even now think, the exact reverse. He devolves upon his own world the responsibility of being in the right against the dissentient worlds of other people....

(Thomas Paine, 1776)

"This must be the product of a great conspiracy, a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man. A conspiracy of infamy so black that, when it is finally exposed, its principals

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shall be forever deserving of the maledictions of all honest men."

(Sen. Joseph McCarthy, 14

June 1951)

FEELING MALVOLENT.

I keep my demons in a box.

Three red cars is very bad news.

Time will certainly NOT crawl.

The first verse isn't true either.

Nevertheless, from David Bowie:

I've never sailed on a sea

I would not challenge a giant

I could not take on the church

Time will crawl

Till the 21st century lose

I know a government man

He was as blind as the moon

He saw the sun in the night

He took a top-gun pilot

He made him fly thru a hole

Till he grew real old

And he never came down

He just flew till he burst

Time will crawl till our mouths run dry

Time will crawl till our feet grow small

Time will crawl till our tails fall off

Time will crawl till the 21st century lose

I saw a black black stream

Full of white eyed fish

And a drowning man

With no eyes at all

I felt a warm warm breeze

That melted metal and steel

I got a bad migraine

That lasted three long years

And the pills that I took

Made my fingers disappear

Time will crawl, time will crawl

Time will crawl

Till the 21st century lose

You were a talented child

You came to live in our town

We never bothered to scream

When your mask came off

We only smelt the gas

As we lay down to sleep

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Time will crawl and our heads bowed down
Time will crawl and our eyes fall out
Time will crawl and the streets run red
Time will crawl till the 21st century lose

Time will crawl and our mouths run dry
Time will crawl and our feet grow small
Time will crawl and our tails fall off
Time will crawl till the 21st century lose

Time will crawl and our heads bowed down
Time will crawl and our eyes fall out
Time will crawl and the streets run red
Time will crawl till the 21st century lose

For the crazy child
We'll give every life
For the crackpot notion

Things are sooooo much better since I started Seminary, and speed.

Subject:
From: terrible person

Just about the time
You start writing the new date correctly,
(Earlier and earlier with each passing year)
You also realize
That this year
Is not going to be much different
Than the last.
Or if so
A lot worse.

the Winter Boys

are freezing in their Spam tin ...

are waiting for the storm...

are drinking heavy water from a stone ..

4-Aminobiphenyl, hexachlorobenzene
Dimethyl sulfate, chloromethyl methylether
2,3, 7,8 Tetrachlorodibenzo-
para-dioxin, carbon disulfide

Dibromochloropropane, chlorinated
benzenes 2-Nitropropane , pentachlorophenol
Benzotrichloride, strontium chromate
1,2 - Dibromo -3-chloropropane

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I went walking in the wasted city
Started thinking about entropy
Smelled the wind from the ruined river
Went home to watch TV.

And it's worse when I try to remember
When I think about then and now
I'd rather see it on the news at eleven
Sit back and watch it run straight down.

Run straight down
Run straight down
I can see it with my eyes closed
Run straight down

We've been living in the shadows all our lives
Where it's stand in line, and don't look back
And don't look left, and don't look right.
So we hide our eyes and wonder who'll survive
Waiting for the night.....

Fluorocarbons in the ozone layer
First the water and the wildlife go
Pretty soon there's not a creature stirring
Except the robots at the dynamo

And it's worse when I try to remember
When I think about then and now
I'd rather see it on the news at eleven
Sit back and watch it run straight down

Run straight down
Run straight down
I can see it with my eyes closed
Run straight down

dog carcass in alley this morning, tire tread on burst stomach. this city is
afraid of me. I have seen its true face.
the streets are extended gutters and the gutters are full of blood and when
the drains finally scab over, all the vermin will drown.
the accumulated filth of all their sex and murder will foam up about their
waists and all the whores and politicians will look up and shout "save
us!".....
and I'll look down and whisper "no".
they had a choice, all of them. they could have followed in the footsteps of
good men, like my father or President Truman.
decent men who believed in a day's work for a day's pay.
instead they followed the droppings of lechers and communists and didn't
realize that the trail led over the precipice until it was too late.
don't tell me they didn't have a choice.
now the whole world stands on the brink, staring down into bloody hell, all
those liberals and intellectuals and smooth talkers....
....and all of a sudden nobody can think of anything to say.

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Yaaaaaargh!!!

I'll show you the life of the mind!

I'll show you the life of the mind!

Look
upon
me,
I
will
show
you
the
life
of the
mind!!

Message 40 1/20/99 6:53 AM
Subject: Re: New Type of Quarter!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party
 It's a le fou World

Engineer K writes:

Can anybody shed more light on Caesar Rodney?

Caesar Rodney, born 1728, was a judge, and one of the three delegates to the Continental Congress from Delaware. In 1776 he was ill with cancer, and as the vote on independence (and the Declaration thereof) were coming up, he had gone back to Delaware, to die, he thought, at home. This left the Delaware delegation divided between the pro-independence Thomas McKean and the pro-British George Read. This would have meant it could not have voted for independence, and since the vote on independence had to be unanimous, the loss of a single colony's vote would have been fatal. So Rodney managed to get himself onto a horse and ride back to Philadelphia from Dover, which was about 80 miles, over roads that were non-existent at best. And remember, he's dying of cancer. He arrived in time to swing Delaware into line behind independence, and the rest is history. Well, I guess the whole thing was history. Oh, and he didn't actually die until 1784.

Canada has a brass \$1 coin in circulation, with a loon on the reverse, which they call "The Loonie." The "Twoonie," a \$2 coin, has a brass insert in the middle,

There was a certain controversy about the Canadian two-dollar coin. (The one-dollar coin, by the way, has allowed such wonderful advertising slogans as, for Air Canada from Ottawa, "Fly to Montreal with 50 loonies." Not sure what that would be in French.) It shows the head of state of Canada, Queen Elizabeth II, on one side, and a bear, an important Canadian animal, on the other. Traditionalists questioned whether it were right to show Her Majesty "with a bear behind".

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Message 39 1/20/99 6:51 AM
Subject: I am VERY disturbed

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From: terrible person
To: film

I am VERY disturbed.

I mean, more than usual.

By three posts in the last day or two.

The first was Kelsey Gadoo's story about her cat with the scratched eye. This was a good story. In content and style, it rather makes one think of something by one of Kelsey Gadoo's favorite (it would appear) writers, Maggie Estep. In fact, it rather made this one (me) think of a very specific thing by Maggie Estep. In fact, it appears to be almost a word-for-word transcription of part of "Why Thursdays Suck", a story by Estep that appeared in the June 17, 1997 issue of the Village Voice.

Now, I am not really disturbed by a little plagiarism, in the sense of stealing someone else's work, and calling it your own. But when someone borrows someone's life, and claims their experiences, that starts to rankle.

See, I knew that people's online personalities may be different from their offline ones. And Kelsey Gadoo asserted as much about herself, sometime last year, saying she wasn't **really** as -- pardon me, I forgot the adjective -- as she acted online. And I knew that there are plenty of onliners who are not what they pretend to be, males impersonating females, and the like. But I always assumed that most of the fascinating life experiences recounted here really happened. I wanted to believe, because they gave me examples for my own life of what might be possible, and what wasn't. They gave encouragement and warning. If similar negative things were happening to me, I did not feel so bad; if not, I felt lucky; if were experiencing similar positive things, I did not worry as much that my luck was a fluke; if not, I had something to hope for. I'm not talking about the labelled as such stories posted long ago in "Erotic City"; as they say in "The Sure Thing", I never thought those stories were real. But other aspects of online had gradually replaced movies and TV for me in the drama department, and I felt this was a positive step towards reality, that I was like Bill Paxton's down to earth wife in "One False Move", who, she pointed out, read non-fiction while he watched TV.

But how could I be so naive as to take them seriously? Because all my own experience of lying has taught me one thing: it's awfully hard to make things up from scratch. Oh, some people can do it, like sirin, for instance, but most people's imaginations are limited. Their fictions are of necessity pretty close to their non-s. So I assumed most of the personal experience stories I read here were rooted in actual life, simply because I couldn't see how and where else they could come from.

But now I see. They come from Maggie Estep!

I think, I'm not sure but I think, that I would prefer even that they have been made up by their online retellers, even cribbed from the experiences of real acquaintances, than that they be borrowed from the imagination or the life of someone they know only from a book. Though maybe Kelsey Gadoo knows Maggie Estep personally; I have no idea at this point. Of course, if something really happened to Maggie Estep, that would still give me my craved and craven guidance. But I can believe more readily that a story told by

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Maggie Estep is actually made up, since as a professional writer she makes things up for a living and should thus be better than average at it. But she is far away, in space and experience, and anything that happened to her is less relevant to my life than if it really happened to someone here.

Or maybe the whole thing is a big inside joke. I'm glad I was already quite disturbed and didn't have so much further to go.

The second disturbing event was Barrymore's apparent assertion that he did NOT, contrary to repeated statements, want to settle his differences with J. Mark Andrus on the field of honor, with fists or tanks or whatever. Though I'm no advocate of violence, I thought that Barrymore's long-standing offer to meet and fight those who mocked him was a vital connection to reality. I often wonder about Barrymore, as I'm sometimes amazed by the things he writes; they must be a joke, I think sometimes. Or maybe they aren't. But until last night, I knew there was one sure way to find out; I could pick an online fight with him and then accept his challenge to settle it person to person. But now he seems to be saying, no, I don't really want to fight. I was just talking. That's just my online persona. (It's like what Kelsey Gadoo said, as noted above.)

But what is the point of having an online persona if you are not going to maintain it online? It would seem the point of an online persona is to make people think this is really the way you are, or at least wonder, having no way of knowing otherwise. I suppose that in a role playing game, if players step out of character, no great harm is done. But in a game, there are ways of keeping score. I think the more appropriate comparison for online is to a movie. (Because, like, this is the film conference!!)

What would happen if in the most serious moments of conventional dramas, meaning films which purport to give an actual glimpse of real life, films like, oh, "Saving Private Ryan", or "Schindler's List", (and excluding comedies, like "Ferris Bueller's Day Off", and experimental films designed to explore the limits of the conventional narrative) actors turned to the camera and broke character? Imagine Ralph Fiennes's Amon Goethe, or rather, Ralph Fiennes himself, assuring us, "Don't worry, we're not really going to kill these people, they're just extras." Think of the moment in "Apocalypse Now" (during the first helicopter attack) in which director Coppola himself is in the frame, shouting "Don't look in the camera!" It's jarring. Now, it is possible that Barrymore is making a post-modern sort of statement about the nature of online identity. In that case, disturbing people would be part of the goal. And on me, at least, it has succeeded.

Finally, there is the matter of whether Auntie Em is really marjorie richter, the online person, and/or Marjorie Richter, a real-life person. Now, as has been acknowledged, this identity is widely-rumored; even I had heard it whispered. But it did not mean much to me, as marjorie richter kept such a low profile. After all, one only cares if $x = y$ if one has an independent definition of y and x . No forensic test, not fingerprints, not DNA, means anything unless one has a sample from the crime scene and one from a known suspect to which to match it. No one cares that Spiderman is Peter Parker unless they already know Peter Parker (or plan to.)

But it does mean a little. Because I do know Marjorie Richter a little bit in

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real life. Please don't worry; it's simply that when I saw it announced on marjorie's resume that she had authored (?designed?) an upcoming N.Y. Times crossword puzzle, with my love of verifying things in periodicals, and my already established weekly cruciverbal habit, I could not help check and confirm this. Now, it could have been a hoax, with someone taking credit for someone else's work. But as Malone says to Ness in "The Untouchables", who would claim that (to write crosswords) who didn't? It was not as if names of famous GOLers were worked into the letter grid, but I'm willing to believe, certainly for argument's sake, the claims of its provenance. And after I heard the "Auntie Em" rumors, it all began to make a sort of sense, that someone whose political posts are so pointed, poignant, pungent, punchy, and -- oh, something else that starts with p , and means smart --, and dowdy only in the Maureen sense, should also author puzzles, which, as I learned from Augie Kunkel in Ellen Raskin's "The Mysterious Disappearance of Leon (I mean Noel)", is a pursuit only for the smartest. I think it would be nice if, if the rumor were true, whatever reasons (some of them are obvious) prevent it from being confirmed, were to fade away, and the people concerned could acknowledge the truth.

So I guess what is really disturbing me is this: I knew that for many GOL users there was a great disconnect between online and offline life. In other words, people didn't tell the truth. I knew that I, for instance, often didn't. But I always thought that I did that for very particular reasons,

which most users didn't share, didn't feel applied. And now I realize that everyone really is doing it. And if I feel disturbed, at least I don't feel so terrible.

Message 131 1/24/99 10:44 PM
Subject: I'm Spartacus!
From: terrible person
To: film

see, there WAS a film connection in the thread.

also acceptable:

"I'm Brian and so's my wife!"

> 130

Message 130 1/25/99 9:43 PM
Subject: Laura
From: terrible person
To: film

Spoiler ahead:

She wasn't murdered after all. She was upstate for the weekend. The murderer was the Svengali-like columnist. She marries the detective.

> 129

Message 129 1/25/99 9:47 PM
Subject: Laura
From: terrible person
To: film

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Spoiler ahead:

Of course, anyone in Twin Peaks could have killed her, just as anyone online could BE her. But it was her sexually abusive father, inhabited by the evil demon Bob from the Black Lodge. Now she's wrapped in plastic.

> 128

Message 128 1/25/99 9:49 PM
Subject: Laura
From: terrible person
To: film

Spoiler ahead:

Petrarch liked her, but she was married. So he invented a new kind of sonnet. End of story. Not really cinema, though. Is this still film or has processing totally taken over? Just wondered.

> 127

Message 127 1/25/99 10:16 PM
Subject: Lara
From: terrible person
To: film

spoiler ahead:

She was a simple schoolgirl until Komarovsky seduced her and she shot him. Then she married Pasha Antipov. Then she went to the front and worked as a nurse with Yuri. Then they both ended up in Siberia and had a big affair and the theme music played and Yuri wrote a bunch of poems about her. Then he had to leave for a while. Then he came back. Then Komarovsky came back and took her to Mongolia, out of danger. (Mongolia?) She may have had a kid who could play the balalaika like a like like a like Yuri, boiiing, that's it. She looked nice in snow.

> 126

Message 126 1/25/99 10:39 PM
Subject: Lawrence
From: terrible person
To: film

spoiler ahead:

Beauteous and very pale guy goes to desert where he meets beauteous and very dark guy. They have passionate affair, though this is not shown, only implied, as is the pale guy's rape by the nasty lumpy Turks. In the end, the pale guy singlehandedly liberates the middle east but the poor childlike Arabs and the the evil British screw everything up, while the pale guy takes up motorcycling and is killed by outlaw bikers.

> 124

Message 124 1/25/99 10:47 PM
Subject: Law! Rah!!!!
From: terrible person
To: film

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I just decided that the law is a really cool thing* which everyone should obey so I thought I would give it a cheer. Law!!! Rah!!!

*As Albert Camus wrote (L'Etranger, part 2): Oui, la loi est bien faite.

> 123
Message 123 1/25/99 11:01 PM
Subject: Lore!! Ahhhh!!
From: terrible person
To: film

Well, as the last few posts have shown, I just love all that accumulated knowledge of the ages!

Message 119 1/26/99 5:42 AM
Subject: Laura
From: terrible person
To: film

oh no. I'm actually done. time to rest on my "Lauras".

Message 116 1/26/99 6:05 PM
Subject: Laura
From: terrible person
To: film

New joint GOL/Nike ads....

"Sometimes I dream that I am her and she is me....
Bom ba da da da...
(Larry (Laurence?) Bird): I'm not going to sing it.
Chorus: I want an aura like Laura.....
 I want an aura like Laura
 I want an aura like Laura....."
Fading and petering out.

Oh, wait, have to make this cinematic:
"The aura. The aura."

Push?
Pull?

Message 113 1/27/99 6:46 AM
Subject: Danes
From: terrible person
To: film

I think everyone knows that I am as loath to disagree with Kelsey Gadoo as I am to agree with Steve Omlid. But I would like to say that I thought that the "I am VERY disturbed" thread, for which I feel someresponsibility though it was taken in a new direction with my title somewhat inappropriately retained, though TOO LONG, and rather silly and tiresome after a while (for so become

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ALL repeated jokes), nevertheless represented a measured and fairly appropriate response to the "outing" of a GOLer using an alias. Instead of continued scathing attacks on and mockery of the accused perpetrator (which Steve Omlid rightly condemned), and instead of just denying the identity (for lying is always wrong, even when it can easily be gotten away with), they banded together in subtle solidarity, and attempted to defeat the outing by the well-established method of overwhelming the aimer with fake decoy targets. During WWII, Winston Churchill introduced Window (no relation to the OS -- at least not that I know of) which consisted of strips of aluminum attached to balloons which could be dropped from airplanes, and which showed up on radar difficult to distinguish from real fighters, bombers, and transports. And don't forget that at the same time the Danes, following of the example of their King, responded to the order of Nazi occupiers that their Jewish fellow citizens wear the yellow star by adopting it themselves. And just as in either case, the Germans knew that some of the radar blips or star wearers had to be their intended targets, just as some of the GOLers who have recently claimed to be each other really are, they could not know which ones and did not have the resources (unlike, say, the Soviets) to try every target. IMHOTEP, was the Egyptian god of medicine. But I am a big fan of creating planned confusion through distraction and destruction of distinction and information.

Oh, and she's going to be in "The Mod Squad". Is that set today or back then? Doesn't she have papers to write?

Message 110 1/27/99 9:09 AM
Subject: Laura X
From: terrible person
To: film

It happens that this is the tenth of my Laura posts which I really should have numbered Romanly/Latinly after the fashion of cinematic sequels. (Though Arabic numerals increasingly prevail -- how unroyal! Perhaps to appease the arabs for negative portrayals, e.g., "the siege".)

Actually, I was just thinking of the sequence at the end of Spike Lee's "Malcolm X" with everyone, including Nelson Mandela (The Coolest Person in the World, along with Vaclav Havel) saying "I'm Malcolm X". Meaning they have something of him in them, not total identification as here. Still, I was thinking about Laura X, how the X could actually, and given recent discussion, appropriately, be a Greek "chi" and all that entails (as in Xmas), which leads me to wonder if nessie might have described Laura's baptism as "dip-laura-ble". I'm thinking also how LauraX, if it had not been taken already by a famous Berkeley feminist, would be an excellent name for a Dr. Seuss character, in a book or a film.

Message 108 1/28/99 6:12 PM
Subject: Re(3): many zealots
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

J.Mark Andrus writes:

*Hermann Goering in 1933 said (approximately):
Every time I hear the word "culture" I want to reach for my revolver.*

Is the name as approximate as the date? Let's get it right. It wasn't Goering,

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it was Hanns Johnst, Head of the State Theatre (approximately.) Source: Bartlett's Familiar Quotations, 15th Ed., p 816. And it's a bad translation; the gun in question was actually a Browning automatic. Sorry to preempt nessie.

Goering's famous quote was "Shoot first and ask questions later, and I will protect you."

Message 105 1/30/99 4:05 AM
Subject: Re(4): many zealots
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

nessie writes:

(quoting J. Mark Andrus)

>Hermann Goering in 1933 said (approximately):

Every time I hear the word "culture" I want to reach for my revolver.

Actually it was a guy named Hanns Johst, also a Nazi.

jinx! see below. now neither of us can talk, and GOL is saved.

In 1933 he became president of the German Academy of Writers where he oversaw the "gliechschaltung," the "coming into line" of German literature.

this is very impressive, considering that in 1933 he was 103 years old, and 15 years dead. but nessie, like Buckaroo Banzai, has never been wrong before, so I guess I'll have to believe him on this one.

In 1931,

I have the date as 1933, actually.

in a play named <Schlageter> a character of his said, "When I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my Browning."

the actual quote is "Wenn ich Kultur hvre...entsichere ich meinen Browning." (I've always used "wenn" in German to mean "if" not "wenn"; I invite the advice of better Teutonophones.) the verb of the main clause is "entsichere", literally, "I release the safety catch" (of my Browning.) Perhaps you, nessie, are one of the few to appreciate the distinction; it's beyond reaching for or just wanting to.

The line is spoken in the first scene of the play, as two students/WW veterans in 1923, the Schlageter of the title and another named Thiemann, are having an argument about the state of Germany and what they can do about it. Thiemann expresses general disdain for democratic ideas and institutions, parties, etc. nessie, you made me read it not just in German, but in Fraktur!

Now, since I really hate showing J. Mark Andrus to be wrong, I must admit that that according to my resources, the line was "attributed" to Goering. This might mean that Goering identified with the character in the play and liked to quote the line (like Ronald Reagan saying "Make my day", though that's even weirder because he really did act so many similar roles and continued to act them out as President.) Or, it might mean that Johst based the character on Goering. Or maybe it was just a popular expression of the time that both used

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and Johst just happened to put on paper. But then, if one guy or the other really was the originator of the quote and meant it, then there is a difference in context and hence in meaning whether it came from the mouth of the drug-addicted head of the Luftwaffe (of whom respect for culture would not be much expected) or from someone akin to the head of the NEA. (Well, the NEA of a few years ago.)

"Attributed" is a funny word. After all, everyone "attributes" the line "The death of one man is a tragedy, but the death of a million is a statistic", to Henry Kissinger, when it was really Josef Stalin. Quotes make their way into the culture and their origins are forgotten and people use them with no thought to the sort of people who originated them. You could say that only certain sorts of people would say those sorts of things, but those sorts can become universal; everyone would say those things. So to condemn kollontai for using an expression that may have originated with Nazis is like condemning someone for a brief membership in an organization whose goals the Communist Party might once have endorsed. Which is smear, guilt by association, and McCarthyism, whether consciously or not.

By the way, the coiner -- excuse me, an early and frequent user, don't want to imply any causes here -- of the expression "shut up and suffer" was Lavrenti Beria, head of the Soviet Secret Police under Stalin.

Molchai i stradai!

Message 103 1/30/99 4:06 AM
Subject: Re(4): The 60s
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

lecia writes:

Eva Luna writes:

*I'm looking forward to seeing if it can actually be worse than "Forest Gump."
HA HA HA!!!! yeah! i'm not the only one out there who wanted forest to keep
running...*

Whatever one might say about "Forrest Gump", one must admit that if the creators were trying to make a piece of right-wing propaganda to rival "Triumph of the Will", they succeeded.

Nevertheless, running long distances is beautiful. Short distances, too. And knowing when to stop and go home. And Robin Wright. Don't mind her-wing propaganda at all.

Interesting (perhaps) point: the opening line of the movie is well known. the analogous part of Winston Groom's book reads, "Being an idiot ain't no box of chocolates."

So, I guess they changed it.

> 102

Message 102 1/29/99 6:46 PM
Subject: Re(2): Danes
From: terrible person
To: film

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

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"It is for this reason, that we are commonly assumed to be the same person logging on under different names."

Neither of us has any further comment concerning this report at this time.

Message 100 1/30/99 9:28 AM
Subject: WWJD
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

laura deal writes:(excerpt)

I haven't found a church out here that I connect with, so I don't go to church anymore, but I still hold my beliefs and I am still a Christian, that is my spiritual path

i agree with laura deal's general idea in her post. jesus was way cool. ("is" way cool, as a concept or character or author of a body of work?) i may not love him the way laura does, but i like him a lot. (note: to avoid the possibility of giving offense by capitalizing pronouns or failing to, i am writing entirely in lower case.)

i think a lot about what it would have been like to be around jesus, the excitement combined with the serenity. (plus the instant fish, bread, and wine, and the free medical care. but i might have wondered when at dinner he started saying "eat me.") i think a lot as well about what it would have been like to *be* jesus, only gradually realizing how i was different from other people. but then, i have long felt close to jesus, closer than to other religious figures, just because of the hard details of background. but jesus talked in puns and analogies, after all. though usually briefly. though not always. anyway.

now, because he did this, and tended to use language that was so vague, cryptic, or subtle that he often seems to contradict himself (or may actually be doing so) especially among the gospels, it is possible to find almost any meaning one wants among his teachings. and in fact, people of the last 2000 years have often done so, which is why there are so many "christian" sects and so many different individual "christians", each sure that their or his or her interpretation is a, or the only, one. jesus is a deconstructionist's dream.

so, for example, i myself find inspiration for terribleness in the life and teachings of jesus. whereas judaism tends to emphasize the relation of the whole jewish people/nation with god, so that worship tends to be in groups, and there is a group destiny, jesus stressed the personal relationship, the private one, without the mediation of the group needed, and the fate of the individual soul. now, I tend to think of "god" as simply a metaphor for the forces of the universe. but the idea is the same. only the universe can judge you, no one else need we fear. our individual lines of communication with the highest power don't run through other human beings unless we let them. we might fear their actions (which are part of the mechanism of the universe), but not their judgment. no one needs to know what i do. the universe will, and treat me appropriately, perhaps using humans as its agents, but only that.

so that's why *i* like jesus, and i hope others' reasons are just as good, or rather, they must be.

as for a church, laura deal, might I suggest the one located right on the

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Hayward Fault, you know, the Quakers? They have their own TV show, don't you know it? You know, the one with Courtney Cox and Jennifer Aniston? "Friends"?

Message 95 1/30/99 10:56 AM
Subject: Re(5): many zealots
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

terrible person writes:
the actual quote is "Wenn ich Kultur hvre...entsichere ich meinen Browning."

terrible person, you twit, look in your dictionary. (American Heritage)

Kultur: Culture, especially, German culture and civilization as idealized by the exponents of German imperialism during the period 1900-45: "Kultur, in fact, has become the exact opposite of 'culture'." (London Times)

(kind of a tendentious quote, though...but use quotes as best you can, I always say.)

anyway, terrible person, if you had a bit of education and wit, you'd see that the quote can be taken in the OPPOSITE meaning: "when I hear the (positive) word "Kultur", I get ready to defend it." (If he were getting ready to attack it, that would not make sense; in the context, the character seems to be very pro-Kultur.)

(I've always used "wenn" in German to mean "if" not "wenn"; I invite the advice of better Teutonophones.)

yeah? here's some advice: write "when" after the "not", not "wenn" again.

> 94
Message 94 1/30/99 1:53 PM
Subject: Re: bowel of the GOL
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

kollontai writes:
RE: "Colon-Tai, the irritable bowel of the G.O.L."
Well, thanks Thorn,
I haven't been able to find the positive yet abt being assigned the
appellation: the irritable bowel of the G.O. L.

please note, kollontai, that it was not Thorn who originated this insult, but mentioned it only to criticize J. Mark Andrus, who seems to have picked it up from laura deal. (see mr. s.f. applet's post on the difficulty of finding the first user of expressions.)

you might however point out in reply that the colon absorbs what is useful of bodily wastes and gets rid of the rest, at least does something very helpful and needed, which is more than can be said for J. Mark Andrus.

or you might point out, if he wants to pun on names, that a "Mark" was a currency which in the 20's (like the person) had no value, was not worth the paper it was printed on, and "Andrus" sounds a lot like one of those hormone

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supplements guys take to beef up their bodies, while it would appear that the part J. Mark Andrus desperately needs to beef up lies between his ears.

*does lack an
authoritative aura, doesn't it?*

considering the nature of authority (here and elsewhere) I think you're better off without it.

Message 89 1/30/99 9:52 PM
Subject: Rebuttal Surfer
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Steve Omlid writes:

>The problem with this question is that it treats Christianity as if really were an "it" - as if it were a single, solitary entity with one face and one personality. And of course, it's not. It's a whole bunch of different things, and different people. Some of those people are assholes. And some of them are heroes. And most of them fall somewhere in between.

J. Mark Andrus writes:

*This is a terrific example of a Namby-Pamby answer if I've ever seen one.
<whack, whack, slap, slap>*

Seriously, you could substitute the word "Nazism" for "Christianity" in your answer, and it would be of equal nominal truth.

Can anyone cite any positive contributions Christianity has made to civilisation?.....

....I'm honestly trying to think of what Christianity has contributed, and aside from some colorful dogma and interesting architecture, I'm having a hell of a time coming up with much. Certainly nothing that outweighs the anti-information/anti-scientific/anti-logic attitude that it continues to perpetrate, and nothing that outweighs the bloodshed in the variety of wars carried out "in the name of God".

So let's have more rebuttals, and less petty indignation, dammit.

As nessie says, you're on.

If Steve Omlid's comment above be Namby-Pamby, and I for one do not find it so, then I would rather read Namby-Pambyism than J. Mark's pinheadedness any day of the week and twice on Sundays.

I mean, look, you could substitute the word "science and logic" for "Christianity" too, and it would be of equal nominal truth. Look at it. Cut and paste as I am now doing. What have science or anything else you hold dear -- even civilisation itself -- contributed that the rest of us are obliged to admire as well? Don't even bother. You can't do it. Let's not even bother to balance penicillin versus neutron bombs. Your argument is based upon a logic which is only one of many possible approaches to truth, and upon assumptions, axioms, concerning what is good, in fact, concerning what "good" is, which however universal and certain they may seem to you, have no absolute unquestionable basis in anything. What if there IS an afterlife, for which

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Christianity prepares one? You and your science can't prove there isn't, and if there is, a little sacrifice in this life would certainly be worth the reward. (You'll say that this is not a scientific matter and I will say, then how good is science as a way of thought?)

You seem to equate goodness with fulfillment of physical needs, and you ignore that there may be many people to whom understanding of the universe and their place in it is more important than food, money, or sex. (And if you are such a materialist and religion-hater, why are you acting like such a jerk towards the atheist socialist kollontai?)

If the Church has over the years been perhaps a little overzealous and intolerant in its proselytizing over the years, wouldn't you break into your neighbor's house and drag him out if you thought it was about to blow up due to a gas leak? Once you grant the initial assumptions of Christianity, of any dogma -- including your own -- all the rest follows. All you can do is refuse to acknowledge the validity of their basic principles, which are at bottom arbitrary postulates, like Euclid's five. But then, they can do the same to you. No one is bound to accept your definitions of happiness, goodness, progress, or the values you place on them. You could point out faults of logic, contradictions, hypocrisies, but no one is bound to accept your reasoning process either. You could say that if Christians could keep just keep their beliefs to themselves and leave you alone, you'd have no problem with them, but on the one hand how can they if the logic of their system enjoins them to spread it, and on the other, since when did science "keep to itself" and bypass those who wanted no part of it?

And while we're judging, I'll bet Laura Deal has read a bunch of science books, but when was the last time you tried prayer?

Systems of thought are as arbitrary as languages. Some people speak French, some Mongolian, can a speaker of either call a speaker of the other "wrong", or demand an explanation of why she speaks that way, what good her tongue does? If you claim the mandate of the majority for your views, be careful; the majority have favored a lot of ideas you might find distasteful.

So just accept it. There are no absolutes. Science accomplishes certain things, and if these are the things you want accomplished, root for science. Religion accomplishes certain other things, and if certain other people want those things accomplished, they will follow God under whatever name they like. Your views are YOUR views, and you hold them because they are good for YOU. If you want to fight for them, go right ahead. But stop trying to foist your own petty indignation, and your quaint outdated notions of universal truth to justify it, on the rest of us, and stop telling us what to believe, unless you are prepared to admit you are no better than the missionaries you mock and decry.

And, by the way, the logic you treasure was in a large measure kept alive by the Church you denigrate. Also, the Latin language, for which I feel personally grateful as it kept me employed for several years (and has been a constant source of joy and inspiration.) And finally, whatever else you might say about him, and I know that is a lot, the Pope categorically opposes the death penalty.

And as for signing off "God", I think the mention the name Lloyd Bentsen alone to Mr. Politics should suffice to send him into a sputtering spasm of

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protests of unfairness.

And I'm glad to rebut head of "politics" J. Mark Andrus.

Message 78 1/31/99 4:12 AM
Subject: Re(2): Rebuttal Surfer
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:
How good is a hammer? You can't even turn screws with it.

Though you can (and usually do) bang them in a little to get them fixed and started....

No disagreement on this point. You're giving an example of judging something by criteria that don't apply, which is exactly what J. Mark Andrus was doing in demanding to know what Christianity had done for civilisation. As Steve Omlid says, hammers, or religion, weren't put here on this earth to meet your criteria for utility.....

And when it comes down to it, though there is no absolute reason, one that isn't in the end arbitrary, to pick any religion over any other, neither is there any reason, to the extent they are not compatible, to pick science over any religion. there's also no a priori reason to pick Christianity out of all the competing religions out there. Who's to say Marduk isn't actually the real boss--or maybe that stuff about him kicking Tiamat's ass was just a cover story, and she's still running the place.

No one; you pays your money and you takes your chance (which, remember, doesn't actually exist; only lack of knowledge does.) And if you lose, you can't complain.

... Pascal's wager isn't as good a bet as it looks.

As for Pascal, he doesn't have any gotos, and of course one can't calculate an expected value with exact knowledge of either the odds, or the payoff. You just have to play a hunch, and recognize it as such.

Languages are far more alike than different.

Does that really make any sense? After all, imagine all the possibilities; they could be infinitely different, but only finitely the same (zero difference) so any finite difference must be closer to zero than infinity. (Does this make sense? If not, Tim Walters should get it, let him explain.)

But to pick up on what Tim Walters is trying to say (I think): yes, there seem to be certain universals of language (nouns, verbs, etc.), from Athabaskan to Zulu. Whether this is due to all languages' descent from a few ancestors (or a single ancestor) or an innate Chomskyan human language capacity or certain environmental demands or some coincidental or inevitable combination, no one is quite sure yet (even within linguistic science.)

Likewise, of the infinity of possible belief systems, only a few relatively

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similar ones have taken root.

Maybe if they have not existed, it's because they are not possible....or they do exist, but just have not taken root *yet*. (See, I have plans...)

Also, this implies that science is basically similar as a belief system to religion, yes?

But it's much more interesting, in my opinion, to think about human reasoning strategies that have evolved in the teeth of this nihilistic commonplace. Do humans think the way they do because they're born that way, because certain strategies have an objectively better relationship to reality (whether we can prove it or not), or both, or something else?

It seems reasonable to assert that the environments in which humans happened to have lived have favored the evolution of a certain basic architecture, a platform, a microcode and assembly language or supporting various basically similar operating systems or an operating system that supports a wide range of basically similar applications (a human conceptual capacity like the hardwired language one.) As to its relation to reality, it should have a strong one, if, big if, reality is the evolutionary "goal" of survival success of the species, in other words, staying alive and reproducing. But there may be something beyond this, yes? And then, processing is only as good as input. Certain strategies may have a better relationship to what we perceive directly (and science has an excellent one), but perception is not necessarily reality; and religion deals with what can't be perceived.

(I'm not so much talking about science vs. religion here as the little things: simple arithmetic, realism, Occam's razor [brought to us by a fine churchman], and others that are widespread if not completely universal).

Tim Walters, you've shown admirable openmindedness here (at least, *I* admire it; J. Mark Andrus might not) but don't forget, simple arithmetic may not be any more necessary than Euclidean geometry ("You see, at any rate, that it is possible", says O'Brien, after blasting from Winston's brain the childish idea that $2 + 2$ always equals 4.). If by realism you mean representationalism, remember that our finite capacity to read information means any representation is limited -- which do you prefer, to see half a globe, or all of a Mercator projection? And I don't think either of us believes that the shortest argument is necessarily the best, that entia non sunt multiplicanda when the entia are pleasing to other senses than that of time, as our philosophical beards might indicate.

essage 75 1/31/99 8:26 AM
Subject: Re(3): Rebuttal Surfer
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Corrigenda duo:

terrible person writes:

*As for Pascal, he doesn't have any gotos, and of course one can't calculate an expected value with exact knowledge of ***either*** the odds, ***or**** the payoff. You just have to play a hunch, and recognize it as such.*

for ***either*** read "neither"

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for ***or*** read "nor".

Tim Walters: Languages are far more alike than different.

terrible person:
Does that really make any sense? After all, imagine all the possibilities; they could be infinitely different, but only finitely the same (zero difference) so any finite difference must be closer to zero than infinity.

Of course, Tim Walters' point makes perfect sense on a logarithmic scale.

We regret any confusion or inconvenience.

Oh, and I can't wait to hear from Mr. A.
Ditko's, I mean.

Message 68 1/31/99 12:38 PM
Subject: Re: Puff the Magic Dragon/Mondegreen
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Kelsey Gadoo writes:
In the song, "Puff the Magic Dragon," there's a line about him wandering (or doing something or other) in the autumn mist.

Until VERY recently, like two years ago (!) I thought the word was "ottomis" and I wondered what an ottomis was and what Puff was doing there

For a long time, I thought it was the "auto mist", meaning L.A. car smog.

After I had learned a little history, I realized that the Ottomis was another name for the Ottoman Empire and Anolee (sp?), as the land was called, a corruption of "Anatolia", modern-day Turkey, the heartland of the Empire. The sea in question is probably the Mediterranean rather than the Black or Aegean; Cilicia, in the northeast corner of the former, where Turkey meets Syria, was famous for pirates. Of course, this area would have been right on the early drug-trade routes from Asia.

Anyway, the earliest at all recognizable version I've been able to find of this song has been in an Italian folk song book from 1913, "la Canzone Tradizionale Italiana" (sp?) by Umberto Postavini, which gave the song's date as "settecento" (sp?) -- that's the 1600's, right?

A posting and translation of the lyrics will have to wait on my getting my scanner working and improving my late Renaissance/early modern Italian -- I'm 1500 years early.

My other theory has to do with the fact that etymologically related to the word "dragon" is the name "Dracula", who fought the Turks, and received the tribute of noble kings and princes, and who lives forever.

I'll be interested to see what others can come up with on this.

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Message 65 1/31/99 2:50 PM
Subject: Re(4): Rebuttal Surefire
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes: (he has all the angles <<<>>>)
 I'm indented to him.

<<First of all, to the extent that religion defines itself as a theory of that which is in principle unobservable, there can't be any conflict.>>

 If they stay out of each others' spheres. But J. Mark Andrus was demanding that they be compared on the same criteria.

<<Secondly, I disagree that the choice is arbitrary except in the most extreme sense. If we have the goal of understanding the world, science is clearly better, not because it's provably more right, but because it's provably more useful (and I don't mean material progress, but advancement of knowledge).>>

 I agree that when it comes to explaining the observable world, science kicks ass. The problem is that we have no idea what is going on that we cannot observe that nevertheless might still affect us. And that the knowledge science advances is still about the observable world, saying nothing about the non-observable, any more than Hamlet's philosophy told him what dreams might come.

<<The solipsist, for example, may claim that he has explained the world as a delusion of his mind; yet he hasn't actually explained anything. The whole world is still there, in his mind or no, with no reduction in complexity.>>

 True. So the ideas are geometrically equivalent, like Tycho's and Ptolemy's systems. Only arbitrary personal taste allows you to choose one or the other, not Ockham's Razor.

<<Similarly, there's the only recently discarded Catholic belief that God moves the sun and planets in epicycles around the Earth that happen to be so placed as to make it appear that the planets are all orbiting the sun in ellipses. This belief is undisprovable for the exact reason that it explains nothing whatsoever. It can be revised, without essential change, to fit any set of observations.>>

 A theory is provable or disprovable only once the axioms and rules of inference are agreed to, which they don't have to be. I have to accept Kepler's Laws, if, and only if, I accept the Rudolphine Tables as accurate, and some principles of motion as valid. But to those who believe in divinity, divine will is enough explanation for anything.

<<A theory that is not disprovable in principle, by reference to reality, is a dead end. This doesn't guarantee that it's wrong, of course; but it guarantees that you can't do much with it.>>

 You may not be able to do much with it in the material world. What you might be able to do with it in the unobservable world, we can't know.

<<Even more fundamentally than that, with a few exceptions such as ASL, they

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all involve speech, or coded speech. Nobody flashes colored cards at each other, or tap-dances, or uses any of the myriads of other possible communication modalities.>>

Wait, wait, I think we have forgotten something. I would say that spoken language is only a very small part of the human communications armamentarium. You, of all people, are forgetting music. (I have an excuse for prejudice towards language.) And then there is dance, and art in all forms, not to mention gesture and action. Language may seem the most precise and general, capable of describing (or approaching a description of) both emotions and physics, but music might be said to do the first better, and math the second, and math describes emotion not as well, and music has had only a limited success with physics.

<<terrible person:Also, this implies that science is basically similar as a belief system to religion, yes?

They have a lot in common--especially in practice, as opposed to theory--but also a lot of important differences. The primary difference, as I see it, is that science is fundamentally opposed to arguments from authority, while religion is based on them. This isn't to say that scientists never use such arguments, or that theists never reason from experience; but in the end religion comes down to belief in a specific creed, while science merely accepts those postulates without which no reasoning is possible.>>

But religion is often not based on reason, but on feeling and faith. laura deal did not need to prove to herself that she believed in Jesus; she just knew it. (Which in turn might be a matter for the sort of science of psychology, why she felt this way.) Religion often circumvents reason, or at least reason as scientifically defined. Or, religion starts with postulates too: all this could not have been by accident, there must be a higher power, and then tries to figure out its nature. A scientist might offer explanations that do not require such a higher power, physical laws; the believer asks, well, what created the laws? and keeps on recursing until the scientist is left cursing.

And as you noted, science can be just as dogmatic, just as emotional in rejecting uncomfortable reason, as religion.

<<Well, that's exactly my point. If there's no a priori reason to believe that $2 + 2 = 4$ why does every culture do simple arithmetic the same way? It seems very unlikely to me that our brains are hardwired for arithmetic, which probably wouldn't have been of much use to early homo sap. So there must be some more primitive level at which the process of addition as we know it satisfies.>>

Well, on the one hand, I have heard, possibly apocryphal, tales, of "primitive" societies who count only to four, anything more than that being "many" (and even to the Greeks, the word for "ten thousand" could mean "countless") which would seem to preclude real arithmetic, so every culture doesn't do it, unless you meant the ones that do, do it the same way. On the other hand, it might seem that among our distant ancestors those who could do a bit of math, say, count the children every night to make sure none were still out gathering and falling prey to the wild beasts, might be favored by evolution.

<<I would propose that this is because it correlates with observable reality

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(at least when combined with the human tendency to divide the world into distinct entities).>>

Again, no disagreement. Anyplace where the rules of arithmetic might not apply, a parallel universe, perhaps, a higher spatial dimension, or heaven, which might be one of the preceding two, would simply not be observable and thus not subject to science.

However, I would also point out that the vast majority of humans throughout history (and even, apparently, of scientists today) have believed in some sort of divinity, and I don't think either of us would assert that this is because it correlates with observable reality.

*<<And I would say that O'Brien knew perfectly damn well that 2+2=4. After all, no one was putting rats on *his* face.>>*

Wrong scene; the rats were to make Winston betray Julia. For the math, O'Brien just put in for electrical procedures. I'm not sure what O'Brien knew. As the Party's control of reality solidifies, it would become more and more possible to accept whatever it said. War is sometimes described as the great test of a nation's ideology and whether it accords with reality. Nations that believe their own propaganda usually lose. If $2+2=5$, the artillery shells won't hit their targets; maybe that doesn't matter, maybe the same insanity pervades the Eastasians and/or Eurasians. Eventually, the war with them -- whichever it is this week -- will become entirely a simulation (if it isn't already in 1984 -- who really is dropping those bombs on London?) and then Oceania can entirely seal itself off from all it cannot control, except perhaps for meteors. Collective solipsism, it's called, though I forgot if that is Orwell's term or Anthony Burgess' in his incisive "1985".

<<By realism I mean the belief that objective reality exists. You might argue, correctly, that there are many belief systems in use that deny objective reality; but I would reply that there are none that act on this belief as if they really meant it. Around the globe, if a potter breaks her wheel, she may castigate Satan or the veil of Maya, but will then mend the wheel with her hands rather than by prayer or thinking it back into shape.>>

But there are plenty of believers in faith healing who refuse to take dying children to doctors (and thus turn them into dead children.) There are and have been plenty of soldiers who marched fearlessly into battle convinced that their religion or medicine made them invulnerable to enemy bullets or would take them straight to heaven if not. Sometimes, the elan this created actually helped them win. (see above concerning war and ideology.) Is this all that different from a faith in one's leaders, or in the technical superiority of one's weapons? The People's Liberation Army long disdained training and relied for the guidance of its weapons on Mao Zedong Thought -- religion, or form of scientific socialism? Most people who put their faith in science and technology have no idea how it works, they are proof of Arthur Clarke's famous line, and technology to them might as well be magic or miracle.

<<But I do believe that an argument that explains something (and can be checked by observation) is better than one that explains nothing and can never be verified, at least for the purposes of understanding reality.>>

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Once more, I basically agree, but once more, I point out that once the point of unobservability is reached, after death, before the Big Bang, in the higher dimensions, science can't say anything, and religion at least holds out a hope for those who want it, even if we and others like us do not.

Message 58 2/1/99 7:04 AM
Subject: Tim and I Accept the Universe
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

by gosh, we'd better!

Tim Walters writes:

To be fair, a lot of theists also insist on poking their noses into science (so-called "scientific creationism" being one of the more egregious examples). If they try to play the science game it's perfectly cricket to call them on their blunders.

Yes, but quite a few scientists since the Victorian Era and before have believed they have "disproved" God. The line of demarcation, the demilitarized zone has been violated on both sides. If there really is such a line.

Not quite. The solipsist has an unnecessary postulate--that the world exists in his mind--which isn't isomorphic to any postulate in the scientist's viewpoint. So the famous razor applies.

But the scientist acknowledges that the word exists in her mind, she just believes that this mental image corresponds to an external reality. A solipsist simply denies this, which is in a way simpler. Maybe the Razor needs to be stropped, or someone will like it so much, he'll buy the company.

Again, not quite. Kepler's Laws are disprovable--all you have to do is find a counterexample. "God did it" is not disprovable.

That was what I meant about the Tables; finding a counterexample to Kepler's laws would mean that a planet was out of line and the Tables were wrong. Also, the fact that we have not found a counterexample does not mean there is not one out there. Which means the theory is adequate for now, but like all theories, will be found lacking some day. (e.g., Newton until Michelson and Morley.)

terrible person: And as you noted, science can be just as dogmatic, just as emotional in rejecting uncomfortable reason, as religion.

*That's not quite what I said. *Scientists* can be, individually; but science in the abstract expects its dogmas to be overturned, and rejoices therein.*

I think this is a relatively recent phenomenon, twentieth-century, even late twentieth century. I don't think Newton thought that his theory would be superseded; I'm not sure Einstein thought his might be (not that it has in the way Newton's has.) Only after the dominant paradigm had been overthrown a few

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times (this is Kuhnian stuff, of course) did postmodern scientists become self-aware, recognizing that every theory they might propose would be incomplete. But even now, scientists who write popular books talk of the end of science, of having solved all the big questions (at least, all the solvable ones) which almost echoes Lord Kelvin a century ago.

There may be a religion with the same attitude, but I can't think of one offhand.

The fact that there is not such a religion indicates a crying need for us to invent it. It would be like Linux, made available, with modification encouraged. But if we are budding L. Ron Hubbards, it would be hard to make money off it.

terrible person: However, I would also point out that the vast majority of humans throughout history (and even, apparently, of scientists today) have believed in some sort of divinity, and I don't think either of us would assert that this is because it correlates with observable reality.

Actually, I would, in a way. Religions attempt to explain the mystical experience, which is quite real (even atheists like me have 'em occasionally).

My personal belief is that divinity is not involved, and that this type of experience is a function of the human mind; but consciousness is a very poorly understood phenomenon, and no existing scientific theory even attempts to explain such higher functions. So religious explanations are as good as any right now (i.e., not very satisfactory, to me at least).

So the question is whether religious experience corresponds to something in world, i.e., a real God, or whether it is all in our minds. This is the same as the solipsist question above, and as insoluble, I think.

So we need to postulate, along with other more or less hardwired evolved capacities of language and concept, one of religion? Hmm. Again, I am asking myself how evolution would have favored such a thing. I guess it would have created social cohesion, willingness to sacrifice self for group, etc. It would perhaps be part, a manifestation, of a larger human capacity to believe what cannot be seen directly, which would be useful ("Yes, the sabretooth tiger is really behind that tree.") Or perhaps it's just another neurosis or worse, and, in a reversal of the belief in some cultures that the mentally ill are really divinely possessed, those with direct religious experience will be classified as mentally ill, like conspiracy theory paranoids. If this is appropriate, if, as literalized in Chesterton's "The Man Who Was Thursday", God is the ultimate conspiracy, as unprovable and undisprovable, it must be remembered that religion, like the theories, just might be right.

Not throwing cards.

Message 42 2/2/99 6:50 AM
Subject: In Goad We Trust
From: terrible person
To: film

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alternate title: "I want some action"

I've been observing this whole recurring "matter of Barrymore" from my own somewhat unique perspective.

I think it's fairly clear that the "goadings" of Barrymore goes on to a great extent because people know they will get a response and enjoy doing it. And the same can be said for Barrymore in the active voice: he goads everyone else because he knows he can always get a rise. It's like WWI, happening not by some chance accident, but because everyone really wanted it and was waiting for some chance accident to start it.

Actually, I don't know how this affair, this war, began, or who started it; I must have been lurking in "Fantasies" at the time. Someone said something that someone took amiss, whether he or she was supposed to or not, and things escalated, by knee jerk reaction or Gulf of Tonkin conspiracy. But I don't think it matters much, since there have been ample chances to end it, and I think I know why it continues.

Now, if I'm wrong, foisting my terribly cynical views of human nature on everyone again, then there is a very simple way to prove it: stop the war.

This can be done by the mutual agreement of both sides, or by the action of one side. That one side does not have to be John Barrymore. There are more of you than of him; you are the stronger side. If the rest of you simply failed to respond to the statements of Barrymore you find inflammatory, he would quickly, I believe, lose his taste for them. Dialogue required a partner and when it turns into monologue, it looks foolish. It's not quite the old "silent treatment"; that punishes any conduct, not just nonverbal. When misconduct is exclusively verbal, not responding is simply the logical response. And the war would be over.

When I attack people, everyone claims not to read what I write -- and yet they, or some of them, respond. Of course, ignoring me would not work to dissuade me, since I am 1) on a mission from God, with the mandate of Heaven, motivated by a messianic sense of vengeance 2) engaging in an intricate and sinister plot, so immense as to dwarf any other in the history of man, the nature of which, could you fathom it, would turn your collective hair Don Kingly, and in which your every action is exactly what I wanted you to do 3) quite completely and paranoidly insane 4) all three.

But Barrymore can't be religiously motivated (because if two men say they're Jesus, they can't both be right -- though many people can say they're Laura), or part of any conspiracy, because nessie would know about it. Nor does he show the slightest sign of anything but the calmest rationality, of being stark raving sane.

So who knows, if people are willing to give up their fun, this might work. If no one admits to reading Barrymore, how does everyone get so offended by what he says? it's like the election of Richard Nixon in 1972; today, everyone swears they voted for the other guy, but somehow the Trickster got elected.

I don't know what people will do with the extra time this will free up, though. They might write about film, I suppose. The funny thing is, Barrymore seems to be about the only one doing that right now. In the sense that he is the only one who goes out and sees new movies and tells what he thinks of

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them. Not the only one; there was pierre le fou's thing about Starship Troopers (though that's kind of old), and Steve starts threads, and other people whom I don't want to slight (at least today; maybe some other day) but I'm thinking of the days when people like sirin, and Eva Luna (who, for anyone's information, is NOT overweight, but if she were so inclined could brag of a Sonia Braga-like sleek svelte sultry smoldering South American sensual somaticity), would consistently start or expand threads that actually gave me some idea of what was going on at the movies these days, and what they wished weren't. I opposed Eva Luna's elevation to the moderatorship on the grounds that her duties would distract her from her writing; my impression is that the culprit is actually her new job as an assistant producer at Detailed Pictures, who brought us "Twenty-One scenes from Kim's Bar". I'm not saying people (and the abovementioned people) don't write at all, but they do write less, it seems, and ne voices like Keela Merrin, and lecia, can only make up to a limited extent. Anyway, maybe people read Barrymore because they want to know about movies, and he is writing about them. In the process, they get angry. If other people were writing about movies, people would not have to read Barrymore, unless they were looking for an argument, which, theoretically, no one is doing.

Now, I have been criticized for not playing by the rules of online society, rejecting it, etc. I have heard "online society" invoked as something strong, to be respected. If this is true, online society should be able to organize itself against a threat to its collective interests. Or admit that it does not really exist.

One more thing: by now, everyone here pretty much knows everyone else, whether in real life, or from here. This is not like the old days, when there were new people coming in all the time, who did not know anyone, who might actually believe foul slanders made against other users. I think most people here are pretty set in their opinions, say, about John Barrymore, regardless of whether what is said about him is true or they believe it; they have seen him in action and formed opinions based on that. Repetition of the same accusations, or attempts to refute them, won't do any good; everyone has heard them all already, and they either continue to read his posts and respond, or they don't. By the same token, nothing John Barrymore can say about anyone carries much weight, not about Eva Luna, since they all agree from the evidence of their own eyes that she is doing a fine job moderating; not about Kelsey Gadoo, who remains popular despite her failure to provide adequate citations and worse, her misuse of the word "tweaked" (see next post); not about J. Mark Andrus (since those tend to lose in coherence as they gain in fury); not about anyone; whether one has positive or negative opinions about these people, they are formed from one's own previous and ongoing experience and not from anything anyone says.

And even the real world threats are empty, as Barrymore has admitted, or Kelsey Gadoo has shown.

Yes, it can be hard to ignore someone. Even if you know the shots coming from outside are practice blanks, they still make you nervous. But obviously, fighting the War on Barrymore, like the War on Drugs, by fighting, is not working. If you really want to, which you may not, if you really can, which you may not, you'll try another way.

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Now that, rather than supporting one side or the other, I have offended everyone, I'd like to say I really liked Keela Merrin's poem -- like Ginsberg's "America", yes?

Message 39 2/2/99 10:56 AM
Subject: For the Greater Goad
From: terrible person
To: film

somewhere in the vast wasteland of his post terrible person writes:

2) engaging in an intricate and sinister plot, so immense as to dwarf any other in the history of man, the nature of which, could you fathom it, would turn your collective hair Don Kingly,

this should have read:

"engaging in an intricate and sinister plot, so immense as to dwarf any other in the history of man, the nature of which, could you fathom it, would, collectively and singly, make your spine tingly, and turn your hair Don Kingly".

We regret the error and any inconvenience. Those responsible are going straight to hell, flammis acribus addicti.

Message 36 2/2/99 9:23 PM
Subject: Cursory Glance
From: terrible person
To: film

Steve Omlid writes:

But - and I apologize if my approval bothers you, Terry - I think this post was pretty fucking brilliant.

Your approval doesn't bother me. Nor does Barrymore's, nor would anyone else's, not Eva Luna's, nor even Kelsey Gadoo's or J. Mark Andrus' for that matter, though I'll get that when hell freezes over and I skate at left wing as a real New Jersey Devil, with our great "H-E-Double hockey stick" jerseys, and we play the Other Guys, and they've got the Big Guy from Galilee in goal, and we're taking shot after shot but it's all no good, or no evil, since of course, Jesus saves. But as long as there are no expectations attached, and if there are, that's too bad, since I was not put on this earth to meet your criteria yadda yadda yadda, I'll take all the approval -- or as the Romans called it, gratia -- I can get; I'm like Elizabeth Nolan seeing the quarter on the floor and saying, "Hey, money!" Because gratia is like money; you can store it up, but its true use is using it up, in spending it. Accumulated approval simply means that you can get away with more next time.

And I never mind having people agree with me now, since that means fewer people I have to torture into converting later.

As for my fucking brilliance, I don't see how you found out about it; I'm not ashamed by any means, but I usually keep things like that private. Really though, it's time to spend a little gratia, but while I am saving the world I thought I might say that I for one am kind of tired of the overuse of "fuck" and its derivatives (such as the delightfully phonetic "fucken", which I'm sure is a middle english participle somewhere.) I mean, the fact is, it has

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lost all its shock value and emphatic power, just as in rap and Quentin Tarantino movies. Is "pretty fucking brilliant" all that much more brilliant than just "pretty brilliant"? I don't know how honored to be! It's like comments in a computer program, that just don't compile, or roughage in your diet, that goes right through. It's not as if there aren't other adjectives, even other expletives, to help out the prosody and accentuate the negative (or positive). Myself, I'm partial to "damned", if it's spelled right; it has a special resonance. But I'm sure some of you must have hick relatives or acquaintances who use quaint and colorful expressions; pick up some of theirs, or use some you have learned in your sojourns in the vast expanse of uncoolness outside Bayaria. This just seems like a good field for the exercise of some creativity.

> 35

Message 35 2/2/99 9:27 PM
Subject: Re: OKay, so, about movies...
From: terrible person
To: film

Keela Merrin writes:
So, that's my report. Anyone else?

Wow, Keela Merrin, you watched a movie? Turns out I did too! And if you wrote about yours, well, goshdarnit, I'll write about mine!! Like some of yours, it was an oldish one -- well, 1997, and I had seen it before, but I don't mind talking about it, and there is only the slightest spoiler.

See, it was "L.A. Confidential", which I loved when I saw it in the theatre. My neighbor just bought a huge telescreen and DVD player, so he invited me over to watch with him and his cat. Now my neighbor is pretty much a regular guy, bigger than I am, older, works out, watches football, likes beer, gets pissed off easily, listens to Springsteen, you know, a regular guy. But not stupid by any means, nor insensitive. His cat is simply the Ultimate Feline. Don't bother telling me about your cat, for it could never even begin to compare with my neighbor's.

So we're watching the movie, watching the three main detective characters, Ed Exley (Guy Pearce) with his glasses, Bud White (Russell Crowe) with Kim Basinger, and Jack Vincennes (Kevin Spacey), the TV-show consultant. And suddenly it occurred to me, a blinding epiphany of structural parallel. I was Ed Exley, smartass who didn't care who he made hate him as he chased his goals. My neighbor was basically Bud White. And then Jack Vincennes, of course, the guy who has no desire whatsoever actually to do anything, but simply wants to hang around and get free attention, he's the cat!!! We tried to teach it to purr "Rollo Tommasi" but then we decided we didn't even want to think about that.

Interesting that in other situations, I have felt like Bud White, the somewhat slow and clunky brute. But that was a long time ago.

But what I did think about was how the three characters are really one. None is complete in himself, each has huge gaps, and none gets anything done on his own. Only once they start getting together do things start happening. Now I don't really know much about psychology except what I had to learn in order to annoy people in arguments here, but I do remember the Freudian trinity (yes, I know that that's considered almost on a par with the four humors for

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obsolescence, but it's kind of fun in its simplicity). I remember in high school, when we read "Lord of the Flies", that roman with an ten foot long key, being taught that "Ralph is the ego, Piggy is the superego, Jack is the id." So I was thinking that perhaps Ellroy the novelist, or the screenwriter, had made things equally schematic, intentionally or not. I guess Exley would be the superego, following the rules, wanting approval of higher-ups. But would White be the id, the dark, violent side? While Exley seeks to avenge his murdered father, White hates his own for killing his mother -- kind of Oedipal. (Again, not saying these complexes exist, but writers seem to like them.) But then Vincennes would seem idlike too, in his pursuit of various desires. Perhaps it's not so simple, and the writers should be praised for this, rather than blamed. Anyway, if anyone has any insight on this, references, this once, might be asked but not demanded.

Message 34 2/2/99 9:41 PM
Subject: Tim and I expect to rate the universe?
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

terrible person: Yes, but quite a few scientists since the Victorian Era and before have believed they have "disproved" God.

An example? I'm not being disingenuous, I really can't think of any.

You've got me. I must have been thinking of the (fictional) 1860's scientist/clergyman in A.S. Byatt's "Morpho-Eugenia" who is trying to refute those who say science and religion are incompatible. Though it seems that Stephen Hawking, maybe, or some other prominent cosmologists have made it clear they find little place for God in their universes, though that could just be their personal, not scientific view, if the two can be separated.

>Not quite. The solipsist has an unnecessary postulate--that the world exists in his >mind--which isn't isomorphic to any postulate in the scientist's viewpoint. So the famous >razor applies.

You can swing your razor wide, Sweeney, and hold it to the skies, but I can't agree that a solipsist's view, in which there is no universe, only his mind, is more complex than a "realists". I don't see anything "natural" or "more natural" about the world existing in reality than in the mind, since after all, certain things definitely exist only in the mind even in a "realist" view. Why not all? Both contain the same number of objects, but in one, one object contains all the others. But this structure is no more complex; there is a sort of subordination rather than parataxis of all the objects, but the "one big complex object" theory is as simple as the "many simple objects". It mutliplies out to the same. (By the way, I am assuming our solipsist is not the sort who thinks he can control the objects in his mind, or that there is an external world of which he is a part, only that he does not experience that world, just the one in his head, like a delusional person.) Remember, the rules under which the mind-universe operates will be exactly the same as the rules of the actual universe. Gravity and mind-gravity work the same way. There would be no way within the universe to tell, so there is no way from the outside to prove. It comes down to semantics. A solipsist just defines "thing" not as "thing-in-the-universe" but as "thing-in-my-mind." Talking to him is more like talking to someone speaking another language than someone thinking

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another way. Just as we two could realize that we were describing the same phenomena with different terms, ultimately, the solipsist and realist are. You used the term "trivial" of another difference in this discussion; I think it applies equally here.

While you might be right that current scientists are more 'umble than those of old, I would say that the culture of science has always encouraged caution and avoidance of sweeping and final statements.

In an era of Big Science, when star researchers get millions in salaries, billions in equipment, when personal fame and political significance may be riding on their work, there is more and more pressure against the objective acceptance of new paradigms. Who wants to lose their investment? I would say science tends to change only when forced to, when the current theory really, really breaks down.

I think we might (or, admittedly, might not) understand consciousness sufficiently to explain the religious experience (in the same sense that stars are "explained" as fusion machines).

Yes, saying HOW stars work or how they got there does not explain WHY.

One could still postulate an unknowable purpose for it, but belief in said purpose would neither help nor hinder in its study or (small shudder) manipulation.

For a trait to evolve, it need not have an evolutionary rationale. It may instead be an unavoidable consequence of selection for another, more directly survival-related trait. In this case, it could well be that there is no way to engineer consciousness without creating the religious impulse (or that such a way was not found in our evolution). We don't know enough to tell.

To "engineer consciousness"? I am assuming you are personifying evolution, rather than accepting an Engineer (non-K) who designed us to believe in Him or Her to keep us in line. As for the evolutionary rationale, or lack thereof, this is a good point, sort of: after all, none of the organs used in speech are used only for that purpose, but were adapted from other "purposes". The existence of vestigial organs like the appendix, the fact that often species adapt organs originally developed for one purpose (or favored by one niche) to another, further supports this idea, that not everything about us has an evolutionary purpose (anymore). Last time, I suggested that the capacity to believe in things unseen had been evolutionarily favored. I would suggest the same about a desire to know why things happen; such a desire leads people with no way to test scientifically to postulate religiously. Then there is one of my favorite human traits, the ability to think analogically, to extend knowledge beyond the immediate. This is why religions (and science) tend to see the universe in human terms, with father gods, mother goddesses, etc. But in the end, the scientific quest for the origin of the human religious capacity could still lead to an undisprovable answer. "Who put it there?" "God did." And we're back where we started.

Message 105 2/5/99 6:17 AM
Subject: Re: Venkman
From: terrible person
To: film

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Cardigan writes:

It would be grand to see Kaufman and Murray as challengers and go at it sitting down at a small square table across from each other. Murray would definitely win in the category of "tacky outfit", but Kaufman would fool Murray with his shy baby face and then spray snide comedic insults when Murray lets his guard down.

You realize of course that Andy Kaufman has been died in the early 80's. However, in the upcoming "Man in the Moon" (title from the REM song), Jim Carrey will play him, and from what I have heard, reincarnatehim.

I fell for Murray as Ray Venkman.

You'rein good company (sigourney weaver.) However, Murray's character was *Peter* Venkman. Ray (Stans or Stanz) was Dan Ackroyd. And Harold Ramis was Egon Spengler (my own nickname for a while.)

"Groundhog Day" was another fine performance by Murray, with a neat idea, of turning infinite boredom into infinite opportunity.

A terrific and ignored Murray role: Dustin Hoffman's playwright roommate in "Tootsie." Another: the dental patient in "Little Shop of Horrors." Which you should see for two characters named Audrey:

"But then there's Audrey
Lovely Audrey
If life were tawdry
And impoverished as before..."

But he's still The New Guy.

> 102
Message 102 2/5/99 9:51 AM
Subject: Re(3): Venkman
From: terrible person
To: film

Kelsey Gadoo, if you really want to persist in the childish joke that we are really the same person so that you can claim my superior skills of argument, I am more amused than annoyed, but when you start using your moderator's powers to put *my* name on such claptrap as "Re: Venkman" (with such totally unterrible locutions as "has been died"), I think that everyone will agree that you are carrying your quest for vengeance just a little too far. But of course, I can't stop you.

> 101
Message 101 2/5/99 11:35 AM
Subject: Re(2): Tim and I affect the rate of the universe?
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

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Then why does the solipsist have to express any statements about the world using the realist's terms, but with added baggage?

a true solipsist would not do this. he or she would have no concept of the inside or outside universe and no reason to talk about it (except that some of the people inside his head would be talking about it. But we all have lots of silly ideas in our heads we dismiss immediately.) Remember, In Edwin Abbott's book, the King of Pointland, who cannot imagine anything outside himself, and assumes that any "external" voice he hears must come from inside? That is a true solipsist. But by letting the existence of the real world be a default state in terms of which his in the mind world is postulated, he or she admits to not being a true believing solipsist, and instead being a snot-nosed seventh grader trying to annoy the teacher of his Gifted and Talented Enrichment Class, who on his way home with his violin case will get beaten up by eighth grade bullies who don't care that they are all in his mind.

> 98

Message 98 2/5/99 6:49 PM
Subject: Re(5): Venkman
From: terrible person
To: film

J.Mark Andrus writes:

Actually, Kelsey Gadoo has no moderator powers for Film, and even if she did, she still wouldn't be able to alter the name contained in the "From" field of someone else's post.

J. Mark Andrus, like I'm going to believe anything *you* say about the unrestrained, non-responsible powers of moderators. Why should *you* tell the truth a) to anyone who can't verify what you say, and b) to me, of whom you apparently don't think much (though you don't think much anyway), and thus why should I or anyone believe that you would tell the truth?

Go home. Learn things.

> 90

Message 90 2/6/99 6:48 AM
Subject: Re(2): Not what I ordered!
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

Oh, please name names.

Yes, look what it did for Elia Kazan!!

>

> 82

Message 82 2/6/99 6:33 PM
Subject: Re(3): Not what I ordered!

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From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

I like MY favorite burrito place because it's on the way home from work and I can walk down the hill into the sunset, as in the westerns, my job here finished, the whole gang chanting with Tex Ritter or whistling Ennio Morricone, me enjoying my beans, my reward. Plus, at my favorite burrito place they have these cards that they stamp each time you buy a burrito, and when you have ten stamps, you get a free burrito!!! You have something to look forward to, a freebee from out of the air, or each time you buy, you can remind yourself you are really spending 10% less. And you feel like a VIP when you hand the card over for stamping or redemption, as if you are one of the few committed to a special relationship of frequent buying with the burrito place, not just someone off the street. Maybe, you think, they are giving me special treatment, just a little more, you know? And since, for the card, a burrito is a burrito is a burrito no matter what the size and extras and price, you can buy 10 cheapo regulars, and then redeem your card for a special with everything! And it's not as if their prices are high anyway. And finally, their hot salsa is not THAT hot, so that even a non-fire-breather like me can feel and look cool by choosing it, where at another place I might have to go with the mild stuff and look unfashionably unextreme.

Oh, and they have a gumball machine, one of those really big ones! Nothing follows a burrito quite like a gumball!

> 74
Message 74 2/7/99 8:00 AM
Subject: Re(3): Venkman
From: terrible person
To: film

Another fun Murray role was as a gangster boss in "Mad Dog and Glory" (1992 or 3). In effect, he switched usual roles with Robert De Niro, who plays a meek police photographer.

However, the really great thing about that movie was David Caruso's performance as DeNiro's sullen fellow cop who simply likes to get into fights. Great intensity. This was back when Caruso was known primarily for opera, and Daniel Defoe novels, before he bared his backside on "NYPD Blue" and went on to such triumphs as "Jade" and "Kiss of Death" and the galactic fame he enjoys today.

Uma is also in it. All of her.

Now, watch Kelsey Gadoo claim credit for this post.

> 73
Message 73 2/7/99 8:04 AM
Subject: Re(5): Not what I ordered!
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Kelsey Gadoo writes:
terry, you didn't tell us the name of your favorite burrito place.

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well, I'm kind of like Marv Thromberry on the old Miller ads. Fearing the negative impact of my endorsement, the place specifically asked me NOT to mention their name.

I don't think so many folks share my tastes anyway....

Message 70 2/7/99 12:15 PM
Subject: Re(7): Not what I ordered!
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Steve Omlid writes:

*Are you so unlike us that your taste in *burritos* is irrelevant?*

You people (man, I love that phrase, "you people") aren't fooling me one bit.

You think I don't know enough Spanish to realize that "burrito" means literally "little burro", that is, "little donkey", and this whole thread is just another of your irrelevant inutile in-joke "ass" discussions?

Me, I've got a mule, and whether you apologize for laughing at it or not, it's what I rode in on (so damn us both) and it's how I'll ride out.
Fweedle-ee-dee.

> 55

Message 55 2/8/99 9:32 AM
Subject: Re(3): guilty pleasures
From: terrible person
To: film

Eva Luna writes:

Which is better, guilt or shame?

Not speaking ex cathedra, hence, with no references, and no infallibility (meaning, if I'm proved wrong, I don't give a damn), I believe that anthropologists define a "shame culture" as one in which individuals are kept in line by the fear of the opinions of others, and a "guilt culture" as one in which individuals are similarly ruled by internalized moral strictures (the collective traditional opinions), expressed as their own consciences or the fear of some higher being. The Greeks were a shame culture (didn't much care what they did if they could get away with it); Christian cultures are guilt oriented.

Any anthropologists care to comment? Sharon Everett, does this lie within your purview?

> 49

Message 49 2/8/99 8:18 PM
Subject: Re(4): Rushmore
From: terrible person
To: film

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J.Mark Andrus writes:

I'm more than a little curious as to the exact means by which you formulated this pronouncement. Did you conduct written surveys, focus-groups, or perhaps dreary little gatherings of humorless wanna-be-commies who yapped dogmatic nonsense at each other over decaf soy lattes?

Will you come off it, J. Mark Andrus?

I don't exactly see you supporting your very firmly held opinions with much more than dubious personal experiences and snippets from the oh-so-reliable web. Where are your focus groups, unless you count a conclave of Fruitopia-chugging twenty-somethings with laptops and skateboards?

I do have one serious question for you, since you've managed to bring up your opinion about "prostitution enslaving women" into about every other post you send anywhere: how does the phenomenon of MALE prostitution fit into that argument for you?

MALE prostitution tends to enslave males. Poor males. Let's face it, the face, or some other body part, of male prostitution is not the elegant gigolo squiring some aged heiress, but the teenaged runaway, trying to pay for a rathole to crash in and some drugs to numb him. sorry to preempt kollontai in this, but she is right; human relations are based on economic rules.

Eagerly awaiting a reply, since you've evaded similar questions elsewhere several times in the recent past...

If failing to reply is "evading", and is to be condemned, and is something you, of course, would never do, I can't wait to see you put even a single word into the discussion over in "It's a le fou world" in response to your own challenge. Conceding defeat? Or do you just want to wait until you are a little better prepared to hold your own, hold your ground, with Tim Walters and me, say, when you've actually completed the fourth grade?

I'm sure that when you've apologized to kollontai, we could do you a favor and forget the whole issue.

As to whether people do or should adjust their notions of physical attractiveness, yes, of course they do. I should hope so. They consider things like brains (oh, sorry, J. Mark), personality (oh , sorry again) and ability to provide. All of these have a sound evolutionary basis if it is that assumed women are looking basically (if unconsciously) for sound parents of their children, which would tend to help the survival of the species. The fact that males of whatever age (both teen and middle, in the film "Rushmore") tend to be attracted to women in their late teens to 20's, the peak of fertility, also has an evolutionary basis. (If I know so much about evolution, it's because J. Mark Andrus provides such a wonderful example of primitive man.) Now, I may be wrong in my analysis, but it is the sort of thing, rather than reflexive shouting down, J. Mark might give if he knew anything of science, or of arts and letters. But his idea of arts stopped at the stage that gets posted on the refrigerator, and of letters, he has only five: I-D-I-O-T.

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> 47

Message 47 2/9/99 4:09 AM
Subject: Tim (irate?) and I reflect on the fate of the universe
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

But since I know that I exist (thanks, Reni, you drunken fart), any argument for solipsism must apply to my experience.

More generally, in the terms of our little epistemological problem, solipsism is intended to explain ordinary experience. Positing a person with a different experience seems like special pleading.

Don't get yourself too excited talking about Reni; you'll get hoarse before Descartes.

Remember, just as we as humans have the ability to accept the existence of things we can't perceive directly (the tiger behind the tree, God, etc.) we also know that not everything we perceive is really there (mirages, mistakes, appearances, etc.) We know that to a certain extent the universe is in our minds; now, as in the old joke about arguing about the price, we are arguing about the extent. Solipsism explains one individual's experience so well it doesn't need to explain anyone else's.

Also, can such a true solipsist exist? Can a human being really fail to have a concept of inside and outside? If so, could such a worldview hold up under extreme circumstances (pain, for example)? I'm guessing that even such a solipsist, if he sat on a tack, would stand up again.

It could, I suppose, the same way belief in God holds up in concentration camps. Remember, too, that pain is literally all in the mind. It can come without real cause and go away when the cause is still present. Since the solipsist does not claim to control the universe, just to experience it, there is no reason for pain to be inconsistent with a universe all in his or her head. In an illusional world, to an illusional body, an illusional tack still has a point (even if nothing else does.)

> 46

Message 46 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(7): Not what I ordered!
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Keela Merrin writes:

What started all the "conspiracy" theories was that after they switched back to Coke Classic, they'd recaptured the market share they'd lost, and more.

It's naiviti like yours that allows treason to prosper. At the root of this was of course the Cancer Man, better known as the Pepsi Drinking Man. He was behind saccharine, too.

> 45

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Message 45 2/9/99 8:41 AM
Subject: Oscar, the Grouch
From: terrible person
To: film

Well, I think I can be more objective than anyone else here, since I only saw two movies this year: "The Truman Show" and "Pi". I'm not swayed by actual experience; only chance is blind and fair. Plus, I always thought the Oscars were just some tribal deity invoked by Joel Siegel. So with complete lack of bias, I pick:

Best Picture

It seems as if "Shakespeare and Love" and "Elizabeth" are basically the dark and light sides of the same movie. All the same cast, too. "Hey, it was fun in England in the late 1500's!" "No, it wasn't." And Tom Stoppard wrote one, but the other has a nicer name; Cate and Gwyneth's equally period names and pleasant looks balance out too. Same with the two war movies; they also balance the patriotic/heroic and cynical/horrific and cancel each other out. So I will have to go with the movie that combines itself the dark and the light sides, of being in a concentration camp (?), "Life is Beautiful". Now if they had nominated "The Truman Show", as I knew they were going to....

Best Female Actor

Meryl has won it enough, and sickness movies are too easy. If Emily Watson wins, Steve Omlid won't shut up about it for a month, so she's out. Montenegro needs to secede from Yugoslavia; maybe then. So we're down to Blanchett and Paltrow, and call me a victim, but I can't help liking that Gwyneth!!! (Maybe if I had seen "Oscar and Lucinda". Sorry, Cate. Kate? Cate. Hmmm.) Let her have it all, the looks, the smile, the talent, the adoration, let her have it all, I don't care. Take it, Gwyneth.

Best Male Actor

Jim Carrey, "The Truman Show", by write-in.

Best Female Actor (supporting)

Kathy Bates is always great, but she's won before and Rachel Griffiths was cute in "Children of the Revolution", so I say, give it to her, rather than any of the old ladies. Plus I like the name "Rachel".

Best Male Actor (supporting)

duh. Ed Harris, of course. No question about it. Not only was he brilliant in the only film (almost) I saw this year, but he's never done a bad job in a long and varied career, and he comes from a certain town in New Jersey where I happen to know they are very proud of him.

Original Screenplay

"The Truman Show", though it's not that original an idea; I had it myself three months before release.

Adapted Screenplay

"Out of Sight". Whatever Eva Luna says.

Oh, and all the technical awards like best special sound effects design editing will go to balding middle aged guys in the same tuxes they wore last year.

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And Jack Palance will do pushups, and there will be no need for the broadcast to be in color, since as always, everyone will be white.

Hey, when are the actual awards? June or something? Someone let me know if I was right, ok?

> 42

Message 42 2/9/99 5:00 PM
Subject: Re(6): Rushmore
From: terrible person
To: film

*J.Mark Andrus writes:
terrible person writes:
Will you come off it, J. Mark Andrus?*

Fuck no.

And in case I haven't mentioned it lately, you're an archetypical example of a "well-spoken" pseudo-intellectual...something that rates in my book as right up there with wormy dog turds, smelly beer-vomit and S.U.V.'s.

No particular degree of irony indended.

Skateboarding over your pathetic excuse for a blabbering blustering countenance,

-Mark

Wow, once again you've thoroughly answered all my points!!!

But before you go saying too much more about yuppies and pseudo-intellectuals (especially those who in an urban bicycle race would leave you panting far behind at the first hill), have you forgotten that time when another poor renter chatted you up in the guise of a Volvoing lawyer looking to buy in the Mission, and YOU just drooled over his redecorating and street parking plans? Remember that? The transcript is a hoot....

Sorry about the well-spokenness. Some of us can't help having thoughts that can't be expressed entirely in four letter words.

> 40

Message 40 2/9/99 5:28 PM
Subject: Re(8): Rushmore
From: terrible person
To: film

*J.Mark Andrus writes:
You make the mistaken assumption that I actually care.*

Which is exactly what kollontai has been saying through her silence to your

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own ignorant carpings. But you cared enough to respond, obviously.

As to the supposed "chat" you mention, you obviously have an interesting fantasy life.

I've never seen any evidence that your favorite accusation against Barrymore is any more than fiction either. And don't refer me to some other onliner who is probably just your alias or your collaborator.

Skateboarding over your pathetic excuse for a blabbering blustering countenance,

This sounds a lot like an online threat of violence. Did we decide whether or not these were legal? Refresh our memory.

Give it up. See, arguing with me is not as fun as arguing with Barrymore.

> 36

Message 36 2/10/99 6:26 AM
Subject: terry and the irates
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

The big solipsism backer was Bishop Berkeley, whose arguments David Hume claimed were "irrefutable yet totally unconvincing", which is pretty much the mainstream view of solipsism.

Would you call him a solipsist? I thought his idea was that things were not in HIS mind, but in His -- meaning, the mind of God. There are those limericks about the tree in the quad, yes? How it continues to be because God is observing it? And Samuel Johnson's idea that he had refuted Berkeley by kicking a stone? (Kind of like Stanford defeating Berkeley by kicking a football?)

Perhaps I should do a poll among the residents of the East Bay town, if only they could be persuaded to pronounce it right. It is home of much that is irrefutable yet totally unconvincing.

Speaking of which, the "prosecution" (?) need feel no shame or sense of loss in being unable to prove an impossible case, since it does not actually have the burden of proof. The "defense" could not "prove" its case either. I'm not actually a solipsist, but I have every right to be; it's simply that whether I am, or anyone else is, is completely arbitrary.

> 29

Message 29 2/10/99 11:43 PM
Subject: Re(10): Rushmore
From: terrible person
To: film

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

terrible person writes:

Which is exactly what kollontai has been saying through her silence to your own ignorant carpings.

J.Mark Andrus writes:

*I'd take this personally, except that "kollontai" has been "saying" the exact same thing to *everyone* who's questioned her.*

Apparently, nobody on the BBS lives up to her high standards of erudition...

Not at all. To those who seem actually to be interested in learning something, and not simply in shouting and stupidly stomping her and her ideas down, she has plenty to say. I myself have never wanted for a rejoinder from kollontai. I guess error and rude dishin' are to you preferable to erudition, but your incapacity to answer her intelligently enough to elicit a response is **your** problem, not hers.

Take this personally.

> 24

Message 24 2/11/99 9:49 PM
Subject: iron pyrites?
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Now hold on, pardner!!!

Tim Walters writes:

On the contrary, I proved my case, to my satisfaction if no one else's.>>>

Isn't this kind of solipsistic? Why don't other people's opinions matter?
Don't we exist?

This is a far cry, of course, from proving solipsism wrong, but such was never my goal.

Well, you were trying to give it a certain second-class philosophical citizenship. If only one theory can be right, and the theory to choose is the simpler one, and solipsism, you argue, is less simple, doesn't that mean you are arguing it is wrong?

And in fact, I was sort of the virtual solipsist, simulating one, playing one on GOL, for you to argue against. As you conceded:

I still think that solipsism is just realism with extra baggage, but I can't think of any way to demonstrate it that I haven't already tried.

your arguments did not work. Now, the inability to find a counterexample in no way constitutes proof, but I was never trying to prove solipsism, just its viability. In the end, you had to say, "I think", to go on faith and feeling, rather than reason. Which was my point. The choice of philosophy is simply a matter of arbitrary feeling.

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> 23

Message 23 2/11/99 10:26 PM
Subject: Buffoon and the Slyer Empirics
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Keela Merrin writes:
but why let ignorance keep you silent, right?

Hey, it's never stopped J. Mark Andrus. But I don't think it applies to your writing.

A normal buffoon, when encountering new, unexpected information, thinks "Say, this is new, unexpected information," whereas a solipsistic buffoon says, "Well this is information I knew all along but chose only to reveal to myself now."

It's "That which I do not know, I do not know" vs. "That which I do not know, I choose not to know."

Noooooooooooo!! (Just call me Mr. Biliious. Tim Walters and Keela Merrin are going to be MEAN to me!!)

I'm not sure what a normal buffoon does, but this private buffoon (a lighthearted loon, if you listen to popular rumor) knows that there are vast reaches of his not necessarily vast mind of which he knows little. Haven't you ever been surprised at yourself? Thought, I can't believe I did that, took on that bully, apologized to that person, wrote that story, allowed that insult, took that risk? Found you knew or remembered something you had long forgotten? Some may be afraid of such concepts, but I don't think you can dispute that there is a lot beneath the surface of our minds. The solipsist does not claim to choose or control the things he or she dreams -- would you? -- just that they are only in his or her mind. I don't think any solipsist claims that the whole universe is in his *conscious* mind, that he or she can access it all at once. As for control, do you feel you control your mind completely? should the solipsist have to?

You people keep assuming that realism is the natural, default state, that solipsism must be build upon it like Windows on DOS (have I used that before?) But it is not necessarily. A baby doesn't have any idea about reality. It can't really distinguish between its dreams and waking perceptions. Sure, reality tends to seem more consistent than dreams but that's because the people around us tell us so. It is entirely possible that, with the right amount of isolation, a person could grow up making little distinction between his or her dream world and the real one, or evolving a set of explanations that cover both, and then it would not at all be the default state to believe in reality, something it required an act of will to suppress, but something that required an effort to believe in, that was unaccustomed. What? You want me to believe that some of what I see is in my mind, but most isn't? I'm sorry, that's way too complex.

By the way, Tim Walters, I'd be glad to extend this discussion, through analogy, to nihilism whenever you'd like. "The Big Lebowski" was the third movie I saw last year.

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And speaking of Occam... isn't that razor thing pretty thoroughly discredited?

The scientific community had used Occam's razor to pronounce the simpler one correct, but later found out that the more complex explanation was true.

As for Occam's razor, I wouldn't say it's exactly disposable. (And discussions of Nair start nasty arguments.) But it's a tool of unprovable philosophy, where which theory to believe is largely and aesthetic choice, not of experimental science, where the better theory is chosen by further experiment. Remember the final words: praeter necessitate. Theories should be complex enough to cover the observed facts, simply not more so. If two theories, one simpler, seem equally correct, then the scientist must devise and perform new tests until one theory fails, then pick the other, because it does the necessary: it explains, and this trumps all considerations of simplicity.

I would point out here that my explanation was simpler than Tim Walters' and thus is better.

Of course, a solipsist could just say that all rules of logic are just in his or her mind as well.

you smart guys might know the actual case.

"you smart guys"? The pot calls the kettles black!!

> 22

Message 22 2/11/99 10:47 PM
Subject: Re(12): Rushmore
From: terrible person
To: film

terrible person writes:

I myself have never wanted for a rejoinder from kollontai.

J.Mark Andrus writes:

Well naturally, since you appear to actually agree with her opinions about prostitution.

See, what was I saying about your inability to read?

And hey, where are MY responses, such as about your threats of violence?

It's a laughable reminder of why the Soviet Union failed.

Would you care to mention some of the names of books and articles on the subject you've read, interviews you've done with former Soviet leaders, or other sources for this expert opinion you so airily dispense?

"America's 'free-market economy' is not free," he said.

"It is the kind of freedom that can let loose atomic bombs and missiles when another country looks to be winning."

Winning is a relative thing. Often enough, a country can "win" simply by

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preventing the enemy from achieving a quick and easy victory. This was the case in WWII; one reason the bombs were dropped was the predicted huge cost of a land invasion. American missiles and depleted-uranium projectiles (which have atomic aftereffects) have been used against Iraq when it proved too stubborn.

Well, at least THIS particular topic has clear relevance in another conference, Jodie.

Here we go again. Unable to achieve his hoped for level of satisfaction in verbal battle with kollontai and myself, J. Mark Andrus once again reverts to trying to stir up his favorite easy target, Barrymore.

Haven't you ever considered taking up needlepoint or something?

> 87

Message 87 2/13/99 1:17 AM
Subject: Re(12): oh, by the way....
From: terrible person
To: film

Eva Luna writes:

*Are you talking about Cahsing Amy? I *hate* that movie?*

Ok....time for a tally. Who hated it? Who loved it?

No long reasoning. Just love or hate.

I was partial to "Casing Aimee", the sequel to "Boxing Helena".

> 85

Message 85 2/13/99 2:07 AM
Subject: Re(14): oh, by the way....
From: terrible person
To: film

Eva Luna writes:

But I kind of liked "Boxing Helena."

Yes!!! I loved the way Ms. Bonham Carter plays Rocky's last opponent, or was it that Brando role? "I could have been a contendah", in a delicate English accent...Malloy, now he's a real Terry. As for me, it's not going to be my night.

> 84

Message 84 2/13/99 9:14 AM
Subject: Re(2): Message in a Bottle
From: terrible person
To: film

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Jerusalem Cricket writes:

Kevin Costner makes me want to hide under my seat and lick week-old junior mints and coke off the floor.

But what about "The Postman", which not only featured a brilliant performance by Costner, but coolio idea, a kickass script, and a convenient, manageable length?

> 81

Message 81 2/13/99 1:26 PM
Subject: Voice only
From: terrible person
To: Crushes on Greatness

KQED carries a National Public Radio show called "Wait, wait...don't tell me!" It's a quiz show on the week's news, with the same three panelists every week, like British shows ("My Word", e.g.), and a clever host whom I knew a long time ago, Peter Sagal. One of the players is Roxanne Roberts, who writes for the Washington Post. The sort of running gag is that she always wins. Because she knows a lot of stuff, and she's wicked smart. She's sort of on the order of Leah Garchik, who writes for the Chronicle or the Examiner and does the local quiz show "Minds Over Matter" on KALW, where they don't keep score but she answers a lot of questions.

Anyway, there are some things I don't like researching, so if anyone knows anything about either of these two, I'd be interested. Like what they are doing tomorrow.

Another radio crush is SarahVowell, who appears on "This American Life" and other NPR shows and writes for Salon. She has this high squeaky Lucy from Twin Peaks, Laraine Newman as a little girl voice, which gets higher and squeakier when she gets emphatic. We have some musical tastes in common. I wonder how old she is.

I'm not even going to get started on all the infinitely wise women of NPR, whom I am glad to have as the last people talking to me when I go to bed and the first when I get up, such as Linda, Nina, Cokie (ahhh!! Cokie!), Silvia, Susan, Leeanne, and, of course, Terry.

Message 79 2/13/99 8:40 PM
Subject: guild in action?
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

or, "guild by association"

Tim Walters writes:

<<<<<<<The whole point of what I'm saying is that a theory needn't be provably wrong to be inferior, and needn't be provably right to be the best available explanation. Nothing is provably wrong or right, but that's the beginning of epistemology, not the end.>>>>>>>

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So wait; let me get this straight. You are not saying that solipsism is wrong? Just that it is inferior? Are you using Occam's razor, which would seem to say that the inferior explanation IS wrong, or not? We're awake, but we're very confused.

Here's what I'M trying to do: show that solipsism and "realism" are equally valid views of the world, by any measure, and that any choice between them is not a rational one.

<<<<<<(terrible person):"Sure, reality tends to seem more consistent than dreams but that's because the people around us tell us so."
(Tim Walters): I trust the idea of a solipsist being told anything by other people is sufficiently self-contradictory to need no gloss from me.>>>>>>

Huh? I was talking about the great mass of non-solipsists who are that way because they believe what they are told. A solipsist rejects what he is told by figments of his imagination.

<<<<<<In any case, there's absolutely no reason to assume that dreams cannot be told from reality without any sort of prompting. If realism is true, then the world is much more complex than the mind, which it contains, and therefore has an immediately obvious difference in texture. >>>>>>

What do you mean by this? One grade of sandpaper versus another? Are you saying that more things happen in the real world than in dreams, that the world is fuller? Because this is clearly not the case. Are you saying that the real world is more consistent? And yet it is still pretty absurd, and we see only an infinitesimal part of the world. If we saw more, it might be even harder to make sense of, hard as dreams. Plus, assuming a world of real things alternating with a world of dreams -- two worlds -- is more complex than just assuming a world of dreams, yes?

<<<<<<If solipsism is true, there's absolutely no reason why one would dream this world rather than another.>>>>>>

If realism is true, there is absolutely no reason why this world should exist rather than another.

<<<<<<(It's interesting, though, that Helen Keller was able to believe in the world, and distinguish it from dreams, despite her limited sensorium .)
>>>>>>

Wow. What were her dreams like?

<<<<< But plenty of kids have been raised in complete isolation. They don't learn to talk, so it's hard to find out if they're solipsists or not; but they act just as if they believe the world is real.>>>>>

Again, how would you know? If you cannot control the dreamed world, you had better go along with it. You will act as if you do. (Again, this is unless you are asserting that the solipsist claims control of his or her world, a point of definition on which I would disagree.) If a dreamed tiger is dreamed-charging at your dreamed body, you'd better dreamed run. (If you would

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ask, why bother to run from a dream, I would say, it's only dream effort; why not?)

<<<<<<Nihilism is certainly superior to solipsism; like solipsism, it doesn't explain anything, but at least it doesn't pretend to. It's a bit dull, though.>>>>>>

Meaning not very complicated, meaning superior by the Razor? I'm favoring de-nialism these days.

<<<<<<(terrible person): If two theories, one simpler, seem equally correct, then the scientist must devise and perform new tests until one theory fails, (Tim Walters): This is exactly what a scientist doesn't do, because there are always an infinite number of theories to explain any given event. One must choose, based on your much better formulation, (terrible person): "it explains; and this trumps all considerations of simplicity." (Tim Walters): But not this, because if there is more than one explanation (and there always is), the simplest one consistent with the data is preferred.>>>>>>

Ok, then if there is x number of theories (because even if there is an infinite number, the scientist can only think of x of them in finite time), and they all seem equally correct, then the scientist must devise and perform new tests until all the theories but one fail. It's like the national spelling bee or a limbo game; keep lowering the bar, making it harder, until everyone has been excluded but one. Is that all that different from the formulation with which you agreed?

<<<<<<The problem with solipsism is that it explains nothing.>>>>>>

Since when did realism explain anything, when it really comes down to it? There is always another question. Why does the sun come up? Obvious answer. Ok, why does the earth go around the sun? Why is the sun there? Why is there hydrogen? Why was there a Big Bang? If at some point you are willing to be content with your answer, since it seems to rest on axioms you accept, great. But at the bottom of science, there is no First Mover. That's religion (the original subject of this debate, of course.) It's that way because God wants it that way. Why does God want it that way? We can't know that. OK. The buck stops. It has to, somewhere. Asolipsist simply cuts off the debate earlier, like a parent with "Because that's how it is, that's why."

<<<<<<A solipsistic theory that explained the world would have to account for all observations, and why one should dream them rather than others;>>>>>

Only when a "realist" theory can explain everything in the universe, including why constants such as c and G and h have the values they do and not some others. If you answer that if they did not, we would not be here to ask (which is a good enough answer), I would say, as the Virtual Solipsist, that if I were not imagining you, you would not be here for us to have this discussion.

<<<<<<and this it cannot do without being a mere shell over realism. The King of Pointland thinks he has explained A. Square as a thought of his; but that's a label, not an explanation.>>>>>

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Which goes back to what I was saying about the distinction of the two views being a matter of semantics. As some writers in fim modify every word with an obscenity, the solipsist puts the tag "dreamed" before every other, as I sort of did in the tiger example above, and the realist puts "real" in the same place (and he does have to put something -- I won't accept "real" as the unmarked, default form.)

As Sol Lipsist (changed from Lipshitz for obvious reasons) used to say from behind the counter of Eagermann's Bagels in Brookline, Mass., as he handed me my Sunday half-dozen, "I still don't get how you can like so much something

that's got nothing at its core."

> 78

Message 78 2/14/99 6:26 AM
Subject: I want some action
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Keela Merrin writes:

What is the necessity of the "in my mind" explanation?

What is the necessity of the "it really exists" explanation?

What experiences require this explanation in order to make sense? By contrast, the experiences of dreams--their inconsistency, as well as the ability to lucid dream--call for an "all in my mind" explanation.

Not while you are dreaming them. While you are, they seem to make sense...is this what you mean by "lucid dreams"? I don't find "reality" all that consistent, either. That's what makes it interesting.

Under Occam, it's not enough to say that one theory is as good as another. If that's the case, then you have to abstain from choosing any of them. That leaves us with just "Things appear to happen."

Actually, that would be siding with solipsism, which we can't really do. If you can't choose any, you are left with "Things might be real or might appear to happen (or somewhere in between.)"

I can stand that. But I would also say that, in the absence of any "necessity" to the contrary, it seems pretty rational to choose to believe that they really do. Perhaps not strictly scientific, but way rational.

This comes down to perception. We agree that we perceive things. The solipsist stops there. The realist -- not of the medieval, anti-Nominalist sort, or maybe, sort of-- then makes the additional assumption that these things actually exist as we perceive them.

I would say that that is because you are used to this worldview. It just seems natural; you want to believe it. You want to believe things exist, and move, etc. You want some action.

Big on sedentariness,

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terrible person

Message 76 2/14/99 9:17 AM
Subject: Re(2): guild in action?
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Keela Merrin, you weren't by any chance implying that solipsists are "seedy", were you?

because that is an assertion I CERTAINLY can't allow you to make.

Message 72 2/14/99 7:46 PM
Subject: Re: Movie following book
From: terrible person
To: film

Tim Walters writes:
1984 (1984 version) (I think they wimped out on the ending a bit, but can't quite remember)

Yes. In the movie, Winston meets Julia in the Chestnut Tree cafe. It's pretty sedate. (In the book, they had met in a park, well before the end scene.) Nevertheless, at the very end of the film, John Hurt looks away from the image of Big Brother on the telescreen, so that when he says/thinks "I love you", it is not clear whether this is directed at Big Brother, fulfilling the last line of the book, or at the just departed Julia, which would totally defeat the purpose of it.

At least it's not like the 50's version, in which Julia and Winston shouted "Down with Big Brother!" as they face the firing squad.

Whatever happened to Suzanna Hamilton?

What happens to a lot of people, for that matter? This would make a good thread maybe.

1984, that was the year.

It occurs to me that "Ragtime" was reasonably close to the book.

Message 69 2/15/99 7:43 AM
Subject: Re(3): Movie following book
From: terrible person
To: film

Auntie Em writes:
*Interesting -- I'd always thought that Ragtime was the most *successful* movie adaptation of a book that I've seen -- one of the few instances where I had read the book first and then not been disappointed by the movie -- but I*

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*didn't think it was *like* the book at all. The book had so many different stories that I think trying to compress them all into a two-hour movie would have been disastrous -- but by focusing the movie on just a small portion of the book, they got a very good movie out of a very good (albeit different, IMO) novel.*

This is a good point. The movie cuts out all the historical characters

(Houdini, Emma Goldman -- why not Maureen Stapleton from "Reds"?-- Henry Ford) except for Evelyn Nesbit, sort of the Monica of her time, (Hey, whatever happened to Elizabeth McGovern?) and Thaw and White, but these folks are not exactly household names today as Houdini is. The film concentrates on the invented characters, the family in New Rochelle, Tateh and his daughter, and of course, Coalhouse Walker, Jr., and on their interactions.

I read an article (Film Quarterly v.26, #1, 1998, "Volatile Forms: The Transgressive Energy of "Ragtime" as Novel and Film", Joanna Rapf) about how cinematic the book is, with its quick cuts and images, and how the book is basically about the birth of cinema, as Tateh pioneers it, reinvents himself through it, and Evelyn becomes the first star/sex symbol. The first would be somewhat lost in the movie; the second survives, somewhat.

What I think the movie did particularly well was to capture the pace, that it is never right to play ragtime fast. I listen to the soundtrack sometimes, and then that of "The Sting." When I want to relax and concentrate, I try to imagine "The Entertainer" played as slowly as possible, until each note takes a minute, an hour, but the relative pitches stay the same.

"Don't you understand? Fireworks -- explosives -- it's the *same thing*!"

Warn the Duke.

> 68
Message 68 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

It's hot.
I'll show you the life of the mind!
I'll show you the life of the mind!
Look
upon
me,
I will show you the
life of the mind!!

If it's not my build, it's my personality.

the Valentine's Day Edition:

In the town, the lover sighs
"Good sir knight, please take my eyes, I've used them..."

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She had one long pair of eyes
She had one long pair of eyes between her
One long pair of eyes
So she could see you.....

-- Robyn Hitchcock

Everybody wants a box of chocolates
And a long-stemmed rose.
And everybody knows.

--Leonard Cohen

You're my witness; I'm your mutineer.

-- Warren Zevon

Illa mi par deo esse videtur
Ille si fas est, superare deos
Qui sedens adversus identidem te
audit et spectat

--Catullus, after Sappho

Surfers ride for love
And wipe out when it hits 'em.

--Iggy Pop

Of course, we Italians know nothing of love.

-- "Amadeus"

Getting heavily into bootstrapping lately.

First, we take Manhattan.
Then we take Berlin!

Wondering where Karla is these days, and who.

Allan Sokal's kinda cool. And kind of annoying.

Madame Chairwoman, I have searched my memory and I am afraid I cannot
recollect that information at this time.

I am number 6. I am not a free man. Who is number 1?

Here's to Suzie, who only sleeps on planes.

His sins were scarlet, but...

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Tell me about fast-breeder reactors.

--Time Bandits

He approved of us, but for reasons that were subtle, like his poetry.

--Dr. Zhivago

Wagner's music is better than it sounds.

-- Mark Twain

Miniver thought and thought and thought
And thought about it.

--E.A. Robinson

Miniver loved the Medici
Albeit he had never seen one.
He would have sinned incessantly
Could he have been one.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola
Girolamo Savonarola
Niccolò Machiavelli
Sandro Botticelli
Francesco Petrarco
Benvenuto Cellini

(a very short list of neat Italians)

Italianos. Like nightingales they sing. Like eagles they fly!

-- Breaking Away

In the clearing stands a boxer,
And a fighter by his trade

And he carries the reminders
Of ev'ry glove that laid him down
And cut him.....
But the fighter still remains ----->

> 52
Message 52 2/15/99 8:07 PM
Subject: shunning the axe
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Keela Merrin, you have to make a new pun in the title!! Ok?

Keela Merrin writes:

(Terry sez:
Not while you are dreaming them. While you are, they seem to make sense...)

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Well, now, that's just a falsehood, terry. It's true a lot of the time, but certainly not all the time.

Hey.... you're starting to sound likeBarrymore! Be careful, strive not with, lest thou become..... "That's just a falsehood, terry. You are a dirty coward liar, terry...."

My dreams seem to make sense because I naturally try to make sense of what I perceive. Don't you? Last night I saw my grandfather and thought, "I thought he was dead!", but then "I guess he isn't, then!" It's only when I get back to reality and wake up that I start to see the inconsistencies. But with a little creative theorizing, I could include both dreams and reality in a grand unified theory. Perhaps reality would just be a special, limited case. And if you care to argue that the variation between dreams and reality (or among dreams) is greater than that within reality, I would have to ask how you would measure that. Reality is pretty weird. So weird, I doubt it's all real. Which is just the point; I have no way of telling.

Lucid dreaming is the phenomenon of becoming conscious that one is dreaming. When lucid, one often can control the dream environment.

This is an experience which "necessitates" an explanation of dreams as all in the mind. There is no corollary experience in the waking world, to my knowledge,

Sure there is. Didn't you see the sixth game of the 1975 World Series when Carlton Fisk "willed" his fly ball to stay fair, to be a winning home run? Haven't you ever felt you "willed" your friend to come walking down the street just as you left your house to go and find her, whether you were thinking it at the time or realized it later? This does not even include occasions when you made some ritual motion to get what you wanted, which may not have had anything to do with it, such as praying, or pushing the button on the pole to get the light to change to "WALK". Also, not all dreams are lucid dreams. Thus, a solipsist who experienced the sense of control would not be able to correlate it with "dreaming" or "non-dreaming" and would not begin to question whether everything was dream. Finally, the solipsist probably would not even think to try to control a dream situation, except perhaps unconsciously, involuntarily; how often do you actually think to try "control" reality by pure force of will?

although you seem to imply otherwise by saying:

(TP:I don't find "reality" all that consistent, either. That's what makes it interesting.)

Harrrrrumph! Explain yourself, sir! A statement of such sweeping import begs for elaboration!

I will not! You have insulted my honor once too often, Keela Merrin! I insist upon satisfaction; let us call our seconds, both of ours; we may have minutes to live! What? You never do duel? Is your life not dull? Try something new, that you've never known. Every moment is different than the previous. Often very. Reality constantly innovates, leading us to ask if the innovations are really real. Lack of novelty is boring, if safe; surprise makes life worthwhile, but unsettling.

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Then I sez:

Under Occam, it's not enough to say that one theory is as good as another. If that's the case, then you have to abstain from choosing any of them. That leaves us with just "Things appear to happen."

Then you sez:

(Actually, that would be siding with solipsism, which we can't really do. If you can't choose any, you are left with "Things might be real or might appear to happen (or somewhere in between.)")

Come now. Whether or not things are real, they appear to happen. That's not siding with solipsism, that's the common experience which both theories try to explain. You needn't gainsay every one of my points to prove me wrong, especially when you're going to contradict yourself a second later, by saying:

(TP:We agree that we perceive things.)

But I won't insist on my wording. "Things appear to happen"/"We percieve things," however you will.

Ok, confusion. I thought you were conceding too much, that you were allowing that solipsism might be provable, which I don't assert any more than I accept that realism might be provable. Now, something Tim Walters said made me realize that for me to say "things might appear to happen" IS conceding too much, so I am going to pretend I just imagined that you or the seven foot tall hairy beast standing behind you said it. As I said to Tim Walters, we don't perceive things happening or existing, we just perceive them, unless we ASSUME that whatever appears exists. Confusion resolved?

So then you sez:

(This comes down to perception. We agree that we perceive things. The solipsist stops there.)

*Hold on thare, son! That's another of your baldfaced lies! Neither the solipsist *nor* the realist stops there, and that's what gets us in this fix!*

Yo! What's yo problem? Chill out. Baldfaced? Boldfaced, maybe; my face is not bald. And I am not a coward bastard snake. Ok?

The solipsist says, "There are perceptions. And that's it." Seems like stopping the inquiry to me.....

Actually, I'm a mite uncomfortable with "realist" as the opposite of "solipsist," but if them's the traditional labels, so be it. I don't have a better proposal.

They aren't really; Tim Walters started using "realist" and I went along, argumenti gratia. I think we have defined it pretty well and its meaning is clear.

I think I'm trying to defend a pretty small plot of ground, here. It's a lost cause to try to "prove" solipsism or realism. But realism is, I think, the more rational choice. By rational I mean "in the absence of any firm evidence, what's the best bet?" Solipsism implies that a unique creature is dreaming everything--so what happens when I die?

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You go to hell, where you carry on this argument with me, forever. No. You can only accept solipsism if you are the dreamer (I mean, you think, so you know you exist -- you can't be someone else's dream, can you?) The solipsist may see other things die but since they are just illusions, that has nothing to do with the solipsist. He may imagine himself immortal. Who knows what happens? Or who knows what happens -- to your soul at least -- when you die in the real world?

In the dream model, I just dream I'm someone else. (There could be other ideas, though; dying is actually the moment we hatch out of 12th dimensional shells and have to justify ourselves before the council of Lizards. Can't disprove that, either, but I admit that's a cheap shot.)

It's completely beyond our system of proof. Science can't tell us if we'll go to heaven (the original subject of this discussion.)

*Well, in the absence of firm evidence, I'm *not* going to choose to behave as if this life is just the current dream. I will cross the street when the light is green, I'll stay out of malaria infested swamps, I'll wear protective covering when playing contact sports. Of course it's not provable that anything is actually happening... I just think it's likely.*

But why? Because you have been assuming this all your life? Because everyone has told you? Because you can't conceive of it being otherwise? Because you may be hard wired to believe this? Because it's useful for dealing with the seen world? Most computers are hardwired to run DOS and Windows but there are other operating systems. What about dealing with the unseen world? Why not, in the absence of firm evidence, choose to believe and behave as if this life IS just the current, or recurrent, dream? You just think it's likely. You feel. You can choose by feeling, but not by reason. No no no no no no no no.

Can't. Nyeah nyeah nyeah.

Like I said, forever!!!

> 51

Message 51 2/15/99 7:59 PM
Subject: equal and opposite inaction
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

I don't think this is what Occam's Razor says at all; it simply says that an explanation with unnecessary assumptions is not as good as one without. It doesn't speak to rightness or wrongness at all.

You can call me stupid, if you like, but it seems to me that the criterion for evaluating whether a theory is "good" or not is whether it is right. I mean, are you saying a theory can be good if it's just pretty?

(TP:Are you saying that more things happen in the real world than in dreams,

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that the world is fuller? Because this is clearly not the case.)

Absolutely it is. For starters, it includes billions of other minds as vast and complex as the perceiver's (again assuming realism is correct).

Possibly. But these are not perceivable in realism anymore than in solipsism.

Realism may posit that something is going on in posited minds, but it has no proof. A realist and a solipsist get the same amount of information, just interpret it differently.

(TP: Plus, assuming a world of real things alternating with a world of dreams -- two worlds -- is more complex than just assuming a world of dreams, yes?)

What two worlds? How are dreams not part of the world?

The realist asserts that dreams are perceptions that are not true in the same way other perceptions are. That's how. Last night, I dreamed about my grandfather, who looked like the actor Keenan Wynn. In the dream, he looked very much alive. He is not actually alive. Therefore, he was alive only in my head. What else might seem real but not be?

(TP: If realism is true, there is absolutely no reason why this world should exist rather than another.)

There's no way to know that. Many realist philosophies (e.g., orthodox Catholicism) posit such a reason.

Is that reason that God wanted things this way? But that is my point; there is no way to know why, or if, this world exists.

(TP: If a dreamed tiger is dreamed-charging at your dreamed body, you'd better dreamed run. (If you would ask, why bother to run from a dream, I would say, it's only dream effort; why not?))

But why? Surely one of these hypothetical solipsists would have the nerve to stand up to his imagination.

Why? It is still going to hurt. And attempting to eliminate parts of the universe in her mind, trying to alter it, is dangerous if the solipsist has no idea if there is anything outside her mind, or what it might be.

What scientists do is work on problems. The less satisfactorily explained something is, the more of a problem it presents. But new explanations bring new problems of their own, so there is no final answer.

Solipsism is a barren philosophy; realism a fruitful one. One might argue that preferring a fruitful philosophy to a barren one is a matter of taste, and I might even agree. But the two are not equivalent.

Not really. Solipsism provides an ultimate answer (just as religion does.) You may not like it, but there it is. Realism keeps searching forever; it may provide some intermediate answers, but it never reaches a final one. People get tired of searching; they just want to stop somewhere. Solipsism says its ok to. The more you explain (or try to), the more taxing it is, in direct proportion. There is no particular reason not to stop at any point and accept

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what one knows and will never know, and collect seashells instead.

*But "real" *is* the default form, because the world appears to exist as even the solipsist must admit.*

No he need not!!!

The world appears. That's all. YOU the realist assert that it appears to exist. To a solipsist, it simply appears to appear.

(And even if he doesn't, I don't need to care, since I am the only possible correct solipsist.) And if this apparent existence is an illusion, there is absolutely nothing I can say about it, unless one day the illusion should fail to be perfect. I could be a brain in a vat with pseudo-sensations being sent to me by aliens, I could be a dream in the mind of God, you could all be figments of my imagination--there is no distinguishing between any of these possibilities.

And there is no reason for any, since the perceptions would be the same, and that's all that matters, since there is no way of knowing what is going on outside one's closed system. Realism can't tell me why the universe exists either. What caused the Big Bang? A cosmic sneeze? A divinity intoning "Let there be light!"? Do you worry about this? Then why should the solipsist worry about why *her* universe of perceptions is there?

Not giving up. Warming up!

Message 50 2/15/99 8:11 PM
Subject: Lupercalia laeta sint!!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

It's not too late to salute Faunus by sacrificing a dog (well, ummm...) and some goats and running around in loinclothes lashing people with strips of the goats' skins!!!

Message 33 2/17/99 11:09 PM
Subject: Re: Come to Fanime Con 99
From: terrible person
To: film

Fanime Con 99? This is great!! This is humanitarian!! What NGOs will you have there?

I guess Sudan is really the place facing the greatest starvation this year....

Message 15 2/19/99 10:24 AM
Subject: A Civil Inaction
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

or, a Civil War Reenaction

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Keela Merrin writes:

Again, it just ain't so! Often so, but not always and not, as you say, "only". Perhaps you personally never experience your dreams as nonsensical while they're happening, in which case I don't know what to say--and I'd suspect you'd be taking that stance just to support your argument.

Well, of course, you don't know what my dreams are like (consider yourself lucky.) Unless you are the one who has been leaving origami unicorns outside my door, but that spoils the whole point. Frankly, I don't think anyone really experiences anything while it's happening, but let that slide. I might be taking this stance to support my argument, (which would be pretty seedy) but then, you might be taking yours to support yours. Especially since this, like every argument in which I engage (offline is as well!!) is a no prisoners taken, no holds barred, all-out slugging match to the finish with the stakes being the bragging rights of all GOL and the knowledge of the nature of the universe. On the other hand, maybe making sense is what you make of it, what you are willing to accept.

Now, see, terry, this is where I have to plead with you not to make arguments you wouldn't accept yourself. Those experiences you mention do not "necessitate" and "all in the mind" explanation in the same way that stopping a bear with the Force does.

Yours don't "necessitate" anything either.

You are assuming that there is no other possible explanation for lucid dreams than conscious intervention. But you can't be sure of that. It's a matter of feeling. Maybe you just wanted something to occur in your dream, and it happened to, and you took credit. If I went around thinking, "Aha, I am going to think Keela Merrin into replying to my post, and maybe I will think Jerusalem Cricket into doing the same", you would think me somewhat fruity. I mean, more fruity. But I might genuinely feel it, and have no way of knowing otherwise.

A lucid dreamer can make a flower spontaneously appear in their hand,

So can a stage magician, or the wind.

at will, and you just can't compare that with "all those times someone calls you just when you were thinking about them." None of the things you cite make an "all in the mind" explanation indispensable.

Neither do yours rule it out.

Your point seems to be that lucid dreams prove that dreams are different from reality because you can have control in one that you don't have in the other. But you don't always have that control, and you sometimes feel you have it when by **your** theory, you shouldn't. So your theory has problems.

I mean, yes, I know, this whole back-and-forth is all "for the sake of the argument," to a large degree, and it's your persnickety devil's advocating that's the engine in this dune buggy, yes indeed. Well done, too, by the way--trying to think through my arguments has provided many pleasantly unsettling moments.

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Really? You mean that? You're not just saying that to make me happy?

But for me this thing's more interesting the closer I stick to arguments I might actually believe--that's when I feel myself to be defending the home turf, so to speak, rather than off in some rhetorical Vietnam.

Well, Vietnam and I go way back. I've said I don't believe in solipsism. But I can't give a good reason for this, and I can't be sure of it. And I don't see how anyone else can be either. Whenever I hear the word "certain", I reach for my unsetttler.

I can see how my statement, "things appear to happen," seems loaded on the side of realism to you, and am willing to stick with "we percieve things," but I can't let you shear us down to just "we perceive." What you've done in that case is stack the deck in the solipsists favor, by defining "perceptions" as "sensations that are all in the mind," as opposed to "sensations that are caused by external things."

I agree that we perceive things. But just what is the nature of those things is debatable.

*I think watching as people that seem to be just like me, with the sole exception that I can't feel their feelings or hear their thoughts, ***DIE AND NEVER RETURN***, is strong, strong, circumstantial evidence that the same thing's going to happen to me. I think that's rational.*

I thought Humphrey died of cancer. But you are assuming all those people *are* like you. A solipsist assumes his or her own uniqueness from the start.

Who knows? Maybe you just tend to see everyone in terms of yourself (so that they seem similar), the way human beings have tended to anthropomorphize the forces of nature.

Turing's the one who said that you can only deduce that other people think because they act like they do, right?

Turing proposed (most famously) that computers could be said to think when they were indistinguishable in conversation from humans. (And other things, such that anything a computer could do could be done by a diagram on a piece of paper. He may have gone as far as your statement. He was a pretty smart guy, living in the wrong time.)

*There's a whole world going on inside me, but I sure do seem to be awfully like everybody else, so to assume that I'm the *only* one with authentic insides, that's the stretch to me.*

Do you mean inside your body? Not sure that you do, but if so, that could all be in your mind too, the way amputees still "feel" missing limbs, or skeletal anorexics still feel fat.

Accepting that things are the way they seem in practical, I guess. But a lot of things are not the way they seem. When it comes down to it, we don't have a much deeper view of the universe than we do, for instance, of each other here. Are you ready to assert that how people appear on GOL is how they are in reality, or that similarity online insures it in real life?

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The torture has been passed to a new generation. I'm proud to have, with Tim Walters, begun and nurtured this discussion in a theoretical way; now that it seems to be passing into the realm of the practical and the psychological, I think I will be content to spectate rather than speculate. But I'll state my case, of which I'm certain: that there may be **some** reason to believe in **some*thing*, but there is no particular reason to believe in any particular thing. But I'll look for the message from the Action Man: "I'm happening, hope you're happening too."

Message 14 2/19/99 10:29 AM
Subject: Re(5): pragmatism
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Keela Merrin writes:

2) *There are three elements that affect any negotiation:*

- a) time*
- b) I forget*
- c) I forget*

Do you remember the other two?

um, memory??

actually:

- b) resources (material, that is, energy, money, goods, physical things)
- c) information.(which is sort of like memory.)

any of these things can affect and be converted into the other two, the way matter can be converted into energy and different kinds of energy can be converted into each other.

this is my theory. (or part of my General Theory of Decision Making.) But I would not be surprised if it had already been around a while.

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Message 13 2/19/99 10:37 AM
Subject: Re(5): pragmatism
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Keela Merrin writes:

1) If you are in a negotiation and you know there's a huge point of contention, try to leave that subject until very last. Hopefully you will deal with easy matters first, and build up goodwill, as well as a feeling of investment in the other person. If they feel like they've put a lot of effort and time into the proceedings, they are more likely to be agreeable.

on the other hand, if there really is no way of compromising on that point, and you could have determined that at the start, you will have wasted a lot of

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time negotiating on all the other points, time you could have spent preparing the military option or whatever. Although you may have delayed the other guy in HIS military preparations. But then, everyone would rather take the chance of not having to go to war, or at least, not having to mobilize, which gets pricy?

Like a circle in a spiral, like a wheel within a wheel...

Heard today that Madeleine Albright called Slobodan Milosovic to warn him of impending bombing. Can you imagine that, actually telling someone directly, "We are going to bomb you and probably kill a bunch of your people?" It's like walking up to someone in a bar and instead of opening with "Can I buy you a drink?" or "Come here often?", saying, "So, you want to have sex?" It seems that decency sometimes requires indirection. The Secretary's sort of messages, I think, are best conveyed through media and intermediaries, or at least language, like "We are by no means rejecting the military option", that's a bit more delicate.

Message 11 2/19/99 7:56 PM
Subject: Re: power (was pragmatism)
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Personally (terribly personally) I'm a big fan of Niccolr Machiavelli's "The Prince", aka "Il Principe without Principles", aka the book formerly known as "The Prince", not to be confused with Saint-Exupiry's "The Little Prince" (how to tame a fox = how to tame a state?) and perhaps better called "The 26 Secrets of Leadership Success". Well, he had 26 chapters. And the Medici (for one of whom, Lorenzo, the book was written) were mainly bankers, only rulers later and without title. There is now, I have noticed, a sort of adaptation of the Big M for businessmen, going section by section, but oddly omitting the last (the exhortation to liberate Italy from foreign rule. Couldn't it become a call for a crusade against a trade deficit?)

I love how "Mac" takes it as a given that human beings are evil and selfish. Doesn't condemn it, just takes note and instructs on how to deal with the fact, and use it to one's own advantage.

I myself am working on an adaptation of Machiavelli, a guide to obtaining and keeping *online* power; it will be called "The Moderator". Not sure, though, to which one I'll offer and dedicate it.

Message 9 2/20/99 6:34 AM
Subject: Re(2): A Civil Inaction
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Keela Merrin writes:
Ahhh, terry, is that then the the rub?

Yes, I can't massage it away, certainly not in this medium.

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You'll engage till the cows come home as long as the battleground is theory, pulling endlessly from your bag of Automatic Gainsaying, but you'll withdraw once asked to take a personal stand?

Actually, I have been taking a personal stand.
The fact is, my head has come in contact with the concrete enough that I prefer abstracts.

Are you a gnat, then, who lands nowhere because it delights in its own buzz?

Gnaturally.

(I hope you take no offense at such taunts. I've seen you use similarly loaded rhetoric in other debates, and I assume you consider a little badinage de rigueur.)

Yes, but I would point out that those other debates concerned very specific practical matters: "so and so should not have written what so and so did." I would not quite put this argument on the same plane, and if I did, I'd give it the aisle seat. My point has always been that solipsism does not make any actual difference in behavior.

If you'd like to hear me to argue in my own particular...idiom...I can, and I am sure that at some point in the future, I will. But to do it now in career would be the wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time. Unless you want to debate that.

Message 3 2/22/99 9:28 AM
Subject: Re(4): Gene Siskel's died
From: terrible person
To: film

according to the Times obituary, a movie is already in the works about Sisbert. Michael Lerner ("Barton Fink") is the leading candidate for the Fat Guy, and Kevin Spacey for the late Other One.

Message 1 2/22/99 9:48 PM
Subject: Re: Siskel's Replacement
From: terrible person
To: film

My impression is that, since the name itself has such recognition that it is vital to retain it, Ebert and the sponsors and producers are making the prime criterion for the person to replace Gene that he or she actually be named Siskel. Although consideration is being given to simply having whoever replaces Gene take the name, the way Roman emperors took Caesar or new members of the greatest band ever took Ramone or Farm-boy Westley became the Dread Pirate Roberts (or I have taken over the name "terrible person" after its original user was hit by a truck, and then shot), the preference is for a relative, or someone else coincidentally bearing the name. Thus, prime candidates are Deep Space Nine Commander Benjamin Siskel, Internet widget maker Siskel Systems, and of course, the entire film buff city of San FranSiskel.

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I have also heard a rumor that, having received anonymously several copyright-violating copies of a certain weekly summary of cable offerings and been rather impressed, the remaining thumbsman is making inquiries and offers concerning the possibility of Eva & Ebert. But he's probably too scared to follow through.

Maybe he'd be like the veteran cops (or other professionals) in the movies who lose their partners of twenty years, and then get paired with some wild youngster. You know, like "Lethal Weapon"? Or the way veteran bands, the Ramones, Judas Priest, the Stones, add replacement members a generation younger, who grew up on their music.

Ebert looked devastated when I saw him interviewed. But he might survive, the way the artist of the French Astirix comic book series managed to keep them going even when the writer died. On the other hand, it could be like Serbia continuing to pretend Yugoslavia exists.

I've also heard that though Siskel himself, as per his request, will be cremated, his relatives have permitted his thumb to be saved and preserved in the Smithsonian.

As for Tom Shales, I by far prefer NPR's other reviewer, Elvis Mitchell (also of the Fort Worth Stat-Telegram.) I have no idea how he complements Ebert physically, since the picture on my radio is really bad. But I must energetically support anyone who, discussing the twentieth anniversary of the release of "The Warriors", whether on his own realization or someone else's prompting, accurately noted that the film was based quite literally on one of the gems of Greek literature, the Anabasis of Xenophon (also the Odyssey of Homer.) Shales and Ebert? Mitchell and Ebert? Elvis and Roger? Roger and Me?

And speaking of me, I get upset whenever a 53-year old journalist, no matter how much I might have disagreed with him or thought him a jerk sometimes, dies of cancer.

I think of what Thomas Jefferson, having presented his credentials as American minister to France, replied when asked if he were there as the replacement to the beloved Benjamin Franklin: that on the contrary he, Jefferson, was only the **successor** to Dr. Franklin, since no one could **replace** him.

Message 79 2/26/99 6:34 AM
Subject: Re: Shakespear In Love In Jokes
From: terrible person
To: film

Big Red writes:
Did anyone get any of the in jokes in Shakespeare in Love?

Isn't it a wonderful irony to hear Big Red complaining about not getting the "in-jokes"?

I actually got **all** the in-jokes, but if I revealed and explained them, that would, you know, defeat the purpose.

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Message 76 2/26/99 9:23 AM
Subject: Re: Shakespear In Love In Jokes
From: terrible person
To: film

What?? Shakespear was only in Love *IN JOKES*? He was just joking around? *I* thought he *really* loved her!!!

Disappointed, disillusioned, disheartened, dyslexic....

terrible person

> 75

Message 75 2/26/99 9:28 AM
Subject: Re: Shakespear In Love In Jokes
From: terrible person
To: film

This would be weird, since I don't think there have been any Love-Ins since the 60's. (Though there was that Englebert HUmperdinck -- Humperdinck! Humperdinck!! I'm not listening!! -- song, "After the Love-In".) So I'll bite, what did Shakespear do in the Love-in? Take LSD?

Or is a "love inn" a smaller, vibrating bed and breakfast version of a Japanese "love hotel"?

Message 74 2/26/99 10:45 AM
Subject: Re(3): Shakespear In Love In Jokes
From: terrible person
To: film

Big Red writes:

This coming from someone who admitted to only seeing 2 movies in 1998, Truman Show and Pi, I would be surprised if you have seen Shakespeare in Love.

Huh?

Well, the fact is that immediately after posting, I thought of at least THREE other movies I saw in 1998, "The Big Lebowski", "A Friend of the Deceased", and "I Went Down". Like a Congressional testifier, I sometimes need to search my memory.

And perhaps there is some mysterious thread connecting "Truman", "Pi", and "Shakespeare", invisible to you (since it connects me as well) so that once I had seen the first two, seeing the third is not only unsurprising, but inevitable?

But more important, considering that I posted the piece to which you refer some two weeks ago, I would have had ample time to see the movie "Shakespeare in Love" since then, yes?

Or to hear Tom Stoppard reveal *all* the secrets at any of several Bay Area live and radio appearances over the last week, as he was in town to promote his new play at the ACT?

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Careful with them assumption things, pal.

oh, and I would just like to say at this point how pleased I am that from afar, even before I opened the conference, indeed, just as I opened the area, that I could smell the distinctive old odor of acid eating into celluloid, and the acrid fumes of accurate fuming, and that like the Rojos in the plaza, or Belloc at the Tanis airfield, at the distant explosions I could be sure of one thing:

sirin's back.

glad for my comfy sandbagged arched bunker (in which to hunker, a punk monk with a pile of junk),

terrible person

Message 68 2/26/99 5:45 PM
Subject: Re(5): Shakespear In Love In Jokes
From: terrible person
To: film

terrible person writes:
Careful with them assumption things, pal.

*Big Red writes:
And I would say the same of you. You assumed I was "complaining" about SIL's "in-jokes" instead of just bringing it up as a topic of discussion.*

you mean, you could say the same thing TO me. But ok, I'll just change "complaining" to "worrying", yielding:

"Isn't it a wonderful irony to hear Big Red worrying about not getting the "in-jokes"?"

Is that all right?

Message 57 2/28/99 11:01 AM
Subject: cross between antlers
From: terrible person
To: Folk Culture

The logo of Jdgermeister beer is a deer (buck, hart?) in front view with a gold, radiant cross floating between its antlers.

Does anyone have any leads as to a possible folkloric significance of this image?

Message 51 2/28/99 9:44 PM
Subject: I wish...
From: terrible person

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

To: The Wishing Well

...I could be sure whether I'm actually damned or not. It would not make any difference of course, but it would be nice to know. It might save a lot of effort.

> 46

Message 46 3/1/99 11:37 AM
Subject: Re: I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

I know what everyone's thinking: the uncertainty is probably part of the damnation. but it does not have to be; as they say, plenty of time for that later. because, see, if damnation is eternal, it does not matter when you start, since you will have infinite time ahead of you no matter what. so if I could put it off for a few years, it would not make any difference in the long run, and it would give me a some time **really** to earn it.

> 45

Message 45 3/1/99 8:12 PM
Subject: Re(2): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

wait, am I clear about this? Could you really be damned in the next life but not know it in this one? Yes, I think so. But you could also start your damnation in this one, and be a double loser. (Of course, you could feel you are damned in this life, and then, wow, hey, you turn out to be blessed!) Or all damnation or beatitude could be just in this life, with none other to follow. I tend toward the eternal view, but I could easily be wrong.

Also, despite what I wrote last post, I imagine that once you got into infinite time when things were never going to change, you'd lose track of it pretty quickly. But you would remember when time was finite, before you started your damnation, differently, and probably much better, even as it became very small in comparison to the time you'd spent in damnation. Therefore, it might actually matter to have as much predamnation time as you could. And if it mattered to you enough to ask for it, you could bet that it would matter enough to those in charge to refuse it.

Damnation is awfully tricky, yet elegant; one of those really neat concepts, like thoughtcrime and Catch-22 that you just can't help contemplating with admiration.

> 42

Message 42 3/2/99 8:03 AM
Subject: Re(3): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

Or could I change my damnation status through good works hereafter? I'm pretty

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much a Calvinist on this one. Remember when Calvin asked his dad how they know the weight limits of bridges, and his dad answered that they drive bigger and bigger trucks over the bridge until it collapses, and then rebuild the bridge exactly the same way with the weight limit set slightly less than the last truck's? Well, not totally relevant. Anyway, I'm not sure damnation is something you earn, or at least, go on earning. I think that either you're damned from day one (so that it does not matter what you do), or you're set to do whatever you are going to do that will earn you damnation (I mean, it wouldn't make sense for you to be damned for things you did not actually do, would it?) or your damnation status is decided fairly early on, so that anything you do after, say, age 16, doesn't matter, or just things are so weighted, logarithmically or something, that it's easy to earn damnation early, but to unearn it later, once the damage (and damning) have been done, is like trying to get an A in a class after you've missed the first week and handed in the first three assignments late and flunked the midterm. (See, everything really depends on learning things correctly the first days!)

But, you see, there is just this chance of beatitude. It's tiny, laughable, but still, it's there, and needs to be protected. And so I guess I should act as if I CAN earn beatitude by behavior, despite all the evidence and thinking to the contrary. It's not as if the process is so awful. I suppose I could spend my energies elsewhere, if I knew it was entirely unworth it and I entirely unworthy. Earning damnation may be like nuclear retaliation; you don't really want to do it, it won't save you from the preemptives, from what's already been decided, it's more a bargaining position (but you can't bargain with the universe) or a way of striking back (but the universe doesn't care.) But then, why try to earn beatitude that will never come? Why give something away for free? So is the only thing to do to weigh the momentary benefits of beatitude-seeking versus damnation-seeking behavior, since the long-term ones are not, cannot be, known? The problem there is that one of the main benefits of beatitude-earning behavior is the feeling that one is earning beatitude, and how nice that will be. Take that away, and we're back to damnation.

Message 41 3/2/99 9:53 AM
Subject: Re(4): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

but wait. what if the universe is not fair? but does it make any sense to say that? who are we judge the universe by our standards? can fairness be defined in any way except by what the universe does?

so let's define "fair" as "operating by consistent rules that can be figured out and used to one's advantage." (that would seem a little more fair to the smart than to the not, though.) or what if the universe operates by said

rules, but they are far beyond our pathetic powers of understanding? or what if the universe doesn't actually operate by rules, but just by some sort of feelings? (not that we would be able to distinguish the two preceding possibilities. but we'd be equally lost.)

what if damnation and beatitude are on a continuum, with no clear boundary? if it's all analog? you get as much damnation and as much beatitude as you deserve? maybe in exactly the way? this would mean there would be no cutoff. you couldn't just barely earn beatitude by your test scores but not really

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deserve it, or just miss it because of one bad answer, even though you were really beatitude material. usually, I favor the analog. but in this case, I think there is a very distinct difference between the two kinds of fated people. no almost cases.

now, assuming the b/d decision is all or nothing, are most people damned, or blessed? which is the default? do you have to do huge number of things right, jump through a huge number of hoops, to have any chance to be blessed, and screwing up on any one of them means straight to the other place/condition? or does everyone really have a good chance of beatitude, which is only lost through some really egregious act? I would have to tend to the first. I think it's just really, really hard to get to heaven. (if it got crowded, it would not be as wonderful, would it?) so it's really no shame not to be going there. and it looked awfully nice there for a while, all saffron and shimmer in the morning sky. but that's little consolation.

Message 39 3/3/99 7:41 AM
Subject: Re(5): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

In the end, though, I can't say I'm really such a poor crestfallen chappie not to be blessed. I mean, I've seen the blessed people, and I could never be like them. They have to work SO hard, like the alphas in "Brave New World". (Better to be an Epsilon.) They have to keep themselves in such good shape, dress well, say cool and anodyne things, work intense jobs to support the whole structure, or just, and what is worse, have to spend all their mental energy worrying about not doing anything to spoil their blessed status. Especially as they invest more and more in the long-term goal of blessedness, staking more and more on that one roll. Any ordinary person would have given up by now. It would be awful to have come so far, sacrificed so much, just to be damned for one slip-up! Almost as bad as having put in all the same (wasted) effort when one never really had a chance. (Or is is the same thing?) I'm just not capable of that sort of sustained concentration and effort. Just not interested enough, I guess. But how can you not be interested in avoiding damnation?

On the other hand, I suppose if I actually were blessed, I would have no trouble doing all the stuff I had to do to be blessed, and neither do those who are blessed; we just have to redefine blessedness. Destiny is character, blah blah blah.

I'm also rethinking the all-or-nothing idea. Not abandoning it, but just looking at it more critically. Let's say that there are those extreme few who are damned, and another extreme group that is blessed. The vast majority of the bell curve would be somewhere in between. Where would they go? (But again, is it fair only to have three groups, for someone just barely out of damnation to have the same fate as someone who just missed beatitude?) There is purgatory, but I could never figure out whether purgatory was like a for-loop, where you went for a certain preassigned length of time because that is how long it was known you would need to be purged (would you know how long? wouldn't that just encourage you to 'serve out your time' with little real effort?), or a do-loop, where you stayed until you were ready to move on, no matter how long that took. Could you fail out of purgatory and get sent down? Or would there be some third place? Like the minor leagues, whence the few

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really good got the ticket to the show, and the really lousy dropped out to sell used cars in Cedar Rapids? Or let's say damnation/beatitude is indeed analog. Everyone's fate would depend by some ratio, not some binary decision, on their behavior. Maybe everyone would actually live in the same place, just differently, so that the damned would be visible to the more blessed, as a warning, and the blessed to the more damned, as an encouragement, or a punishment. In short, the world of the blessed and the damned and all those in between (if so things are configured) would be a lot like this world we live in now.

Message 37 3/3/99 9:47 AM
Subject: Re(6): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

on the other hand, I guess, part of being blessed is being able to cope with it. so now I see no reason not to be blessed, and would welcome it, I guess.

this sort of goes back to one of my earlier questions, but is knowing you are going to be damned (or blessed) the same thing as being damned (or blessed) ? I mean, knowing you are going to die is not the same thing as being dead. still, it seems that there would be something about knowing your fate that might ruin (or make) your day, or make the prophecy self-fulfilling.

> 36
Message 36 3/3/99 10:33 AM
Subject: Re(7): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

terrible person writes:

on the other hand, I guess, part of being blessed is being able to cope with it. so now I see no reason not to be blessed, and would welcome it, I guess.

first of all, part of being blessed would be wanting it as well (you would have to want it to work for it, but if you were destined for it, you'd be set to want it. Maybe through hypnopaedia.)

And second, that's all very nice that to accept beatitude, as it is to be willing to accept a lottery jackpot, but there is a distinct and resounding lack of offers of it right now. So I can answer ringingly called on by the universe, and even raise my hand, but I might have to keep it up there quite a long time.

Message 34 3/3/99 9:44 PM
Subject: Re(8): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

One thing about damnation, though: presumably, they need a lot of staff. (They probably need a lot of staff in the other condition as well, waiting on the blessed hand and foot. come to think of it, maybe that is what the damned have to do. though I envision their occupation as more like telemarketing.) But

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keeping the damned in line, and well, damned, must offer a lot of employment. Unless it's all been mechanized and computerized. Now, Jean-Paul Sartre envisioned the damned all punishing each other, as in a cooperative store, the clients are the employees. But I don't think I agree. I think there is a small cadre of employees working with the management (who may or may not be damned themselves), like the Jewish "kapos" in concentration camps. And I guess it is marginally better to take one of these jobs, when available (are they in great demand?) than to be the object of the job.

But there is another position I'd much rather have. Someone must have the task of letting those about to face their fate what it is. A sort of messenger, who taps those about to head to their reward (or just find it out) on the shoulder and says, "Your turn now. Come along." Now, it's possible that there would be different services for the blessed and the damned. For the blessed, harp music, ravishing light, white robes, undulating beauties, and for the damned, a swift shove and the Beastie Boys. But I doubt this. It just wouldn't be efficient. there must be just a single service of Angeli Mortis, that takes care of both types, only sorting them out once they had been collected. (A bit like the Joint Operating Agreement for the competing Chronicle and Examiner. Though I think heaven and hell are pretty much in agreement on most matters; like Netscape and Microsoft -- almost !--they've got the market divided pretty comfortably between them.)

What I think I would like about this job would be that I could try to make it harder on the mean, nasty folks who deserve what is happening to them at that moment, and easier on the nice ones for whom I'd feel a little sorry. Not that there would be many of the latter. But I think it would be an important job, important to do well, and I would like to think I could do it.

Message 33 3/4/99 6:48 AM
Subject: Re: An abandoned auto court...
From: terrible person
To: Great Beginnings

James Ellroy (Elroy? his son Elroy?), "L.A. Confidential"

Message 32 3/4/99 7:15 AM
Subject: Re(9): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

And I would not mind being the one to announce to the blessed that they are. Though they knew that. It's kind of dangerous always being the bearer of bad news; there is a long tradition of blaming the messenger. (Though I guess I would be beyond that.) When I actually was a messenger, I occasionally knew that I was delivering a subpoena to some multinational, and then I'd be sure to adopt an especially unsympathetic, even snickering and snide aspect, but when I was bringing a bunch of new work to some nice friendly graphics outfit, it was my pleasure to come in smiling, clothes straightened, and singing the theme song to "Underdog". To the blessed, I'd say, "Don't worry. You're in luck". To the damned, I might say nothing; in response to their questions, "I'm not at liberty to comment on that", or give them the same answer as the blessed, and let their damnation start with a surprise!

But why would I be so unsympathetic to those in the same position as I? I

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guess that's why I'd be damned! Besides, an iron rule is that we always feel superior to and make fun of those in worse shape than we. It's universal.

It would be something like "Wings of Desire", or better "Faraway, So Close" (I don't identify so much with the Bruno Ganz character as with the other one, and he gets to meet Mikhail Gorbachev!!) The only difference between the angels and me is where I'd have to go at the end of the day (or at any moment. When the demon appears to Faust in Marlowe's play -- summoned up through Latin, I might add, so it DOES have its use -- and the scholar asks him how he has escaped from damnation, he replies that he is there at that very moment -- anywhere he goes is damnation.) I'm sure everyone who has ever worked temp -- or for that matter, been female, I guess -- is familiar with the phenomenon of doing exactly the same work as someone else, and being rewarded much much less. For me, it would be like being on pass, or furlough, or parole, like "All Quiet On the Western Front" or "The Rock" or "Escape from New York" -- the powers that be call for help on the very person they've imprisoned, though it would be more like "The Silence of the Lambs", in that there would be no promise of release. Because there would not be any.

did I remember all the words this time?

Message 27 3/4/99 5:15 PM
Subject: Re: Mitsubishi Robot Fish
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

But do androids dream of them?

> 16
Message 16 3/5/99 6:55 AM
Subject: Re(11): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

so all this talk about eternal rewards has made it into my dreams. I was on a Bart train to heaven. It looked just like a normal Bart train, going through the Tube, but I knew I was going to heaven!! Wow. Maybe the people just looked blessed. I couldn't recognize them by sight. They were in disguise, I guess. (I guess we were heading into the skies?) They looked like store mannequins, like action figures, Small Soldiers, like dolls. Of course, then the train turned into a boat, a ferry (this from the talk on the radio I had heard about expanding ferry service.) Or maybe I had just transferred. I guess I wasn't supposed to be there because to be frank, everyone else seemed to be calling me a loser, or a lesser person. They were calling me terrible, too, but backwards, and they kept repeating it. (Wouldn't they know my name if they saw me in heaven?) Anyway, I had my computer with me. I was trying to write something, but everyone started yelling, "stop it!! you'll upset things again!!" They started talking about my checkered past, with quotes, and judging it, putting sharp labels on it. This got me really mad, but what could I do? Everyone was telling me to stand down. Then they did the Wave, and I was at the end and got pushed off the boat, and I fell like a rock. I woke up as I hit the whatever, the water, and whenever I fall in a dream, I wake up feeling

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as if I have fallen into bed from five feet above.

I'm glad I wasn't bound for the other place. Maybe tonight.

> 5

Message 5 3/5/99 9:24 PM
Subject: Re(12): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

I caught a little of that show "Brimstone" tonight; I knew enough of the concept to think I should like it, but not enough to have any idea what was going on. I just noticed that everything was blue and Peter Horton looked awful.

Message 54 3/6/99 2:09 PM
Subject: Re(13): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

I'm in mourning for Kiley, very upset at the end of the embodiment of the Impossible Dream. I realized I'll never have the chance to hear live the voice I've listened to so many times over electronic media, acting as both teller and protagonist of a great story of adventure in New York and other places. With this loss, there will be just a little less chivalry (especially of the slim, odd variety), a lot less honor and faith, in the world.

"To right
The unrightable wrong
To love
Pure and chaste from afar
To strive
When your arms are to weary
To reach
The unreachable star!

This is my quest
To follow that star
No matter how hopeless
No matter how far
To fight for the right
Without respite or pause
To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause.....

And the world
Will be better for this
That one man
Scorned and covered with scars
Still strove
With his last ounce of courage
To reach
The unreachable stars!!!"

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Mancha bene, to the inspiration of all those who tilt with windmills, even the windmills of the mind.

I was thinking, too, about going to hell for a heavenly cause. If someone were willing to give up his or her life to save someone else, he or she would probably go to heaven, right? Unless he or she knew in advance that that was a sure way to heaven, and then it becomes cynical and mercenary. but what if a person is willing to give up his *soul* -- gain the whole world, and lose his soul -- no -- just to save someone else's? That would seem to be an even greater offer, more deserving of going to heaven. But that would lead to a contradiction, since you then would not actually lose your soul. Just the offer, just the willingness, isn't enough. You have to go through with it. It's like the end of "Fail-Safe", where the president offers to nuke NYC ourselves to make up for our accidental destruction of Moscow, to show the Soviets we were not trying to start WWII, and then later asks if just the offer was proof enough of sincerity. Or the way the mad Caligula forced a senator who had offered his own life to the gods in place of that of the ailing emperor kill himself when Caligula got better. The universe demands its pound of flesh. Maybe it has constituents before which it can't look bad. It seems this theme, of sacrificing one's soul for someone else, showed up in a lot of Graham Greene books I read in high school and college. But I don't know if it's in "Monsignor Quixote"; I did not read that one.

Message 47 3/7/99 3:47 PM
Subject: Stanley Kubrick, dead at 70
From: terrible person
To: film

Ha!! yes!! I'm getting the announcement up before Barrymore!!

Ok, there's nothing really to say now, so on with the usual annoyingness:

Cause of death has been variously given as French firing squad, crucifixion, detonation of the Doomsday device, a blow from a bone that turned into a spaceship, a blow with a phallic sculpture, a blow with an axe, and a single shot from an M14 from a crazed overweight Marine.

His last words have been variously given as "Yeeee-hawwww!", "I'm scared, Dave", and "Gene Siskel, I'll see you in hell!!"

Kubrick died with his boots on, and his eyes wide open, clutching the sole existing print of "Eyes Wide Shut" between his hands, now locked in rigor mortis. Attempts to extricate the reel from his grasp have failed.

Message 40 3/8/99 6:13 AM
Subject: A Nation Turns Its Lonely Eyes to You
From: terrible person
To: film

Joe DiMaggio, 1914-1999

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Joltin' Joe has left and gone away.

Yes. This does count as film, since he was married to Marilyn Monroe and the song is from a movie.

Plus I wanted to scoop Barrymore again.

Now, if only he could have been as good as Ted Williams, and played for a real team, instead of the Yankees.

Message 39 3/8/99 6:23 AM
Subject: Re(14): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

I was running yesterday, running up a hill. On such occasions, besides feeling like Mercer, I can't help thinking of Kate Bush: "If we only could/ We'd make a deal with God..." But then, Kate Bush basically IS God(dess -- hardly matters.) She also has that song about hell being heaven.

Maybe the line is "We could deal with God".

Also when I'm running, to encourage myself, I imagine the devil is nipping at my heels (he runs surprisingly fast on those cloven hooves.) Like Billy-be-damned.

Message 31 3/9/99 6:38 AM
Subject: Kubrick bites the dust
From: terrible person
To: film

Eva Luna writes:

Way too emotionless and distancing for my tastes. I liked "lolita" ok, and like "The Killing" (but mainly for the performacnes from Sterling Hayden and Timothy Carey,)

It's too bad that "The Killing" isn't that other Sterling Hayden movie, "The Asphalt Jungle". Because that had a very young Marilyn Monroe, which would have meant that Kubrick and DiMaggio were connected by only one degree (Kevin Bacon anywhere?) which would have made for a nice conspiracy theory. The revenge of the Kennedys at last....but no. Was Elisha Cook in "Killing" or "Jungle"? He's great. Personally, I can watch "Dr. Strangelove (or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb)" any number of times, and I was so glad to hear that Santa Cruz had finally banned fluoridation of water, thus protecting our precious bodily fluids.

My mind is going. I can feel it. There is no question about it.

But I can walk!!!

Who's gonna keep sending the weekly flowers to her crypt now?

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The Crypt Keeper? Rocket from the Crypt? The same guy who puts the flowers and cognac on Poe's grave? MM and RFK's secret love child?

Cryptically,

terrible person

Oh, anyone see the headline "DiMaggio Streak Ends at 84"? I liked that.

Message 30 (Unsent)
Subject: Re: Does whatever a spider can.
From: terrible person
To: film

This could be neat. For Jim Carrey really IS spidery, as the Marvel hero was originally, not overmusclcd as he has become. He has the requisite original nerdiness too, and isn't too old.

Who is on tap for the luscious redhead Mary Jane? She's a model; take any "Women's Health" cover-girl with dimples. Cameron Diaz? Good chance for some ethnically blind casting, too -- whatever happened to Tia Carrere? For the tragic Gwen Stacy, Julie Delpy, if she can handle the accent. Or Heather Graham!

Marlon Brando as the Kingpin! He wouldn't have to gain any weight!

David Mamet as Dr. Octopus! Tim Roth as the Green Goblin!

I like Robert Guillaume for Robbie Robertson, but Jonah Jameson is harder. Get the same guy who played the Comedian in "Watchmen."

The greatest challenge will be for the Foley artist, duplicating "Thwipppp!"

> 19

Message 19 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

I'm gazing at faces staring blankly at me
I suppose it's just a sign of the times
They tell me tomorrow will never arrive
But I've seen it end a million times.

I lost my direction while dodging the flak
Give me a hint or something
If I could freeze time at the flick of a switch
I wouldn't hesitate -- No!!
There must be something wrong, boys.

Obnoxious action, obnoxious results
From teachers who refuse to be taught.
Distorted pictures and dizzy, dizzy people
Rush by me at the speed of thought.

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And sit at the tables and throw us the scraps
>H
For Christ's sake leave us something
Now they can erase us at the flick of a switch
How long will it take?
Now!
There must be something wrong, boys!
There must be something wrong, boys....

> 10
Message 10 3/12/99 6:32 AM
Subject: Re(15): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

So I'm reading an amazing book, David Halberstam's "The Best and the Brightest". It's about how a bunch of apparently really smart people managed to do one of the dumbest things in American history, get the country into war in Southeast Asia. (So that by definition they could not have been so smart, right?) What's especially depressing is when some official tries to resist the momentum to escalation, and says, "Hey, maybe we shouldn't be doing this." Then for a moment you think that millions of lives will be saved, but then you remember. It's like watching a movie when they've already shown the hero dead at the start and the rest is a flashback ("Pulp Fiction", perhaps) or as a character's doom approaches but seems to be avertible -- but isn't. ("Life of Brian", or "Gallipoli")

Also, it's only late 1963 (in the book) and a few people, even senior ones, are saying "Maybe we should get out of this now", but no one is saying, "We can't win this one." No one seems to be thinking that way; the US had won every other war and it was just a matter of will and resources. I guess they were not aware of the three kinds of impossibility, that the war was not a finite or contingent impossibility, not even an asymptotic one, but a divergent one. When did they know they were damned?

I find almost every aspect of history fascinating, but especially the Cold War, and the whole decision making process. What were these policy-makers thinking? What were their criteria, their assumptions, their rules of inference? Did they even know, could they tell us, though? Or can we only look at what they did? (I'm also interested in what the people who had to carry out the policies were thinking. And most of all, when the two groups were the same. But there are the same limitations of knowledge.)

Message 6 3/13/99 9:38 AM
Subject: Re(16): I wish...
From: terrible person
To: The Wishing Well

This is about the nature of gambling. I, for one, am shocked, shocked! to see that it's going on here. a gamble is by definition -- by mine, at least -- an attempted exchange of what you do have for what you could have at the risk of losing what you have (if you have nothing to lose, it's not a gamble.) Or

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better, it's an exchange of what is (or seems) more probable but worse for what seems better but less probable at the risk of losing what you have.

(Remember too, that probability is all in the mind; it is simply our lack of knowledge, since everything in the universe actually is determined. Better and worse are also in the mind, but let's not go into that now.) And you could be totally wrong about things staying the same if you don't do anything (since things do tend to go downhill when left on their own.) Whereas before the gamble, you have something, and relatively certainly, afterwards you will have either everything -- or nothing. (A movement to the extremes.)

Examples: you have a dollar, but you think you can make it into ten or a million; you go to Vegas or play the lottery, probably losing it. You have a job, but you want a better one, so you keep looking, keep retraining, though it gets in the way of your current job, or your enjoyment of your free time. You have a relationship, but you think you can do better, so you put off commitment and keep hitting the bars (and hitting on people), reading the personals, even though it limits or risks destroying the current one.

But this is about the nature of anti-gambling, otherwise known as selling your soul. Because at a certain point, certainty of something becomes more attractive than the possibility of everything when it comes with the equal probability of nothing. It's like compromising in a negotiation, though this one is with the universe. Is compromise bad? With tyrants, yes, with good-faith negotiators, no, so now we've just moved the locus of the argument. John Dickinson may have said, "Most men with nothing would rather protect the possibility of becoming rich than face the reality of being poor." I don't think I would agree with the Pennsylvania Farmer's definitions of "nothing" and "poverty"; I would rather say "relatively little", for poverty has degrees, and is, in general, better than, say, death. Anyway, throughout our lives, we are encouraged to "go for it", to take risks, to gamble. Those who play it safe, who give up the possibility of blessedness, (and remember, giving up blessedness seems like a way of avoiding damnation) in favor of something in between seem, well, wimpy. But the avoidance of damnation is a major concession by the universe, and vastly valuable to the individual, as valuable, I think, as the concession that one won't attain beatitude. It's all very symmetric. Others would say that the state of compromise IS damnation, as if whatever is not beatitude is, as if there is no third way. But I would disagree, I think. At a certain point, everyone gets tired of striving and hoping, and consequently risking, and they flee the extremes, and everyone sells their soul, for the best compromise they can get, and then tries to enjoy it.

Message 5 3/13/99 11:52 AM
Subject: Re: uncle benny is the real thing
From: terrible person
To: film

Look for Chow on video in the 1995 "God of Saloonkeepers", which is pretty closely "Casablanca" in pre-takeover Hong Kong, with Chow as the Rick equivalent and Gong Li as the girlfriend who seemed to have walked out on him (to join her Harry Wu-like husband) as the tanks rolled into TienAnMen.

Look for Chow upcoming in "The Blue Silk Dragon", which is based on an unfinished Dashiell Hammett story. When Sam Spade (Gabriel Byrne) has a problem that takes him into Chinatown, not speaking Chinese, he farms it out to the fedora'd Chow, who gets beaten up a lot.

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Message 1 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

How it will end...

...only Providence can direct -- but dear God! what brave men I shall lose
before this business ends.
-- George Washington, before the Battle of New York

Eden, there's no Eden...
I'm gazing at faces staring blankly at me
I suppose it's just a sign of the times
They tell me tomorrow will never arrive
But I've seen it end a million times.

I lost my direction while dodging the flak
Give me a hint or something
If I could freeze time at the flick of a switch
I wouldn't hesitate -- No!!
There must be something wrong, boys.

Obnoxious action, obnoxious results
From teachers who refuse to be taught.
Distorted pictures and dizzy, dizzy people
Rush by me at the speed of thought.

And sit at the tables and throw us the scraps
For Christ's sake leave us something
Now they can erase us at the flick of a switch
How long will it take?
Now!
There must be something wrong, boys!
There must be something wrong, boys....

--the Chameleons, 1983

I wish the ape a lot of success.
I'm sorry my apartment's a mess. (WZ)

Should have stayed on the farm, should have listened to my old man.

"Then we're stupid, and we'll die." -- Blade Runner

Or worse, they'll make fun of us!!

Danger! Danger!

i had visions, i was in them
i was looking into the mirror
to see a little bit clearer
rottenness and evil in me

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

in the hospital for nerves

put me

then they had to commit me

and

you

told them all i was crazy

they cut off my legs now i'm an amputee, god damn you

i'm not sick but i'm not well

and i'm so hot cause i'm in hell

i'm not sick but i'm not well

and it's a sin to live so well

i wanna publish zines
and rage against machines
i wanna pierce my tongue

fine

it doesn't hurt, it feels

the trivial sublime
i'd like to turn off time
and kill my mind
you kill my mind

paranoia paranoia

everybody's coming to get me

just say you never met me

i'm going underground with the moles

hear the voices in my head

i swear to god it sounds like they're snoring

but if you're bored then you're boring

the agony and the irony, they're killing me

i'm not sick but i'm not well

and i'm so hot cause i'm in hell

i'm not sick but i'm not well

and it's a sin to live so well

Jim Carroll (not to be confused with Lewis) writes:

You know the stars in the night

They're like the holes in the cave

Like the ceiling of a bombed-out church

But gravity blocks my screams

It's like an enemy's dreams

My guardians quit

They quit before they started their search

I want a world without gravity

It could be just what I need

I'd watch the stars move close

I'd watch the earth recede...

she's got

wicked wicked wicked wicked GRAVITY

wicked wicked wicked wicked GRAVITY

wicked wicked wicked wicked GRAVITY

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

wicked wicked wicked wicked GRAVITY
wicked wicked wicked wicked GRAVITY
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wicked
*

Message 134 3/20/99 8:27 AM
Subject: Re: Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

As far as I am concerned, even if Elia Kazan had never made a single film, much less a single great one, he should still receive some sort of award, should have long ago, for his courage in fighting Communism at a time when it posed a dire and very real threat to America and American ideals of freedom.

If blacklisting may in some ways have limited the content of American film of the 1950's, I assure you that it was nothing compared to the limitations Communists would have imposed had they been successful in their goal of infiltration, indoctrination, and subversion.

Recent historical revelations have confirmed what men like J. Edgar Hoover, J. Parnell Thomas, and Joseph R. McCarthy, warned us of, that every level of our society, government, and culture was riddled with agents owing allegiance to Moscow, who were devoted to using American freedom only to deny it to others. One of the founders of HUAC itself, Rep. Samuel Dickstein, was himself on the Soviet payroll. Academe, and scientific research, were full of communists and

sympathizers, such as J. Robert Oppenheimer. And Hollywood was no different. Anyone ever heard of Dorothy Parker?

At the time, the value of film as propaganda had been well established. "Battleship Potemkin". "Alexander Nevsky". "Triumph of the Will". "Jud Suss". "Why We Fight". "Casablanca". It was clear that whoever could control the film industry could control the minds of Americans, influencing them towards acceptance of Communism. Hollywood thus became as vital a battleground against Communism, a domestic one, as that foreign one going on at the same time, Korea.

Nor should we have any particular sympathy for these "blacklisted" people. We should not see them as high-minded idealists following what seemed like the only hope for a better world amidst the Depression and the rise of Fascism.

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

They were naive dupes, supposedly smart people who should have known better (or bored ones who found leftism fashionable.) By the late 30's, the 20 years of Leninist and Stalinist repression, suppression, extermination, of every enemy, real or perceived, was known. To ignore the liquidation of the Kulaks and the purges took a positive act of will. The further crimes of Stalin in the name of Communism, a nonaggression pact with the supposed archenemy Hitler, the totally illegal annexation of the Baltic republics and half of Poland, the enslavement of Eastern Europe, the relocation of whole populations with great suffering, the Katyn Forest massacre -- all these things were conveniently overlooked by head-in-the-sand, heart-in-Moscow Communists in America, in Hollywood. And the exposé of these people should be blamed?

Finally, I have heard "High Noon" -- a personal favorite, by the way -- held up as an example of a film's courageous stand against HUAC/McCarthyism. But let's not deceive ourselves. Marshall Kane may stand up against the fear of the whole town, but he also overrules its will, to resist Frank Miller and his goons. Which does not sound very democratic to me, especially when the danger was as much to the Marshall as the town. It sounds to me a bit more like fascism, in which a "big man" decides he knows better than the "little people". If this is supposed to be the reaction of the "freedom-loving left" in Hollywood to persecution in the name of anti-communism, it's pretty sad.

Give 'em hell, Elia. And enjoy your well-deserved -- and wrongly delayed -- Oscar.

Message 133 3/20/99 8:32 AM
Subject: Re: Violent Thoughts
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Jezebel writes:

So, does anyone else ever have these violent impulses, where they strongly feel what the impact would actually be like? Or am I the only psychotic one?

careful with that term.

Personally, I'm rather glad for the Brady Bill and the five-day waiting period.

<<<And what do you suppose prevents us from acting on these impulses?>>>

Societal pressure, internalized, duh. Until the impulse overwhelms it.

Message 132 3/20/99 2:41 PM
Subject: Re(3): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

Oooh, Keela Merrin, you're really making me mad! First of all, I'm not laughing at the superior intellect. And second, what the hell is a herbert?

I could contend every point you made. I could be a contender! Contender is the knight!

So, firstly, it was not I who brought the girl into this. It is YOU who are

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confusing Communists and Socialists. I never used the specific terms "socialists" or "Marxists". This is because the objects of the HUAC and McCarthy "witchhunts" were not Socialists, they were Communists and Communist sympathizers. They were Stalinists. And this is because at the time, virtually the entire American left had sold its soul to Stalin, when it seemed he represented the only alternative to Fascism, and not bothered to redeem that soul, or found it too late to, once it became clear there were other alternatives. A lot of people, supposedly smart ones - Jean-Paul Sartre, for example -- never ceased to support Uncle Joe. No true socialist could have endorsed the totalitarian state capitalism of the Soviet Union under Joseph Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili. There were leftist organizations, unions, etc., that were careful to keep the Communists and Stalinists out. But the American Communist Party was almost totally subservient to the Moscow line, and it tried to make any organization in which it became involved -- and there were many -- do the same.

And political dissent in this country was not "stifled". Remember that the anti-communism campaign was begun by the Truman Administration. This was something with bipartisan support. Note that plenty of prominent politicians -- Margaret Chase Smith being the most famous -- condemned McCarthy, and got away with it. This was the period when civil rights first became an issue, with Hubert Humphrey's speech to the Democratic National Convention in 1948 (leading to the third party "Dixiecrat" candidacy of J. Strom Thurmond), the desegregation of the armed forces, the Brown decision in 1954. I am sure this compares rather favorably with the amount of political dissent allowed in Stalin's Russia at the time. You can call me whatever intellectual insults you like, but I think of myself as a relativist, and I'll bet even you could have related better in the 1950's to the US than the USSR. At least you could vote to change the former.

I would say that publicity is the best weapon against spies and subverters, who really can't work without cover. What did you expect, that a director or actor would put "Member, Communist Party" under his name on the credits? How else was the public to know, to be warned about the danger, except publically? What would you have had HUAC do, send the FBI to kidnap suspects off the street and haul them off to the Gulag, as they did in the Soviet Union? The hearings were a blunt instrument, it's true, but Alan Rickman to the contrary, they hurt a lot less than the alternative.

As for the danger from Communists, you forget that a only a minority of colonists (about one third) supported independence from Britain, and a minority of Southerners were enthusiastic about secession. Some Americans joined the KKK, the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, volunteered to fight in Vietnam. Most acquiesced to the genocide of the Native Americans and the oppression of every minority group. Today, Moral minorities threaten to destroy rights that the majority cherishes, when they get around to thinking about them. I saw one of those oh-so-PC bumper stickers recently, the one with the quote from that famous faker of research Margaret Mead, the one about a small group of determined citizens changing things, and I was frightened. The Nazis were a small group of determined citizens. The radical right are well organized and they vote. The Communists had organization -- Lenin's famous quote applies equally well here -- and they had blind loyalty. They had an open system here they could easily exploit, and they had a population which, through the New Deal, the total mobilization of WWII, and now the consumer economy, was becoming quite accustomed to regimentation and doing just what

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the government and other large institutions told them to do, either directly or through propaganda (advertising.) (Ever read Sinclair Lewis' "It Can't Happen Here"?) The point is, to dismiss the possibility of a takeover by a small minority resulting in Soviet style repression contradicts every lesson of history and current events.

I don't write off the "misfortunes" of those "blacklisted", especially when some of them had not even done the things of which they were accused. But I would rather, any day of the week, go through what they did, than spend ten years in Siberia with Ivan Denisovich, or get a bullet in the back of the head at Lubyanka. McCarthyism to Stalinist repression is a paper cut to the shower scene in "Psycho".

And by the way, Gary Cooper didn't name names. He didn't have any names to name. What he said was, "I don't know much about Communism, but from what I hear, I don't like it, because it isn't on the level."

If it is agreed that Kazan deserves the award artistically, then the burden of proof is on those who would deny it to him to explain why. They need to show that what he did was utterly evil. And as far as I am concerned, they can't, because it was quite the contrary.

---terrible person ("the eternal Thompson gunner/still wanders through the night/ now it's ten years later/ but he still keeps up the fight" -- though if I were really Headless, wouldn't I be sirin, or Brom Bones?)

Oh, and don't worry, I don't believe you really mean what you said either.

Message 131 3/20/99 5:23 PM
Subject: Re(4): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

Steve Omlid writes:

Great post, Keela. (And same to you Terry, even though I don't agree with you and I too am not sure how much of that was deep conviction and how much was was shit-disturbing for its own sake.)

Don't you think (John) Barrymore deserves some credit for starting the thread?

As for my share of it, well, gee, thanks, I guess, but I think it really underlines the narrowness of the range of opinion presented and held in this conference and BBS that when a contrary opinion is expressed (by me), folks, rather than arguing with it, simply deny the possibility that anyone (or that I) could actually think this way! They seem to be certain I must just be having fun, that like Cyrano de Bergerac, my nose is a joke which I will soon take off and my position is taken on strictly to annoy or make a point. But what if you-all are wrong? What if, rather than simply looking for opportunities to be contrary, I actually believe the things I write?

After all, if I just wanted to argue, I would take issue with the prevailing opinion no matter what it was. I would have gone out to see "Saving Private Ryan" so that I could have disputed with Martin Chong and Eva Luna. I'd be all over politics (much to J. Mark Andrus' furious powerless annoyance), Women

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<--> Men, wherever controversy rages. As Steve Omlid basically concedes, there is so much bullshit piling up here, that I never need to look for a chance to put on my Batsuit and batwings and try to stay above it. (This is the Theory of Large Pools, which negates all notions of cause and effect, of want and choice and menu.) It's like milk at the supermarket next door, open 24 hours, easily available whenever I want it, no need to wait for a shipment to arrive or the doors to open.

But looking at the actual record, isn't it possible as well that I don't mind sitting quietly indefinitely, or for long periods, driving along in the passenger side, watching the posts of a fence go by, and only when I see one that really needs to be banged down, that really stands out and disturbs me and calls my name, that I feel I need to stop the (bumper) car, go get out the sledgehammer, and wail away with this (blunt) instrument, until I've put my mind at rest with what will be my testimony?

In other words, you may be sure I'm kidding, but what if I'm not?

And what the hell do you mean by "deep conviction", anyway?

Because I've never been convicted, no matter how many times I've been accused.

Message 130 3/20/99 5:41 PM
Subject: Re(6): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

Auntie Em writes:

I almost bought it, but a few of the lines in the beginning, like "dire and very real threat" and "goal of infiltration, indoctrination, and subversion," sounded too much like parody.

Interesting, since the first quote is from Hoover's "Masters of Deceit", and the latter from John A. Stormer's "None Dare Call It Treason."

Message 129 3/20/99 6:22 PM
Subject: Re(6): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

Auntie Em writes:

I almost bought it, but a few of the lines in the beginning..... sounded too much like parody.

Though it did get more convincing towards the end .

And if I didn't actually believe it myself, would that make it any less true?

Message 128 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person
To: film

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

but whom did he shoot?

you're not going to get me to believe that there was a Clint Eastwood movie in which he didn't shoot anyone. He even shot people, and buildings, in "The Bridges of Madison County".

he plays a reporter, right? So I'm imagining him there with his notebook, etc.. "I know what you're thinking. Did he write six sentences, or only five? Well, to tell you the truth, I've forgotten myself in all this excitement. But being as this is a number 2 pencil, the most powerful writing implement in the world, and mightier than the sword [or is that the other one], you've got to ask yourself one question...."

Message 122 3/21/99 1:39 PM
Subject: Re(6): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

Steve Omlid writes:

Nope, we didn't do that. What we did was not "deny the possibility" that you might think that way, but rather we simply raised the possibility that you might have been either exaggerating your opinion or adopting an opinion simply to stir debate. Given your somewhat overwrought stance over what you perceive as a "narrowness of opinion", and given your propensity towards shit-disturbing for its own sake (which is certainly not necessarily a bad thing in an arena where the goal is to promote discussion), our raising this possibility was hardly a stretch.

Nope (I wish you could see me now, and see that I'm matching your silly supercilious lip-puckering in saying it) yourself. I don't see the same sort of doubts about motivation raised for anyone else here in any other argument. I've heard people say "your reasons are wrong" but never "your reasons aren't really yours". You continue to attribute to me a "propensity towards shit-disturbing for its own sake" as if this were a given, again making assumptions about my motivations for which you cannot possibly have any grounds. I could just as easily assume your basic impulse to be the promotion of utter banality and proclaim it to be such.

I wrote what I wrote, as the Pope told Reginald Foster, and I'll stand by it, and take full responsibility for it. Take it for what it says, and respond based on that. If you can, since it would appear that the argument that I don't really mean what I say is raised first by those without the facts or argumentative skill to rebut me. If you disagree with me, disprove me; if you can't (more likely), I guess ignore me, but don't go making statements you can't prove because I WILL call you on them, as I've done to others before. Otherwise, admit that what I say is true, which it would be whether I believe it or not. If I told you that my father's family lost everything when the Red Army marched into Lvov in 1939, and having fled to Hungary and somehow survived WWII had to run for their lives again with the Communist takeover in 1947, would you tell me you didn't really think I meant what I said, that I was just trying to stir up trouble? Would you burp out one of your trademark "Nopes" of pathetically empty contempt, since of course, you would be just SO sure you knew what was in my mind?

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My advice to you is not to look beyond the surface, at least here, at least mine. You can't have any idea what's inside the black box; much more useful to pay attention to the red LED's on top. (They might be counting down.) The visible part of the iceberg should be worry enough; don't go diving to try to see the rest because there is way too much of it and it's not pretty. In short, pay attention to what I'm saying, and not what you think I'm saying, because once you start to try to think, you're in way over your depth.

Message 115 3/21/99 8:34 PM
Subject: Re(8): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

terrible person writes: (quoting Steve Omlid)
You continue to attribute to me a "propensity towards shit-disturbing for its own sake" as if this were a given, again making assumptions about my motivations for which you cannot possibly have any grounds

pierre le fou writes:
Except that it's a pattern of yours that we've seen you do over and over again

Wrong again. When will you people ever stick to what you actually know? That I engage in argument here is of course obvious. That I do so "for it's own sake" you have no way of proving, and therefore, if you have any intellectual self-respect or moral claim, no right to assert. I mean, you can say whatever you like about me, call me whatever you want, and I can't actually do anything about it, but aren't you supposed to be the good, true, right, righteous, and ethical ones?

Message 105 3/22/99 6:04 PM
Subject: Re(2): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

nessie writes:
Let's leave the politics and the morals out of the equation for a minute and consider what happens to a society that honors informers.

Ok. Is it bad for society when children let the authorities know that their parents are abusing them?

Wouldn't things be better -- wouldn't you be happier if some member of one of the JFK conspiracies (whichever actually succeeded) had informed on it?

Or is it better always to keep silent?

To paraphrase a memorable line of Eva Luna's, "Informing on bad things, I guess, is good! And informing on good things -- or things you happen to do -- is bad!"

Message 104 3/22/99 7:46 PM

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Subject: Re(3): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

I should say for starters that if I actually did argue just for the sake of arguing, it would be because there were people like Keela Merrin worth arguing with. But I am smiling, and do you know why? It's because I'm not really left-handed.....

Hah!

Thwang!

First of all, I'm not asserting (nor ever have asserted) that I never do nor ever have done anything simply to provoke. It's possible, I suppose, that I sometimes do. But I am emphatically denying is your or anyone else's ability to know when I am not saying quite what I really think (if I ever am),

especially through this medium.

(Flank. Jank-a-lank.)

You demand to know what my true convictions are. What if I don't have any? What if the only thing about which I'm sure is that we can't be sure about anything else? What if that's what I'm really trying to prove? And what makes you think I have a beard?

As for arguing what you don't believe, haven't you ever heard of lawyers?

(Phwitt! Ding-ting! Swish! Yow!)

During the Citation Wars (remember, when I went mano-a-womano with Kelsey Gadoo?), I deployed the most terrible weapon in my arsenal, the layered argument, quoting in the process Edward R. Murrow, famous for his affair with Pamela Harriman, his very silly celebrity interview show, and, oh yes, basically creating CBS News from scratch and taking on McCarthy. Murrow also once defended a government employee, Milo (that's a neat name!) Radulovich, who had lost his job because his father was alleged to have been a Communist. Intoned ol' Edward Roscoe, "The iniquity of the father shall not be visited upon the sons, even if that iniquity be proved, and in this case, it was not." Spidra Webster might have added that it was not even an iniquity. Now, it's good to have multiple tiers of protection, so that even if the besiegers cross the moat, they still have to climb the ramparts while we pour boiling oil on them. But there is no need to employ the defenses all at once if the first one will suffice; it saves boiling oil (in case OPEC raises prices) and you really do want to keep those Ostrogoths as far away as you can. So there is no need to say "You're wrong (in this specific instance)!" when I can say instead "You can't possibly (or at least probably) be right (in general)!" And being able to say, "So what if you were right?" is like being high on a steep bluff like Chateau Gaillard, which the French were only able to take by crawling up the latrines.

(Criiiiiing! Klank! Ehhhh!)

Speaking of bluffs, have you ever thought to check all the registered

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historical facts before attributing to me unquestionable scholarship? Just wondered.

(Thwipp! Scrape! Whoosh!)

Now, as for my actual opinions on McCarthy and his ilk, the yes or no answer you've demanded, do you really expect to dissect me with this blunt instrument?

(No, not this one. Spring!!! Gachang!!)

If you'd like to read my thoughts on Joseph McCarthy, politician, plotter, person, and personification, I'd be glad to share them. I can tell you something of both sides in the controversy, both his supporters and his opponents. (I don't know as much about HUAC. Yet.) However, it would take more than a single page, though less than five pages, and length is not so popular here.

(Lock blades, lock hilts, grimace, gnash teeth, shove back, stand away a moment.)

Now, why are YOU smiling?

Message 103 3/22/99 7:52 PM
Subject: Re(3): The Holocaust: What of Roberto's View of It?
From: terrible person
To: film

I heard Benigni's acceptance speech, which one I'm not sure, and I thought I heard him say something about how without the Holocaust, his film could never have been made, that he dedicated the award to them, as if being portrayed in his award winning movie was supposed to be a consolation for dying or nearly dying in gas chambers. Did anyone hear this too, and being more charitable than I, attribute it to problems with English? Or was anyone equally bothered?

Message 102 3/22/99 8:00 PM
Subject: Re(4): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

Auntie Em writes:

But for you to say now that the American leftists of the 40s and 50s were a bad thing and, in particular, a "dire and real threat," you have to somehow account for the 50 years since then which shows that they were not.

I hate to argue with Auntie Em, because, basically, I'm scared to. Even if I'm right.

But I thought it was clear that my point was that you can't call informing in itself good or bad, as nessie was trying to do, but that instead that it was the nature the thing being informed on that had to be debated. I am glad to do that, if you'd like to do it seriously, with evidence, etc.

Because the last 50 years -- really, the last few years -- have shown that

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they really were a threat.

Message 101 3/22/99 8:04 PM
Subject: Re(6): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

John Barrymore writes:
Well, one of my former professors, an excellent Latin teacher, was removed from his job at Berkeley in the 1950s when they were required to take "Loyalty Oaths."

But this is quite impossible. Everyone knows that Latin teachers are so esteemed and valuable that they are jealously retained no matter what.

Message 100 3/23/99 7:13 AM
Subject: Re(5): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

pierre le fou writes:
You ever heard the story of The Boy Who Cried Wolf?

Do we have an actual completed analogy somewhere in our future or just a throwaway reference?

Whatever you might say about the proverbial Boy, in the end, there WAS a wolf, and from what little I know of wolves, I doubt it went home satisfied after eating just a single meal.

Message 99 3/23/99 7:14 AM
Subject: Re(6): Elia Kazan: Should he or Should he Not?
From: terrible person
To: film

Steve Omlid writes:
The fictional (but based-in-reality) movie The Front had a nice sad irony in it - the comedian whose life is ruined by the blacklist (played by Zero Mostel) had joined the Communist Party for one of the most time-honored reasons. He did it to impress a cute Commie babe.

This was not just fiction. The Communist Party deliberately used attractive women (and friendly men) to recruit insecure and lonely people with unfulfilled lives, in the same way as religious groups. The Party provided not just a sense of idealistic purpose, and a sense of secretive adventure, but a social life.

Message 93 3/23/99 9:19 PM
Subject: Re(5): The Holocaust: What of Roberto's View of It?
From: terrible person
To: film

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

bernard thomas writes:

*I just cannot believe anyone is that (for want of a better word)
"enthusiastic" ALL OF THE TIME.*

BUT *I* AM!!!!!!

YAHOOOOO!!!

> 89

Message 89 3/23/99 11:06 PM
Subject: Re: Civil War
From: terrible person
To: politics

Bernard Thomas has an excellent point, though by the time General Sherman really got going, the English and French had pretty much realized that the Union was going to win and given up on the idea of intervening to help the South (though ships for the Confederacy continued to be built in Britain, and other weapons and goods sold to be run through the Union blockade. And in the last months of the war, Jefferson Davis offered to abolish slavery in return for Franco-British assistance.) But early in the war, intervention was a definite possibility. The British had to deal with lots of angry textile workers unemployed because of the cutoff of Southern cotton, and in France, Napoleon III wanted to weaken America so that it would not get in the way of his hairbrained Mexican takeover. A certain number of incidence involving American and British ships on the high seas brought Lord Palmerston and co. even closer to stepping in. It was largely due to the skill of the US Minister to the Court of St. James, Charles Francis Adams (son of John Quincy) that the British were kept out. His famous barbs include, to an unsympathetic Queen Victoria, "It would be superfluous in me to point out to Your Majesty that this is war", and to a crowd of millhands demanding to know why the Union had not beaten the secessionists in 90 days as promised, "Because we found we had Americans to fight instead of Englishmen."

However, it should be pointed out that in the 19th century plenty of nations intervened in each other's affairs for no other reasons than they felt like it and could get away with it. European nations would demand to protect the Christians of the Turkish Empire, or demand that certain princelings succeed to certain thrones. This does not even include what they were doing in Africa and Asia. At the time, no one said "business"; they talked of "recognizing so-and-so's interests" in an area.

I guess, considering two alternatives, one in which a lot of Kosovo Albanians get chased from their homes or killed, and one in which not as many Kosovo Albanians get chased from their homes or killed, the second is preferable. but I wonder if it can be brought about by NATO action, especially limited-casualty bombing alone. It didn't beat the North Vietnamese and it hasn't done much against Saddam. And the Serbians have shown themselves pretty determined and willing to take international punishment. Don't forget five years of sanctions. And Gavrilo Princip.

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> 82

Message 82 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

don't worry too much. you're not psychotic, or if you are, you're not the only one. I (and I think I speak for others) also sometimes have violent impulses to blow stuff up, especially ugly buildings standing in front of us. but we handle these feelings and are stronger for it.

> 78

Message 78 3/25/99 9:42 PM
Subject: Re(2): Singing a little
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Kelsey Gadoo writes:
And who knew that Spidra had a wife?

She has a wicked neat webpage!

> 77

Message 77 3/25/99 9:55 PM
Subject: Re(4): Blowing Stuff Up
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

nessie writes:
Anybody here know why they're called "guy wires"?

I believe that to celebrate Women History Month, most major demolition firms have been using gal wires, which have been shown to do the job just as well

for 70 percent of the pay. Goddess worshippers call them Gaia wires.

And in productions of Frank Loesser musicals, doll wires are used.

And in St. Louis, MarkMc wires.

And much as I would like to believe in pierre le fou's explanation, my dictionary (American Heritage) says that word is from Dutch, quite unrelated to the name or the male term.

don't touch me, I'm a real live wire,

terrible person (always asking "wire we doing this?")

Message 69 3/26/99 11:00 PM
Subject: Stoler is Dead

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

From: terrible person
To: film

I'm surprised that (John) Barrymore missed this one, for I count on him for such things, but I just found out about the death 17 February, age 69, of Shirley Stoler, who helped repeal the unwritten rule that restricted (and still tends to restrict) large actresses to comedic or minor roles, although the dramatic roles she received tended to be villainous ones. She was best known for her role as a cigar-smoking Nazi commandant in men's boxers and boots, a handful of grease in her hair, in Lina Wertmüller's 1976 film "Seven Beauties". But she had roles in many other notable pictures, including "Honeymoon Killers", "Klute" and "The Deer Hunter".

But what I found REALLY interesting was that she had appeared, as Mrs. Haze, in a previously unknown (to me) 1981 stage production of "Lolita", adapted by Edward Albee. Well, Albee damned. Apparently, it is universally agreed that not only was this play version better than either filmed one, but that it was far superior to the novel itself. And if everyone says so, why, they must be right, right?

Message 67 3/27/99 8:55 AM
Subject: Re(2): Stoler is Dead
From: terrible person
To: film

lecia writes:
are you really going to start a new round of bloody noses?

maybe reveal some RED FACES.....

how could anyone disparage the great vladimir by comparing him to ed and find him wanting?

shows how much YOU know, Monsieur or Senorita lecia. it happens that Nabokov was a VERY strong anti-communist (strongly supported the useless expenditure of American lives in the foreign adventure of Vietnam, e.g.....)

~personally thinks that mama haze could kick good old martha's ass any day of the week

martha? you mean Martha Beck, murderess played by Shirley in "The Honeymoon Killers"?

-- thought Steve Omlid should have stood by what he said as he said he does

Message 65 3/27/99 7:26 PM
Subject: vrai iconoclasme
From: terrible person
To: film

Well, Steve Omlid, before you decry faux iconoclasm so loudly, I think it might be ... diverting? instructive? if you provided a few examples of what you feel to be legitimate iconoclasm. And a few of what you believe to be

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legitimate icons. (for Kelsey Gadoo tastefully to arrange.) Would you?

(References to the Byzantine Greeks not necessary, however.)

It would appear what is assumed to be true (an "icon", under this metaphor regime) varies enormously with subculture and time, that those smashing the icons themselves become them if one waits a few minutes or travels a few paces. In every group, there are icons, and they are defended with (etymologically appropriate) religious fervor while those of other groups are attacked. But of course, OUR group always has the absolute truth, and there is no such thing as taste.

My tastes are not really anyone's business, but I always fly EconoClass, even when meeting with a FirstClass client.

Message 64 3/28/99 8:51 AM
Subject: l'iconoclasme fatigui
From: terrible person

To: film

first of all, wouldn't you say that pretty much anything in a movie is an icon? I don't mean in the quasi-punning visual symbolic sense. But if you put something up on a ten-foot tall screen, far larger than life, or even on a tiny one, but YOU are paying attention to it rather than your own life, which if you don't think it is equally important, should be, simply because it's real. And even a great deal of "iconoclastic" film criticism simply, by reinforcing the importance of individual film elements (such as actors) and of film in general, feeds the general and specific icon-worship.

But no matter how iconoclastic you are, there are always people who can challenge your assumptions and cast themselves as yet more iconoclastic. Or, and what is easier, you can defend the icons (perhaps excusing them as "guilty pleasures" to attempt to shield oneself from the new "alternative mainstream") when and where it has become unpopular and shock that way. Or, you can simply be differently iconoclastic, defending your icons, smashing the other guys', without trying to occupy the "normal" center.

And as for Drew Barrymore vs. Jodie Foster, this is a terrific example of class-based snobbery. Despite Drew Barrymore's illustrious ancestry, her image is that of "white trash", with her tattoos, exhibitionism, past problems, public love life, limited actual acting talents. Jodie Foster's education, her Oscars and directing credits, her careful choice of roles, her careful protection of her private life (and rumors about her that many "average moviegoers" find a little icky), and even her magnificent facial bone structure, all make her the favorite of the upper, the educated, tasteful classes, to which most of the critics belong or want to. (It's always funny to see Jodie Foster trying to play lower class roles, trying SO hard, you can hear the gears turning in her mind.) Many moviegoers find her cold, distant. Not fun. Not like the bouncy, enthusiastic Drew Barrymore, who smiles back at you on posters instead of looking away to some distant cosmic goal. I don't know what the "Power" ratings, the Hollywood 100, say, nor who commands more per picture, but I would definitely think more people like Drew Barrymore than Jodie Foster, and like her more.

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Now, whether that makes her more "important" is another issue entirely. Popularity can be counted by butts in seats. (When I was in show business, I always knew who and what was popular.) But importance? Is that influence?

Influence on people in general or just on the film industry (even if supposedly the latter comes from the former?) It's true that I'm a monarchist, but as in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe, I support the monarch as the guarantor of welfare of the people versus the aristocracy. The Barrymore vs. Foster question is that of whether art is for everyone, or just for a few who will direct it to some "higher" purpose. Or in other words, if anyone is going to talk of who is more important, one has to ask, more important to whom? and to more of whom?

Message 59 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

Steve Omlid, 3/27/99, 9:01: <<<<<some serious tilting at sacred cows.>>>>>

Steve Omlid, 3/28/99, 9:10: <<<<<shooting at some exalted sacred cows.>>>>>

YOU SHALL NOT PRESS DOWN UPON THE BROW OF FILM THIS CROWN OF THORNS!! YOU SHALL NOT CRUCIFY GOL UPON MIXED AND OVERUSED METAPHORS!!!

I was thinking today as I read some articles in the newspaper how much GOL might sometimes resemble professional wrestling.

Now, I would say that often in film actors and characters the public is looking for someone who is somehow, to match their largeness on the screen and large importance, bigger and better than they. We can argue about the reasons for this, but it seems obvious that people identify much more easily with people who are more beautiful than they can ever hope to be than those who are smarter. And this goes much of the way towards accounting for the relative importances of Drew Barrymore and Jodie Foster.

Message 53 3/28/99 8:56 PM
Subject: Re: right outa "1984"
From: terrible person
To: politics

I rather disagree. I've read "1984" several times and never found anything in it that has much to do with what you are talking about. Unless you are just using "1984ish" in its loosest sense, that is, "bad", do you have any actual reason for invoking George Orwell's novel in this context?

> 52

Message 52 3/28/99 8:58 PM
Subject: Re: MUSTY TV Mar. 27th-Apr. 2nd
From: terrible person
To: film

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NO INTRO?!!?!?!?!?!?!?

?

!

Message 51 3/28/99 9:02 PM
Subject: Re: Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Yeah!! It's cool to watch buildings get blown up and fall down!!

I'll bet the people of Guernica, London, Berlin, Hanoi, Sarajevo, and Oklahoma City thought the same thing!!

Message 47 3/29/99 8:20 AM
Subject: Re(4): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Nine writes:
Nah, he's just standing in for kollontai.

Actually, I'm not at this moment.

But in general, I'd be proud to.

I haven't noticed **you** standing for much in particular lately, though.

Message 46 3/29/99 10:51 AM
Subject: Re(3): right outa "1984"
From: terrible person
To: politics

But the whole point of "1984" was that the "double-talk slogans" to which you allude were TRUE, which was what gave the world of Ingsoc and Airstrip One its nightmare quality. This is all explained in the latter half of the book, in which Winston is reading "The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism" (supposedly by Emmanuel Goldstein) and being interrogated/tortured/converted/saved by O'Brien. War had become peace, and freedom had become slavery. And the statements put out by the Party which Winston thought were lies, he realized, could just as well have been true for anything he could prove or even know.

These days, the term "Orwellian" seems to be applied to anything with which one doesn't agree. Of course, the meaning of any expression can shift and spread, but as it does so, it loses any sort of punch. Information is distinctions. As Gilbert wrote, "When everyone is somebody/Then no one's anybody", and when an expression can mean anything, it means nothing.

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Message 44 3/29/99 6:36 PM
Subject: Re: Nam
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:

Even if all thepropaganda about them is true (highly unlikely), the Serbians are doing NOTHING in Kosovo that the Americans didn't do in Viet Nam, many times over.

Well, the U.S. troops certainly drove a lot of people out of their homes, to get them into "strategic hamlets" or just out so that the areas could be made "free-fire zones", but they weren't doing this with the eventual purpose of settling another ethnic group there, as the Serbians seem to be doing.

One pioneer though of ethnic cleansing followed by partition were the British in Ireland, though. I don't recall the Yugoslavs intervening in that, but I'll check my history books.

Well, I suppose the U.S. did a good job on the Native Americans. Does that count?

Message 43 3/29/99 6:39 PM
Subject: Re(6): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

Yeah, Nine. How dare you actually have a life!

I don't see any particular evidence of that.

But so you're saying something like that the more one posts, the less of a life one has?

Message 41 3/29/99 8:43 PM
Subject: Re(3): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

Context, Terry, context.

Golly gee.

Context, huh? Can we agree that children who are exposed to a lot of cartoonish, consequenceless violence in movies, TV shows, and video games tend not to appreciate the actual effects of violence in more realistic movies or reality itself? Or should I bring out the studies and references? Do we think that those who act a certain way in the safe context of a role playing game or a BBS don't act that way in reality?

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Message 40 3/29/99 8:47 PM
Subject: Re: Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

I'm noticing also in my Chronicle today the comments of a local community organizer, who was very upset at the crowds, the noise, and above all the unexpected clouds of choking dust of uncertain composition. (Did you remember your masks, or would that have spoiled the fun?) "Instead of throwing the Christians to the lions, it was throwing this old building to the dynamite plunger." He said that it was an "event for the Bruce Willis and Schwarzenegger crowd", and "a sick spectacle." On the other hand, can you really believe these community-oriented types?

But he's right; they'll have public executions next.

Now, when we destroy something, what are we really destroying? Not matter, or energy - they can only be transformed into one another. What is being destroyed is structure. I mean, all the concrete and steel of Verducci Hall is still there, if in little pieces. It's just the overall structure, which used to hold it all together, that's gone. Now, what is structure? It's information. It's distinctions. It's what made Verducci Hall different from some other arrangement of concrete and steel, such as a large random pile of it on the ground. Do you want to destroy information? Verducci Hall was evidence. All Steve Omlid's graffiti -- there is no way to prove it now. It's down the memory hole, it's as if it never happened. All that work. There is now no way of distinguishing whether he did all that work, or not. No way of distinguishing truth from untruth. Is that sad? Or is the destruction of information, the annihilation of certainty, and the acceleration of the trend to entropy -- is that good? Is the replacement of purposeful structure -- ok, structure always limits freedom, but for a reason -- with anarchical randomness, good? Is it beautiful to disrupt a working structure, a system of things working together that apparently has been to the benefit of some people -- just for entertainment, gratification? I'd be interested in your answers, how you feel about the breaking down of that which people have worked so hard to build.

This building, apparently, had to be destroyed only because it had been badly wounded, made uninhabitable by an earthquake. It should have had many years of use left. This was death without reason, and death without reason is tragic. Isn't loss of this building is a shame; shouldn't it be mourned because it could not be saved? When someone dies young, is that a cause for celebration? Do you sing and dance and drink at funerals? If you found a deer by the side of the road that had been hit by a car and hurt beyond repair, would you call all your friends to the spectacle of your finishing it off and the blood spurting in beautiful red patterns? If you want to celebrate something, shouldn't you wait until they actually begin building whatever the destruction made room for? It's far easier to destroy than to build. If you want to witness destruction, there is no shortage of it around. And if creation usually requires destruction of what came before, don't you realize that it is in no way guaranteed by it?

Message 39 3/29/99 9:13 PM
Subject: Re: Double plus ungood(was: Nam)
From: terrible person

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To: politics

Comrade Nessie, I don't think you have the latest edition of the Newspeak dictionary. Doubleplusungood should all be one word. Careful; you're tending to thoughtcrime.

What amazes me is Milosevic's grasp of asset-based logic, of what matters and what doesn't. The bombing in its current form does not matter. He will lose his air force and defenses, which he basically does not need to keep himself in power. Meanwhile he gains a lot of sympathy at home and abroad. If he shoots down the odd NATO plane, all the better. He is not worried about losing control of the skies because he knows this only matters if a ground war is coming; air war is not an end in itself; you have to hold the ground. It's where the people live. And he is pretty sure no ground war is coming. (If there is to be one, then, ok, there is no point to any strategy, he's pretty much done for. Rien ne vaudra rien. Although if ground troops go in, the Allies will be unwilling to take casualties, and look to negotiate as quickly as possible. They CERTAINLY will not drive on Belgrade any more than they did on Baghdad, so he is still safe. Let NATO invade. His boys will inflict maximum suffering, on their home turf, unified, with no long lines of communication or weakening support back home.) Meanwhile his troops can operate freely in Kosovo. There is nothing the Allies can do from the air since the Serbian forces are operating in small groups. They might be able to do something if they sent in ground troops, but even then this would be dicey. Remember the last time the US fought, with all its heavy weapons and technology, motivated guys operating in small groups on their home turf?

There actually is a solution for NATO. But it is one they have rejected. There is already a force in Kosovo, another one that knows the territory better than the Serbians, motivated if they weren't before, even more by the horrors inflicted on their people. This is the KLA. Now, NATO has refused to arm the KLA, and avoided embracing it in any way. but since the KLA has signed the peace accord NATO is trying to enforce, and NATO is now in effect acting as its air force, they might as well recognize that an alliance exists. Now, there are only about 12000 KLA fighters, at best, compared to some 40000 Serbians, and even with NATO weapons, they could not match Serbian armament. However, remember that the Serbians are operating in small groups. this advantage can be turned against them; since Vietnam showed how vulnerable small patrols are to guerrilla attacks. The KLA might not be able to do a lot of damage, but they would force the Serbians to operate in larger groups (with armored vehicles) for safety. But these larger units would be much more vulnerable to allied air attack. The Serbians would be caught between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Now, this is simply the advice I would give the NATO brass, if I were asked. It's a solution to the military problem. Whether it would produce a desirable political result, I have no idea. I'll figure that out....tomorrow? If there is one.....

Message 37 3/30/99 6:41 AM
Subject: Re(4): Exocet Missiles
From: terrible person
To: politics

If the Chinese could steal a W-88 miniature warhead design from Los Alamos, as

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we say they did, why not some other nation?

Also, didn't one of the cruise missiles we sent against Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan land, without the warhead exploding, in Pakistan? Not that the Pakistanis would reverse engineer it and sell it to anyone...

Also, according to Newsweek, the Yugoslav navy has 13 submarines. They're probably really old, but all concentrated on one target....

And, db daugherty, I don't think these are the kind of miniature submarines that carried Hagbard Celine.

Message 36 3/30/99 6:48 AM
Subject: Re(5): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

Weren't you the one who was saying we shouldn't speculate on people's motivations, Terry?

Yes, and I'll say it again. But it's not at all what I was saying here. I have no idea what anyone's motivation in going to watch violence or act obnoxiously is. What I am saying is that watching "unreal" violence, whatever their motivation, tends to desensitize someone to the real thing. Can you understand that difference?

Message 35 3/30/99 6:49 AM
Subject: Re(3): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

Not really, I don't think.

Well, that's been obvious for a long time.

And now you expect us to believe you remember?

Message 34 3/30/99 7:01 AM
Subject: Re(3): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

pierre le fou writes:

See the above if that still baffles you.

The only thing that baffles me is your inarticulateness.

When the state executes someone, it takes a perfectly good human being, a wondrous creation, a fantastic structure, induplicable, and turns it into a pile of organic compounds indistinguishable from any other. A dead body can't do any more than a dead deer or a rotting pile of garbage. Because this body has some problems, instead of trying to repair them, the state has decided

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this body is irreparable, good for nothing, fit only to be destroyed, for the spectacle of it, so that people can have a sense of awe at the power of the state, a satisfaction of basic bloodlust and love of destruction, a sense of tragedy at the fall of someone like them, a feeling of "gee, glad it wasn't me", and one of "gee, I'd better be careful." All these things apply equally well to the public demolition of a building.

Call in the air strike, as they say.

I think that should remove some of YOUR bafflement, if it can make a dent in your ignorance.

Message 32 3/30/99 9:02 AM
Subject: Re(2): Double plus ungood(was: Nam)
From: terrible person
To: politics

The other clever thing Milosevic was to realize that there was really no incentive that the West could offer him to cooperate on Kosovo, except not to bomb. (Didn't anyone ever talk about sanctions? They helped bring Milosevic to Dayton in 1995.) And it wasn't worth it to avoid bombing; the price was too high. He would have had to allow NATO occupation of Kosovo. No, not worth it at all. The West had expected just the threat of bombing would scare him. Never make a threat unless the alternative is just as much in your interest. You have to be able to say, ok, we are perfectly capable of and willing to do it our way if you don't want to go along. In this case, it was obvious that NATO did not really want to bomb and certainly doesn't want to send in ground troops. So Milosevic called NATO's bluff. Go ahead, bomb me, see what I care. You would have done it anyway, there was no point for me to behave. He shot the hostage, in effect. Since things couldn't be worse, now he was free to do what he liked in Kosovo. What could NATO do to him? They were bombing already. (He's like the guy in "Life of Brian" already condemned for saying "Jehovah".) He just has to hold on for a week or so, very doable. (NATO is only bombing military targets, not civilians, certainly not him in his palace.)

Eventually, he will have ethnically cleansed the province. It will really be impossible to send the refugees back, or most of them. Then what will the West do? (Besides spend a lot of money maintaining the refugees in Albania or Macedonia or the half of Kosovo Milosevic doesn't want, in camps to maintain the illusion they are going home, or through permanent resettlement.) The West is severely limited in its options by its desire/need to appear moral. So will they make Serbia/Yugoslavia a permanent international pariah? (As we try to in Iraq, or Cuba, with such great success?) Work to overthrow Milosevic? It will be too late. There will be no point in punishing a whole country, especially one in the heart of Europe, astride the Danube. Neighboring countries, many of which are sympathetic anyway, will have to trade with Serbia, even if the U.S. and pals refuse to. Ten years from now, all this will be forgotten, all the effort wasted. It will be like the ending of "L.A. Confidential"; everyone will be in bed with everyone because they will have no alternative, everyone will have had to accept each other's evil.

His only danger is that his military will be so damaged that he can no longer maintain his grip on power, but considering his popular support (elevated by the bombing), his control of the media, and the complete absence of

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alternative political forces, this is the least of his worries, and he knows it.

Message 31 3/30/99 9:05 AM
Subject: Re(5): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

pierre le fou writes:

I understand your argument, but I don't believe it for a second. Nor is that really the point.

Gee, like you really think I believe anything that *you* write here?

Message 28 3/30/99 6:38 PM
Subject: Re(4): Double plus ungood(was
From: terrible person
To: politics

I hear repeated over and over that the reason Kosovo is so important to the Serbs is that it is the 'cradle of their civilization'(Newsweek.) Like most other things I hear over and over, I start to doubt this. It would seem to me that the main reason the Serbs want Kosovo, or Milosevic wants Kosovo - especially a Kosovo empty of people, ethnically cleansed -- is the favorite old German one of Lebensraum, "living space." Serbia absorbed some 650,000 refugees from Croatia (displaced by military campaigns assisted by the U.S. -- nessie has written of this) It has long expected to put them in Kosovo.

Now, there is the old question about what might have happened in Vietnam if the U.S. had simply taken all the money it spent on the War, billions upon billions, and divided it among the Vietnamese as a bribe not to go Communist. (Giving it for aid projects might have seemed less cynical, but then all the funds would have been stolen by corrupt officials.) The same question really should be asked about Kosovo. What if the wealthy NATO countries had simply offered Milosevic or the refugees several billion for new housing, job creation, etc. in Serbia? this would have given Milosevic the political cover to let Kosovo become more autonomous, and it also would have made the West look good in the eyes of the Serbians, exerting something of a moderating influence. Of course, the US military would not have gotten to show off a lot of high tech weaponry we taxpayers have been funding. but at least, dare I say it, no one would have had to be killed!!!

I suppose this could still be offered; maybe if the Serbs would get rid of Milosevic we'd rebuild them the way we did Germany. But if we've mainly been bombing military targets, we don't want to be rebuilding the military, and yet they are the ones we would have to please, since they are the only ones who can overthrow Milosevic.

I don't think Milosevic has a psychology background; I think you are thinking of former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic as the one who proved that psychotherapists are no more moral than anyone else.

As for air war, Mitchell and Douhet were wrong. It did not win WWII, not

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Vietnam, not the Gulf War, and I really doubt it is going to win this one.

> 27

Message 27 3/30/99 7:01 PM
Subject: Re(3): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Tim Walters, you are confusing the information something contains as a medium and that which it contains as an object, by virtue of its structure. A rock, with an intricate irregular crystal structure, but nothing written on it, can contain far more information than the text of an SF Chronicle (certainly than a Bay Guardian) because it is harder to reproduce. (It could be used to store text information if we really wanted to.) Two issues of a newspaper may contain the same text, but totally different information, since one is the one the murder victim was holding and desperately pointing to as he expired, and may contain evidence, and the other was just sitting in the box hoping to be bought. What if you had a paper that was actually bought in France in 1914? A photocopy -- preserving all the text information -- wouldn't quite replace it as a souvenir. You could make a million photocopies. But the paper would be different. Similarly, two blood cells may carry the same genetic information, but one was spilled, say, at the Battle of Lexington, and the other wasn't. (Hence the medieval veneration of relics.) One will be contaminated with gunpowder, the other not.

So maybe if you've seen one college dorm, you've seen them all, as Spiro Agnew or Murray Head might say, but Steve Omlid and many other people lived in this particular one and not another, and it's marked with their initials and even bodily fluids. A replacement building will have none of this history. No one will have any particular memories of it or associations with it for a long time. (I am not referring to the graffiti he left there for its text content, since it's a picture and graphics has far greater information -- try opening certain people's resumes here.) This is why, for instance, the Zionists wanted to go back to the land at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean, rather than be settled in Brazil or Madagascar or some place with similar climate but fewer entanglements. This is why we preserve landmarks, why in Europe, the Queen lives in a palace not a high-rise condo, why they worship in cathedrals built last millennium instead of last year. Because these places are special, and they have taken a long time to get that way, to accumulate information. Sure, they might not be quite as efficient, but unless you were in a high-performance situation, with which would you rather tell time, your great-grandfather's gold pocket watch, or a \$9.95 digital? If your hard drive crashed, would the exact same model be much of a replacement if it did not have any of your files on it because you had not been using it for five years like the other one? If your dog of 20 years died, would you accept that a new one was "just like it"? How about if your wife died? Personality is information....

If Verducci HAD to go, is that a reason to be happy about it? If next week they're having a public clearcutting of an ancient redwood forest, even one damaged by a forest fire, would you attend and think it cool? Do you enjoy car crashes on "Cops", stunts that defy death and don't succeed on "Real TV"? "My creatures are dying, and you celebrate?" God upbraids the Hebrews as the Red Sea closes on the Egyptian army....

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But by your argument, one person could have experienced the event and been the storehouse of the information for everyone else (who would have had the same experience anyway.) If we agree that viewing destruction without consequences is desensitizing and brutalizing, why did so many people all need to go and be brutalized by the experience? Why destroy a real building? (They could easily have had the same experience, if it were necessary, watching a special effects recreation, or being brainwashed into believing they had seen it.) Doesn't this replace good information (confirmation of pleasant memories) with bad (destructive feelings)? As I asked before, if you want to celebrate something, can't you celebrate the building of the new rather than the destruction of the old and loved?

I don't know quite what you mean by "category error", and I have no idea what you mean by "conscious". Do you? That the building had an interest in remaining intact is indicated (as much as in most other circumstances) by its resistance to being knocked down -- why did they have to dynamite it, and not just give it a light shove? Also, I would probably disagree with you about the information content of the building versus the human (presumably the human brain, not the human body; since we are not blasting the body apart in most executions, just shutting down the brain.) A building is pretty big, was around pretty long, and every chunk of it can encode something. This is tricky to measure, but it seems you could get within two or three points, on a logarithmic scale, of a human brain. (And then, don't some human brains contain orders of magnitude more information than others, yet we're all equal?)

Message 26 3/31/99 7:23 AM
Subject: Re(7): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

pierre le fou writes:
This mere slapping a few personal remarks

A few? You mean, in addition to not being able to read or understand, you can't count either?

And personal? It's the same thing I've already said about "online truth" a thousand times!

into an email and calling it a flame....

No. YOU'RE calling it a flame. I think of it as "bursting your long- and carefully-cultivated bubble."

How many times over the last year, in prose and in verse, have I had to put you in your place, in the corner with the dunce cap? Or do you keep coming back only to try to convince unbelieving me (and barely believing everyone else) that you really do participate in and enjoy your imagined humiliation games?

But my advice to you, pierre le sot, is to find someone like Tim Walters, who is actually capable of understanding, formulating, and stating ideas with some

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clarity, and to follow him around for a while. Say, ten or twenty years, until maybe you will have learned something. And then maybe you'll be worth more than a K or two. Because there really is no way for me to write any more in response to "Duh".

Message 25 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

If that is the case, you are using a ridiculously inefficient storage and compression system. Random noise is by definition everywhere indistinguishable; any thirty second chunk, or one second chunk, sounds (to our ears) like any other. By the same token, any one second of a certain tone (except the onset) is just like any other. When I worked in speech/sound compression, the basic technique was instead of recording each millisecond of a sound with the number of bits you were using, you would simply record the pitch and the duration for a great savings of data. You could do the same thing with Beethoven, just say, "Give me nine-tenths of a second of G" (three times) then as much as you like of E flat....", which is a lot more efficient than saying at each millisecond, "Still on G?" (Of course, this only works when you have the same pitch or type of sound s for a certain time, not jumping around every millisecond.) Silence is even easier. But white noise, just random jumping around, with no particular reason, conveys no information (except as a block.) Anyway, I'm surprised to hear you say that noise contains information because by definition, it's just not true.

If the information is in the coding scheme, not the rock, that's just showing that information does not exist outside of context, as you said. But this rock can convey a particular message. If you want to convey a different message, change your code book, find another rock that matches your message, or manipulate the very complex structure of this

Message 24 3/31/99 8:17 AM
Subject: Re(5): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

If it is the case that white noise takes up as much memory as Beethoven, you are using a ridiculously inefficient storage and compression system. Random noise is by definition everywhere indistinguishable; any thirty second chunk, or one second chunk, sounds (to our ears) like any other. By the same token, any one second of a certain tone (except the onset) is just like any other.

When I worked in speech/sound compression, the basic technique was instead of recording each millisecond of a sound with the number of bits you were using, you would simply record the pitch and the duration for a great savings of data. You could do the same thing with Beethoven, just say, "Give me nine-tenths of a second of G" (three times) then as much as you like of E flat....", which is a lot more efficient than saying at each millisecond, "Still on G?" (Of course, this only works when you have the same pitch or type of sound s for a certain time, not jumping around every millisecond.) Silence is even easier. But white noise, just random jumping around, with no particular reason, conveys no information (except as a block.) Anyway, I'm surprised to hear you say that noise contains information because by

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definition, it's just not true.

If the information is in the coding scheme, not the rock, that's just showing that information does not exist outside of context, as you said. But this rock can convey a particular message that it happens to match. If you want to convey a different message, change your code book, find another rock that matches your message, or manipulate the very complex structure of this rock to match your message.

The information to which I was referring in the dead man's newspaper would be forensic information, fingerprints, hairs, chemicals, etc. You could not perform tests for these things on just any newspaper.

If your taco was just like the taco you ate yesterday, so that you could not tell it was a different one and you might as well have been repeating yesterdays lunch, it does not contain much information; it's just a taco. On the other hand, if this taco was just the best one you had ever had, somehow the tacomaker had done something different with the salsa, or something, and you wanted to jump up, wave it around, and shout to the assembled masses, "THIS IS THE BEST DAMNED TACO I HAVE EVER HAD!!!", then run to the tacomaker and demand to know just what he had done to it, and saved it so it could be reverse engineered.....then it would contain significant information, apart from just being a taco from a particular taqueria. (I mean, if you wanted to describe it by specifying the position of every atom, that would be a huge amount of information, too much, I think, since moving a few atoms probably would not change its taste. When you get up to this level, information tends to travel in big packets, like "How much cilantro?) Uniqueness is relative; ideally, we might be able to save everything (how many people here save every email, fill up our hard drives?); when space is at a premium, or when things break down, we must make choices, but why do we have to celebrate it?

And to the extent that you could tell, walking through the halls of Verducci, that it was the place you had lived and not some other, it contained more information, and was worth saving. Death closes all, yet something ere the end, some deed of noble note, may yet be done, not unbecoming those who fought with gods; entropy does suck, and sucks everything down, but it can be resisted or collaborated with. And even if information in toto is lost, certain information can be protected, if we choose to.

I didn't say that all information was equal, or that more was always better; just the contrary. Information is given its value by its use. In these parts, a man's life can depend on a mere scrap of information. (In "Tinker,Tailor,Soldier, Spy", the fate of the British Secret Service depends on three bits.) I'm not telling anyone how to feel, just observing how they seem to. When I read the comments of some of its former residents, about the pleasant associations they had with the place, and when I thought of how when I go back to places I have lived and studied, and see the loci of memory gone, I get upset, it certainly seemed this place had valuable information. I mean, everyone talks of how GOL used to be better, and when it gets shut down, they'll probably miss it. Or will we celebrate the day that GOL gets "put out of its misery", so much of its informantion lost?

Message 23 3/31/99 9:02 AM
Subject: Re: cruel adaptation of dangerous liaisons
From: terrible person

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To: film

lecia writes:

(and before anyone tries to make me question my sexuality, i will not discuss it! trying to learn from barrymore's mistakes...)

don't worry. Your entire private life only becomes fair game for the Un-GOLish Activities Committee if you DENY any interest in watching same-sex couplings, rather than EXPRESSING it.

the question is, how well did the movie handle the base story?

Message 18 3/31/99 6:36 PM
Subject: Gulf of Tonkin
From: terrible person
To: politics

In 1964, two American ships, the Maddox and the C. Turner Joy were supposedly attacked by North Vietnamese patrol boats in the Gulf of Tonkin (off the coast of N. Vietnam.) Whether this actually happened is the subject of much debate, with most of the evidence now indicating that at least some of the attacks never happened (or were provoked by the American ships.) However, this did not stop Lyndon Johnson from using the attack to convince Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin resolution giving him a free hand in Vietnam, and using that resolution to begin bombing and other escalatory activities.

Now, supposedly, three, count em', three American soldiers have disappeared near the Macedonian border with Kosovo, after coming under fire on a recon mission. (Are we sure they were on the right side? Could they have been sent into the frontier region as US troops were sent to the disputed Texas/ Mexico border by President Polk in order to provoke a confrontation?) Maybe this isn't fake, but it's awfully convenient.

I guess we'll just have to send three or four armored or airborne divisions to rescue them now! "I didn't INTEND to send in ground troops, like I've been saying", Bill Clinton will say, "But now I HAVE to!"

Why couldn't they just send Tom Hanks and co.?

Message 16 3/31/99 8:37 PM
Subject: Re(7): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Slight puzzlement about the disagreement on the rock thing as I thought it was the least controversial of the things I said....

I'm thinking of a rock consisting of rows and rows of crystals in neat columns and layers, like sugar cubes stacked up. Each crystal can be magnetized, independently of its neighbors, in one of six ways (with the north pole facing

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through any of its six faces.) Now, I don't know how the physics of this would quite work, but I think the idea is sound in theory, not all that different from magnetic tape or other media. Now, a suitable device could "read" the orientations of the crystals, and translate them, using base 6, into numbers. Or, crystals could be taken two at a time, giving 36 combinations, enough to represent the letters and decimal digits. In this way, a rock one finds could contain a lot of information, either alphanumeric, or, if the orientations were set when the rock cooled out of lava, it might give information, say, about the way the earth's magnetic field at the time of formation. (If the rock were repeatedly heated and cooled, to jumble up all the orientations so that the rock did not seem different from any other -- just a rock, as it were -- I guess that would be a "noise" rock, like an erased tape, and even in a an apparently structured rock, there would be a certain number of random crystals that would also be "noise", and the reader tries to separate them from the signal/information.)

But imagine a "write" device, that could take such a rock and change orientations to encode information. Now we can use it to send whatever message we want. The other possibility would have been to have a whole field of rocks, and when one wants to send a message, go out and check them until one finds one that matches the message, like Michelangelo trying to find a piece of marble naturally shaped just right for the pose he wants to give his next statue. Depending on the complexity of the message, this could take a very long time, but it would by no means be impossible, any more than the monkeys typing Shakespeare.

As for a code book, of course there would have to be one, there is in any information exchange. You and I have swapped code books; we've agreed to hold this discussion in English. That's all part of the context you were talking about. But swapping code books does not make the rock (the actual message) superfluous, any more than our agreeing to speak english makes the actual holding of the discussion unnecessary. (Unless we are just arguing about the meanings of words. Perhaps the if we really agreed on what language we were speaking, we would have the same definition of every word, including "information.")

As for the newspaper and subsequent examples, now we are talking about changing channel widths, changing amounts of expected information. Information content depends on what you are looking for. When you buy your paper, you don't check it for bloodstains. You don't consider that to be part of the channel. You would differentiate it from another paper by the arrangements of letters on a page, or perhaps the number of pages. When you buy your taco, and they ask you a series of questions as to what you want on it (and the choices in answer give the taco its information content, differentiating, say, a carne asada from a legumbres), they don't ask you if you want iron filings on it, or a dead frog. If we're transmitting sound we don't ask for pictures, and if we're transmitting n bits at a time, we don't ask about the $n+1$ st. The width of the channel is the log base two of the number of possible tacos. (Wendy's used to advertise that its burgers were served 256 different ways; there were, I guess, 8 different toppings, each one could be there or not, hence, 2 to the 8th combinations = 256.) There is a finite and defined context within which to operate, which tells the information of what the limits are.

Another example: when you identify yourself as Tim Walters, you are actually giving an infinite amount of information, since you are saying "I am not terrible person, or Auntie Em, or Eva Luna, or joshua brody, or Spidra

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Webster, or that guy over there, or my cousin in Cleveland, or any member of the Russian Parliament, or, in fact, anyone who has ever lived, or any other organism, or unit of matter that has ever existed..." With no context specified to give this information, the signall has to give all the information. But these questions are asked within a finite context; no one asked you if you were the Crab Nebula: if the question is "what living human being are you?", you'd only need about 33 bits to differentiate yourself from all of them, and if the question is "Are you Tim Walters or terrible person?" your answer contains only one bit.

The answer to the question "Are you Tim Walters or someone else (not Tim Walters)?" also contains one bit, if you see all that is "not Tim Walters" as one undifferentiable mass, as Prince Rupprecht, the Steve Martin character in "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" knows only "Mother" and "Not Mother". The Hebrews knew of "God" (theirs) and "False gods" (everyone else's) and saw no point in wasting information differentiating among the latter. The Greeks divided the world into Hellenes and barbarians (a word which comes from the Greek belief that anyone who did not speak Greek was just making noise, babbling, which the Greeks mockingly imitated "bar-bar-bar...")

But when the taco is really special, you have to ask "what else beyond the normal is in this?" It's as if you had eight bits to specify a number and it's more than 256 and you need an extra bit or two to specify it. You have to widen the channel to show what makes it different, the way color pictures take more information than black and white. (Two pictures can be identical in black and white, but be colored totally differently.) YOU can say, ok, we're going to use twice as wide a channel to specify everything, and all the old things will simply fill in the new bits with 0's, but that is kind of a waste. If you had simply found the right combination of taco ingredients out of all the offered combinations, agreed, the Ideal Platonic Taco contains no more information. (Next time I go to the taqueria, I'll be sure to ask for "mas informacion.") So just as a bigger building (or hard drive) contains more information (all other things being equal), a stained newspaper has an extra layer of information added onto it, and needs a wider channel to transmit that.

Verducci Hall (at its demise) contained all sorts of marks that a brand new identical hall would not have had, will not have. Since we generally expect things

to be unmarked rather than marked, the new hall would be the default and have less information. (I know that the zero sign can often be more meaningful; the person who goes to the costume party in street clothes, the curious behavior of the dog in the night, the lack of an ending on the Russian feminine genitive plural. But you can build lots and lots of buildings that on their day of opening will be exactly the same, that is, blank, like Levittown; it would be very hard to duplicate every mark and graffito of an old one. Take a bunch of anything new, chairs, computers, students; at the start, they all look the same; but use differentiates them; they have marks for which no one would have thought to look on the new models. We tend to assume things are the same, the default, the same pitch, until they aren't. They just assume things are uncomplicated and it isn't until they become complicated that they allocate channel capacity to deal with that. What we have never seen, we don't look for, don't expect (which is why all want and need is contingent.) Once we've actually seen something, then we look for it in other things. "I never thought X could be like this; now whenever I have an X, I check to see whether

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it is like this or not." Things start the same, in the same place, but as they diverge and separate, (e.g., American English becomes different from the British variety) they accumulate difference and this difference is information.

The information content of an object is usually its history, where it came from. A particular building could only have been built, and was only built, by certain people at certain time. A pile of rubble could have come from any one of many buildings. History is information is uniqueness. I guess I have spent too much time Back East, and not enough time in California, to have forgotten the intrinsic beauty of historic landmarks, that George Washington actually lived or the Boston Massacre happened or my ancestors really arrived at this particular place and no other.

As for celebrating, no one is making me, but those who attended the destruction of the building were certainly encouraging the rest of us to attend one ourselves, at which point I thought the other point of view should be represented.

Message 15 3/31/99 8:40 PM
Subject: Re(7): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

if a person is actually desensitized by an imploding building, or Natural Born Killers, or whatever bit of fictional or staged violence, then it is their own damned fault.

It may be their fault - I don't actually believe in fault as a concept but I'll use the expression -- but isn't it our problem they inflict it on us, if people decide they like watching buildings fall down so much they decide to help them to do so (or spectate rather than calling the fire department?) If people want to destroy their own homes and property, that's their business (though I would regret the loss of history and information), but would they stop before they got to mine? You are saying that we should leave the choice to them, and then, I guess, if they make the wrong one, take action, slapping them in jail or whatever, ruining their lives, our pocketbooks. What happened to acting "proactively" instead of "reactively"?

Face it, if you knew someone who liked watching movies of graphic violence -- let's really push your buttons, snuff films of prostitutes -- wouldn't you think there was something wrong with them, no matter how much they protested that it was all in fun, that they'd never really do anything like that? If they said, come join us, it's oh so much fun, wouldn't you decline rather emphatically, and not hesitate to tell them why? So, unless you're just taking this position for the sake of an argument, and I can't tell if you're not, can you really, when you hear of people enjoying watching the destruction of buildings, fail to start to wonder about them, and when they try to encourage you to partake in this activity, answer with anything but a firm "No"?

Message 12 4/1/99 7:00 AM

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Italics, theirs.

Subject: Re(9): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

Well, that's a really good example of "What about the Nazis?" arguing - portraying an extreme situation to try to shake a conviction.

(and snuff films are basically like alligators in the sewers - urban myths),

Watch that slippery slope, Terry.

it would seem that a conviction, if it really is one, should cover even extreme circumstances, especially if they are not so extreme. I don't see much wrong with invoking the Nazis when there actually are Serbians committing genocide in Kosovo; these things do happen.

As for snuff films, saying they don't exist is ridiculous. News networks and tabloid shows feature footage of people being killed, in battle, in shootouts, in accidents, all the time. (I believe, for instance, that the famous picture "Justice on a Saigon Street", of South Vietnamese police chief Nguyen Van Loan summarily shooting a VC suspect in the head, was part of a film sequence, not a single still.) Only a few weeks ago, CBS showed Dr. Kevorkian "assisting a suicide" or whatever he calls it. If someone taped all these things, like a guy I knew who watched hockey games and taped and compiled only the fights, and watched them over and over, would you think that was nothing to worry about?

What you call "the slippery slope" I call analogy, the next logical step, the question of where to draw the line, thinking ahead, remembering Munich. Do you want to wait until something terrible happens before you take steps to avoid it, or only deal with it when it's arrived and it's too late to do anything about it? Isn't that thinking "proactively"?

> 11

Message 11 (Unsent)
Subject: Re: Remains of the Day
From: terrible person
To: film

Well, some people complained that here was Anthony Hopkins playing another repressed Englishman (like he'd played one in "Silence of the Lambs"). And others assumed the movie must have been about a restaurant for vultures (or undertakers.) But I really liked it (I was interested in the historical context too.) "You have my heartiest congratulations." What a line. And the ending, in which no one gets anyone...

Message 10 4/1/99 9:36 AM
Subject: Re(9): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

The rock may not contain alphanumeric information itself, contains information that can be translated into alphanumeric information. (I mean, a magnetic tape doesn't "contain" musical information; it contains metal crystals magnetized

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certain ways rather than certain others, and this is translated by the tape head. A book doesn't "contain" text information, but rather, marks on paper we translate into language on reading.)

Let me modify my image of the rocks in a way I hope you will accept. Imagine that the layers of crystals in the rock are really thin sheets, maybe just two molecules thick, in layers to store information, like mica (let's call them mica storers.) The layers are so thin that you inspect each layer of molecules from one side or the other (no need to look through, you just peel off the layer and turn it over.) And let's say the crystals can take one of 26 recognizably different shapes. Oh, and let's say the crystals are really big, like a tenth of an inch high. Oh, and while we're at it, let's just make the layers of mica out of paper instead. So now, instead of a rock, we have a book. We would also have a sort of code book, explaining the meanings of sequences of letters, called a dictionary/grammar. Now, let's say the letters on the pages have been chosen at random, say, by proverbial monkeys sitting at typewriters. If the number of pages is finite, the number of possible different books is also finite though large. (They could also be generated by computer program that would type "AAAAA...", then "BAAAA...") If I have an enormous library full of these rocks/books, in fact, every single one, then some of them will be real books in real English (or other languages.) Most of them will appear to be gibberish. If I want to send a message, I simply look through my collection until I find the book that matches my message (by comparing it with the code book, which might just be my knowledge of English).

It will take a long time, but I can do it, and it is my act of selecting, deciding, that puts the information into the signal, plus the fact that I had decided it was a message and told the receiver so. If I handed you a book and didn't say it was a message, you might just enjoy the euphony or silliness of the sounds, but you would not try to interpret it. If you don't know if it's actually a message, it has no information; it could be natural and random, the way repeating quasars were first thought to be Little Green Men, or the way the patterns of tea leaves are taken to be messages. A child shouts something insulting but his parent says "Please. he didn't mean anything by it, just repeating something he heard and liked the sound of." One problem is that messages are not always labelled. A bunch of beeps come over a wire, and we try to interpret it as Morse code, when no one ever said it was. It's like the old joke about Helen Keller trying to read the waffle iron...We have to guess what the code book is and then try to use it, changing our guess if it doesn't produce anything intelligible, on the assumption that it is supposed to. "Captain, we have this signal from the other ship, and we don't know what code he's using, but using Code A he says he's under attack, and using Code B he says his sneakers are full of ruby-red tuna fish, so we're not sure which to go with.") This is the same principal under which, if you notice a sentence in someone's post that sounds like a known quote but is not announced as one, so that, in effect, it's not in the code book, you don't know whether it is intended to be one, and any information that it conveys as a quote (e.g., connection to the original speaker) as opposed to what it says in itself, is lost. Just as with the mica storer, if you don't know if it's a message or not, there is not much you can do with it.

If you have a sufficiently large pool of prewritten messages from which to choose, it's just like choosing to write one yourself. (Herman Melville had to decide to write "Moby Dick" and not "A Tale of Two Cities", and this was a

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series of decisions, starting with one to write "c" on his page rather than "i".)

We do basically the same thing when we speak English, choosing from a preexisting set of words that match what we want to say. The gibberish random words never get used any more than the rocks that say what we don't want to say.

So, that's why my rocks would be a completely adequate, if cumbersome, information carrier.

English can be pretty cumbersome too.

What do you have against the monkeys? I mean, besides that they would probably hit the same keys over and over. Would you accept the analogy if I suggested using a computer based on some apparently random process to generate text? Do you disagree that given long enough (even if it's more than the expected age of the universe) any string will be generated? Which of the three types of impossible do you judge this to be?

In the second and third "I am Tim Walters" examples ("which human being are you?" and 'which of two human -- well, beings are you?') the context gave a lot of information. The context is the sum of possibilities, all the things the signal could have been but isn't and from which it needs to be differentiated. But in the first example, there was no context, or rather, it was infinite; you could have been anyone or anything, so that eliminating anything does not bring you any closer to some remaining thing that must be the answer. So there is no contextual information. But without a context, there really isn't a signal; you don't know what to look for. So I guess I would agree that absent a limiting context, saying "I am Tim Walters" is meaningless, with no information (the signal doesn't have any, the context doesn't either.)

Saying the code book has all the information, or that the message has very little, is like saying the the record player has all the information and can make music without the record. Context is just what you do with the information. If you ask me whether to play "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band" or the Bach Double Concerto, my answer is a single bit; your interpretation turns it into a huge amount of information represented by the two pieces of music. On the other hand, if you ask a very simple question, yet I give you a long-winded answer with many words, letters, decisions in it (not that I'd ever do that, of course), the message contains a lot of information but is turned into very little by context.

Finally, you ask me why I don't consider other factors -- fun, need for a new building, etc., -- in my argument. If you are trying to be evenhanded, why don't you ask the other side why they don't present **my** arguments? They made a statement, emphasizing the "fun" factor. I present the alternative. (I've responded concerning the aesthetics of explosions in replying to Steve Omlid.) As for the utility factor, of course I concede (and have conceded) the utility of a habitable building over a condemned one, but I have pointed out that Verducci WAS a habitable building until the earthquake, with years of use ahead, so that it was tragic that it had to come down, and I wondered why people should celebrate waste and tragedy.

> 9

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Message 9 4/1/99 12:37 PM
Subject: Re(5): Double plus ungood(was
From: terrible person
To: politics

The Allies have finally done something smart. I heard this morning the NATO spokesman, the Air Commodore (I love that title, Michael Jordan meets Teddy Prendergast. I also like the other mouthpiece, Jamie Shea, with the Michael Palin accent, though) saying that NATO had credible reports of fuel shortages in the FRY (Federal Republic of Yugo -- I like that too) army in Kosovo, and of dissension among its leadership. Now, I have no idea if this is true or not, but if they repeat it enough, and the FRY kooks hear it, it can become self-fulfilling. A dissatisfied general hears of other dissatisfied generals and starts plotting....soldiers become reluctant to operate far from base, fearing they won't have enough fuel to get back....the value of propaganda cannot be overestimated, although of course there is nothing to prevent the FRY from using the same tactic back at us, spreading rumors -- not entirely untrue -- of dissension within NATO.

Hearing this, I also start to hope, hey, maybe the FRY army will collapse suddenly, it was just a matter of hanging on and applying the pressure long enough no matter how the giant thrashed around, trusting the captain even as it looked as if he was driving over a waterfall...and Clinton and co. will say, we knew all along our policy would work, we just couldn't talk about it, we had it all calculated, like a gambling system at Monte Carlo, we had to lose for a while before our luck would change, or a start up company, you have to pour money into it for years while the naysayers grumble before it turns a profit and then makes billion....and look, not a single life lost....

Except that at least half a million people will have been displaced in the process, and so much property destroyed, wouldn't that be swell?

Message 5 4/1/99 8:01 PM
Subject: Re(11): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

First of all, Steve Omlid, I would like to say that at no time in this argument in this conference have I mentioned Ireland. I may have mentioned other places; I may have mentioned Ireland in other conferences, but if you are going to retain your claim to moral superiority over poor old terrible person you might at least read his posts, right here, on record, and quote what he actually said. (Unless this is the old "I don't read your posts, but...") At least it makes for a real argument, not a smear. And could you pay some attention, too, to how he/I actually said it? I mentioned other places where there are or have been ample supplies of buildings being demolished where those who so enjoyed this demolition could perhaps have satisfied the desire for experience they urged on the rest of us.

Plus, I love how you dismiss Ireland's four hundred and more years of well documented oppression by the English with "stuff like that", and then tell me that I lack perspective, and am being "needlessly insulting" (please, tell me about the needful kind.)

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On the same subject, I never invoked the Nazis in this Verducci affair. (Except that some of the bombing sites I mentioned were their victims.) YOU did, to describe a type of argument, and I defended that sort of argument under some circumstances. What I am comparing is the enjoyment of watching a building imploded and the joy in watching other types of violence.

What you do not seem to understand is the principal of comparison or analogy, because you can only seem to engage in black or white thinking (though often at the same time). Something is, totally, or it isn't, not at all, it's good, let's do it as much as we can, or it's bad, let's totally avoid it. When you make a comparison, say, my love is like a red, red rose, are you saying he or she grows in the ground? If you say someone runs like a deer, do you mean he or she stops to shit in the woods every once in a while? No comparison is exact or total. Is Slobodan Milosevic like Adolf Hitler, if he has white hair and eight letters in his first name? Is he more like him, however, at least in ways that matter in the current situation, than, say, Vaclav Havel? (All rise, please. Thank you.) So if I say that watching a demolition is like watching a snuff film (or rather, since I don't really feel like arguing with you about your vaunted field of expertise of pornography, and I would just as soon snuff films NOT actually exist, a film of a killing), do you really think I mean it is exactly like it, down to the dust flying, in your own absolute, binary, all or nothing sense? Or can you conceive that I might be saying that it is similar to it to a certain extent, and that it is to this same extent that it can have a negative impact?

Or if you are so intent on attacking analogies on principle, with a fair and even hand, is there any particular reason that you passed with no problem Engineer K's original comparison of the joy of watching destruction to sex? Or is it just wrong when terrible person creates the analogy?

I'm not big on absolutes. I usually don't say things are "bad", unless I specify the way (bad in that they will lead to violence, which I do not consider such a good thing -- if one thinks violence is good, then he or she won't accept my definition of "bad"). More likely, I describe things in terms of each other -- if X is bad, for specified characteristics, then Y is worse, for having those characteristics for a greater degree. If people agree to, forcefully maintain, the first proposition, they really ought to accept the first (though I can't oblige them to accept my rather conventional logic, though it's often considered the mark of a reasonable rational person.)

I'm also not big on arbitrary divisions of the relative continuum (and almost everything is on a continuum -- what you call a "slippery slope".) At what point in the evening does it become "dark"? How long is an overlong post?

(Does it remain short enough when it is one letter under 5K, but add an "and", put it over the edge, and it's suddenly just too long?) There are many "bad" things, but some are worse than others, and to the extent they are bad, we condemn them and work to stop them. Slobodan Milosevic may be like Hitler, but if the real Hitler were around, wouldn't you fight against him first? If my kids had nothing to do but watch either a snuff film or a demolition, I'd take them to the latter. But I'd rather just go for a walk.

You like to draw definite lines and say that one side is ok, the other not, as

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if it's just so clear. But look at most of the terrible things of this century, how there was no clear line. Guys in brown shirts march in Bavaria -- no matter, they're just a fringe party, and it's important to maintain political freedom, right? That was clear, right? Until they destroy that freedom....but who would have known that in 1922? Let's send some advisors to a little country in Asia, not to fight, just to advise. Who could argue with that? Who did? But once you have established something it's hard to avoid going to the next step. Fine. Your slippery slope. But what you don't realize is that there are no plateaux. You try to decide at some rather arbitrary point that this is where to stop. But the logic you use applies equally well to most other points on the curve, as you make this steady tradeoff. When you shop for a computer, don't you find that you can get twice as much for just a little more? And once you're upped your price limit (which was arbitrary in the first place, just some nice round number) you find you can do so much better for just a little more...who wouldn't take advantage of the economies of scale? Oh, I know, you'll say, "Well, I know what I need, and I won't buy more than that." But do you? How do you know? What if your needs change? Maybe you could think about it some more. But that takes up time, time during which you can't use your computer, time during which prices change and models sell out? It's the same with your universalized moral statements. Things change. How do you know your criteria are right? By experience? Can you trust it? When it comes down to it, pretty much any decision is arbitrary. Sorry!!! You want certainty, become Catholic. But as for the rules and dividing lines that are so obvious to you, and which you seem to expect are going to be obvious to me, forget it.

Now, I've made no secret - heh - of my belief that human motivation, to the extent it actually exists, generally comes down to a matter of self-interest (and the closer other people are to you, the more interest you have in them.) I do, however, define this fairly broadly; for instance, I wouldn't want my neighbors to starve because then I will have to fight to protect my own food. So if I worry about people being affected by watching a demolition, or the sort of people who would in the first place, it's not for some absolute god-given moral reason, but a practical one. Can you see that the more people do these unsettling things, the more I might worry about sharing a planet with them? Can you see why I wonder you don't feel the same way?

Oh, and I know you brought this up as an example, and I've already answered the point, but I might as well get this off my chest and onto the record, and with an analogy that should be close enough to satisfy even you:

In the matter of the "Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence" -- let me ask you: imagine if a group of, say, Palestinian Arabs, people with a legitimate gripe against certain groups of Jews, decided to hold "Yum! Kippur", and dress up as caricatures of Orthodox Jews, with black suits, hats, tzitzis, tfillin, beards, etc., or in costumes associated with certain groups of Jews of another era, say, the kaftans and knee breeches of 19th century Jewish bankers (or cartoons thereof), and hold a huge feast (while observant Jews were fasting on the holiest day of their year) and raucous celebration, and even if this were to raise money to build schools and hospitals in Gaza where they are desperately needed, even if you were a liberal Jew who dressed conventionally and believed the establishment of a Palestinian state, and had a sense of humor, or even if you were just some ordinary Gentile who liked to think himself fair-minded, wouldn't you be just a little upset, and don't you think there might be something of an outcry, and don't you think it might be somewhat justifiable? References to Skokie, perhaps? Skokie, remember, was

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not about setting up actual gas chambers, but about insulting the memory and traditions of a people.

And can you really trot out the argument that while Jews have been persecuted, Catholics have been persecutors, considering what happens in Israel and Israeli occupied territories to non-Jews, and what happens to Catholics in places like China and Northern Ireland? (There, I mentioned Ireland.)

I mean, if a group of people are so angry at policies set by the Pope, why not stampede cattle through the Vatican instead of insulting a lot of his not-altogether-loyal followers? As we've seen with Milosevic, a perceived attack on the people only shored up the leader.

There.

Message 4 4/1/99 8:29 PM
Subject: Re(9): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

pierre le bjte, are you still here? I had quite forgotten about you! and you obviously haven't learned anything or forgotten anything!

If you're going to call me a whore, you need first to clear this with Steve Omlid, in both his self-appointed capacities, protector of the honor of sex-workers and determiner of the appropriateness of analogies. But I am actually like him in this case (mirabile dictu), I don't mind being called a whore; everyone sells their body, mind and soul at some point and I'd be glad to also if I could get enough for mine to last for a while. But I think it's awful to compare a hard-toiling sex worker, who gives a certain kind of attention so she can have some free time, to me, who uses up a lot of his free time so he can get a certain kind of attention. In short, this metaphor is the sort of utterly lame inanity so typical of you. If my pimp is the rush I get stirring up shit, does it either protect me or beat me up or find me customers? Try with that addled mind of yours to come up with an insult that actually makes sense, and then maybe you'll succeed in insulting me, instead of just baffling me, which is so easy that even an imbecile like you can manage it.

Unless, was "intellectually brilliant" supposed to be an insult? I guess in the land of the one-track mind, the multi-interested can seem pretty threatening.

Oh, and there is no need whatsoever to take anything I write seriously. If people find it informative, well-written, or amusing (which I know makes you uncontrollably jealous), and they WANT to, that's up to them. They are welcome to get what they like out of it, and if you were capable of getting anything out of anything on any topic but one, I would encourage you to do the same.

Oh, and tell me again why we should take *you* seriously, why you are any less of a whore, etc., etc.? I'd like to either know these things or watch you struggle with those tough bisyllabic words trying to express them.

Oh, and you'll notice I've written a little more this time. This is because you so cleverly goaded me for not writing at length last time, and then based

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your boast of superiority on how did not write at length yourself, and I fell into your trap and am utterly perplexed and baffled(see above) for all my Unferthian intellectual brilliance.

Oh, and there is no such thing as consent.

Message 1 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(2): That'll do it
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:
This is how the War of Jenkin's Ear got started.

That was not a nice war. But just imagine how it might have been -- and how embarrassing for the historians -- if the Spanish had cut off something else..

Message 139 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

See, this is where you make the same mistake again! Whatever Parmenides said, there are not "two sides" to every issue, because that would mean that whoever is not with you is against you. There are instead a sometimes infinite, usually large, always more than two gradations. What's the point in answering questions like "Do you like Bill Clinton?" with "Yes, AND no?" when the only answer that really makes sense is to say how much, and under what circumstances?

I use your full screen name whenever I refer to you (or anyone else online) 1) to indicate that the screen persona is all I know anything about, not the

Message 138 4/2/99 9:07 AM
Subject: Re: changing the subject
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Elizabeth A. Nolan writes:
1. I'm going to be sending a book to a friend in Canada, with the provision that he pay for the postage or reimburse me for it. Any suggestions on the easiest way to do this, while not having to deal with exchange rates and such?

Well, if he's not a good enough friend that you can give him the gift of postage, I'd say he's not a good enough friend that he'll refrain from scamming you. Since the Canadian dollar is only worth about 80 cents, make sure he does not try to foist the same amount of that fake-o money on you as you have invested in good old U.S. postage with real Fort Knox backed original dollars. Canadians will do that.

On the other hand, you could demand repayment in loonies and twonies (doubloonies?) which, it has been indicated before in this space, are wicked fun.

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Message 136 4/2/99 7:17 PM
Subject: Re(11): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Tim Walters writes:

Stop right there. First you posit hypothetical rocks with a great deal of information already in them, then you elide the remaining difficulties with this sentence. "A long time" is literally true, I guess, considering that it will take you far longer than the lifetime of the universe to find the first sentence of your message, even if you scan one rock a second.

This is what happens when you try to make information from noise. And it's nothing like what happens when we speak English (which is admittedly ill-understood--but it's not sifting through combinatorial permutations, or we couldn't do it at all).

Oh wait, your post later shows that you know this... so what's your point, exactly?

I'm not going anywhere. Do you still want me to answer this? Well, I will anyway. If Santa gives you a lump of coal rather than a box of candy (to indicate naughty rather than nice), that is a message. The information is put there by Santa's decision, his choice of one item rather than the other, and by the context, the agreed upon law about stockings. If Santa's choice were random, the message would be noise; if there were no tradition concerning candy or coal, there would be no information.

If instead of candy or coal, I choose from a vast field of rocks one that matches my message according to our agreed upon code, again, the rock has information content. How long it would take me to find the right rock doesn't matter, any more than if Santa had to go all the way down to Baffin Island to find a lump of coal to send you.

The rock has information in it to the extent that an observer can distinguish it from another rock.

As I compose a sentence in English, I make a set of decisions. Now, it is true that the number of sentences is infinite, because they can be infinitely long. But there is a finite number of words in English (at any instant, it's always changing over time) and thus a finite number of sentences of a given length. If I wanted to, I could encode each one on a rock of finite size, and go and find it when I wanted to use it.

The point is, as we have learned from command-line OS's versus menu-driven GUI's, there is no difference with respect to information whether we seem to decide to put the information in ourselves, or select it out from what is offered. In the first case, the menu of commands is in our heads; in the second, it's on the screen. In terms of conveying information, marking choices, there is no difference.

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The signal has some, just not very much.

How much? How many bits?

Saying the code book has all the information, or that the message has very little, is like saying the the record player has all the information and can make music without the record.

Building a code book for the rock is like making a record player that can only play one record. In that case, all or most of the information would, in fact, be in the record player.

I was not building a code book for the rock, but for many rocks, and then selecting rocks to send my messages according to the rules of the code book. (Even if you started with one rock, and arbitrarily assigned it a meaning, crystal by crystal, you could still base everything on that, as long as you chose your remaining rocks accordingly.) Which is akin to having a huge number of records, some with random noise, some with a great artist like Warren Zevon, Stanard Q. Ridgway, or Iggy Pop, and when one wanted to convey a certain message, say, that of the message of Desperadoes Under the Eaves, putting onto the same record player some of the Zevon, rather than something else.

You are, rather, bullying people. You have a well-developed passive-aggressive style for doing it, phrasing your insults as rhetorical questions so that you can disavow them later as "merely wondering".

Redefining common English words to suit your needs is not argument. Specious analogies are not argument.

My "rhetorical questions" aren't. The people I argue with have subtle and complexly nuanced positions and I need to know where they stand before I argue with them, to determine if we actually differ. I may consider a certain answer more likely, but if I don't receive it, then I'll either point out its inconsistency with other positions taken by my interlocutor, change my line of argument, or decide my he or she and I actually agree.

When I was a teacher, the Socratic method was thought much of.

As for "passive-aggressive", I feel so fortunate that here, just by writing a few paragraphs, I can receive, unsolicited and for free, psychotherapeutic diagnostic services that might cost me thousands in the real world. It's funny though; though there are people here who actually do appear to have training, degrees, and credentials in this area (whose authority to speak authoritatively I have nevertheless challenged), I don't know of any to your credit. Would you tell me please, how you arrived at this conclusion (citing definitions of this technical, specific term, your qualifications, etc.) or if you are just throwing it around as an insult, "redefining words to suit your needs", as you like to put it? And if you are using the it that way, may I ask if this means that in general you regard mental conditions as grounds for mockery and stigmatization? We can argue by your rules; I'd just like to know what they are.

As for "bullying", I think I've pretty deferential to *you*, at least, through this debate, not gloating, for instance, when you accepted one of my points, or had to backpedal on one of yours. Toward others, well, onsidering the

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things that have been said to me in this thread and the tone in which they have been said, if I'm a bully, maybe *I* should run to the principal's office for protection. I regard the questions I ask and the argumentative techniques I use as completely legitimate, and that anyone is free to use them against me -- if they aren't already.

Finally, the use of analogies and everyday terms extended to metaphorical senses is something you have proudly done yourself and defended me for doing in the past. Is it the influence of Steve Omlid, or is it simply the fact of their being used against you or your friends in this case that turns analogies into "bad analogies"?

Once again, I've asked.

Message 135 4/2/99 7:18 PM
Subject: Re(13): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

(Of course, you've been known to make mistakes yourself. Look back at the Engineer's original post and see if he actually compared the implosion to sex. See - it is kind of difficult sometimes to remember what people said at the beginning of the thread.)

Concerning what Engineer K originally said: here it is (and easily verified.)

"It was the coolest thing ever, and as much fun as I've ever had with my clothes on.

If you ever ever have the opportunity to see a building imploded, DO IT! The live experience exceeds seeing it on television by as much as HOT MONKEY SEX exceeds porno tapes."

(emphasis his.)

Now, in the first sentence, I don't think he was talking about swimming or even taking a chemical decontamination shower. The third sentence speaks for itself. I guess.

Beyond that, the notion that I am a proponent of "black and white thinking" is kind of laughable. In case you haven't noticed, I've taken some shit on GOL for being too much the opposite - for trying to see both sides of everything. Remember "namby-pamby"?

See, this is where you make the same mistake again! Whatever Protagoras said, there are not "two sides" to every issue, because that would mean that whoever is not with you is against you. (I don't care if Jesus said it.) This is the attitude that says, for example, if you don't support a right-wing dictatorship, you must be a Communist. There are instead a sometimes infinite, usually large, but always more than two, gradations. What's the point in answering questions like "Do you like Bill Clinton?" with "Yes, AND no?" when the only answer that really makes sense is to say how much, and under what circumstances?

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I don't know if this is any consolation to you, but *I* have never considered you "namby-pamby", and *I've* never called you that. I've seen others call you such things, but I never paid much attention, considering it just another in-joke, because you seem to me in general to take specific stands with a lot more emphatic firmness than thoughtful consideration.

Besides, you're the one who talked about how wonderful "convictions" are,

Nor did I say anything about the wondrousness of convictions; in fact, my comment about them was in keeping with my usual sarcasm about such things and seems unable to accept that someone could watch a building implode, enjoy it, and still be entirely capable of distinguishing between that and "real" violence.

I said that (or in some cases, I asked whether) the more someone enjoys a planned, controlled demolition, the more likely he or she is to enjoy or accept involuntary demolitions and other acts of destruction, both planned and un-, and that the celebration of destruction for fun by choice is kind of insensitive considering the number of people in the world for whom such destruction involves neither choice nor fun. I never spoke in terms of absolute causes and effects, but rather in terms of tendencies and increased possibilities.

You're also the one who recites "Steve Omlid" over and over as if it were a brand name rather than a real person.

I use your full screen name whenever I refer to you (or anyone else online, almost) 1) to make it clear to which of the massed debaters arrayed against me I am responding in a particular post when there is nothing in the other's post which calls for direct quotation and its identifying "so and so writes", 2) to underscore that the screen persona is all I know anything about, not the actual person, whether he or she has some other name or the same, and 3) subliminally to encourage everyone else to do the same for me, that is, call me by my full and connotative screen name, and not some nickname I myself have not used since the time and the situation (and the world, and I) were very different.

Finally, if you want to trust that "the vast majority of people who watch [a demolition] won't be affected", that's fine, but will you please allow some of the rest of us to worry about what can be done by just one Tim McVeigh or Terry Nichols?

Message 134 4/2/99 7:29 PM
Subject: Re(6): Moebius
From: terrible person
To: film

Tim Walters writes:

A. [J.?] Deutsch, "A Subway Named Moebius".

Yes, J.

Since I read this I've been scared to ride the T in Boston, if I wasn't

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.
already because of Charlie.

Message 133 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

guess not!

guess that's it!

What's to say?

What to say?

LOL!!!

What are the rules?

Broke the rules?

Message 128 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

a word on the nature of games:

in a first order game, which includes most of what are conventionally labelled games, such as, say, baseball, it is possible to step outside the game, find out the rules, and apply them, as you are trying to do with dating.

but in a second order game, the basic rules are not given; part of the game is figuring out what they are. imagine playing baseball and not knowing whether after knocking one to left you were supposed to head to first, or, say, stand on your head, and you could only figure that out by observation and experimentation.

there are however, beyond that, third order games, in which part of the game is figuring out how to figure out the rules (by experimentation? by intuition?), then fourth order games, in which the process of figuring out how to figure out how to figure out the rules is also not given, but instead is part of the game, and so on ad infinitum.

in fact, when you really get to infinity, and you really don't know anything for sure, and everything, when you come down to it, is based on a guess, it's not called a game anymore; it's called reality.

and I am afraid that is where dating lies.

good luck, though, or rather, I hope your predetermined but unknown fate is a pleasant one by your definition.

I would like to add for all my loyal readers that in proportion to the value attached to scoring and winning in an actual game, it will require that the

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interpreters and enforcers of the rules be separate from the players. in real-life dating, as opposed to The Dating Game, there is no such umpire, at least, none to whom one can appeal.

also, I should point out that the other main determiner of the extent to which something is a game is the nature and importance of goal, and how far removed it is from the main goal of life (perceived by unidealistic evolutionists to be the survival and reproduction, by some religious to be the bringing about of the kingdom of heaven, etc.)

a public service.

Pick up the Blue Line outbound at Govamin Senna, and you might Hope to run into the very luscious Ms. Davis.

Besides this, my nominees for the underground transport film festival schedule would be: Subway, Metro, The Last Metro, Zazie dans le Metro, Just Another Girl on the IRT, THX 1138, the last part of Speed, anything they ever film in the Washington D.C. stations (infinite escalators, coffered, vaulted ceilings -- it would be so cool for a James Bond movie), a few minutes of Pi and Jacob's Ladder, and two or three cars ahead of all of them, Walter Matthau and Robert Shaw in.....The Taking of Pelham 123.....

Danger Third Rail.

Message 127 4/3/99 8:04 PM
Subject: Re: How does this game work, anyway?
From: terrible person
To: Women<-->Men

a word on the nature of games:

in a first order game, which includes most of what are conventionally labelled games, such as, say, baseball, it is possible to step outside the game, find out the rules, and apply them, as you are trying to do with dating.

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pleasant one by your definition.

Message 126 4/3/99 8:13 PM
Subject: Slobo: the movie
From: terrible person
To: film

I was thinking today how much Slobodan Milosevic looks like Jack Nance in "Eraserhead". Not just the hair, but the face and the expression.

Unfortunately for those in Hollywood already no doubt preparing to make the movie version of this conflict (as if "Wag the Dog" has not obviated their task) or in case Oliver Stone is preparing a revisionist resuscitation, Jack Nance is dead.

Instead, I would actually suggest Tim Robbins. He has the right facial shape and a proven ability to play demagogues. Only problem: extreme height.

Milosevic's wife is actually head of hr own political party; I'm not sure what she looks like (I think she's kind of short and dark), but Susan Sarandon is very versatile.

Message 125 4/3/99 11:07 PM
Subject: Re(8): Moebius
From: terrible person
To: film

The MBTA might not be wonderful, but pick up the Blue Line outbound at Govamin Senna, and you might Hope to run into the very luscious Ms. Davis.

Besides this, my nominees for the underground transport film festival schedule would be: Subway, Metro, The Last Metro, Zazie dans le Metro, Just Another Girl on the IRT, THX 1138, the last part of Speed, anything they ever film in the Washington D.C. stations (infinite escalators, coffered, vaulted ceilings -- it would be so cool for a James Bond movie), a few minutes of Pi and Jacob's Ladder, and two or three cars ahead of all of them, Walter Matthau and Robert Shaw in.....The Taking of Pelham 123.....

Danger Third Rail.

Message 124 4/3/99 11:09 PM
Subject: Re(2): How does this game work, anyway?
From: terrible person
To: Women<-->Men

I would like to add for all my loyal readers that in proportion to the value attached to scoring and winning in an actual game, it will require that the interpreters and enforcers of the rules be separate from the players. in real-life dating, as opposed to The Dating Game, there is no such umpire, at least, none to whom one can appeal.

also, I should point out that the other main determiner of the extent to which something is a game is the nature and importance of goal, and how far removed it is from the main goal of life (perceived by unidealistic evolutionists to be the survival and reproduction, by some religious to be the bringing about of the kingdom of heaven, etc.)

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a public service.

"Doesn't anyone here know how to play this game?" -- Casey Stengel, on the 1962 Mets

Message 120 4/4/99 12:44 AM
Subject: Re(5): Joy of Live Radio
From: terrible person
To: lecia

Eva Luna writes:

I am still amazed how easily people are fooled into thinking a story is fact if they get it in an email with a "from the New York Times dated blah blah blah" at the begining of the story. Seems people are more able to take verbal stories with a grain of salt.

And by the way, where'd that "grain of salt" phrase come from?

What Eva said.

Though I would extend it to all periodicals, if not farther.

It's a lot easier to keep a straight face in writing.

The grain of salt expression is a translation of the latin "cum grano salis." It apparently originated in Pliny the Elder's note (Historia Naturalis, Book XXIII) that the Roman general Pompey (fully Gnaeus Pompeius Strabo Magnus, though since Strabo means "squinter" and "magnus" means "great" he preferred to use the latter) would take a grain of salt (with his food, I guess) along with his anti-poison antidote. Whether the grain of salt wards off the poison, or it shows he did not much trust the antidote, I'm not sure. He didn't die of poison. Caesar defeated him and he fled to Egypt and King Ptolemy had him killed to kiss up to Caesar. But then Caesar got killed in the theatre Pompey had built, at the foot of a statue of Pompey!!! The romans loved coincidences like that. It helped them make sense of their universe.

Also, and this might be of interest, the word for salt in Latin had the idiomatic sense of "sarcastic wit."

Message 119 4/4/99 12:52 AM
Subject: Re(6): Double plus ungood(was
From: terrible person
To: politics

I was wondering this, so I looked it up. Anyone know how big Kosovo is? As in, square miles? Well, that won't mean much. How big is Kosovo in comparison, to, say, Rhode Island? New Jersey? L.A. County? Prize to correct guessers; ties will be decided by point spread; losers get bombed with cruise missiles.

Message 113 4/4/99 3:41 PM
Subject: Re(5): Joy of Live Radio
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Eva Luna writes:

I am still amazed how easily people are fooled into thinking a story is fact if they get it in an email with a "from the New York Times dated blah blah blah" at the beginning of the story.

I don't know if this was supposed to be covered by your statement, but it is useful to note that even when the email really does represent an actual (if possibly copyright violating) quotation from America's Newspaper of Record, the Times has been known, on occasion, to be, if I dare say it, wrong, from its view on Dr. Goddard to it's recent "Cancer Cure in Sight" announcement and beyond. I can't understand, try as I might, this paper's effect on man.

Message 111 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(6): Joy of Live Radio
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Karin Shaw writes:

Actually, I don't really care where it came from, just that it was so darn funny that I burst out laughing at work, and for the rest of the day, had a silly grin on my face everytime I thought about it.

I agree with this sentiment. After all, I mean, I heard this story the other day about a duck who walks into a bar and asks the bartender if he has any grapes, and it turned out it wasn't really true!!! But I thought it was funny anyway!

Message 110 4/4/99 8:47 PM
Subject: Re(10): Moebius
From: terrible person
To: film

Tim Walters writes:

which led to the amusing-to-Washingtonites scene in No Way Out where Kevin Costner descends into the fictitious Georgetown Metro station

The Georgetowners apparently fought pretty hard avoid a Metro stop in their neighborhood, supposedly out of fear that it would bring in "the wrong element." If by that they meant Kevin Costner, I can't say I blame them.

See, I know the best way to accumulate some popular approval around here is to rag on Kevin Costner.

Message 108 (Unsent)
Subject: Helen Mirren
From: terrible person
To: Crushes on Greatness

Just completed my annual ritual of watching "The Long Good Friday" (1979.)

Message 104 (Unsent)
Subject: Something weird in "Psycho"

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

From: terrible person
To: film

I was watching "Psycho" yesterday. At the very end, as the image of Tony Perkins giving his soliloquy as "Mother" dissolves to that of the car being pulled from the mud, a grinning skull (the face of Mother, I guess) appeared where Perkin's face had been, just visible against a dark background, for about two seconds. Now, I know it was there; I was sitting close to the monitor, and I rewound and watched several times. It won't do any good to try to convince me I was hallucinating, though I would not blame anyone for trying. Maybe this is so commonly known that no one bothers commenting on it, but I have never heard anyone talk about it, and I follow such things with a certain attention. Maybe it is not so noticeable in theatrical showings. Or was it supposed to be "subliminally" perceived or somesuch?

Did Van Sant duplicate it?

Message 97 4/6/99 7:32 PM
Subject: Re(7): in the neighborhood
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Terms such as "LOL" or "ROTFLMAAOUBPO" are a little imprecise for my taste, so I will say that that was worth 27 seconds of throw-back-the-head guffawing. (Not uncontrollable laughter, mind you, rather, laughter I could have controlled but chose not to because I enjoyed it.)

A personal favorite of former-Soviet origin:

KNOCK KNOCK!
Who's there?
KGB!
KGB who?
We'll ask the questions around here!

The KGB of course probably would not have knocked.

Also, there's the one in which you rush up excitedly to someone and say "I've just heard the greatest knock-knock joke and you have to hear it!!" And your friend, concerned at your hyperventilation, says "Ok!" and you say "Ok, you start!" and he or she carried away by your enthusiasm and not thinking says "Knock knock!" and you say "Who's there?" and they say....

For a second, I thought the Laurie Anderson variant was LONI Anderson and it sort of made a little sense sort of for a second....

Message 93 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(12): Double plus ungood(was
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:

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They CAN'T be attacked from the air.

Well, they're hiding in barns, supposedly. I heard one spokesman taking consolation in this, that while they were hiding, they could not do any damage. But the Air Commodore guy was complaining that the Serbs seem to know when the NATO planes are taking off in Italy, and only then they take a seventh inning stretch from scorching the earth and hide their tanks and selves. How the Serbs know this, I'm not sure; maybe it's the Russian spy ship, or maybe it's some guy camped out near Aviano with a cell phone.

As for what Hitler thought about the Soviet forces, he was largely right. The Soviets collapsed. It was only good old General Winter and Marshal Frost (and Colonel Distance) that prevented the Germans from scoring a knock-out blow, giving the Soviets some time to recover. And the weather has been the Serbians main ally in this war too. Doesn't anyone at the Pentagon watch the Weather Channel?

If the Russians were going to intervene, distance would be against them.

Message 90 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person

Can you explain:

-- a Trautmann Paradox?
-- the difference between vagueness and ambiguity?
-- a lishnii cheloviek?
-- the three kinds of impossibility?

If yes to any, I'd be interested in hearing from you.

Message 88 4/10/99 4:04 PM
Subject: I was the Tax Man
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

I worked for the IRS for about 18 months not long after I first moved out here. I was a researcher in the Criminal Investigations Division (now behind the steel door at the Oakland Federal Building.) It was probably the best job I've ever had (or ever will have). On my first day, a couple of other new hires and I were there in the suits we had worn to our college graduations and our new laminated IDs, and our new boss, Patricia, was welcoming us. She was a petite African-American woman who had gotten her law degree from Golden Gate while cashiering at Safeway. She said, "Have any of you seen that movie "The Untouchables"?" And I raised my hand high because it's one of my favorite movies. And she said, "Well, it was a good movie, but Eliot Ness didn't get Al Capone. *We* got Al Capone." (Now that's not totally true, but it's closer than Brian De Palma's and David Mamet's version.)

So I of course was not an Investigator as she was; my job was basically to go to various courthouses and repositories of public records to check on ownership of property, businesses, liens, fictitious business names, all that sort of thing. Sometimes Patricia would tell me what specifically I was

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looking for, sometimes it would just be a fishing expedition ("Get everything you can that's remotely related to person X...") and if I asked what it was for she'd tell me to mind my own business.

Anyway, I almost never had any contact with taxpayers -- that was all the investigators. Except that a few times she had not had time to sort and read everything I had found for her, so she needed to have me in the room to hand her the documents as she referred to them. I didn't say anything, of course, but I got to hear her way of dealing with suspected tax cheats, which was totally unsympathetic. (The audits I saw were all with Caucasian males with nice suits and a lot of property. I don't know how she would have been towards others.)

One time, though, she had an important call in the middle of an audit and she didn't want to take it in front of the taxpayer, but she couldn't exactly ask him to step out, so she went to take it in another room. She told me to stay there, I guess to keep him from disturbing any evidence. So this guy starts talking to me. I imagine he was thinking, "This looks like an upper-middle-class white kid, maybe he'll have more sympathy." I tried to shrug him off, shuffle papers, but he kept asking me things I had no way of knowing, like what they might do to him. Finally, he asked me if I thought the whole process were fair, kept asking. (I'm thinking, when is Patricia going to get back?) So finally I said, Sir, I think the law was very clear. And he says, that's not what I asked, is it fair? And I'm thinking, I don't do this, I don't handle people, I handle paper, this guy is not my responsibility. So I stammered out, it was your responsibility. And he said, really annoyed, like "My *responsibility*? What do you know about responsibility? I have a business, I have kids, I have employees...." And he went on like that, for about a minute, and closed with something that I remember as "snot-nosed punk", which either because I am one and hate to be reminded of it, or because though I have every reason to be, I'm not, and resent being assumed to be one, I got really pissed, and said, "Listen. All that stuff, that's *your* problem. *You* made a conscious decision to break the law. *You* decided to try to defraud the United States Government. All that stuff, you should have thought of it then. 'Cause if you had gotten away with it, you'd be laughing now, but my boss is smarter than you and you got caught. So don't bother me because there is nothing that I can do for you and I wouldn't do it if I could."

Well, we were both pretty surprised at what I had said and we both shut up. I was thinking, guilty or not, he could still bring a complaint that would get me fired (this was when the anti-IRS movement in the government was starting to heat up.) I don't know what he was thinking. Anyway, then Patricia came back in and the audit continued and I kept handing her papers though I was shaking. I had to work hard not to look at the taxpayer. Finally it was over and he slunk out of there and I couldn't tell if he even looked at me, and I asked Patricia if I could speak to her privately, and told her what had happened. I thought she would be mad; she just laughed. She said I had the right attitude though I should watch my tongue, that she doubted he would complain, she could cover me if he did. She said that we were there to enforce the law, as passed by the people in Washington. If people didn't like the law, they could call their Congressman, not us. It wasn't her or my job to have sympathy for anyone. And she did not lose sleep at night about the people who had successfully evaded. We can't get everyone, she said, but we can make it hard for them. Some people are just smarter than we are, and that didn't bother her much.

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Incidentally, the IRS has a special division to check its own employees' returns. But I didn't really learn any tricks or loopholes or weaknesses while I was there; everything I learned taught me on the contrary NOT to screw around with my taxes.

About seven months later, I guess people had called their Congressmen, and Al Gore was busy reinventing government, because they cut the IRS and eliminated most of the researcher jobs and downsized me. (I think Patricia was transferred to Fresno.) But my opinion on paying taxes hasn't changed. If people start choosing what laws to obey, what's the point of having laws? If you want to break laws, for your own benefit, by your own choice, fine, but don't complain about the consequences. If there are government programs you don't feel like funding because you don't agree with them or don't feel they benefit you, there are a lot of other programs that you do like, do benefit you, for which a lot of other Americans don't like paying. And this from someone who is not so big on promoting the general welfare, but who realizes that a lot of the time it's the best way to promote the personal one.

Message 87 4/12/99 6:40 AM
Subject: Re(3): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Engineer K writes:

[179 words], including:

Reponse of 50 words of less only, please.

Once again, the famous GOL double standard.

I've answered exhaustively already; maybe you could read my answers.

Also, is "mental masturbation" directed at me? Funny, masturbation seems lately the territory of pierre le fou, who was on the "other side". Is it an insult? Do you condemn masturbation?

Message 86 4/12/99 6:42 AM
Subject: Re(2): I was the Tax Man
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

I don't know about random audits; as I noted and you may have read, I was with Criminal Investigations. I can't speak about other divisions and sections, but I would imagine that the cuts to CID mean that more wealthy people are getting away with evading taxes.

By the way, the cuts were largely at the instigation/pressure of Newt and his newly elected Republican Congressional majority.

Message 85 4/12/99 12:07 PM
Subject: Re(5): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person

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To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

The only double standard I see is that when you disagree with other people you think you're enlightening them, and when others disagree with you you think they're persecuting you.

Not at all. Are you confused between methods and message? I consider myself to be doing exactly the same thing to others as they are to me. They use their methods; I mine. We're all equal, morally. We're all terrible. I'm just the only one who'll admit it.

So I intend to use at least as many words as they do, if I like.

Message 83 4/12/99 7:01 PM
Subject: Re(7): Verducci Hall DUSTED!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

*For the record, I don't really mind how large your posts are. If I find them interesting - like I did your IRS post, which was really a great read (and I agree with you about paying taxes, too) - I'll read every word. If I don't, I won't. When I *do* have problems with you, it's usually not related to your verbosity.*

Fine then. And though of course I could, I won't put "Response must be in Latin" or "Response in rhyme only please" at the end of anything I direct your way.

Message 82 4/12/99 7:05 PM
Subject: Re: psychic immunity
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

nessie writes:

Does the human mind have an integrated system of mechanisms which perform a function for the mind which is analogous to that performed by the immune system for the body?

How about -- experience?

Message 81 4/12/99 7:12 PM
Subject: Beaver Hunt!!
From: terrible person
To: politics

I heard they caught one of them, but that the other two are still at large. It's just one dam thing after another. In true Washington tradition, the beaver admitted destroying the cherry tree. Reached for comment, former

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Senator Howard Baker asked, "What did the beaver gnaw and when did he gnaw it?"

Message 80 (Unsent)
Subject: Susan Macdougall acquitted!!
From: terrible person
To: politics

Yay!!

I say this simply

Message 79 4/12/99 7:21 PM
Subject: Re: Newest American Terrorist Organization
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:

Take a good look at the NATO insignia. It's a stylized swastika.

nessie, I can't believe that YOU of all people, ever-vigilant YOU, fell for this.

The NATO insigne is OBVIOUSLY a stylized hammer and sickle.

Message 70 4/13/99 11:08 PM
Subject: Re(9): propaganda
From: terrible person
To: politics

lecia writes:

i most assuredly do not support milo! he has proven more than once that not only is he a bully and a psycho chess player(a nod to you terrible person)

I'll say the same thing to you that I said to someone else who called me the same things recently; for the former, I choose my tactics as others choose theirs, and for the latter, I'd really be interested in knowing your psychiatric qualifications to make such a diagnosis.

Message 69 4/13/99 11:22 PM
Subject: Re(2): Beaver Hunt!!
From: terrible person
To: politics

bernard thomas writes:

Are these Republican beavers or Democratic beavers? Just curious.

The way they are undermining cherryshed American institutions, they must be Communists! Just look at their teeth, shaped, for cutting, just like hammers and sickles! And just look at the scientific name for beaver -- "CASTOR"! Need I say more? But wherever these Communist beavers may lurk, even if, as I suspect, there are 201 of them in the State Department creating the ridiculous foreign policy we've been enjoying -- what else could explain it? -- (remember, beavers are glad when we're up a creek, and the building of

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barricades is straight out of the Paris Commune) even if there are 57 or 81, they must be rooted out, they shall be found and exposed, just as they were in the 50's, by my hero, Senator Eddie Haskell!

Ok, maybe they're not communist beavers. But they revel in the destruction of things that took a lot of time and effort to build; that's bad enough.

Also, the report I heard to the effect that there were 3 of them, I just realized, was on CNN. So that must mean there were really at least 100,000.

Message 68 4/13/99 11:35 PM
Subject: I am VERY disturbed II
From: terrible person
To: politics

Some of you may remember that in January, in the film conference, I expressed great dismay that certain prominent GOL figures seemed to be admitting that their personas here were only cultivated images, that they did not really mean the things they said.

So you can imagine how I must feel to find out that tomorrow, Kenneth Starr will testify before Congress that he opposes the renewal of the Independent Counsel Act, that he believes it to be unconstitutional.

Now, when hypocrisy is undetectable (putting one's deeds in conflict only with one's private thoughts), I don't mind it -- how could I?

But why did he have to tell everyone and spoil a wonderful performance?

Was he just so upset by being beaten by Susan Macdougall -- who as a con woman could probably outsmart the entire cast of "The Grifters" -- that he folded in disgust? Was it jealousy that Judge Webber Wright nailed Clinton when Starr never could?

Well, I'll certainly never believe a word he says again.

Message 67 4/14/99 7:25 AM
Subject: Re(2): I am VERY disturbed II
From: terrible person
To: politics

Steve Omlid writes:

If I were Clinton and I read that, I wouldn't know whether to laugh or cry.

My guess is that he'd be rather contemptuous.

Message 66 4/14/99 7:34 AM
Subject: Re(11): propaganda
From: terrible person
To: politics

lecia writes:

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oh, now you're just being silly!

Harumph.

Message 65 4/14/99 7:38 AM
Subject: Re(4): Beaver Hunt!!
From: terrible person
To: politics

Steve Omlid writes:

Huh, huh, huh. You said "beaver".

Wait. I don't get it. Is there some prurient meaning to the word "beaver" I don't seem to know about?

Message 61 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(7): propaganda
From: terrible person
To: politics

Auntie Em writes:

Steve Omlid writes:

nessie writes:

This is the choice between more deaths and fewer deaths. I favor fewer deaths. How about the rest of you?

Well, gee, Nessie, I favor fewer deaths too.

My reaction exactly.

Are you sure this is a universal? If it took 999,999 American servicepeople's deaths to save a million Kosovars, would that be worth it? How about 500,000 Ami

Message 60 (Unsent)
Subject: Making Plans for Niger
From: terrible person
To: politics

Any opinions on the coup in this West African country?

Message 59 4/15/99 9:50 AM
Subject: Re(2): I am VERY disturbed II
From: terrible person
To: politics

My guess is that the Republicans are figuring that everyone from this Administration who can be investigated (and his dog) already has, and smelling blood for 2000 and expecting to have one of theirs in power, and don't want him or her to have to deal with another Lawrence Walsh, so this is why Good

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Republicans now oppose the IC.

Message 58 4/15/99 8:28 PM
Subject: Re: we're havin' a heat wave...
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

lecia writes:
man does he [bill clinton] have a big head! HUGE!

and in fact he's very sensitive about it.

So that just proves there was a totally innocent and honest reason for him to answer "Yes, definitely!" when Monica asked him, "Would you like a little head?"

Message 57 4/15/99 8:40 PM

Subject: Stupid antireligion
From: terrible person
To: politics

J.Mark Andrus writes:
Apparently the laws of physics are beyond the simplistic, selfish mentality of this Christian imbecile...

Apparently the laws of reason are beyond the simplistic, self-centered mentality of this -- well, whatever he claims to believe in -- imbecile.

It's obvious that an all-powerful God/Jesus/Gaia/Aeolus/whathaveyou could easily have made the wind a little more powerful in the middle to take down her house too, or without touching the adjacent mobile homes, no matter what the differences in structural strength, if He/She/It/whatever had thought it appropriate. That this did not happen is something to be thankful for. No physics needed.

And that woman has the pleasant knowledge that she's going to heaven.

Would you care to demonstrate YOUR knowledge of the laws of physics? I'll be sitting in the front row of the lecture, with my taped glasses and pocket protector, ready to ask lots of questions.....

Message 56 4/15/99 10:01 PM
Subject: Re: Shit!
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

shit is a good old english word, going back through Germanic to the Indo-european root "skei-", to separate. (Words of this type form the oldest basic vocabulary of any language.) Excrement is what separates from the body.

skei- also gives the latin verb "scio", to separate in the sense of to make

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

distinctions, hence, to know. from "scio" comes "scientia", knowledge, whence "science".

my linguistics tutor would tell this to his classes on the first day.

Message 45 (Unsent)
Subject:
From: terrible person
To: politics

It used to be that when you paid your Federal income tax by check, you made it out to the IRS. This always bothered me; I had no idea what the IRS was doing with my money, whether they were giving it to the rest of the Federal government or sharing it amongst their agents and staff (and if so, why wasn't I getting any of it?) I thought the IRS was just the collection agent; the money was owed to the US government.

This tied in, possibly, it seemed, with the fact, often cited by conspiracy theorists and anti-government militants, that US money is illegitimate because it (bills at least) say "Federal Reserve Note" (and not "US Treasury Note", or even "United States Note", as I believe they did briefly under Kennedy.) The idea is that some other shadowy entity is controlling what should be a function of a straightforward government department.

But when I went to send my check this year, I noticed a change. The payee was no longer the IRS, but "United States Treasury." I thought that was great!

Paying straight to the Treasury! I have a personal relationship now with the Federal Government!

Let's see what they do with the bills.

Message 44 4/16/99 9:23 AM
Subject: Newley deceased
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

I heard yesterday of the death of Anthony Newley, British performer, director, and songwriter, most famous for his musical "Stop the World -- I Want to Get Off". (Well, don't we all.) The show, (cowritten about 1960 with Leslie Bricusse, who's Leslie in the Nielsen sense) usually staged abstractly on a circus-like set, with some of the actors as clown mimes, concerns the life and loves of a typical Englishman, who goes through a succession of international extramarital lovers (all played by the same actress who plays his ordinary, decent wife) as he climbs up the ladder of business and politics. Probably its most famous song is the final one, sung by the main character after the death of his wife and shortly before his own, "What Kind of Fool Am I?"

My sister used to sing it to the tune of "The Rainbow Connection".

Message 43 4/16/99 9:32 AM

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Subject: Re(5): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

I once second-acted Sweeny Todd after drinking an entire bottle of Mad Dog.

Really? Wow! In what role? I kind of imagine you as the Beadle....but now we're getting into reality so all imaginings are invalid.

Now I'm mentally casting an entire production of ST:TDBOFS with GOLers.

I think I'd be Pirelli.

Message 40 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(3): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

Jason Pagura writes:
those vacant mobile homes,

J.Mark Andrus writes:
Perhaps the occupants of the mobile homes were homosexuals,

there weren't any occupants.

Message 39 (Unsent)
Subject: Re(9): Stupid antireligion
From: terrible person
To: politics

Even if that woman, solely on the basis of her belief in Jesus, can be assumed to hold all the other beliefs you attribute to her, and that having read all your comments over the Net, she has concluded that you, J. Mark Andrus, represents everything that SHE happens to find abhorrent and wrong....

what, except for the obvious reason that they are antithetical to YOUR particular interests, makes you so sure she's not right?

Message 38 4/16/99 6:09 PM
Subject: Re(7): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:
Laura Deal as Mrs. Lovett!

Ok, though when I think of someone who wields a mean and sharp chopping knife, I think Auntie Em. And Heyer has the requisite glee.

Pierre le Fou as Judge Turpin! (Especially if the GOL version included the

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scene (omitted from the Broadway production) where Turpin whips himself in an eroto-regligious frenzy. And, of course, the GOL version *would* include that scene.)

J. Mark Andrus also qualifies on the whips and the judgmentalness.

Now: for Johanna and Antony, I'd go with Kelsey Gadoo and Jerusalem Cricket.

For Tobias, someone as yet not-totally-driven-mad by the horrors of GOL, but soon to be, someone like Keela Merrin or lecia.

For the beggar woman -- careful here -- Eva Luna?

And for Todd himself? nessie possesses the requisite brooding sense of vengeance. but Todd was smooth, Todd was subtle, Todd could remain quiet for a long time and then LASH OUT SUDDENLY AND CUTTINGLY!!

And that means: Sirin.

Though of course, Michael D. Sweeney might have the inside track for the role.

And I wouldn't refuse a shot at it.

Heh heh.

Message 37 4/16/99 6:13 PM
Subject: Re(2): Newley deceased
From: terrible person
To: It's a le fou World

Tim Walters writes:

Not to mention his bizarre rendition of the theme from "Goldfinger."

Eeeesh. And he wrote the song, too.

Message 35 4/16/99 7:33 PM
Subject: Re(5): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

db daugherty writes:

nessie writes:

Me either. These people SCARE me. Maybe I never should have read up on the etymology of the word "faggot."

While you're at it, look up "punk", then connect the dots...

I can't believe anyone actually these sorts of word-association folk etymologies, which are basically no more than puns. Guess what? Not all words that sound the same have the same meaning!

Particularly re "faggot": I can give you just as good an alternate etymology: in English boarding schools, a "fag" was a younger student who performed odd

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jobs and personal services -- and often other services -- for upperclassmen.
(see "If....")

Now, if either of you can cite me a single -- even a single, not even a preponderance of examples that it would really take for the word meaning to be transferred -- example of a person being burned at the stake solely because of homosexual practices (or suspicion of tendency thereto), I'll give you a nickel.

Message 34 4/16/99 7:35 PM
Subject: Re(7): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

db daugherty writes:

I wuoldn't want to believe in a god that blessed me while harming my neighbor.

what if you were more deserving than your neighbor? wouldn't you expect better treatment?

Message 32 4/17/99 6:20 AM
Subject: Re(9): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

terrible person writes:

Now: for Johanna and Antony, I'd go with Kelsey Gadoo and Jerusalem Cricket.

Steve Omlid writes:

But which would play which?

Doesn'tmuch matter; either would work.We could have Johanna and Antonia, but I've always been a fan of gender-blind casting (e.g.,Whoopi Goldberg as Pseudolus in "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" last year.) Yellow hair is a matter of wigs, basically.("Yellow? Not exact enough!")

But I never thought of nessie as being particularly willing to serve anyone...

terrible person

("Now, I, the so famous Pirelli, I wish to know who has the nerve to say... My elixir is piss?
Who says this?")

Message 30 4/17/99 1:39 PM
Subject: Re(9): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

db daugherty writes:
No one "deserves" anything.

so that the only test of whether an act is "right" or "wrong" is whether you can get away with it?

Message 29 4/17/99 2:11 PM
Subject: Re(4): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

nessie writes:
These people SCARE me.

Take this as explanation or consolation (and grounds for celebration), but YOU scare a lot of THEM just as much.

The idea of a civil war (not a second, since the 1861-1865 conflict was not a true civil war) is interesting, since armed conflict has traditionally often been a fairly effective, if not efficient, means of deciding which side and doctrinal system were right -- it's the one that's left.

Message 26 4/17/99 7:36 PM
Subject: Re(11): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

db daugherty writes:
Who's talking about acts? The subject is tornados.

Let's see. You said you would not believe in a God who treated you differently than your neighbors (e.g., sent a tornado that hurt them, but not you.) I asked whether it would make any difference if your neighbors deserved to be hit by a tornado, say, if they were mass murderers or had done other horrible things which are generally thought to deserve punishment. You, paraphrasing Clint Eastwood in "Unforgiven", said roughly that deserve has nothing to do with it. I asked then if there were any basis for morality, if people did not deserve or not deserve certain things by their acts or inacts.

Now, maybe, when you made your original statement, the idea was that, instead of implying by your denial the opposite, that you would believe in a God who did NOT treat you differently, you were saying that you would not believe in a God under any circumstances. If so, your position is based on faith and not on reason, and I can't argue with faith.

Message 25 4/17/99 7:38 PM
Subject: Re(9): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

J.Mark Andrus writes:

a phonemenon I invariably find tiresome.

if your brain is getting tired, it's probably because it's out of shape. try exercising it on occasion!

Message 23 4/17/99 7:42 PM
Subject: Re(4): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

bernard thomas writes:

a very effective argument against laws against "victimless crimes"

I'm not quite sure how "victimless crimes" got into this discussion, but since others find it relevant, would one of them care to explain to me how this poor condemned-by-all Christian woman was "victimizing" anyone by her expression of faith?

Message 18 4/17/99 7:51 PM
Subject: Re(9): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Meg Cotner writes:

Care for a harpsichord soundtrack?

There's the organ-accompanied duet ("Tower of Bray") in the second act; if Steve Omlid the Beadle will defer to your keyboard skills, by all means.

Message 12 4/18/99 8:21 AM
Subject: Re(11): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

terrible person writes:

But I never thought of nessie as being particularly willing to serve anyone...

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

Think again.

I'm not sure quite what you mean (I was commenting on nessie's political stance), but I am having a really good time talking about show tunes in two different conferences, and distasteful though that topic may be to most people here, at least while I'm on it it basically keeps me from saying such Harry Kellerman-ish terrible things about people.

Something to remember.

Message 11 4/18/99 8:19 AM

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Subject: Re(11): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

But I don't want to be Beadle that much; it's kind of a nothing role.

Dibs on director!

Objection. You're just trying to be moderator again, and I won't have it. I suggest an uncontroversial compromise candidate, one with a theatrical background and universal respect: Elizabeth A. Nolan.

(Although, of course, if she declines the female lead, laura deal has the directing experience too, and, very relevantly, has it with small children.)

Message 10 4/18/99 10:17 AM
Subject: Sweeney Todd (was: Re(13): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

*Actually, what would *really* be cool is if Laura directed a production of Sweeney Todd performed by her students.*

Now, would this include the flagellation scene?

I fear that such a production might have the effect of turning sweet impressionable young children into traumatized-out-of-their-now-white-haired-heads Tobiases.

After all, I first got into "Sweeney Todd" when I was pretty young, and look how I turned out.

Although, now that I think of it, I believe laura deal did report involving her students in a production of "Hamlet", which has equal blood and gore.

Careful there; the parents of Michael Carneal are suing the media outlets they hold responsible for his murderous spree.

Message 9 4/18/99 10:19 AM
Subject: Re(13): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Kelsey Gadoo writes:

Translation: stay on topic, Gadoo!

Not quite; more like , "Here are some reasons why you might want to stay on THIS topic."

Message 8 4/18/99 10:24 AM
Subject: Re: Emily reads the phone book
From: terrible person

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To: film

Well, I have no idea as to the effects of Ms. Watson's screen presence or acting abilities, but the image of her in the poster caused my former manager to react in a manner formerly reserved only for Rosanna Arquette, that is, to collapse into a paroxysm of pointing and screaming "Ferret face!!"

Message 7 4/18/99 10:37 AM
Subject: Re: Fwd(3): [CTRL] 50 Years of Research Results in AIDS??
From: terrible person
To: politics

I love the carefully edited and snipped, teaser quality of this post. It really makes me want to read the whole thing.

It's like one of those movie ads or trailers in which there is a quick shot of the hot performer unbuttoning his or her shirt, which is supposed to make the viewer want to rush out and see the film in the hope of seeing her or him actually take it off (which really never happens.) Or the way quotes from reviews are carefully chosen, or the most obscure (but favorable) reviewers located, in order to insure a complimentary comment. "I loved it! It's a sure-fire Oscar (tm)! The ride of your life!"

I see a great career for nessie a Hollywood publicist.

Message 6 4/18/99 12:38 PM
Subject: Re(2): Sweeney Todd (was: Re(13): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

Actually, it's the families of his victims who are suing the makers of: The Basketball Diaries, which is an R-rated movie he wasn't supposed to see without his parents' consent; certain adult video sites, and notice that word "adult"; and certain violent video games, which the vast majority of children are able to play without anything more than appearing to have had too much espresso. But don't get me started, or else we'll have to change the thread name again.

And I hear Michael Carneal watched a lot of building demolitions too.

Oops.

Back to show tunes.

I really like "The Music Man" -- how about you?

Message 5 4/18/99 12:44 PM
Subject: Re(3): Emily reads the phone book
From: terrible person
To: film

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Steve Omlid writes:

And it is true that she isn't a "great beauty". Which is swell, because "great beauties" tend to bore me. Give me a spectacular pair of blue-grey eyes over flawless porcelain features anytime.

I think you may have missed my point. In most still pictures of seen of her (the only kind of pictures I've seen of her), she comes across as quite, and dare I say it, conventionally, attractive. It's just that in the "Metroland" poster her face seems to have undergone some strange sort of foreshortening. (While Christian Bales looks more like John Sayles, hovering there profiled in the background.)

Message 4 4/18/99 6:47 PM
Subject: Re(4): Sweeney Todd (was: Re(13): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Spidra Webster writes:

Yep. Got exposed to it ["The Music Man"]early

Spidra Webster, you are an honorary Cool Kid.

Oh.

I just remembered.

I'm not empowered to bestow that degree.

Now, if Kelsey Gadoo could get over her reticence to elaborate upon her past associations with and interests in musical comedies, they would instantly become "cool" and fashionable here, to the extent that other GOLers would be tripping over themselves and each other to go on the record concerning their own tastes in and experiences of show tunes!

As for how to audition, Spidra Webster, I have occasionally seen notices in various free papers, and who knows, there may be a website. But ya gotta know the territory!

terrible person (I always *think* there's a band, kid)

Message 3 4/18/99 8:42 PM
Subject: Re(4): Sweeney Todd (was: Re(13): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:

Here's a great musical: Marat/Sade.

*String up every aristocrat
Out with the priests, let 'em live off their fat!*

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

I was hoping to move towards the less gruesome sort of musicals, but if you want to match quotes of that type:

"Little Shop of Horrors"

If you want a rationale
It isn't very hard to see
Stop and think it over, pal
The guy sure looks like plant food to me!

Message 2 4/18/99 8:47 PM
Subject: Re(4): Sweeney Todd (was: Re(13): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Meg Cotner writes:

When I was growing up in Michigan, they would play it each year. I want to say it was at 4th of July, but I'm not sure about that.

I also liked the allusions the Simposon's made to this movie during the "monorail" episode.

I've heard of that....

Every time I walk past my local billiards establishment, I want to leap up on a bench and shout to the passersby "A pool talbe? DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?" and have them spontaneously assemble into a chorus for "Ya Got Trouble..."...You know, just some random cacaphonic guerrilla street theater....

Terrible (with a capital T and that rhymes with P and that stands for) Person!

Message 1 4/19/99 7:40 AM
Subject: Re(6): Sweeney Todd (was: Re(13): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Spidra Webster writes:

Yes, yes, because a "Spidra" endorsement isn't cool enough.

Rather, a "terrible" endorsement is not the sort of award to put on one's resume.

I get the pitcha...

I'm saddened to hear of the late Early Wynn.

Growing up in the Greater New York area (but, thank God or whatever powers may be, not in the City itself, but in the pure, environmentally and morally uncontaminated air of New Jersey) I was able to go to Broadway and Off-Broadway shows with some regularity. But I think listening to the cast albums, and being involved with high school and college productions, were a lot more important in my, er, development.

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

One exception: the Metropolitan Opera's early 80's staging of Brecht and Weill's "Mahagonny".

Ticket prices are outrageous now; however, there is still the half-price TICKETS booth in Times Square, I believe; and there's always "Cats".

Message 26 4/19/99 6:12 PM
Subject: Re(8): Sweeney Todd (was: Re(13): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:
Actually, I think Cats has closed in New York.

Negatory on that one; it's still at the Winter Garden.

Message 24 4/19/99 6:45 PM
Subject: Re(10): Sweeney Todd (was: Re(13): conan does amazing things
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Cocktail Party

Steve Omlid writes:
Really? My bad. But it's not like Cats really counts as a musical anyway. It's more like a ride.

Yes, but I met Sidney Poitier's son once, and he promised me a part in the movie version his father will be directing.

Message 20 4/20/99 9:13 AM
Subject: Re: Housemates/Roommates
From: terrible person
To: Women<-->Men

Spidra Webster writes:
How do people deal with this kinda stuff?

Find the cheapest studio or one-bed one can (deciding that the cost is covered by the reduced stress-related doctor bills, and the greater amount one can produce and earn in the clearer environment) and enjoy the splendid isolation!

Message 18 4/20/99 9:37 AM
Subject: Re(2): Housemates/Roommates
From: terrible person
To: Women<-->Men

Kelsey Gadoo writes:
<<<But the other important thing is that I always make an agreement that we're going to do a trial period of two weeks.>>>

I can't imagine letting someone move all his or her stuff in, break his or her other lease (or pay for two apartments), for just two weeks. Do you then give them two weeks to leave, since most apartments open up on the first? (I doubt I'd want to be on the other side of this deal either; I might find it rather

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

insulting, though this comes down to supply and demand and desperation. I wonder what people would have posted if the original poster had been looking to BE a roommate rather than find one.)

I suppose the real use of this agreement is as a threat, as a bullshit filter. Only someone who is really sure he or she is telling the truth and is a decent roommate would agree to it (or a very nervy, Milosevic-like liar who thinks you could not actually follow through on your threat and thus doesn't fear it.

Or someone who actually thinks he or she is pretty nice and has no idea he or she won't measure up to your standards and find him or herself out on the street.)

Message 17 4/20/99 9:28 AM
Subject: Re(2): Housemates/Roommates
From: terrible person
To: Women<-->Men

pierre le fou writes:

You don't need a roommate, you have room to offer.

This all sounds good and encouraging and ideal, but my perception is that Spidra Webster can't afford the multiroom apartment all on her own and needs people to help pay the rent. (Which reminds me of a recent show tune.) It's not so easy when you're not so rich.

Message 3 4/20/99 12:21 PM
Subject: Re: Huh
From: terrible person
To: Heyer's Temple of Doom

Heyer writes:

<<<Doesn't anyone celebrate any damned thing anymore?>>>

yesterday was Patriots' Day in the Boston area, the anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, celebrated by the running of the Marathon.

I used to celebrate by reenacting on bicycle Paul Revere's ride of the previous evening. I love Paul Revere, whether he rode or not.

another big holiday there is 17 March, not just St. Patrick's but Evacuation Day, when Henry Knox's cannon, transported from Fort Ticonderoga and set up on Dorchester Heights, obliged the British to quit the City of Boston.

I don't really know if American independence was a good thing or not; I guess it was, for me, and it made for an awfully fun Bicentennial.

"Oh, what a glorious morning this is!" -- Samuel Adams, 19 April 1775

By the rude bridge that arched the flood
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard 'round the world. -- Emerson

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

"Stand your ground. Don't fire unless fired upon. But if they mean to have a war, let it begin here." -- Capt. John Parker, Lexington, same day

"Ye villains, ye rebels, disperse! Damn you, disperse! Lay down your arms! Damn you, why don't you lay down your arms?!" -- Major John Pitcairn, same place, same day, later killed at Bunker Hill

"Buckaroo, there is little time. You'd better come quickly if your planet is still important to you." -- John Parker

"Hey Elvis, want some more fried chicken?" -- Col. Tom Parker

"Have a beer, Hancock." -- Sam Adams

>Message 33 4/19/99 6:42 PM
Subject: Re(6): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

bernard thomas writes:

<<<by writing their personal morality into the law, the result of which is laws such as those against a variety of sexual behaviors, drug use (as opposed to sale), gambling and so on, i.e "victimless crimes".>>>

I can understand this view better if I am reminded where you stand on the issue of liberals "writing their personal morality into law" by obliging even conservative taxpayers to pay to help support drug abusers (theoretically recovering), illegal immigrants, young women whom they judge to have been sexually irresponsible, and the poor in general. (The fact that Jesus commands us to help these people -- let's, or let them, forget that for a moment.) My impression, bernard thomas, is that your libertarianism is general rather than specific, and thus, I can't find you hypocritical unless I catch you someday on a welfare line.

<<<I personally don't agree with J.Mark that expressing one's faith in the manner sited victimizes anyone, but I do tend to react negatively when I hear such expressions because I associate them with the sort of logic (as expressed by one well-known preacher)>>>

but you are going by your associations, based to a great extent on one (or a few) outstanding examples. would you consider it fair for all drug users to be judged by one speed-puppy who shoots up a McDonald's, all gay men by -- I don't know, Andrew Cunanan? which is to a great extent what conservative or religious bigots do.

In matters like this, I think statistical evidence is preferable to the anecdotal kind.

Message 32 4/19/99 6:57 PM
Subject: Re(7): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

The Terrible Papers, Part III: Stoler ("terrible person")'s Posts on the Guardian Online BBS, November 1998 to April 1999. Hard to follow sometimes, I know; remember, the stuff in Roman is mine; in *Italics*, theirs.

Steve Omlid writes:

(Because, actually, everyone wants to see their personal philosophy enacted into law to some degree or another. It's just a matter of how much that manifests itself as persecution.)

A statement I definitely agree with -- though perhaps "universalized", would be more accurate than "enacted into law" -- in a post I generally agree with. (What's up with you lately, Steve Omlid? You keep doing this. I even found your Bob Dole joke rather funny.)

However:

an "Identity Christian" (the term for those who believe in Christian supremacy)

"Christian Identity" is something even more specific than that, a cross between a cult and a militia that believes white Northern European "Aryans" are the true chosen people and Jews, Blacks, etc., are inferior and demonic. Centered, I believe, in a compound in Idaho (near where Mark Fuhrman went to live) and "Elohim City" in Oklahoma (visited by Tim McVeigh a little over four years ago.) Far, far more extreme even than Falwell or Robertson (not to pooh-pooh their particular brand of extremism.)

Message 26 4/20/99 9:05 AM
Subject: Re(7): Stupid religion
From: terrible person
To: politics

Wait, wait; I found something about which to disagree. Two things, really.

First of all,

Steve Omlid writes: (this is actually a quote from bernard thomas; it appeared that Steve Omlid basically agreed, but if not, then I'm just arguing with bernard thomas)

the result of which is laws such as those against a variety of sexual behaviors, drug use (as opposed to sale)

I'm a bit puzzled by the distinction that is being made between "victimless" drug possession/use, and sale. I don't see how you can have one without the other; how are people supposed to get the stuff? Not everyone who uses can grow (if we're talking of marijuana) his or her own (some of the medical cases will simply be too weak) and not everyone who does grow can afford to give it away for free. It seems that if it's ok to use drugs, it should be ok to get more. Unless this is a sort of week-kneed way of sliding into acceptance, or some random unmotivated method for a modicum of control, legalizing possession but not sale is like arresting prostitutes but not johns, or like the view, held, according to polls, by a strangely large number of Americans, that gay men and lesbians (etc. -- I really wish the guy who coined the term "heterosexual" had defined it on analogy with "heterodox", so that it would cover all sexualities other than "orthodox" "orthosexuality." "LGBT" just doesn't flow as nicely.) ought to be tolerated, and not burned at the stake or electrochemically "converted", but not allowed to adopt or teach children for fear that they might create more of their kind. This is like a grandfather

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clause, or the Cold War policy of "containment" of Communism, or Hamlet's decree that there will be no more marriages but all those already married (but one) shall live, and underlyingly and ominously assumes that if a group can be limited it will die out eventually.

Also, I'm rather against the recreational use of drugs (including alcohol and, to some extent, fiction films and literature) in general. I worry about anything that takes people away from reality (and what would I know about that? Perhaps drugs open up whole new realities. This they may for aught I know to the contrary, but there is still a sort of common gateway reality where everyone starts, where everyone took the drugs [or declined to], and to which people generally return after a certain time unless they can get more of the drug, again, within the common reality. If people can escape into their higher consciousness, more power to them; unfortunately, physical needs usually intervene.) Now, to the extent that drugs simply loosen one's grip on reality, they open one to control by the manipulators of perception, the media, the government, unscrupulous wielders of facts and words. (Indeed, I've often felt that the main reason I've had any success in online debates is not some overpowering intellect, but the fact that the minds of some of my opponents were on other planes.) However, this is not always the case; drugs may also cause one to grip firmly to some new idea of reality. This renders the con man's job somewhat more difficult, as he tries to figure out just what this other reality is and make use of it. But to the extent that drugs produce a different sensation of reality in every user, it makes it very difficult for them all to unite to resist some group whose dogma might be less creative, but unified. (Any conflict tests which side's perceptions are closer to reality. An army of druggies [believing they can fly, say] versus an army of religious nuts believing God is on their side-- who'd win?) In other words, drugs make you a lot less alert to the bad stuff going down, and play right into the hands of the doers of that bad stuff; as long as I am one of those doers, and you want me in charge, go right ahead, but then I can't count on you to fight off the guys who are even worse than I am.

5K limit here still? To be continued.