I frankly don't have as much time as I'd like to look through the comments following the items that appear on SWIFT, and I'm sure I thus miss a lot of good material. At this article , I discussed some differences between UK and USA English usage, and though I was tempted to get into car parts - the English have "boot," "lorry," and "petrol" where we have "trunk," "truck," and "gas" - I settled on some place names and proper names. The item got 1,826 hits and 37 comments within the first 24 hours, among which was one from "BillyJoe" that I believe needs my attention.

The androgynous BillyJoe asked:

And, pray tell, what is *this* doing in Swift?

- though he/she omitted the interrogation mark. While I hope most of our readers assumed a correct answer to that query, I should provide a formal explanation.

Language - both written and spoken - is, in my opinion, the single most important advantage that humans have over all other forms of life on Earth. I therefore have an admitted preoccupation with its use, particularly in connection with material that I originate and/or process. The pages of SWIFT get my close attention, and though I might have chosen to state my reasons for including this item, I failed to do so. Differences in grammar, spelling, and usage can often lead to misunderstanding in the ever-changing and ever-evolving English language, and if my understanding of other languages were as proficient as that of my "mother tongue," I'm sure I'd find the same problems there, as well.

As a youth, I was briefly distracted by a book titled, "Science and Sanity" to which I was introduced by a close friend. Written by Alfred Korzybski, a Polish Count, it introduced me to the "general semantics" concept that he developed, and the idea that he called "time-binding" - perhaps the only nugget of sooth that I learned from the book. This referred to the fact that our species has the ability to communicate with coming generations and learn from the past, by means of the written and spoken word - and now, of course, via video data as well. Animals cannot do this with any meaningful accuracy, so far as we know, and language is essential to our use of this advantage. Thus, my preoccupation with this facility.

Communication of data, ideas, and emotions should be treated with great respect and paramount attention. When we lose touch with others, we lose our connection with the future of our species.

Please forgive this perhaps overstated excuse for evoking your inquiry, BillyJoe...