Tekstboekje
Why are turkeys' eggs not distributed, sold and eaten in the same way as hens' eggs?

I don't know why turkey eggs are not usually available for culinary purposes, but I suggest that if you do come across them, 1. Charles Manners, fourth Duke of Rutland, an 18th-century governor-general of Ireland, had one for breakfast every morning. He died at the age of 33.

*Brian Howes, Bingham, Notts*

*The Guardian, 2012*
Simply irresistible? You could be sacked

1 IF you think an employee is "irresistibly" attractive, it's OK to sack them — at least in the minds of seven male US judges.

2 An all-male Iowa Supreme Court has ruled that a dentist acted legally when he fired an assistant. The court ruled 7 — 0 that bosses can fire employees they see as an "irresistible" attraction. Such firings are not unlawful discrimination under the Iowa Civil Rights Act because they are motivated by emotions, not gender, Justice Edward Mansfield wrote.

3 A lawyer for dentist James Knight said the decision was a victory for "family values" because Dr Knight fired Melissa Nelson to save his marriage. But Ms Nelson's lawyer said the court failed to recognise the discrimination women see routinely in the workplace. "These judges say they don't think men can be held responsible for their behaviour and that women are the ones who have to monitor and control their bosses' sexual desires."

4 Ms Nelson worked for Dr Knight for 10 years and he considered her a stellar worker. But in her final months there he complained she distracted him. Dr Knight and Ms Nelson — both married with children — exchanged text messages, mostly about personal matters such as their families. Dr Knight's wife found out about the messages and demanded Ms Nelson be fired. Ms Nelson filed a lawsuit alleging gender discrimination, arguing she would not have been terminated if she were male.

Sunday Herald Sun, 2012
In the professional judgement of Dr James Curlew, his unfortunate daughter had, at the very most, five years left before it was all over. Not her life, you understand; her prospects for marriage. The same physical features that made him such a distinguished-looking man — tall, rangy build, aquiline nose, long face, strong jaw — were a calamitous inheritance for a girl. If she acted quickly, now while she was in her teens, there was still hope.

'Oh, but I don't wish to marry, Father,' she told him. 'The world has enough married folk in it. What it hasn't got enough is missionaries.'

'In that case,' he joked, 'it's damn naughty of the savages in Africa to keep eating them, isn't it?'

'You mustn't call them savages, Father,' Emmeline chided him solemnly. 'Such disparagements are precisely why slavery is still with us.'

Dr Curlew clenched his jaw — the same jaw he'd passed on to his blameless daughter — and did his best not to argue. Rancour between him and Emmeline would have grieved his wife, had she lived to see it.

'I don't know why you say "still with us",' he couldn't help remarking. 'We don't have slavery in England.'

'We must regard the whole world as our home, Father,' said Emmeline, wiping her fingers on the breakfast napkin. Pale sunlight was shining through the parlour window onto her face and upper body, a cool glow aided by the white tablecloth and the snowy landscape outside. The jingling of horses' harnesses as the nearby shops received their deliveries mingled with the tinkling of Emmeline's spoon in her teacup. 'This is the 1850s,' she reminded her father, as if the modern age had arrived while he'd been occupied elsewhere. 'Every place on Earth is connected by the web of our Empire. I have correspondents as far-flung as Kabool and New York.'
The lefties who need a hand
adapted from an article by Sara Harris

1 UP UNTIL the end of World War II, all children were forced to use their right hand to write. Teachers would tie their left hand behind their back and even cane them if they picked up a pen with their left hand. Thankfully, such barbaric punishments are now illegal, but some experts argue that left-handed children remain disadvantaged in the classrooms. They claim that children who are left-handed can find writing more difficult than their right-handed friends and can quickly fall behind.

2 A study published in 2008 showed that children who are left-handed perform worse at school than right-handers. Antony Clark, head of Malvern College, recently re-ignited the debate on the subject by claiming that pupils should be given spoken as well as written exams to prevent left-handed children falling behind. He told how he had observed left-handed pupils having greater difficulty producing legible script. "When I see students writing — and many left-handers have difficulty with script — one imagines that they write less and perhaps achieve lower grades than those who write more," he said.

3 Critics, however, point out that being left-handed is not a barrier to success. Five of the last seven U.S. presidents have been left-handed and conservative Prime Minister Winston Churchill was also 'a leftie', as is Prime Minister David Cameron.

4 Cary Cooper, professor of psychology and health at Lancaster University, believes special dispensation should only be given to left-handers if they have other learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. "Left-handed people are no longer forced to write right-handed, which did cause problems in the past," he says. "Being left-handed is not a learning difficulty in itself. We are all using new technologies such as computers and texting, and left and right-handed people are losing the ability to write. We must maintain the ability to write one way or another."

Daily Mail, 2010
That warm, fuzzy feeling

adapted from an article by Paul Bloom

Any scientists who study morality are interested in why people behave badly, but I am more curious to understand why we are so nice. It seems that much of it is part of human nature, not the product of culture or parenting. The economist Adam Smith pointed out long ago that when you see somebody in pain, you feel it — to an extent — as if it were your own, and you are motivated to make it go away. Modern research shows this is true even of babies. When babies hear crying, they cry, and if they see someone suffer, even silently, they become distressed. As soon as they can move, babies will try to help. They'll stroke the person, or hand over a toy or bottle.

In my own research, I have been studying the development of our capacity to judge the behaviour of others as right or wrong. I created a set of short plays for babies using puppets. In one, a character would struggle to get up a hill. One puppet would help him; another would push him down. I then presented each baby with the two puppets. Even those as young as 6 months old tended to reach for the "good guy", suggesting that this is who they prefer. I also created plays in which one puppet does neither good nor bad, and I found that babies reach for a good guy over a neutral guy, but would rather reach for a neutral than a bad guy. This suggests babies are both drawn towards the good guy and away from the bad.

More recently, I explored the judgements of 3-month-olds. Although babies that young cannot coordinate their actions well enough to reach for something, I knew from the previous study that babies first tend to look to where they're going to reach. As predicted, they looked at the good guy, and not at the bad guy, suggesting that they, too, favour this character.

Are these true moral judgements? It's an open question. One might ask, for instance, whether babies are motivated to reward the good character and punish the bad — this is the focus of ongoing work. At minimum, though, we can conclude that babies are third-party interactions of a positive and negative nature, and that this influences how they behave. They have, then, the foundations of morality.

Can these inborn inclinations explain the scope of human kindness? Probably not. Babies prefer the familiar: they prefer to hear their native language rather than a foreign one; babies raised in white households prefer to look at white faces while those raised in black households prefer black faces and these preferences grow into biases and behaviours. At around 9 months, they'll show stranger anxiety and, later on, sort themselves into groups, dividing the world into us versus them, showing little sign of caring about distant others.
None of this is ___________. Our brains have evolved through natural selection to favour those who share our genes and those with whom we continually interact. It is entirely predictable that our natural reaction to strangers is at best indifference and more typically fear and disgust.

A theory of human kindness needs two parts. The core of our moral sense is explained by our evolved nature, but its extension to strangers is the product of our culture, our intelligence and our imagination.

*NewScientist, 2010*
Park wi-fi

based on an article by Baz Blakeney

1 MY COUNCIL is thinking about turning the city's parks into wi-fi hot spots. How brilliant is that? The parks could soon be full of people doing exciting e-stuff, like updating their Bookfaces or watching cats dance on YouSpace. Teenagers will be able to play virtual sport without getting all sweaty and dirty and without burning off any of that valuable puppy fat, which they need for winter warmth. You won't have to hang around the playground to watch kiddies falling off swings to get your laughs. Just Google "kids falling off swings".

2 My council has many great ideas. Once they installed little electronic speakers in the park that emitted bird sounds when you walked past them. I should point out that it was difficult to hear the bird sounds unless you put your head close to the speaker. That's because the park was full of annoying sounds from real birds. But, still, a top idea.

3 The other great thing about this wi-fi park idea is the increase in electro-magnetic radiation. You can get a top-up while you're walking the dog or having a jog or a family picnic. You can never have too much radiation. Radio stations and TV stations pump their little waves through us day and night. That's so we can listen to Pink and watch shows like The Biggest Loser. Big buzzy powerlines drop radiation from above. Electric doors give us a little zing when we go in or out. Every time you travel on a train or tram, you are surrounded by people clutching handheld zappers so they can follow the enthralling adventures of Mel B on Twitter.

4 Some kooky conspiracy theorists say all this electronic activity is bad for us. That sometime down the track, we will suffer the health consequences of our bodies being constantly bombarded by radiation. I say phooey. These are probably the same nutcases who told us that the moon landing was a hoax filmed in a TV studio.  

21 the World Health Organisation classifies mobile phone radiation as only a Group 2B danger (possibly causing cancer). Until that "possibly" is changed to "definitely", I say tweet on.

5 I was given an invaluable lesson the other day in how technology has changed our lives. A friend and I attended a short, free piano concert at the State Library, where a man played a grand piano. It's difficult to describe but, take my word for it, it was cute. Most of the crowd spent the entire concert watching it through their mobile phone screens as they videoed it. Many walked away before the piece was finished and stood in
a corner sharing and comparing their video grabs. By the time the performance was over, half of the audience had moved off, with only slightly less grace and dignity than a tribe of gibbons that had run out of bananas. But the most important thing was that they had their snippets of video that they could upload on their YouFace pages. Right next to the footage of the dancing cats. Soon they may be able to do it in the park. And I'll be able to tell my grandchildren I was there to see it.

Herald Sun, 2012
Smoke without fire

1 BACK in the 1950s, when the dangers of smoking were becoming clear and the tobacco industry was panicked, cigarette-makers came up with a wheeze: safer smokes. Filter-tipped, low-tar and "light" cigarettes were the result.

2 In reality, those cigarettes were not safer at all. Smokers inhaled more deeply or smoked more. 25. Internal documents later revealed that they cynically promoted safer cigarettes to discourage people from quitting.

3 Given this history of smoke and mirrors, you should be suspicious when a tobacco company announces that it is investing in a "reduced risk" cigarette. In December, British American Tobacco (BAT) bought a company called CN Creative, which makes "electronic cigarettes". It is now planning to ask the UK authorities to recognise one of its products as a smoking-cessation medicine.

4 26? Probably not. There is mounting evidence that e-cigarettes are safer than smoking and really can help addicts cut down or quit. They seem especially useful for hard-core smokers who have failed to quit or who don't even want to try.1)

5 The anti-tobacco group Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) has given a qualified backing to e-cigarettes for harm reduction. ASH sensibly points out that e-cigarettes are clearly safer than inhaling tobacco smoke, and says there is little evidence that they will attract non-smokers or make smoking acceptable again.

6 Don't hold your breath, though. A similar argument has been made for "snus", a form of oral tobacco mainly used in Sweden. There is evidence that it can help smokers quit and that it is safer than smoking. Sweden has the lowest rates of smoking and lung cancer in Europe, which is often attributed to the use of snus. If Sweden's snus habit was replicated across the EU it would prevent thousands of lung cancer deaths, and yet it remains illegal. Outside Sweden it is condemned as a carcinogen and a potential gateway to smoking. The lesson? Harm reduction is a tough sell.

7 It may be distasteful to watch a tobacco company spearhead a campaign for cigarette harm reduction. But action is sorely needed. If the evidence stacks up, they should be given the benefit of the doubt — for now.

NewScientist, 2013

noot 1 According to more recent findings this claim is controversial.
Candid Camera

based on an article by Barbara Ellen

1 I once put a camera in my daughter's room. It was portable, positioned on a bookcase, trained on a desktop and only on when she was supposed to be studying for her retakes. The plan was to use the camera short term, mainly to stop the endless parental rounds of clomping up to her room, checking and chivvying. It was also to give her privacy — the alternative (which she was offered) was to study at the kitchen table.

2 The camera was an unmitigated disaster. I rarely remembered to check it and when I did it wasn't on her. With an inventiveness that seems screamingly funny now, it was pointed straight at the ceiling, covered with a jumper or giving me a clear view of the inside of the bin. My daughter ended up mainly studying at the kitchen table.

3 During the brief, doomed camera experiment, I would get into heated debates with people who thought it was akin to a violation of human rights. Those who most opposed it tended to have no children (leave them to their unknowing bliss) or much younger children. While I don't mean to alarm the latter group of rookies, they need to know that they know nothing.

4 Nappies and sleepless nights are nothing compared to the teenage years, when trouble is not only most likely to kick off (which doesn't matter), but also have genuine far-reaching consequences (which do). A crying baby at 4am is hard yakka, but that baby has no real autonomy or power and could not unwittingly (or otherwise) destroy its future. Toddlers or young schoolchildren aren't likely to get into situations that could adversely affect their lives for decades.

5 It is only during the pre-teen/teenage years that a parent is first called upon to do the real dirty work of parenting, including slapping hands away from self-destruct buttons. This is how parents end up eavesdropping, reading diaries, grilling friends, putting location spyware on mobiles. I did none of the above, partly because of ethical quandaries, but mainly because I never got the chance.

6 If this wasn't your experience of parenting teenagers, lucky you. Otherwise, it seems unfair to judge beleaguered, exhausted parents if, at some points, they make mistakes, including convincing themselves that training cameras on their first born is a completely sane decision; they do it because they care.

The Observer, 2013
Grammar guerrillas make their mark

1 Some people may think that grammar doesn't matter anymore, but there is a quiet army out there of those who disagree. In the wake of a council's decision to remove apostrophes from street signs, an anonymous guerrilla grammarian is going around using a marker pen to correct the punctuation. Signs with missing punctuation, such as that at Scholars' Walk, have seen the correct apostrophe inserted overnight.

2 The local authority in Cambridge has been accused of 'dumbing down' in the great university town over its decision to remove punctuation from street signs. The council argues it is simply following guidelines from the National Land and Property Gazetteer, where all new street names are registered. They argue that apostrophes are said to lead to mistakes – particularly among emergency services. Councillor Tim Ward, executive director of planning, said: "I think people would be more unhappy if an ambulance was unable to find their street." He admitted that the decision could be reversed if national guidelines change. But he added that the punctuation of street signs was at present a low priority issue for the local authority following a raft of budget cuts.  

Kathy Salaman, director of the Cambridge-based Good Grammar Company, praised the undercover 'repair' work and said: "I have heard that the signs have been vandalised by the marker pen but to me it was the language that has been vandalised by removing the apostrophes. I am very pleased that someone or some people have taken it in their hands to correct this dumbing down. Apostrophes can be key to conveying the meaning of a street name and I am hoping a campaign will be launched to get councils to change their minds. Cambridge is famous for the university and for people coming from other countries, such as scholars or business people. It should be leading by example in this day of trying to improve grammar and educational achievement. The signs without correct punctuation are just a耻辱.

adapted from an article from dailymail.co.uk, 2014
Bike Lane Lamentations

1 Courtland Milloy's July 9 Metro column, "District biker gang — the pedaling kind — has a lot of nerve," caught me off guard.

Frequently, car doors open as I pass, buses pass a few inches from my handlebars, and motorists yell or honk at me when I am trying to get around double-parked vehicles or cars parking. I try to obey traffic lights, but sometimes it is nice to get a running start and get away from traffic. The bike lanes have helped enormously. I do not understand why anyone would think they are bad. I have been bicycling in the District since 1984, and motorists appear more impatient with my presence on a bicycle than they did years ago, probably because of the higher volume of traffic. Everyone would be better off riding a bicycle in the city, but it is not for everyone. However, saying that hitting a bicyclist is worth the $500 fine is not a solution.

Jamie Rothschild, Washington

2 The July 11 Style article "In D.C.’s bike wars, here come the spokespeople," peddling civility by and toward bikers downtown, revealed the reason cyclists should be aggressively ticketed by D.C. police when they break the rules: in the one brief capsule of time described in the article, five cyclists sped through a red light. An ambulance, fire engine or police car could have been speeding into the intersection, and the cyclists would have caused a tragedy, among many possibilities. If rude and rule-breaking cyclists start receiving fines for their behavior, maybe they will reconsider their importance over the importance of every other individual on the streets.

Linda O'Brien, Takoma Park

3 Courtland Milloy got his facts wrong and essentially advocated vehicular assault. How could The Post advocate violence that pits a driver in a ton of metal against an exposed bicyclist?

As a nation, we are trying to achieve a more sustainable way of living, and integrating multiple modes of transportation in cities is one way to do that.

Carolyn Dick Mayes, New Ipswich, N.H.

washingtonpost.com, 2014
Can You Make Boys Play with Dolls?

adapted from an article by Justin Green

1 Egalia, a new state-sponsored pre-school in Stockholm, is dedicated to the total obliteration of the male and female distinction. There are no boys and girls at Egalia — just 'friends' and 'buddies'. "Egalia gives children a fantastic opportunity to be whoever they want to be," says one excited teacher. (It is probably necessary to add that this is not a fantasy: this school actually exists.)

2 The Swedes are treating gender-conforming children the way we once treated gender-variant children, formerly called 'tomboy girls' and 'sissy boys'. These gender-variant kids are persistently attracted to the toys of the opposite sex. They will often remain fixated on the 'wrong' toys despite relentless, often cruel pressure from parents, doctors, and peers. These children's sex-stereotyped culture – a non-stop Toys"R"Us indoctrination – seems to have little effect on their passion for the toys of the opposite sex.

3 There was a time when a boy who displayed a persistent aversion to trucks and rough play, and a fixation on frilly dolls or princess paraphernalia would have been considered a candidate for behavior modification therapy. Today, most experts encourage tolerance, understanding, and acceptance: just leave him alone and let him play as he wants. The Swedes should extend the same tolerant understanding to the gender identity and preferences of the vast majority of children.

thedailybeast.com, 2012
Tear-jerkers can turn you liberal

SENTIMENTAL films make you more liberal, research suggests. Political scientists found that Hollywood movies are better able to change attitudes – in a left-wing direction – than advertising or news reports.

The research of Todd Adkins, of the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, published in the journal Social Science Quarterly, was based on a study of 268 students who were asked about their political views, shown a film and then questioned again. Half identified themselves as politically conservative. The researchers noted a leftward shift in attitudes after the participants saw a film with a liberal message. The movies were As Good As It Gets with Jack Nicholson and The Rainmaker with Matt Damon.

Dr Adkins said audiences seemed to turn off their critical faculties when they reach the cinema. 'Viewers come expecting to be entertained and are not prepared to encounter and evaluate political messages as they would during campaign advertisements or network news,' he said.

It emerged this week that the FBI considered It’s a Wonderful Life, the classic American tear-jerker, to be sympathetic to communism when it came out in 1946.

adapted from Daily Mail, 2013
Why I am in the Front Row

By DAVID BORDWELL

1 With award season upon us, movie-lovers are rushing to the theaters to see the big contenders. And if you're like most people, you sit fairly far back, maybe even in the very last row.

2 For public gatherings, it seems, sitting in the rear is the default. In 1978, the economist Thomas Schelling famously offered seven hypotheses about why people don't fill up the front of an auditorium as fast as they fill up the back. His reflections were occasioned by giving a lecture to 800 people, none of whom would sit in the first dozen rows. I know the feeling, though on a smaller scale. In a lecture hall, seeing all of your students huddled so far away, you start to think you may have cooties.

3 As for the movies, when we were little, most of us didn't mind sitting up by the screen. But as we age, we seem to gravitate toward the rear. We're even told that we should sit a prescribed distance back, usually the dead center of the auditorium. A distance of two to three times the screen height is a common recommendation.

4 With the rise of 3-D — there are now over 22,000 3-D screens world-wide — the debate about where to sit has been rekindled. Some say the sweet spot remains the same, but others prefer to sit further back. A more distant view, they think, lessens the eyestrain of constantly refocusing on the changing depth.

5 I've never understood the impulse to flee from the action. I've always been a front-zone sitter. For me, sitting there is hard-core movie-going: nobody's head looms in front of you. You're less disturbed by latecomers. You have more leg
room, and should you wish to leave, the front row is the only one that lets you sneak out easily from any seat.

6 More than that, I like scanning the frame in great sweeps and even sometimes turning my head to follow the action. The early wide-screen technologies, like CinemaScope and Cinerama, used huge screens to immerse the audience, and even with today's smaller multiplex screens, I can recover something like that sense of being snugly wrapped in the movie's world.

7 When the picture first comes looming up, you do feel a little disconcerted and overwhelmed. But I find that I adapt in a minute or two. Even the extreme angle isn't a problem, partly because of perceptual constancy — the brain's tendency to see familiar objects as having a standard shape and size, despite changes in perspective.

8 I know that most people find this sheer madness, but I've found that sitting close is the preference of devoted movie fans. Be warned, though: It can get personal up there.

9 My strangest encounter came during a visit to a theater in Munich to see "Get Carter" (the Michael Caine version, not the Sylvester Stallone one), and I was the first entrant. I secured my front-row center post and suddenly found an aged German lady standing before me. Seeing that I was reading a book in English, she said, "Pardon me, you're in my seat." I looked around and saw that we were the only people there. "I always sit here," she said. "I come every night." I am a nice well-brought up guy, so I did the civilized thing. I relocated to the seat behind her. Soon "Get Carter" started. The old bat immediately fell asleep. She slept through the whole movie. I wanted to knock her upside the head. When I left, she was still out, snoring in my seat.

—Mr. Bordwell is a professor emeritus of film studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He writes regularly at www.davidbordwell.net/blog.
Hospital Hygiene

adapted from an article by Julia Belluz

It’s no secret that hospitals are dirty places. Hospital-acquired infections, like C. difficile, are major killers, and everyday objects on the wards — from white coats to ultrasound equipment — are well-known harborers of bacteria.

Now, a new study in the journal Open Medicine has revealed a little-known germ hotspot: the hospital elevator button.

The research, conducted by three physicians, compared the amounts of bacteria living on 120 elevator buttons and 96 toilet surfaces at three hospitals in Toronto, Ontario.

To find out just how dirty the hospital surfaces were, the researchers acted like Holmesian microbe hunters, swabbing elevator buttons, and the handles of bathrooms stalls and toilet flushers.

A lab technician — blinded to the source of the samples and purpose of the study — then examined them.

The results will surely lift elevator buttons to the same ick-factor status as waiting-room magazines or hotel TV remote-controls: the elevator buttons were much dirtier than the toilet surfaces. "The prevalence of colonization (with bacteria) of elevator buttons was 61 percent," the study reads. On the toilets, it was 43 percent.

Now, the study has a few limitations. The samples were taken during flu season, which may have prompted people to use more hand sanitizer. It was also cold outside, when many folks wear gloves. This means the hospital surfaces may be even dirtier than the researchers found. On the other hand, since influenza was in full swing, there may have been more hospital traffic than usual, which would also bias the research.

But there’s some good news: the kinds of bacteria the researchers found had "low pathogenicity", meaning they are unlikely to make people sick.

That doesn't mean they're not possible vectors of disease, however. "Patients remain at potential risk of cross-contamination because of the frequent use of
these buttons by diverse individuals," the study authors wrote. "In addition, a visitor is more likely to come into contact with an elevator button or a toilet than with inanimate hospital equipment and may transmit organisms if interacting with inpatients."

So the researchers offered a few solutions: place alcohol-based hand sanitizers outside elevators, enlarge elevator buttons so that people can use their elbows to push them, or make the elevator experience touchless.

Interestingly, while elevator buttons were dirtier than toilets, they were actually cleaner than hospital computer keyboards. Maybe this means everything in a hospital should be touchless, or at least as clean as the bathrooms.

vox.com, 2014