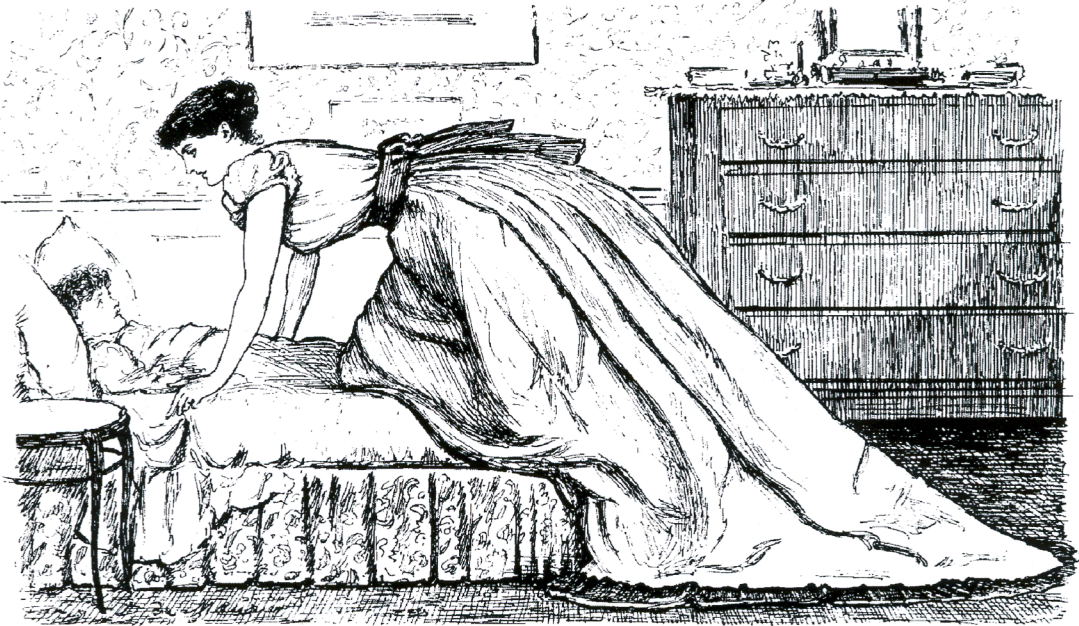


Certain Embarrassing Questions

ROB KOVITZ

Putting, raising, pondering, evading, begging, answering the question



"Why have you got such a Bare Neck, Mummie?"

"I'm going to a Dance, Darling. One has to dress like this for a Dance!"

"Do the Ladies dance in one Room, and the Gentlemen in another, Mummie?"

An Embarrassing Question, Punch, May 25, 1895

FAQ (noun)

pronounced *fak*

Acronym for *frequently asked question*

What is a FAQ? A FAQ is a list of questions and answers, posted on a website or newsgroup with boilerplate answers, to preemptively address newbie ignorance and confusion. How is FAQ pronounced? The correct pronunciation is *fak*, though some insist on spelling it out. Why are FAQs worth reading? A FAQ can save a newbie considerable time by providing information that could otherwise be learned only by lurking for days or weeks, and considerable embarrassment by heading off breaches of netiquette as obscure yet essential as *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Jonathon Keats, Control + Alt + Delete: A Dictionary of Cyberslang

How are we to begin? We should certainly not wait till the eve of marriage, but begin in childhood. In theory, it is wrong to lie to children, if they are to maintain unshaken confidence in their parents, and remain truthful themselves. No doubt we cannot explain everything to a child at the age when it begins to ask its mother certain embarrassing questions, but we should endeavor as far as possible to tell it the truth in a manner suitable to its age. When this is impossible, every child who knows that no reasonable explanation is ever refused it will be satisfied with the answer: "You are too young now to understand that; I will tell you when you are older." Every child who speaks openly to its mother asks sooner or later how children come into the world. It is easier to reply to this when the child has had the opportunity of observing

the same thing in animals. Why should the mother conceal the fact that it is nearly the same in man as in animals? The child never thinks of blushing or laughing at natural phenomena.

Auguste Forel and C. F. Marshall, The Sexual Question: A Scientific, Psychological, Hygienic and Sociological Study

She doesn't answer but instead asks her own question, trying her best to conceal the question mark: Dad, what if all the churches and cathedrals were really centers for transmitting and receiving messages to and from space?

A. G. Porta, No World Concerto

YOU are now called to redress a great transgression. Seldom in the history of nations has such a question been presented. Tariffs, army bills, navy bills, land bills, are important, and justly occupy your care; but these all belong to the course of ordinary legislation. As means and instruments only, they are necessarily subordinate to the conservation of government itself. Grant them or deny them, in greater or less degree, and you will inflict no shock. The machinery of government will continue to move. The State will not cease to exist. Far otherwise is it with the eminent question now before you, involving, as it does, liberty in a broad territory, and also involving the peace of the whole country, with our good name in history for ever more.

Charles Sumner, On the Crime Against Kansas

So What Is Capitalism, Anyway?

We are used to seeing modern capitalism (along with modern traditions of democratic government) as emerging only later: with the Age of Revolutions—the industrial revolution, the American and French revolutions—a series of profound breaks at the end of the eighteenth century that only became fully institutionalized after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Here we come face to face with a peculiar paradox. It would seem that almost all elements of financial apparatus that we've come to associate with capitalism—central banks, bond markets, short-selling, brokerage houses, speculative bubbles, securitization, annuities—came into being not only before the science of economics (which is perhaps not too surprising), but also before the rise of factories, and wage labor itself. This is a genuine challenge to familiar ways of thinking. We like to think of the factories and workshops as the “real economy,” and the rest as

superstructure, constructed on top of it. But if this were really so, then how can it be that the superstructure came first? Can the dreams of the system create its body?

All this raises the question of what “capitalism” is to begin with, a question on which there is no consensus at all.

David Graeber, Debt: The First 5,000 Years

23. Objection to the Consideration of a Question.

An objection may be made to the consideration of any original main motion, and to no others, provided it is made before there is any debate or before any subsidiary motion is stated. Thus, it may be applied to petitions and to communications that are not from a superior body, as well as to resolutions. It cannot be applied to incidental main motions, such as amendments to by-laws, or to reports of committees on subjects referred to them, etc. It is similar to a question of order in that it can be made when another has the floor, and does not require a second; and as the chairman can call a member to order, so he can put this question, if he deems it advisable, upon his own responsibility. It cannot be debated, or amended, or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it. It yields to privileged motions and to the motion to lay on the table. A negative, but not an affirmative vote on the consideration may be reconsidered.

When an original main motion is made and any member wishes to prevent its consideration, he rises, although another has the floor, and says, “Mr. Chairman, I object to its consideration.” The chairman immediately puts the question, “The consideration of the question has been objected to: Will the assembly consider it? [or, Shall the question be considered?]” If decided in the negative by a two-thirds vote, the whole matter is dismissed for that session; otherwise, the discussion continues as if this objection had never been made. The same question may be introduced at any succeeding session.

The *Object* of this motion is not to cut off debate (for which other motions are provided) but to enable the assembly to avoid altogether any question which it may deem irrelevant, unprofitable, or contentious. If the chair considers the question entirely outside the objects of the society, he should rule it out of order, from which decision an appeal may be taken.

Objection to the consideration of a question must not be confounded with objecting where

unanimous consent, or a majority vote, is required. Thus, in case of the minority of a committee desiring to submit their views, a single member saying, "I object," prevents it, unless the assembly by a majority vote grants them permission.

Henry M. Robert, *Robert's Rules of Order Revised for Deliberative Assemblies*

"Sir?" Hogan prompted. "Robert Niles...?"

"I've never received any kind of threat from that direction, Detective Inspector Hogan. Nor had I heard the name Herdman until after the shootings." He turned his head from the mirror. "Does that answer your questions?"

"Yes, sir."

"If Herdman had set out to target Anthony, why turn the gun on the other boys? Why wait so long after sentencing?"

"Yes, sir."

"Motive isn't always the issue..."

Ian Rankin, *A Question of Blood*

epiplexis

e-pi-plex'-is

from Gk. epi, "upon" and plessein, "to strike"

Asking questions in order to chide, to express grief, or to inveigh. A kind of rhetorical question.

Examples

Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? —Job 3:11

Gideon Burton, *Silva Rhetoricae (The Forest of Rhetoric)*

For ever and anon comes Indigestion

(Not the most "dainty Ariel") and perplexes

Our soarings with another sort of question:

And that which after all my spirit vexes,

Is, that I find no spot where Man can rest eye on,

Without confusion of the sorts and sexes,

Of beings, stars, and this unriddled wonder,

The World, which at the worst's a glorious blunder—

Lord Byron, *Don Juan, Canto XI*

The sister was not a mister. Was this a surprise. It was. The conclusion came when there was no arrangement. All the time that there was a question there was a decision. Replacing a casual acquaintance with an ordinary daughter does not make a son.

Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*

Let it suffice to have said so much about these matters; and as to the question how and by what exploits being Egyptians they received the sceptres of royalty over the Dorians, we will omit these things, since others have told about them; but the things with which other narrators have not dealt, of these I will make mention.

Herodotus, *The History*

Should one pay special attention to the training of the thumb?

It may be said that the thumb and the middle finger are the two arch-conspirators against a precise finger technique. They crave your greatest attention. Above all, you must see to it that, in touching the keys with these fingers, you do not move the whole hand, still less the arm.

Josef Hofmann, *Piano Playing: With Piano Questions Answered*

Sources: Burton, Gideon, *Silva Rhetoricae (The Forest of Rhetoric)*, Brigham Young University, <http://rhetoric.byu.edu/>. Byron, Lord (George Gordon), *Don Juan*, Vol. II, London: Thomas Davison, 1828. Forel, Auguste, and C. F. Marshall, *The Sexual Question; A Scientific, Psychological, Hygienic and Sociological Study*, Brooklyn: Physicians and Surgeons Book Company, 1931. Graeber, David, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, New York: Melville House, 2011. Herodotus, *The History*, Translated by G. C. Macaulay, Volume 2, London: MacMillan and Co., 1914. Hofmann, Josef, *Piano Playing: With Piano Questions Answered*, New York: Dover, 1909. Keats, Jonathon, *Control + Alt + Delete: A Dictionary of Cyberslang*, Globe Pequot, 2007. Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, Translated by Philemon Holland, London: G. Barclay, 1847. Porta, A. G., *No World Concerto*, Translated by Darren Koelman and Rhett McNeil, Dalkey Archive Press, 2013. Rankin, Ian, *A Question of Blood*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2003. Robert, Henry M., *Robert's Rules of Order Revised for Deliberative Assemblies*, Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1915. Stein, Gertrude, "Tender Buttons," 1914, *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*, New York: Vintage, 1990. Sumner, Charles, "On the Crime Against Kansas," 1856, *The World's Famous Orations*, Edited by William Jennings Bryan, New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1906.

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