

# Daft, not stupid question

Allan Johnson struck a chord with his piece on question-and-answer sessions at academic conferences (“Interrogative mood music”, 29 August). However, I would like to point out that one type of question is missing from his list: the (phoney) “Daft Question”. It has this incipit: “This might be a daft question, but...”.

As a young scholar new to British academia, I often “questioned” the Daft Question’s logic: why ask if the point is not worth making? Besides, no academic in her right mind in Continental Europe would start from such a humble premise! Experience however has shown that often hidden behind such modesty, dictated by the British propensity towards self-deprecation, are the most challenging and provocative questions.

Having gone native by now, I happily join in the ritual of the Daft Question in the hope that what I have to say is not “literally” daft.

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