

WELL DONNE

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From the description of islands given by J. R. Ross in his dissertation (1967), it follows that (2), although it is apparently a natural continuation of a discourse begun by (1), is nevertheless ungrammatical.

(1) Michigan isn't a good place to study linguistics.

(2) *Then what is it a good place to study?

As Ross observes, such structures as "a good place to study X" form islands, and the "X" cannot be moved out, as it is in (2). On the other hand, the absence of an island in (3), together with the fact that preposition-stranding is permissible in English, permit the movement resulting in (4):

(3) Ann Arbor isn't a good place for linguistics.

(4) What is Ann Arbor a good place for?

Now, consider the sentence

(5) Sam is no man for that job.

As we have seen, (5) cannot be grammatically questioned by

(6) *For what job is Sam no man?

This fact, while predicted by Ross (1967), results from the earlier research of J. Donne (1624) on this phenomenon, as expressed in his insightful observation that

(7) No man is an island.

REFERENCES

Donne, J. (1624) *Devotions* XVII.

Ross, John Robert. (1967) *Constraints on Variables in Syntax*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.