The prized possession you value above all others... Our house in north London, which my wife Maggie and I bought 26 years ago. It was built in 1694 and I feel like the temporary custodian. I can’t imagine living anywhere else.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I like the idea of launching myself off Mont Blanc on a hang-glider and floating over Europe all day.

The temptation you wish you could resist... The computer. I spend up to seven hours a day on it. Even when I stop working, the screen saver plays a random slide show of my photos and I sit there reliving my life in slow motion.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Catch-22 by Joseph Heller. I read it on a subway train in New York in 1961 and laughed so hard I fell off my seat. I loved its weird fatalism.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... It’d be pretty interesting to hang out with Colonel Gaddaf and see what he’s up to.

The way fame and fortune has changed you, for better and worse... Life is easy because I have no debts so can afford my three children and pursue work I want to do. The downside is you get isolated and find it hard to understand everyone else’s frustrations.

The film you can watch time and time again... Walt Disney’s Pinocchio blew me away when I was eight. It has the most exquisitely detailed drawings. I saw it again 15 years ago and was amazed how it had held up.

The person who has influenced you most... Cartoonist Harvey Kurtzman. I was his assistant in the 60s and he taught me about satire and craftsmanship of cartooning. Because of him I was able to free my mind and create crazy cartoons – like the big foot – that later became such emblems of Monty Python. Harvey was a godfather of Python.

The figure from history for whom you’d most like to buy a pie and a pint... Pythagoras. I’d like to ask him if he really did invent everything he is credited with, or, if, like many of us suspect, he got it all from Egypt.

The piece of wisdom you’d pass on to a child... When it comes to a job, have the courage to do what makes you happy. The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Etymology. I’m intrigued by the origin of words and how they interconnect history. It’s a challenging subject for someone like me, who has a pitifully limited vocabulary.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A full-length sheepskin coat I bought in Turkey and hand-painted in 1964. I was wearing it when I first met Eric Idle and Terry Jones of Monty Python in the late 1960s. They were blown away by the coat and it kickstarted the friendship. They thought I was pretty cool because of that coat. I’ve no idea how I lost it.

The unending quest that drives you on... To find the energy and inspiration to do what makes you happy. The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Pythagoras. I’m intrigued by the origin of words and how they interconnect history. It’s a challenging subject for someone like me, who has a pitifully limited vocabulary.

The poem that touches your soul... I love the intensity of The Tyger by William Blake. It is so dark and reminds me that nature is waiting to devour us. The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Pythagoras. I’m intrigued by the origin of words and how they interconnect history. It’s a challenging subject for someone like me, who has a pitifully limited vocabulary.

The happiest moment you will cherish... The first time I met Terry Jones. I was doing make-up on Python and I associate it with her. Liking that song is also one of the few things we agree on!

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The saddest time that shook your world... That’s easy when Heath Ledger died while filming The Imaginarium Of Doctor Parnassus in 2008. He was a close friend and a wonderful person.

The world that you would most like to erase... The way fame and fortune has changed you, for better and worse... Life is easy because I have no debts so can afford my three children and pursue work I want to do. The downside is you get isolated and find it hard to understand everyone else’s frustrations.

The way you want to be remembered... That I left the place a bit more interesting than before I arrived and that my cartooning got other people looking at it. The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Pythagoras. I’m intrigued by the origin of words and how they interconnect history. It’s a challenging subject for someone like me, who has a pitifully limited vocabulary.

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