First things first, but not necessarily in that order.
   -- The Doctor, in John Flanagan and Andrew McCulloch's _Meglos_

And so it begins.
   -- Kosh, in J. Michael Straczynski's _Babylon 5_: "Chrysalis"

The story so far: In the beginning the Universe was created. This has made a lot of people very angry and has been widely regarded as a bad move.
   -- Douglas Adams, _The Restaurant at the End of the Universe_

A book of quotations... can never be complete.
   -- Robert M. Hamilton, preface, _Canadian Quotations and Phrases: Literary and Historical_

Perhaps the reader may ask, of what consequence is it whether the author's exact language is preserved or not, provided we have his thought? The answer is, that inaccurate quotation is a sin against truth. It may appear in any particular instance to be a trifle, but perfection consists in small things, and perfection is no trifle.
   -- Robert W. Shaunon, "Misquotation," _The Canadian Magazine_, October 1898

Try to learn something about everything and everything about something.
   -- T.H. Huxley

In reality, though, the first thing to ask of history is that it should point out to us the paths of liberty. The great lesson to draw from revolutions is not that they devour humanity but rather that tyranny never fails to generate them.
   -- Pierre Elliott Trudeau, "When the People Are in Power"

He who wonders discovers that this in itself is wonder.
   -- M.C. Escher

The most merciful thing in the world... is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents.
   -- H.P. Lovecraft

He did not mean to be cruel. If anybody had called him so, he would have resented it extremely. He would have said that what he did was done entirely for the good of the country. But he was a man who had always been accustomed to consider himself first and foremost, believing that whatever he wanted was sure to be right, and therefore he ought to have it. So he tried to get it, and got it too, as people like him very often do. Whether they enjoy it when they have it is another question.
   -- Dinah Craik, _The Little Lame Prince_

To hate is to study, to study is to understand, to understand is to appreciate, to appreciate is to love. So maybe I'll end up loving your theory.
   -- John A. Wheeler

A physicist is an atom's way of knowing about atoms.
   -- George Wald

"Non-fiction", on the other hand, declares itself to be the carrier of fact, an expression of reality, and thus of truth. Why then does most fact-based work have a remarkably short shelf life? The reply might be that additional facts come along. That we are learning all the time. In that case, it was never an expression of reality or truth. And even if the facts are overtaken, the arguments built upon them should not date with such terrifying rapidity. Decade-old serious "non-fiction" often seems arcane, irrelevant. The written style itself seems to become old-fashioned. Two-centuries-old decent "fiction" on the other hand can easily remain fresh.
   -- John Ralston Saul, _On Equilibrium_

Government, today, is growing too strong to be safe. There are no longer any citizens in the world; there are only subjects. They work day in and day out for their masters; they are bound to die for their masters at call. Out of this
working and dying they tend to get less and less.
-- H.L. Mencken

One trouble with being efficient is that it makes everybody hate you so.
-- Bob Edwards, the Calgary Eyeopener, March 18, 1916

"ABROAD", adj. At war with savages and idiots. To be a Frenchman abroad is to
be miserable; to be an American abroad is to make others miserable.
-- Ambrose Bierce, _The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary_

Nobody can be exactly like me. Sometimes even I have trouble doing it.
-- Tallulah Bankhead

It is easy -- terribly easy -- to shake a man's faith in himself. To take
advantage of that to break a man's spirit is devil's work. Take care of what
you are doing. Take care.
-- George Bernard Shaw, _Candida_

It is ordinary for us to poison rivers also; yea and the very elements whereof
the world doth stand, are by us infected: for even the air itself, wherein and
whereby all things should live, we corrupt to their mischief and destruction.
-- Pliny the Elder, the Natural History, tr. Philemon Holland

I am a design chauvinist. I believe that good design is magical and not to be
lightly tinkered with. The difference between a great design and a lousy one is
in the meshing of the thousand details that either fit or don't, and the spirit
of the passionate intellect that has tied them together, or tried. That's why
programming -- or buying software -- on the basis of "lists of features" is a
doomed and misguided effort. The features can be thrown together, as in a
garbage can, or carefully laid together and interwoven in elegant unification,
as in APL, or the Forth language, or the game of chess.
-- Ted Nelson

Two paradoxes are better than one; they may even suggest a solution.
-- Edward Teller

Monty Python's usual schoolboy humour is here let loose on a period of history
appropriately familiar to every schoolboy in the West, and a faith which could
be shaken by such good-humoured ribaldry would be a very precarious faith
indeed.
-- The British Board Of Film Censors, in their report on _Life of
Brian_

If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for
instance; let us ask, "Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning
quantity or number?" No. "Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning
matter of fact and existence?" No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can
contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.
-- David Hume

Those who write software only for pay should go hurt some other field.
-- Erik Naggum, in _gnu.misc.discuss_

You'll have to leave my meals on a tray outside the door because I'll be
working pretty late on the secret of making myself invisible, which may take me
almost until eleven o'clock.
-- S.J. Perelman, "Captain Future, Block That Kick!"

The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a
profound truth may well be another profound truth.
-- Niels Bohr

Many people, other than the authors, contribute to the making of a book, from
the first person who had the bright idea of alphabetic writing through the
inventor of movable type to the lumberjacks who felled the trees that were
pulped for its printing. It is not customary to acknowledge the trees
themselves, though their commitment is total.
-- Forsyth and Rada, _Machine Learning_
Yes, Agassiz *does* recommend authors to eat fish, because the phosphorus in it makes brain. So far you are correct. But I cannot help you to a decision about the amount you need to eat -- at least, not with certainty. If the specimen composition you send is about your fair usual average, I should judge that a couple of whales would be all you would want for the present. Not the largest kind, but simply good middling-sized whales.
-- Mark Twain

We all live to a formula. Maybe the secret lies in keeping that formula secret.
-- Peter Greenaway, _Dear Boullée_

We have just reached the outer fringes of the Solar System. Can any sane man possibly argue that we should stop there?
-- Hugh MacLennan, "Remembrance Day, 2010 A.D.", in _Scotchman's Return and Other Essays_

I said I *liked* being half-educated; you were so much more *surprised* at everything when you were ignorant.
-- Gerald Durrell, _My Family and Other Animals_

My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble mind.
-- Albert Einstein

Trivia rarely affect efficiency. Are all the machinations worth it, when their primary effect is to make the code less readable?
-- Kernighan and Plauger, _The Elements of Programming Style_

The great thing about human language is that it prevents us from sticking to the matter at hand.
-- Lewis Thomas

There is more. There is much more. It all adds up to a great deal less.
-- Roger Ebert, reviewing _Heaven's Gate_

It may be that our role on this planet is not to worship God -- but to create him.
-- Arthur C. Clarke

I can't believe in the God of my Fathers. If there is one Mind which understands all things, it will comprehend me in my unbelief. I don't know whose hand hung Hesperus in the sky, and fixed the Dog Star, and scattered the shining dust of Heaven, and fired the sun, and froze the darkness between the lonely worlds that spin in space.
-- Gerald Kersh

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron.
-- Dwight D. Eisenhower

The sooner you make your first five thousand mistakes the sooner you will be able to correct them.
-- Kimon Nicolaides

Scientia sine arte nihil est; ars sine scientia nihil est.
-- Jean Vignot

No word meaning "art" occurs in Aivilik, nor does "artist": there are only people. Nor is any distinction made between utilitarian and decorative objects. The Aivilik say simply, "A man should do all things properly."
-- Edmund Carpenter, _Eskimo_
Everything of importance has been said before by somebody who did not discover it.

-- Alfred North Whitehead

I keep the subject of my inquiry constantly before me, and wait till the first dawning opens gradually, by little and little, into a full and clear light.

-- Isaac Newton

The more I have studied him, the more Newton has receded from me. It has been my privilege at various times to know a number of brilliant men, men whom I acknowledge without hesitation to be my intellectual superiors. I have never, however, met one against whom I was unwilling to measure myself, so that it seemed reasonable to say that I was half as able as the person in question, or a third or a fourth, but in every case a finite fraction. The end result of my study of Newton has served to convince me that with him there is no measure. He has become for me wholly other, one of the tiny handful of supreme geniuses who have shaped the categories of the human intellect, a man not finally reducible to the criteria by which we comprehend our fellow beings.

-- Richard Westfall, _Never at Rest. A Biography of Isaac Newton_

We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.

-- Oscar Wilde

Ye poor posterity, think not that ye are the first. Other fools before ye have seen the sun rise and set, and the moon change her shape and her hour. As they were so ye are; and yet not so great; for the pyramids my people built stand to this day; whilst the dustheaps on which ye slave, and which ye call empires, scatter in the wind even as ye pile your dead sons' bodies on them to make yet more dust.

-- George Bernard Shaw, _Caesar and Cleopatra_

My work always tried to unite the true with the beautiful; but when I had to choose one or the other, I usually chose the beautiful.

-- Hermann Weyl

"There is no disputing about tastes," says the old saw. In my experience there is little else.

-- Robertson Davies, _Marchbanks' Almanac_

Truth is not always in a well. In fact, as regards the more important knowledge, I do believe that she is invariably superficial. The depth lies in the valleys where we seek her, and not upon the mountain-tops where she is found.

-- Edgar Allan Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"

We can lick gravity, but sometimes the paperwork is overwhelming.

-- Wernher Von Braun

Let your voice be heard, whether or not it is to the taste of every jack-in-office who may be obstructing the traffic. By all means, render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's -- but this does not necessarily include everything that he says is his.

-- Denis Johnston, _The Brazen Horn_

Americans are benevolently ignorant about Canada, while Canadians are malevolently well informed about the United States.

-- J. Bartlett Brebner

You could augment an earwig to the point where it understood nuclear physics, but it would still be a very stupid thing to do!

-- The Doctor, in Robert Holmes' _The Two Doctors_

I'm very well acquainted too with matters mathematical, / I understand equations, both the simple and quadratical, / About binomial theorem I'm teeming with a lot of news--- / With many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse.

-- Gilbert and Sullivan, _The Pirates of Penzance_
Should I not have changed either the day for carrying out my scheme, or the scheme itself -- but preferably only the day?
-- Ovid, _The Metamorphoses_

The idea of an incarnation of God is absurd: why should the human race think itself so superior to bees, ants, and elephants as to be put in this unique relation to its maker?... Christians are like a council of frogs in a marsh or a synod of worms on a dung-hill croaking and squeaking "for our sakes was the world created."
-- Julian the Apostate

Until we become the architects of a society that is truly free and ecological, it will always seem that when the human brain is not adaptive, it is more often destructive than creative.
-- Murray Bookchin

If there is anything the nonconformist hates worse than a conformist it's another nonconformist who doesn't conform to the prevailing standard of nonconformity.
-- Bill Vaughan

A conservative is a man who sits and thinks, mostly sits.
-- Woodrow Wilson

It is great good health to believe, as the Hindus do, that there are 33 million gods and goddesses in the world. It is great good health to want to understand one's dreams. It is great good health to desire the ambiguous and paradoxical. It is sickness of the profoundest kind to believe that there is one reality. There is sickness in any piece of work or any piece of art seriously attempting to suggest that the idea that there is more than one reality is somehow redundant.
-- Clive Barker

Consistency requires you to be as ignorant today as you were a year ago.
-- Bernard Berenson

A person who lacks the means, within himself, to live a good and happy life will find any period of his existence wearisome.
-- Cicero, "On Old Age"

The ultimate evil is the weakness, cowardice, that is one of the constituents of so much human nature. When, rarely, unalloyed nobility does occur, its chances of prevailing are slim. Yet it exists, and its mere existence is reason enough for not wiping the name of mankind off the slate.
-- John Simon

Problems worthy of attack / prove their worth by hitting back.
-- Piet Hein

Interestingly, according to modern astronomers, space is finite. This is a very comforting thought -- particularly for people who can never remember where they have left things.
-- Woody Allen

Time is like a river, flowing endlessly through the universe. And if you poled your flatboat in that river, you might fight your way against the current and travel upstream into the past. Or go with the flow and rush into the future. This was in a less cynical time before toxic waste dumping and pollution filled the waterway of Chronus with the detritus of empty hours, wasted minutes, years of repetition and time that has been killed.
-- Harlan Ellison

They are ill discoverers that think there is no land, when they can see nothing but sea.
-- Sir Francis Bacon

An educator should consider that he has failed in his job if he has not succeeded in instilling some trace of a divine dissatisfaction with our
miserable social environment.
-- Anthony Standen

The study of the errors into which great minds have fallen in the pursuit of
truth can never be uninstructive... No man is so wise but that he may learn
some wisdom from his past errors, either of thought or action, and no society
has made such advances as to be capable of no improvement from the retrospect
of its past folly and credulity.
-- Charles Mackay, _Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness
of Crowds_

For the skeptic there remains only one consolation: if there should be such a
thing as a superhuman Law, it is administered with sub-human inefficiency.
-- Eric Ambler, _A Coffin for Dimitrios_

Military intelligence is a contradiction in terms.
-- Groucho Marx

Maybe I am getting too young for this sort of thing.
-- The Doctor, in David Agnew's _The Invasion of Time_

Cities do not change over the centuries. They represent the aspirations of
particular men and women to lead a common life; as a result their atmosphere,
their tone, remain the same. Those people whose relations are founded
principally upon commerce and upon the ferocious claims of domestic privacy
will construct a city as dark and as ugly as London was. And is. Those people
who wish to lead agreeable lives, and in constant intercourse with one another,
will build a city as beautiful and as elegant as Paris.
-- Peter Ackroyd, _Dickens_

The words _figure_ and _fictitious_ both derive from the same Latin root
_fingere_. Beware!
-- M.J. Moroney

The average man who does not know what to do with his life, wants another one
which will last forever.
-- Anatole France

A print addict is a man who reads in elevators. People occasionally look at me
curiously when they see me standing there, reading a paragraph or two as the
elevator goes up. To me, it's curious that there are people who do not read in
elevators. What can they be thinking about?
-- Robert Fulford, "The Pastimes of a Print Addict"

You know what misery I went through there, listening to lawyers day and night.
If you'd had experience of them yourself, as brave as you think you are, you'd
have preferred to clean out the Augean stables...
-- Seneca, _The Apocolocyntosis_

Politicians should read science fiction, not westerns and detective stories.
-- Arthur C. Clarke

The work of Leslie is particularly confusing. The mischievous muse of
thermodynamics made him inweave his simple statements about heat in a horrid
mess of difficult, irrelevant, and unexplained calculations. His and other
early theories of heat make much of entities as imperceptible as voids and
vortices or, for that matter, angels. They belong not to physics but to what
would now be regarded as speculative philosophy.
-- Clifford Truesdell

Fortune can, for her pleasure, fools advance, / And toss them on the wheels of
Chance.
-- Juvenal

Methusalem might be half an hour in telling what o'clock it was: but as for us
postdiluvians, we ought to do everything in haste; and in our speeches, as well
as actions, remember that our time is short.
-- Sir Richard Steele
Now I know what a statesman is; he's a dead politician. We need more statesmen.
-- Bob Edwards (attributed)

Stockbroker (John Cleese): Well, speaking as member of the Stock Exchange I
would suck their brains out with a straw, sell the widows and orphans and go
into South American Zinc.
-- Monty Python: "Sex and Violence"

Tetsuo's kind see only the power of Western scientific reductionism. They wish
to combine it with our discipline, our traditional methods of competitive
conformity. With this I fundamentally disagree. What the West really has to
offer -- the only thing it has to offer, my child -- is honesty. Somehow, in
the midst of their horrid history, the best among the _gaijin_ learned a
wonderful lesson. They learned to distrust themselves, to doubt even what they
were taught to believe or what their egos make them yearn to see. To know that
even truth must be scrutinized, it was a great discovery, almost as great as
the treasure we of the East have to offer them in return, the gift of harmony.
-- David Brin, "Dr. Pak's Preschool"

Let me be the first to admit that the naked truth about me is to the naked
truth about Salvador Dali as an old ukulele in the attic is to a piano in a
tree, and I mean a piano with breasts.
-- James Thurber, "The Secret Life of James Thurber", in _The Thurber
Carnival_

Society, my dear, is like salt water, good to swim in but hard to swallow.
-- Arthur Stringer, _The Silver Poppy_

There is something about a mass-market Luxury Cruise that's unbearably sad.
Like most unbearably sad things, it seems incredibly elusive and complex in its
causes and simple in its effect: on board the _Nadir_ -- especially at night,
when all the ship's structured fun and reassurances and gaiety-noise ceased --
I felt despair. The word's overused and banalified now, "despair", but it's a
serious word, and I'm using it seriously. For me it denotes a simple admixture
-- a weird yearning for death combined with a crushing sense of my own
smallness and futility that presents as a fear of death. It's maybe close to
what people call dread or angst. But it's not these things, quite. It's more
like wanting to die in order to escape the unbearable feeling of becoming aware
that I'm small and weak and selfish and going without any doubt at all to die.
It's wanting to jump overboard.
-- David Foster Wallace, "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do
Again", in _A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again_

... many other means there be, that promise the foreknowledge of things to
come: besides the raising up and conjuring of ghosts departed, the conference
also with familiars and spirits infernal. And all these were found out in our
days, to be no better than vanities and false illusions...
-- Pliny the Elder, the Natural History, tr. Philemon Holland

In science, "fact" can only mean "confirmed to such a degree that it would be
pervasive to withhold provisional assent." I suppose that apples might start to
rise tomorrow, but the possibility does not merit equal time in physics
classrooms.
-- Stephen Jay Gould

I am not an irretrievable skeptic. I am not hopeless prejudiced. I am perfectly
willing to believe, and my mind is wide open; but I have, as yet, to be
convinced. I am perfectly willing, but the evidence must be sane and
conclusive.
-- Harry Houdini, in _Houdini on Magic_

I don't think I have made as much of my life as I should have. I should have
written more books.
2000

The effects which follow too constant and intense a concentration upon evil are
always disastrous. Those who crusade, not *for* God in themselves, but *against* the devil in others, never succeed in making the world better, but leave it either as it was, or sometimes even perceptibly worse than it was, before the crusade began. By thinking primarily of evil we tend, however excellent our intentions, to create occasions for evil to manifest itself.

-- Aldous Huxley, _The Devils of Loudun_

And that inverted bowl they call the Sky, / Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die, / Lift not your hand to It for help -- for It / As impotently moves as you or I.

-- Omar Khayyam

All this progress is marvelous... now if only it would stop!

-- Allan Lamport

From the horridness of this crime, I do conclude that, of all others, it requires the clearest relevancy and most convincing probature; and I condemn, next to the witches themselves, those cruel and too forward judges who burn persons by thousands as guilty of this crime.

-- Sir George Mackenzie

So then, these are the foundations, as they call them, of all mixt bodies, and of all wonderful operations: and whatsoever experiments they proved, the causes hereof rested (as they supposed) and were to be found in the Elements and their qualities.

-- Giambattista Della Porta, _Natural Magick_

Physicists like to think that all you have to do is say, these are the conditions, now what happens next?

-- Richard P. Feynman

You think you know when you learn, are more sure when you can write, even more when you can teach, but certain when you can program.

-- Alan J. Perlis

Man is never honestly the fatalist, nor even the stoic. He fights his fate, often desperately. He is forever entering bold exceptions to the rulings of the bench of gods. This fighting, no doubt, makes for human progress, for it favors the strong and the brave. It also makes for beauty, for lesser men try to escape from a hopeless and intolerable world by creating a more lovely one of their own.

-- H.L. Mencken

Where is human nature so weak as in the bookstore?

-- Henry Ward Beecher

Science would be ruined if (like sports) it were to put competition above everything else, and if it were to clarify the rules of competition by withdrawing entirely into narrowly defined specialties. The rare scholars who are nomads-by-choice are essential to the intellectual welfare of the settled disciplines.

-- Benoit Mandelbrot

The avoidance of taxes is the only intellectual pursuit that still carries any reward.

-- John Maynard Keynes

A sympathetic Scot summed it all up very neatly in the remark, "You should make a point of trying every experience once, excepting incest and folk dancing."

-- Sir Arnold Bax

Any impatient student of mathematics or science or engineering who is irked by having algebraic symbolism thrust upon him should try to get along without it for a week.

-- Eric Temple Bell

My early and invincible love of reading, which I would not exchange for the treasures of India...
-- Edward Gibbon

The destruction of this planet would have no significance on a cosmic scale: to an observer in the Andromeda nebula, the sign of our extinction would be no more than a match flaring for a second in the heavens: and if that match does blaze in the darkness there will be none to mourn a race that used a power that could have lit a beacon in the stars to light its funeral pyre. The choice is ours.

-- Stanley Kubrick

... nothing wrong with Southern California that a rise in the ocean level wouldn't cure.

-- Ross Macdonald, _The Drowning Pool_

Mathematics may humbly help in the market-place, but it also reaches to the stars.

-- Herbert Westren Turnbull

Dear Lord, I've been asked, nay commanded, to thank Thee for the Christmas turkey before us... a turkey which was no doubt a lively, intelligent bird... a social being... capable of actual affection... nuzzling its young with almost human-like compassion. Anyway, it's dead and we're gonna eat it. Please give our respects to its family...

-- Berke Breathed, _Bloom Country Babylon_

So far as I can remember, there is not one word in the Gospels in praise of intelligence.

-- Bertrand Russell

Facts were never pleasing to him. He acquired them with reluctance and got rid of them with relief. He was never on terms with them until he had stood them on their heads.

-- J.M. Barrie

What I look forward to is continued immaturity followed by death.

-- Dave Barry

I want to be young and wild, and then I want to be middle-aged and rich, and then I want to be old and annoy people by pretending that I'm deaf.

-- _Blackadder III_: "Nob and Nobility"

We have first raised a dust and then complain we cannot see.

-- Bishop Berkeley

Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle... chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that, of course, they are many in number; or that, after all, they are other than the little, shriveled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome *insects* of the hour.

-- Edmund Burke, _Reflections on the Revolution in France_

Life's too short for chess.

-- H.J. Byron

Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Be as decent as you can. Don’t believe without evidence. Treat things divine with marked respect -- don’t have anything to do with them. Do not trust humanity without collateral security; it will play you some scurvy trick. Remember that it hurts no one to be treated as an enemy entitled to respect until he shall prove himself a friend worthy of affection. Cultivate a taste for distasteful truths. And, finally, most important of all, endeavor to see things as they are, not as they ought to be.

-- Ambrose Bierce

Our American professors like their literature clear, cold, pure and very dead.
As Palamides hunted the Questing Beast, she hunted the Figure of Speech. She hunted it through the clangorous halls of Shakespeare and through the green forests of Scott.
-- James Thurber, "Here Lies Miss Groby", in _The Thurber Carnival_

All the limitative Theorems of metamathematics and the theory of computation suggest that once the ability to represent your own structure has reached a certain critical point, that is the kiss of death: it guarantees that you can never represent yourself totally. Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem, Church's Undecidability Theorem, Turing's Halting Theorem, Tarski's Truth Theorem -- all have the flavor of some ancient fairy tale which warns you that "To seek self-knowledge is to embark on a journey which... will always be incomplete, cannot be charted on any map, will never halt, cannot be described."
-- Douglas R. Hofstadter, _Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid_

What is the difference between unethical and ethical advertising? Unethical advertising uses falsehoods to deceive the public; ethical advertising uses truth to deceive the public.
-- Vilhjalmur Stefansson, _Discovery_

[Quoting from TV Guide] "As a result, TV horror may be returning to its roots -- when psychological terror and subtlety had more impact than an ax to the head." There are, of course, no such roots, in television or anywhere else. The horrible tradition began in _The Castle of Otranto_, with a boy crushed under a gigantic helmet -- nothing subtle or psychological about *that*.
-- Walter Kendrick, _The Thrill of Fear: 250 Years Of Scary Entertainment_

When I read passages like this, I want to look for the nearest wall to bang my head against.
-- S.T. Joshi, "Arthur Machen: The Mystery of the Universe" in _The Weird Tale_

There is a difference between art and life and that difference is readability.
-- Marian Engel, in the _Toronto Globe and Mail_, Dec. 28, 1974

Surely where there's smoke there's fire? No, where there's so much smoke there's smoke.
-- John A. Wheeler

Our view... is that it is an essential characteristic of experimentation that it is carried out with limited resources, and an essential part of the subject of experimental design to ascertain how these should be best applied; or, in particular, to which causes of disturbance care should be given, and which ought to be deliberately ignored.
-- Sir Ronald A. Fisher

The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible.
-- Albert Einstein

We should have had socialism already, but for the socialists.
-- George Bernard Shaw

It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.
-- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

By undue profundity we perplex and enfeeble thought; and it is possible to make even Venus herself vanish from the firmament by a scrutiny too sustained, too concentrated, or too direct.
-- Edgar Allan Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"

It's an experience like no other experience I can describe, the best thing that can happen to a scientist, realizing that something that's happened in his or her mind exactly corresponds to something that happens in nature. It's
startling every time it occurs. One is surprised that a construct of one's own mind can actually be realized in the honest-to-goodness world out there. A great shock, and a great, great joy.

-- Leo Kadanoff

I have found some of the best reasons I ever had for remaining at the bottom simply by looking at the men at the top.

-- Frank Moore Colby

Everyone is as God has made him, and oftentimes a great deal worse.

-- Miguel De Cervantes

He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper.

-- Edmund Burke

There was a blithe certainty that came from first comprehending the full Einstein field equations, arabesques of Greek letters clinging tenuously to the page, a gossamer web. They seemed insubstantial when you first saw them, a string of squiggles. Yet to follow the delicate tensors as they contracted, as the superscripts paired with subscripts, collapsing mathematically into concrete classical entities -- potential; mass; forces vectoring in a curved geometry -- that was a sublime experience. The iron fist of the real, inside the velvet glove of airy mathematics.

-- Gregory Benford, _Timescape_

I could never sleep my way to the top / 'Cause my alarm clock always wakes me right up.

-- They Might Be Giants, "Hey, Mr DJ, I Thought You Said We Had a Deal"

One grows tired of jelly babies, Castellan. One grows tired of almost everything, Castellan, except power.

-- The Doctor, in David Agnew's _The Invasion of Time_

No matter how hard you try, there is always going to be someone more underground than you.

-- Robert Fulford, "My Life Underground", in _Marshall Delaney at the Movies_

Such is the audacity of man, that he hath learned to counterfeit Nature, yea, and is so bold as to challenge her in her work.

-- Pliny the Elder, the Natural History, tr. Philemon Holland

Take everything you like seriously, except yourselves.

-- Rudyard Kipling

Somehow the wondrous promise of the earth is that there are things beautiful in it, things wondrous and alluring, and by virtue of your trade you want to understand them.

-- Mitchell Feigenbaum

It is well to observe the force and virtue and consequence of discoveries, and these are to be seen nowhere more conspicuously than in those three which were unknown to the ancients, and of which the origin, though recent, is obscure and inglorious; namely, printing, gunpowder and the magnet [i.e. Mariner's Needle]. For these three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world.

-- Francis Bacon

And if you give us any more trouble I shall visit you in the small hours and put a bat up your nightdress.

-- Basil Fawlty, "Mrs. Richards"

Predicting the future, as we all know, is risky. Predicting the evolution of new technology is downright hazardous.

-- Leon Cooper
Child pornography -- I never heard of it as a problem five years ago, but now it's brought up constantly. I think it's the new Red-baiting. The people in Burma don't understand how it is that we are focusing our whole crypto policy on catching child pornographers. If you think that cryptography is good for society you have to apologize and say that you are against child pornography... The fact that I even have to say that is an indication of how effective this Red-baiting is... I think that we can't let our civil liberties for the society at large be determined by government policy towards a tiny segment of the criminal population.

-- Philip Zimmermann

An apprentice carpenter may want only a hammer and saw, but a master craftsman employs many precision tools. Computer programming likewise requires sophisticated tools to cope with the complexity of real applications, and only practice with these tools will build skill in their use.

-- Robert L. Kruse, _Data Structures and Program Design_

1) A strong belief is more important than a few facts.
2) The stronger the belief, the fewer the facts.
3) The fewer the facts, the more people killed.

-- Milton Rothman

A fact is a simple statement that everyone believes. It is innocent, unless found guilty. A hypothesis is a novel suggestion that no one wants to believe. It is guilty, until found effective.

-- Edward Teller

Life at the top is financially rewarding, spiritually draining, physically exhausting, and short.

-- Peter C. Newman, _The Canadian Establishment_

My specific goal is to revolutionize the future of the species. Mathematics is just another way of predicting the future.

-- Ralph Abraham

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.

-- Charles Darwin, _The Origin of Species_

All things are difficult before they are easy.

-- Thomas Fuller

Very little is known about the War of 1812 because the Americans lost it.

-- Eric Nicol, _Say Uncle_

It is strange that we know so little about the properties of numbers. They are our handiwork, yet they baffle us; we can fathom only a few of their intricacies. Having defined their attributes and prescribed their behaviour, we are hard pressed to perceive the implications of our formulas.

-- James R. Newman

And what is a good citizen? Simply one who never says, does or thinks anything that is unusual. Schools are maintained in order to bring this uniformity up to the highest possible point. A school is a hopper into which children are heaved while they are still young and tender; therein they are pressed into certain standard shapes and covered from head to heels with official rubber-stamps.

-- H.L. Mencken

Machines take me by surprise with great frequency.

-- Alan Turing

Let us overthrow the totems, break the taboos. Or better, let us consider them cancelled. Coldly, let us be intelligent.

-- Pierre Trudeau, "Politique fonctionnelle"
The Cross is a gibbet -- rather an odd thing to make use of as a talisman against bad luck, if that is how we regard it. Or is it, instead, a cynical reminder that Virtue usually gets pilloried whenever it makes one of its occasional appearances in this world?
-- Denis Johnston, _The Brazen Horn_

Time, place, and action may with pains be wrought, / But Genius must be born; and can never be taught.
-- John Congreve

The more efficient computers become at inducing new knowledge, the more widely that knowledge will be applied, even in matters of life and death. It is essential that such knowledge be open to inspection. This means that designers of learning systems have a public duty to use comprehensible description languages -- even if that means sacrificing performance. Otherwise we run the risk of generating truly "unknowable knowledge."
-- Richard Forsyth, "Machine Learning for Expert Systems"

Nothing in the entire universe ever perishes, believe me, but things vary, and adopt a new form. The phrase "being born" is used for beginning to be something different from what one was before, while "dying" means ceasing to be the same. Though this thing may pass into that, and that into this, yet the sums of things remains unchanged.
-- Ovid, _The Metamorphoses_

You cannot slander human nature; it is worse than words can paint it.
-- Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Truth I have no trouble with, it's the facts I get all screwed up.
-- Farley Mowat

"Doctor, we did good, didn't we?"
"Perhaps. Time will tell. Always does."
-- Ace and the Doctor, in Ben Aaronovitch's _Remembrance of the Daleks_

There are only two kinds of scholars; those who love ideas and those who hate them.
-- Emile Chartier

The true poet and the true scientist are not estranged. They go forth into nature like two friends. Behold them strolling through the summer fields and woods. The younger of the two is much the more active and inquiring; he is ever and anon stepping aside to examine some object more minutely, plucking a flower, treasuring a shell, pursuing a bird, watching a butterfly; now he turns over a stone, peers into the marshes, chips off a fragment of rock, and everywhere seems intent on some special and particular knowledge of the things about him. The elder man has more an air of leisurely contemplation and enjoyment, is less curious about special objects and features, and more desirous of putting himself in harmony with the spirit of the whole. But when his younger companion has any fresh and characteristic bit of information to impart to him, how attentively he listens, how sure and discriminating is his appreciation! The interests of the two in the universe are widely different, yet in no true sense are they hostile or mutually destructive.
-- John Burroughs

Things are not as bad as they seem. They are worse.
-- Bill Press

I am afraid of the worst, but I am not sure what that is.
-- Abraham Rotstein

Ideally, you should be your own hero, just as I am mine.
-- Bargepole

I have seen the future and it doesn't work.
-- Robert Fulford
... one of the strongest motives that lead men to art and science is escape from everyday life with its painful crudity and hopeless dreariness, from the fetters of one's own ever-shifting desires. A finely tempered nature longs to escape from the personal life into the world of objective perception and thought.

-- Albert Einstein

Accountant (Graham Chapman): Oh well, I'm a chartered accountant, and consequently too boring to be of interest.

-- Monty Python: "Sex and Violence"

The most extensive computation known has been conducted over the last billion years on a planet-wide scale: it is the evolution of life. The power of this computation is illustrated by the complexity and beauty of its crowning achievement, the human brain.

-- David Rogers, "Weather Prediction Using a Genetic Memory"

Planet Bog -- Pools of toxic chemicals bubble under a choking atmosphere of poisonous gases... but aside from that, it's not much like Earth.

-- Bill Watterson, _The Authoritative Calvin and Hobbes_

Politics is made up largely of irrelevancies.

-- Dalton Camp

I will not go so far as to say that to construct a history of thought without profound study of the mathematical ideas of successive epochs is like omitting Hamlet from the play which is named after him... But it is certainly analogous to cutting out the part of Ophelia. This simile is singularly exact. For Ophelia is quite essential to the play, she is very charming -- and a little mad.

-- Alfred North Whitehead

Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good... luckily, it's not difficult.

-- Charlotte Whitton

... no man of genuinely superior intelligence has even been an actor. Even supposing a young man of appreciable mental powers to be lured upon the stage, as philosophers are occasionally lured into bordellos, his mind would be inevitably and almost immediately destroyed by the gaudy nonsense issuing from his mouth every night.

-- H.L. Mencken, "The Allied Arts"

Have the courage to be ignorant of a great number of things, in order to avoid the calamity of being ignorant of everything.

-- Sydney Smith

K is for KENGHIS KHAN. *He* was a very *nice* person. History has no record of him. There is a moral in that, somewhere.

-- Harlan Ellison, "From A to Z in the Chocolate Alphabet"

... all men and women, in couples or otherwise, who fall into exclusive habits of self-indulgence, and forget their natural sympathy and close connection with everybody and everything in the world around them, not only neglect the first duty of life, but, by a happy retributive justice, deprive themselves of its truest and best enjoyment.

-- Charles Dickens, _Sketches of Young Couples_

I want to know the truth, however perverted that may sound.

-- Stephen Wolfram

It is unnecessary to understand electromagnetic theory before wiring a lamp or to study physics in order to repair a pump. We count on our fingers and give no heed to the proliferating implications of the act.

-- James R. Newman

[He]... was a letter writer of the type that is now completely extinct. His circle of correspondents was perhaps no larger but it was easily more
bewildered than that of any other American of his generation...
-- James Thurber

In Einstein's theory of relativity the observer is a man who sets out in quest of truth armed with a measuring-rod. In quantum theory he sets out with a sieve.
-- Sir Arthur Eddington

I'm lost, but I'm making record time.
-- Allan Lamport

*Cartesian*, adj. Relating to Descartes, a famous philosopher, author of the celebrated dictum, _Cogito ergo sum..._ The dictum might be improved, however, thus: _Cogito cogito ergo cogito sum_ -- "I think that I think, therefore I think That I am"; as close an approach to certainty as any philosopher has yet made.
-- Ambrose Bierce, _The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary_

Anyone who has begun to think places some portion of the world in jeopardy.
-- John Dewey

Paper has a genius for multiplication that cannot be equalled anywhere else in nature.
-- Hugh Keenleyside

The process of preparing programs for a digital computer is especially attractive, not only because it can be economically and scientifically rewarding, but also because it can be an aesthetic experience much like composing poetry or music.
-- Donald E. Knuth

Sure there is music even in the beauty, and the silent note which Cupid strikes, far sweeter than the sound of an instrument. For there is music wherever there is harmony, order and proportion; and thus far we may maintain the music of the spheres; for those well ordered motions, and regular paces, though they give no sound unto the ear, yet to the understanding they strike a note most full of harmony.
-- Sir Thomas Browne

Q. "Do you listen to your own music?"
A. "No ... It was bad enough having to play the shit without having to listen to it."
-- John Zorn

I can't see the point in the theatre. All that sex and violence. I get enough of that at home. Apart from the sex, of course.
-- Baldrick, in _Blackadder III_: "Sense and Senility"

Someone once said that the two most important things in developing taste were sensitivity and intelligence. I don't think this is so; I'd rather call them curiosity and courage. Curiosity to look for the new and the hidden; courage to develop your own tastes regardless of what others might say or think.
-- R. Murray Schafer, _The Composer in the Classroom_

The more we study mind and matter scientifically the more we see that all things follow a natural sequence, a sequence as liable to work for our disadvantage as for our advantage. It flows like the water of a river, it falls like rain, it is as impartial as the sea. It is as innocent of malice as it is of compassion.
-- Llewelyn Powys, _The Pathetic Fallacy_

My house is small, but you are learned men / And by your arguments can make a place / Twenty foot broad as infinite as space.
-- Chaucer, the Reeve's Tale, in _The Canterbury Tales_

America is a country that doesn't know where it is going but is determined to set a speed record getting there.
-- Laurence J. Peter
There's certainly a growing atmosphere of academic totalitarianism. It shows up in things like the attacks on the legitimacy of the more eclectic and interdisciplinary fields, or in the increasing constraints on student choice.  
-- Tom Naylor

Books must follow sciences, and not sciences books.  
-- Francis Bacon

We pass through this world but once. Few tragedies can be more extensive than the stunting of life, few injustices deeper than the denial of an opportunity to strive or even to hope, by a limit imposed from without, but falsely identified as lying within.  
-- Stephen Jay Gould, _The Mismeasure of Man_

Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood.  
-- Marie Curie

Memory is knowledge; character is the box of values and habits in which our knowledge knocks around. People with a lot of knowledge thrown together in a box that encourages social intercourse and experimentation tend to come up with good ideas, which are the engine of change. Think of Silicon Valley in California, or Oxbridge in the United Kingdom.  
-- William Thorsell

You have perhaps heard the story of the four students -- British, French, American, Canadian -- who were asked to write an essay on elephants. The British student entitled his essay "Elephants and the Empire." The French student called his "Love and the Elephant." The title of the American student's essay was "Bigger and Better Elephants," and the Canadian student called his "Elephants: A Federal or Provincial Responsibility?"  
-- Robert H. Winters

The sciences do not try to explain, they hardly even try to interpret, they mainly make models. By a model is meant a mathematical construct which, with the addition of certain verbal interpretations, describes observed phenomena. The justification of such a mathematical construct is solely and precisely that it is expected to work.  
-- John Von Neumann

I remember those years when we shared the joy of love, / that tiny little pond, hidden in the courtyard! / We were close and intimate, we never were apart, / meeting beneath flowers, / meeting beneath willows -- / a song sung at a feast among curtains of gold!  
But in a moment happiness turned to desolation; / frightening off the mandarin ducks, / how cruel the wind-blown waves! / As I ponder I realize there's no one I can blame -- / she was wrong, / I was wrong, / for all our good relationship bad feelings did arise.  

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power, / And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave, / Awaits alike th' inevitable hour: / The paths of glory lead but to the grave.  
-- Thomas Gray

God used beautiful mathematics in creating the world.  
-- Paul Dirac

Artists can color the sky red because they know it's blue. Those of us who aren't artists must color things the way they really are or people might think we're stupid.  
-- Jules Feiffer

Whoever ceases to be a student has never been a student.  
-- George Iles

What can I wish to the youth of my country who devote themselves to science?...
Thirdly, passion. Remember that science demands from a man all his life. If you had two lives that would not be enough for you. Be passionate in your work and in your searching.
-- Ivan Pavlov

The larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder.
-- Ralph W. Sockman

I imagine if you had built the Newton Memorial outside Paris ... it would have undoubtedly shown the violence of 1870 and 1914 and 1942 and 1945 -- even 1968! Consider building a vast cube of stone merely to register the effects of violence -- marked and dated as an indictment.
-- Peter Greenaway, _Dear Boullée_

Curiosity is the very basis of education and if you tell me that curiosity killed the cat, I say only the cat died nobly.
-- Arnold Edinborough

Man is ready to die for an idea, provided that idea is not quite clear to him.
-- Paul Eldridge

There are two ways of constructing a software design: One way is to make it so simple that there are obviously no deficiencies, and the other way is to make it so complicated that there are no obvious deficiencies. The first method is far more difficult.
-- C.A.R. Hoare

One paramount truth / our society smothers / in petty concern / with position and pelf: / It isn't enough / to exasperate others; / you've got to remember / to gladden yourself.
-- Piet Hein

In order to solve this differential equation you look at it until a solution occurs to you.
-- Quoted by George Pólya

First, you must know what the thing is, and then after learn the use of the same.
-- Robert Recorde

Nor is it very difficult to understand why a Canadian passport should be so popular. Part of the explanation is that with it one can travel easily almost anywhere. Another reason for the popularity of the little blue booklet stamped in gold is that one can speak English or French or Ukranian or Polish or Chinese and still be a Canadian. One can, in fact, be almost anyone and still be a Canadian; and to be a Canadian is to have a passport to the whole world.
-- Douglas Lepan

Thought is only a flash between two long nights, but this flash is everything.
-- Henri Poincare

When this grey world crumbles like a cake / I'll be hanging from the hope / That I'll never see that recipe again.
-- They Might Be Giants, "It's Not My Birthday"

I know that most men, including those at ease with problems of the greatest complexity, can seldom accept even the simplest and most obvious truth if it be such as would oblige them to admit the falsity of conclusions which they have delighted in explaining to colleagues, which they have proudly taught to others, and which they have woven, thread by thread, into the fabric of their lives.
-- Leo Tolstoy

When a man tells you that he got rich through hard work, ask him *whose*?
-- Don Marquis

Human consciousness arose but a minute before midnight on the geological clock. Yet we mayflies try to bend an ancient world to our purposes, ignorant perhaps
of the messages buried in its long history. Let us hope that we are still in
the early morning of our April day.
-- Stephen Jay Gould, "Our Allotted Lifetimes", in _The Panda's
Thumb_

Now, that the sovereign power and deity, whatsoever it is, should have regard
of mankind, is a toy and vanity worthy to be laughed at.
-- Pliny the Elder

... those who have never entered upon scientific pursuits know not a tithe of
the poetry by which they are surrounded... Sad, indeed, is it to see how men
occupy themselves with trivialities, and are indifferent to the grandest
phenomena -- care not to understand the architecture of the heavens, but are
deeply interested in some contemptible controversy about the intrigues of Mary
Queen of Scots!
-- Herbert Spencer

A little learning is a dangerous thing but a lot of ignorance is just as bad.
-- Bob Edwards

If you sincerely desire a *truly* well-rounded education, you must study the
extremists, the obscure and "nutty". You need the balance! Your poor brain is
already being impregnated with middle-of-the-road crap, twenty-four hours a
day, *no matter what*. Network TV, newspapers, radio, magazines at the
supermarket... even if you never watch, read, listen, or leave your house, even
if you are deaf and blind, the *telepathic pressure alone* of the uncountable
normals surrounding you will insure that you are automatically well-grounded in
consensus reality.
-- Rev. Ivan Stang, _High Weirdness By Mail_

There is an astonishing imagination, even in the science of mathematics... We
repeat, there was far more imagination in the head of Archimedes than in that
of Homer.
-- Voltaire

No one has ever had an idea in a dress suit.
-- Sir Frederick G. Banting

Since this Galaxy began, vast civilizations have risen and fallen, risen and
fallen, risen and fallen so often that it's quite tempting to think that life
in the Galaxy must be (a) something akin to seasick -- space-sick, time sick,
history sick or some such thing, and (b) stupid.
-- Douglas Adams, _Life, the Universe and Everything_

Every man is wise when attacked by a mad dog; fewer when pursued by a mad
woman; only the wisest survive when attacked by a mad notion.
-- Robertson Davies, _Marchbanks' Almanac_

Y is for YGGDRASIL. The legendary Nordic ash tree with its three roots
extending into the lands of mortals, giants, and Niflheim, the land of mist,
grows in Wisconsin. Legend has it that when the tree falls, the universe will
fall. Next Wednesday, the State Highway Commission comes through that empty
pasture with a freeway.
-- Harlan Ellison, "From A to Z in the Chocolate Alphabet"

This principle is so perfectly general that no particular application of it is
possible.
-- Quoted by George Pólya

The effort to understand the universe is one of the very few things that lifts
human life a little above the level of farce and gives it some of the grace of
tragedy.
-- Steven Weinberg

I always think that if you deal with extremely emotional, even melodramatic,
subject matter, as I constantly do, the best way to handle those situations is
at a sufficient remove. It's like a doctor and a nurse and a casualty
situation. You can't help the patient and you can't help yourself by emoting.
And I don't think cinema is intended for therapy, so I object also to that huge, massive manipulation which is perpetrated on the public.
-- Peter Greenaway

Now he has departed from this strange world a little ahead of me. That means nothing. People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.
-- Albert Einstein

If all the good people were clever; / And all clever people were good, / The world would be nicer than ever / We thought that it possibly could.
-- Elizabeth Wordsworth, "Good and Clever"

An efficient organization is one in which the accounting department knows the exact cost of every useless administrative procedure which they themselves have initiated.
-- E.W.R. Steacie

France has culture but no civilization. England has civilization but no culture. The United States has neither. Canada has both.
-- Robin Mathews

There was never a great genius without a tincture of madness.
-- Aristotle

A technique succeeds in mathematical physics, not by a clever trick, or a happy accident, but because it expresses some aspect of a physical truth.
-- O.G. Sutton

In brief, she assumed that, being a man, I was vain to the point of imbecility, and this assumption was correct, as it always is.
-- H.L. Mencken, "A Popular Virtue"

Even when uttered by Democrats, "middle class" often sounds like a mealymouthed way of saying, "Us, and not them," where "them" includes poor people, snake handlers and those with pierced tongues.
-- Barbara Ehrenreich

You see, our experts describe you as an appallingly dull fellow, unimaginative, timid, lacking in initiative, spineless, easily dominated, no sense of humour, tedious company and irrepressibly drab and awful. And whereas in most professions these would be considerable drawbacks, in chartered accountancy they are a positive boon.
-- Monty Python: "Show Ten"

By the worldly standards of public life, all scholars in their work are of course oddly virtuous. They do not make wild claims, they do not cheat, they do not try to persuade at any cost, they appeal neither to prejudice nor to authority, they are often frank about their ignorance, their disputes are fairly decorous, they do not confuse what is being argued with race, politics, sex or age, they listen patiently to the young and to the old who both know everything. These are the general virtues of scholarship, and they are peculiarly the virtues of science.
-- Jacob Bronowski

Some compilers allow a check during execution that subscripts do not exceed array dimensions. This is a help, but not sufficient. First, many programmers do not use such compilers because "They're not efficient." (Presumably, this means that it is vital to get the wrong answers quickly.)
-- Kernighan and Plauger, _The Elements of Programming Style_

If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face -- for ever... And remember that it is for ever.
-- George Orwell, _1984_

There are... scientific works -- star catalogues, for example -- which are not art; but the theoretical structures of Gauss, Einstein, or Maxwell are original, individual, "very personal" responses and expressions of exactly the
same kind as the creative works of Beethoven or Dostoievski.
-- James R. Newman

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.
-- Henry David Thoreau, _Walden_

As a matter of fact, I personally would much rather hear Perotin than Mozart.
-- Steve Reich

Once you accept that the world is a giant computer run by white mice, all other movies fade into insignificance.
-- Mutsumi Takahashi, on _The Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Galaxy_

Our advanced and fashionable thinkers are, naturally, out on a wide swing of the pendulum, away from the previous swing of the pendulum. If you want to reach dead center, you will do well to avoid the most advanced thinkers.
-- Anthony Standen

We talk about the American way, the British way. If we had any sense, we would know that there is no American way, no British way. There is only one way -- the scientific way that cuts across racial lines with international boundaries.
-- M.M. Coady

If we follow the advice of these people, we might as well go back into the cave.
-- Hans Bethe

I loathe the expression "What makes him tick." It is the American mind, looking for simple and singular solution, that uses the foolish expression. A person not only ticks, he also chimes and strikes the hour, falls and breaks and has to be put together again, and sometimes stops like an electric clock in a thunderstorm.
-- James Thurber

About the only people who don't quarrel over religion are the people who don't have any.
-- Bob Edwards

The primary purpose of the DATA statement is to give names to constants; instead of referring to pi as 3.141592653589793 at every appearance, the variable PI can be given that value with a DATA statement and used instead of the longer form of the constant. This also simplifies modifying the program, should the value of pi change.
-- From a Fortran manual for Xerox computers

As with most fine things, chocolate has its season. There is a simple memory aid that you can use to determine whether it is the correct time to order chocolate dishes: any month whose name contains the letter A, E, or U is the proper time for chocolate.
-- Sandra Boynton, "Chocolate: The Consuming Passion"

If knowledge can create problems, it is not through ignorance that we can solve them.
-- Isaac Asimov

Mathematics transfigures the fortuitous concourse of atoms into the tracery of the finger of God.
-- Herbert Westren Turnbull

I am a sociologist, God help me.
-- John O'Neill

Every body continues in its state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line, except insofar as it doesn't.
-- Sir Arthur Eddington

Think until it hurts.
-- Roy Thomson
The real question of government versus private enterprise is argued on too philosophical and abstract a basis. Theoretically, planning may be good. But nobody has ever figured out the cause of government stupidity -- and until they do (and find the cure) all ideal plans will fall into quicksand.

-- Richard P. Feynman

The Social Sciences are good at accounting for disasters once they have taken place.

-- Claude T. Bissell

The past is an old armchair in the attic, the present an ominous ticking sound, and the future anybody's guess. It was fun back there with the Rover Boys, the Little Colonel, Pollyanna, and Peg-o'-my-Heart, but we don't want to be caught in the past while the Russians are shaking hands with the Martians. Let us then be up and doing.

-- James Thurber

Before a war military science seems a real science, like astronomy; but after a war it seems more like astrology.

-- Rebecca West

There are three roads to ruin; women, gambling and technicians. The most pleasant is with women, the quickest is with gambling, but the surest is with technicians.

-- Georges Pompidou

This is the original contract; these the laws / Imposed by nature, and by nature's cause.

-- John Dryden

... it is certain that the real function of art is to increase our self-consciousness; to make us more aware of what we are, and therefore of what the universe in which we live really is. And since mathematics, in its own way, also performs this function, it is not only aesthetically charming but profoundly significant. It is an art, and a great art.

-- John W.N. Sullivan

It is simply untrue that all our institutions are evil, ... that all politicians are mere opportunists, that all aspects of university life are corrupt. Having discovered an illness, it's not terribly useful to prescribe death as a cure.

-- George McGovern

There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion.

-- Francis Bacon, "Of Beauty"

He saw the crowd and thought of the waves moving through them, breaking into white, swallowing foam. The small figures dimly sensed the eddies of the waves as paradox, as riddle, and heard the tick of time without knowing what they sensed, and clung to their linear illusions of past and future, of progression, of their opening births and yawning deaths to come... And he thought of Markham and his mother and all these uncountable people, never loosening their grip on their hopes, and their strange human sense, their last illusion, that no matter how the days moved through them, there always remained the pulse of things coming, the sense that even now there was yet still time.

-- Gregory Benford, _Timescape_

They must often change, who would be constant in happiness or wisdom.

-- Confucius

The most dreadful thing of all is that many millions of people in the poor countries are going to starve to death before our eyes. We shall see them doing so upon our television sets.

-- C.P. Snow

Reverend Belling (Graham Chapman): You know, there are many people in the country today who, through no fault of their own, are sane. Some of them were
born sane. Some of them became sane later in their lives. It is up to people like you and me who are out of our tiny little minds to try and help these people overcome their sanity. You can start in small ways with ping-pong ball eyes and a funny voice and then you can paint half of your body red and the other half green and then you can jump up and down in a bowl of treacle going "squawk, squawk, squawk..." And then you can go "Neurhhh! Neurhhh!" and then you can roll around on the floor going "ping pting pting..."

-- Monty Python: "Show Twenty-One"

But is such a thing fit to be discovered to the people? shall I do such an unworthy Act? Ah! my pen falls out of my hand. Yet my desire to help posterity, overcomes; for perhaps from this gleaning as it were, greater and more admirable inventions may be produced.

-- Giambattista Della Porta, _Natural Magick_

A little learning is a dangerous thing; / Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring; / There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, / And drinking largely sobers us again.

-- Alexander Pope

All the secrets we may be able to keep from any and every god and human being do not in the least absorb us from the obligation to refrain from whatever actions are greedy, unjust, sensual, or otherwise immoderate.

-- Cicero, "On Duties"

Thought alone is eternal.

-- Owen Meredith

The mathematician lives long and lives young; the wings of his soul do not early drop off, nor do its pores become clogged with the earthy particles blown from the dusty highways of vulgar life.

-- James Joseph Sylvester

Be wiser than other people if you can; but do not tell them so.

-- Lord Chesterfield

If we are still here to witness the destruction of our planet some five billion years or more hence, then we will have achieved something so unprecedented in the history of life that we should be willing to sing our swansong with joy --_sic transit gloria mundi_.

-- Stephen Jay Gould, "In The Midst of Life...", in _The Panda's Thumb_

In the world of human thought generally, and in physical science particularly, the most important and fruitful concepts are those to which it is impossible to attach a well-defined meaning.

-- H.A. Kramers

Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it.

-- Samuel Johnson

Science itself, therefore, may be regarded as a minimal problem, consisting of the completest possible presentment of facts with the least possible expenditure of thought.

-- Ernst Mach

How did Biot arrive at the partial differential equation? [the heat conduction equation, *Uxx=Ut*]... Perhaps Laplace gave Biot the equation and left him to sink or swim for a few years in trying to derive it. That would have been merely an instance of the way great mathematicians since the very beginnings of mathematical research have effortlessly maintained their superiority over ordinary mortals.

-- Clifford Truesdell

Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage.

-- William Ellery Channing
One cannot play chess if one becomes aware of the pieces as living souls and of the fact that the Whites and the Blacks have more in common with each other than with the players. Suddenly one loses all interest in who will be champion.
   -- Anatol Rapoport

The chemists are a strange class of mortals, impelled by an almost insane impulse to seek their pleasure among smoke and vapor, soot and flame, poisons and poverty, yet among all these evils I seem to live so sweetly, that may I die if I would change places with the Persian King.
   -- Johann Becher

Since when was genius found respectable?
   -- Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows.
   -- Charles Darwin, _The Origin of Species_

To know only one thing well is to have a barbaric mind: civilization implies the graceful relation of all varieties of experience to a central humane system of thought. The present age is peculiarly barbaric; introduce, say, a Hebrew scholar to an ichthyologist or an authority on Danish place names and the pair of them would have no single topic in common but the weather or the war (if there happened to be a war in progress, which is usual in this barbaric age).
   -- Robert Graves

For a successful technology, reality must take precedence over public relations, for Nature cannot be fooled.
   -- Richard P. Feynman

Book lovers are thought by unbookish people to be gentle and unworldly, and perhaps a few of them are so. But there are others who will lie and scheme and steal to get books as wildly and unconscionably as the dope-taker in pursuit of his drug. They may not want the books to read immediately, or at all; they want them to possess, to range on their shelves, to have at command. They want books as a Turk is thought to want concubines -- not to be hastily deflowered, but to be kept at their master's call, and enjoyed more often in thought than in reality.
   -- Robertson Davies, _Tempest-Tost_

You are right on target when you say that mad scientists have a total disregard for the well-being of others. We don't want to spread evil; we just see no point in bothering to spread good.
   -- Richard M. Mathews

Maybe we're just lucky to live in a universe composed by a divine Bach. Perhaps next door, the inhabitants of a John Cage universe muddle along in chaos...
   -- Michael Weiss, in _sci.physics_

Q. "Do you think everything works out for the best?"
   A. "Maybe not the best, but everything works out to something."
   -- John Cage

Philosophy is a game with objectives and no rules. Mathematics is a game with rules and no objectives.
   -- Anonymous

I'm not against the police; I'm just afraid of them.
   -- Alfred Hitchcock

The universe is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper.
   -- Eden Phillpotts

Sentimental or not, I confess that the predicament of poor Valentino touched me. It provided grist for my mill, but I couldn't quite enjoy it. Here was a young man who was living daily the dream of millions of other young men. Here
was one who was catnip to women. Here was one who had wealth and fame. And here
was one who was very unhappy.
-- H.L. Mencken

I didn't think; I experimented.
-- Wilhelm Roentgen

[John] Dalton's records, carefully preserved for a century, were destroyed
during the World War II bombing of Manchester. It is not only the living who
are killed in war.
-- Isaac Asimov

You will be able to appreciate the influence of such an Engine on the future
progress of science. I live in a country which is incapable of estimating it.
-- Charles Babbage

I also believe that academic freedom should protect the right of a professor or
student to advocate Marxism, socialism, communism, or any other minority
viewpoint -- no matter how distasteful to the majority, provided...
-- Richard M. Nixon

You can not apply mathematics as long as words still becloud reality.
-- Hermann Weyl

Ambition has but one reward for all: / A little power, a little transient fame,
A grave to rest in, and a fading name.
-- William Winter

So as this only point among the rest remaineth sure and certain, namely, that
nothing is certain...
-- Pliny the Elder, the Natural History, tr. Philemon Holland

They [corporations] cannot commit trespass nor be outlawed, nor excommunicated,
for they have no souls.
-- Sir Edward Coke

Of course, corporations and governments have a right to something for their
money. They pay the wages. But they don't have the ethical right to literally
purchase the copyright of a citizen's potential contribution to society. In a
democracy they should not have the legal right to silence the quasi-totality of
the functioning élite in order to satisfy a managerial taste for control and
secrecy.
-- John Ralston Saul, _On Equilibrium_

In political discussion heat is in inverse proportion to knowledge.
-- J.G.C. Minchin

All that is human must retrograde if it do not advance.
-- Edward Gibbon

I saw Eternity the other night, / Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
/ All calm, as it was bright; / And round beneath it, / Time in hours, days,
years, / Driv'n by the spheres / Like a vast shadow mov'd; in which the world /
And all her train were hurl'd.
-- Henry Vaughan, "The World"

The world is a tragedy to those who feel, but a comedy to those who think.
-- Horace Walpole

It has been said that for those who "feel", life is a tragedy and for those who
"think", it is a comedy. There is no need to live only half a life. For those
who both think and feel, life is an adventure.
-- Theodore Zeldin, _An Intimate History of Humanity_

War is just to those to whom war is necessary.
-- Titus Livius

One can be instructed in society, one is inspired only in solitude.
It is well to know something of the manners of various peoples, in order more sanely to judge our own, and that we do not think that everything against our modes is ridiculous, and against reason, as those who have seen nothing are accustomed to think.

-- René Descartes, in Discourse I

I have sat through an Italian Opera, till, for sheer pain, and inexplicable anguish, I haved rushed out into the noisiest places of the crowded streets, to solace myself with sounds, which I was not obliged to follow, and get rid of the distracting torment of endless, fruitless, barren attention!

-- Charles Lamb, "A Chapter on Ears"

The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and for deeds left undone.

-- Harriet Beecher Stowe

The Law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich, as well as the poor, to sleep under the bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.

-- Anatole France

Real-world problems are often "high-dimensional", that is, are described by large numbers of dependent variables. Algorithms must be specifically designed to function well in such high-dimensional spaces.

-- David Rogers, "Weather Prediction Using a Genetic Memory"

God made the Idiot for practice, and then He made the School Board.

-- Mark Twain

The warning message we sent the Russians was a calculated ambiguity that would be clearly understood.

-- Alexander Haig

Everything you've learned in school as "obvious" becomes less and less obvious as you begin to study the universe. For example, there are no solids in the universe. There's not even a suggestion of a solid. There are no absolute continuums. There are no surfaces. There are no straight lines.

-- R. Buckminster Fuller

If all the world's a stage, I want to operate the trap door.

-- Paul Beatty

He had that rare weird electricity about him -- that extremely wild and heavy presence that you only see in a person who has abandoned all hope of ever behaving "normally."

-- Hunter S. Thompson, _Fear and Loathing '72_

The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not "Eureka!" (I found it!) but "That's funny ..."

-- Isaac Asimov

What sane person could live in this world and not be crazy?

-- Ursula K. Leguin

There is scarcely an occurrence in nature which, happening at a certain time, is not looked upon by some persons as a prognosticator either of good or evil. The latter are in the greatest number, so much more ingenious are we in tormenting ourselves than in discovering reasons for enjoyment in the things that surround us.

-- Charles Mackay, _Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds_

We have a criminal jury system which is superior to any in the world; and its efficiency is only marred by the difficulty of finding twelve men every day who don't know anything and can't read.

-- Mark Twain
Any member introducing a dog into the Society's premises shall be liable to a fine of one pound. Any animal leading a blind person shall be deemed to be a cat.

-- Rule 46, Oxford Union Society

The people I distrust most are those who want to improve our lives but have only one course of action.

-- Frank Herbert

No doubt, a scientist isn't necessarily penalized for being a complex, versatile, eccentric individual with lots of extra-scientific interests. But it certainly doesn't help him a bit.

-- Stephen Toulmin

Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes).

-- Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"

One can expect the human race to continue attempting systems just within or just beyond our reach; and software systems are perhaps the most intricate and complex of man's handiworks. The management of this complex craft will demand our best use of new languages and systems, our best adaptation of proven engineering management methods, liberal doses of common sense, and a God-given humility to recognize our fallibility and limitations.

-- Frederick P. Brooks, Jr., _The Mythical Man-Month_

We participate in a tragedy; at a comedy we only look.

-- Aldous Huxley, _The Devils of Loudun_

Your grandchildren will likely find it incredible -- or even sinful -- that you burned up a gallon of gasoline to fetch a pack of cigarettes!

-- Dr. Paul MacCready Jr.

Anyway: I'm not blessed or merciful. I'm just me. I've got a job to do and I do it. Listen: even as we're talking, I'm there for old and young, innocent and guilty, those who die together and those who die alone. I'm in cars and boats and planes, in hospitals and forests and abattoirs. For some folks death is a release and for others death is an abomination, a terrible thing. But in the end, I'm there for all of them.

-- Neil Gaiman, _Sandman_ #20: _Façade_

We could have saved [the Earth] but we were too damned cheap.

-- Kurt Vonnegut

Then the Lord himself spoke and said: "If you can grasp what is meant by this, you will be delivered from the fear of Endings. So do not cease from searching. Yet, remember this; when you find that for which you are looking, you will at first be struck with horror and amazement. But after the horror will come understanding; and in the end you will find yourself to be set apart, and honoured above them all."

-- The Gospel of St. Thomas (Apocryphal)

Now is the time for everyone who believes in the rule of reason to speak up against pathological science and its purveyors.

-- John A. Wheeler

Most reformers wore rubber boots and stood on glass when God sent a current of Commonsense through the Universe.

-- Elbert Hubbard

The progress of science is often affected more by the frailties of humans and their institutions than by the limitations of scientific measuring devices. The scientific method is only as effective as the humans using it. It does not automatically lead to progress.

-- Steven S. Zumdahl

What is the difference between method and device? A method is a device which you use twice.
If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our
institutions, great is our sin.
-- Charles Darwin

Those who will not reason / Perish in the act: / Those who will not act /
Perish for that reason.
-- W.H. Auden, "Shorts"

The sum of religion, says Pythagoras, is to be like him thou worshipest. Had
Pythagoras lived in our day he would have seen his mistake. The sum of modern
religion is to make him thou worshipest like unto thyself.
-- Ambrose Bierce

Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.
-- H.G. Wells

Hence no force however great can stretch a cord however fine into an horizontal
line which is accurately straight: there will always be a bending downwards.
-- William Whewell

Those cave paintings are wonderful, but like everything we know, they are not
too wonderful to be true. It is their reality that gives them wonder, and while
there will never come a time when some of us will not wish for more than we can
have, the happiest of us will wait confidently for other tangible finds. We
treasure the cave at Altamira where a century ago a little girl first saw the
great painted bison. New caves will be found, year after year, in lab or clinic
or sky or ocean depth, or even in ancient markings. That is the promise of real
science, which cannot allow wish to rule mind, but nonetheless finds unendingly
wonderful things.
-- Philip Morrison

I'm sure the reason such young nitwits are produced in our schools is because
they have no contact with anything of any use in everyday life.
-- Petronius, _The Satyricon_

The universe may / be as great as they say. / But it wouldn't be missed / if it
didn't exist.
-- Piet Hein

Some people imagine that nuclear war will mean instant and painless death. But
for millions this will not be the case. The accounts of the injured at
Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and of the doctors who tried to tend them, witness to
the horrors and torments which would be magnified thousands of times over in
the kinds of attack we analyse here...
-- Stan Openshaw, _Doomsday_

Commandment Number One of any truly civilized society is this: Let people be
different.
-- David Grayson

The world is governed more by appearances than realities, so that it is fully
as necessary to seem to know something as to know it.
-- Daniel Webster

I've been in the presence of some powerful reality distortion fields, including
those that surround Steve Jobs and Bill Gates, but you, Mr. Furr, take the
cake.
-- Philip Elmer-Dewitt, to Joel Furr, in _alt.internet.media-
coverage_.

I work in celestial mechanics, but I am not interested in getting to the moon.
-- Marston Morse

No phenomenon is a real phenomenon until it is an observed phenomenon.
-- John A. Wheeler
Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth, / And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings...
  -- John Gillespie Magee

Yes, we have to divide up our time like that, between our politics and our equations. But to me our equations are far more important, for politics are only a matter of present concern. A mathematical equation stands forever.
  -- Albert Einstein

Meanwhile, the poor Babel fish, by effectively removing all barriers to communication between different races and cultures, has caused more and bloodier wars than anything else in the history of creation.

We dance round in a ring and suppose, / But the Secret sits in the middle and knows.
  -- Robert Frost, "The Secret Sits"

Philosophers say a great deal about what is absolutely necessary for science, and it is always, so far as one can see, rather naive, and probably wrong.
  -- Richard P. Feynman

Acquired characteristics are inherited in technology and culture. Lamarckian evolution is rapid and accumulative. It explains the cardinal difference between our past, purely biological mode of change, and our current, maddening acceleration toward something new and liberating -- or toward the abyss.
  -- Stephen Jay Gould, "Shades of Lamarck", in _The Panda's Thumb_

Whatever you do, stamp out abuses, and love those who love you.
  -- Voltaire

My deeply held belief is that if a god of anything like the traditional sort exists, our curiosity and intelligence is provided by such a God. We would be unappreciative of that gift ... if we suppressed our passion to explore the universe and ourselves.
  -- Carl Sagan

"After all, did not Our Lord send a lowly earthworm to comfort Moses in his torment?"
"NO."
  -- _Blackadder III_: "Duel and Duality"

Today's pop counterculture, especially among the young, is an awesome mix of maximum mindlessness, minimum historical awareness, and a pathetic yearning for (to quote Chico Marx) strawberry shortcut. To hell with established religions, with science, with philosophy, with economics and politics, with the liberal arts -- with anything that demands time and effort.
  -- Martin Gardner

Let's see ... If I were meta-agnostic, I'd be confused over whether I'm agnostic or not -- but I'm not quite sure if I feel *that* way; hence I must be meta-meta-agnostic (I guess). Oh, well.
  -- Douglas R. Hofstadter, _Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid_

If you can do an experiment in one day, then in 10 days you can test 10 ideas, and maybe one of the 10 will be right. Then you've got it made.
  -- Solomon H. Snyder

A hundred astronomers have left parts of their souls and their hopes in drawings showing the surface of Mars. A score of men have left their stamp in the major theories about life on the strange planet fourth from the sun. The names of ten thousand technicians and scientists rest now on a plaque standing a few feet above the soil of Mars, attached to a spacecraft sent there in 1976. Fifty writers have tried their pen out on Mars and things Martian; sixty movie directors have tried to grasp the magic and mystery... I would like to show you how to fall in love with a planet.
  -- Robert M. Powers
If you haven't found something strange during the day, it hasn't been much of a
day.  
-- John A. Wheeler

If I can't picture it, I can't understand it.  
-- Albert Einstein

You know how dumb the average guy is? Well, by definition, half of them are
even dumber than *that*.  
-- J.R. "Bob" Dobbs, confusing the average and the median.

You're bound to be unhappy if you optimize everything.  
-- Donald E. Knuth, said while answering questions after a lecture at
Concordia University, Montreal

Time itself flows on with constant motion, just like a river: for no more than
a river can the fleeting hour stand still. As wave is driven on by wave, and,
itself pursued, pursues the one before, so the moments of time at once flee and
follow, and are ever new.  
-- Ovid, _The Metamorphoses_

To be pleased with one's limits is a wretched state.
-- Goethe

Underachiever -- and proud of it, man!  
-- _The Simpsons_

"You are all a lost generation," Gertrude Stein said to Hemingway. We weren't
lost. We knew where we were, all right, but we wouldn't go home.  
-- James Thurber

Men and governments must act to the best of their ability. There is no such
thing as absolute certainty but there is assurance sufficient for the purposes
of human life.  
-- John Stuart Mill

I was not a child prodigy, because a child prodigy is a child who knows as much
when it is a child as it does when it grows up.  
-- Will Rogers

This example illustrates the differences in the effects which may be produced
by research in pure or applied science. A research on the lines of applied
science would doubtless have led to improvement and development of the older
methods -- the research in pure science has given us an entirely new and much
more powerful method. In fact, research in applied science leads to reforms,
research in pure science leads to revolutions, and revolutions, whether
political or industrial, are exceedingly profitable things if you are on the
winning side.  
-- J.J. Thomson

We live in a Newtonian world of Einsteinian physics ruled by Frankenstein
logic.  
-- David Russell

In business school classrooms they construct wonderful models of a nonworld.
-- Peter Drucker

If introductory physics were taught the way that introductory computer science
seems to be taught, students would not see equational statements of Newton's
Laws until their first semester of graduate school.  
-- Jerry Kuch

People who can't get laid watch _Star Trek_ and eat Twinkies!  
-- Harlan Ellison

If nature has made any one thing less susceptible than all others of exclusive
property, it is the action of the thinking power called an idea, which an
individual may exclusively possess as long as he keeps it to himself; but the moment it is divulged, it forces itself into the possession of everyone, and the receiver cannot dispossess himself of it... He who receives an idea from me, receives instructions himself without lessening mine; as he who lights his taper at mine, receives light without darkening me. That ideas should be spread from one to another over the globe, for the moral and mutual instruction of man, and improvement of his condition, seems to have been peculiarly and benevolently designed by nature...

-- Thomas Jefferson

It is no good to try to stop knowledge from going forward. Ignorance is never better than knowledge.

-- Enrico Fermi

Marriage has many pains but celibacy has no pleasures.

-- Samuel Johnson

I do not feel obliged to believe that that same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forego their use.

-- Galileo Galilei

The farce is finished. I go to seek a vast perhaps.

-- François Rabelais

Prediction is very difficult, especially of the future.

-- Niels Bohr

If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world.

-- Francis Bacon, "Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature"

The chess-board is the world; the pieces are the phenomena of the universe; the rules of the games are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance.

-- T.H. Huxley

With stupidity the gods themselves contend in vain.

-- Friedrich Von Schiller

Nature is beneficent. I praise her and all her works. She is silent and wise. She is cunning, but for good ends. She has brought me here and will also lead me away. She may scold me, but she will not hate her work. I trust her.

-- Goethe

Education is what survives when what has been learnt has been forgotten.

-- B.F. Skinner

It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practise either of them.

-- Mark Twain

Physics is, hopefully, simple. Physicists are not.

-- Edward Teller

We are at the very beginning of time for the human race. It is not unreasonable that we grapple with problems. But there are tens of thousands of years in the future. Our responsibility is to do what we can, learn what we can, improve the solutions, and pass them on.

-- Richard P. Feynman

What a terrible thing to have lost one's mind. Or not to have a mind at all. How true that is.

-- J. Danforth Quayle

Give light, and the darkness will disappear of itself.
-- Desiderius Erasmus

If [in a rain forest] the traveler notices a particular species and wishes to find more like it, he must often turn his eyes in vain in every direction. Trees of varied forms, dimensions, and colors are around him, but he rarely sees any of them repeated. Time after time he goes towards a tree which looks like the one he seeks, but a closer examination proves it to be distinct.
-- Alfred Russel Wallace

Rule Number 1 is, don't sweat the small stuff. Rule Number 2 is, it's all small stuff.
-- Robert Eliot

This person called up and said, "You've got to come and take this seminar. It will completely change your life in just one weekend." And I said, "Well, I don't want to completely change my life this weekend. I've got a lot of things to do on Monday."
-- Rick Fields

A machine is as distinctively and brilliantly and expressively human as a violin sonata or a theorem in Euclid.
-- Gregory Vlastos

I guess I'm just an old mad scientist at bottom. Give me an underground laboratory, half a dozen atom-smashers, and a beautiful girl in a diaphanous veil waiting to be turned into a chimpanzee, and I care not who writes the nation's laws.
-- S.J. Perelman, "Captain Future, Block That Kick!"

God looks after the stupid, the drunk, and the United States.
-- Anonymous

... Sir Isaac Newton... is in every Englishman's wallet... he's on the English one-pound note. I always carry one on me for good luck. A man who discovered gravity and thus successfully secured our feet on the ground is a good companion.
-- Peter Greenaway, _The Belly of an Architect_

Early to rise and early to bed makes a male healthy and wealthy and dead.
-- James Thurber

I once asked a Christmas Eve group of children if they believed in Santa Claus. The very smallest ones answered without hesitation, "Why, of course!" The older ones shook their heads. The little girls smiled but said nothing. One future scientist asserted boldly "I know who it is"; and a little make-strong with his eye on gain said: "I believe in it all; I can believe in anything." That boy, I realized, would one day be a bishop.
-- Stephen Leacock

Setting loose on the battlefield weapons that are able to learn may be one of the biggest mistakes mankind has ever made. It could also be one of the last.
-- Richard Forsyth, "Machine Learning for Expert Systems"

She'd taken the harlot century she'd been born into for granted, knowing no other, but now -- seeing it with *his* eyes, hearing it with *his* ears -- she understood it afresh; saw just how desperate it was to please, yet how dispossessed of pleasure; how crude, even as it claimed sophistication; and, despite its zeal to spellbind, how utterly unenchanting.
-- Clive Barker, _Weaveworld_

The older I grow the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom.
-- H.L. Mencken

If man does find the solution for world peace it will be the most revolutionary reversal of his record we have ever known.
-- George C. Marshall
As I was going up the stair / I met a man who wasn't there. / He wasn't there again today. / I wish, I wish he'd stay away.
   -- Hughes Mearns, "The Psychoed"

A single death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic.
   -- Joseph Stalin

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the
devils. One is to disbelieve their existence. The other is to believe, and to
feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally
pleased by both errors...
   -- C.S. Lewis, _The Screwtape Letters_

Well, to be fair I did have a couple of gadgets he probably didn't, like a
teaspoon and an open mind.
   -- The Doctor, in David Fisher's _The Creature From the Pit_

This world, for aught he knows, is very faulty and imperfect, compared to a
superior standard; and was only the first rude essay of some infant deity, who
afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance; it is the work only
of some dependent, inferior deity; and is the object of derision of his
superiors; it is the production of old age and dotage in some superannuated
deity; and ever since his death, has run on at adventures, from the first
impulse and active force, which it received from him.
   -- David Hume

I joy to journey among the stars, high above, to leave the earth and this dull
abode, to ride on the clouds and stand on stout Atlas' shoulders, looking down
from afar on men as they wander aimlessly, devoid of any guiding principle, to
unroll for them the scroll of fate...
   -- Ovid, _The Metamorphoses_

I was up at five, you know, we do have staff problems, I'm so sorry, it's all
done by magic.
   -- Basil Fawlty

The conservative has but little to fear from the man whose reason is the
servant of his passions, but let him beware of him in whom reason has become
the greatest and most terrible of the passions.
   -- J.B.S. Haldane

At the bidding of a Peter the Hermit millions of men hurled themselves against
the East; the words of an hallucinated enthusiast such as Mahomet created a
force capable of triumphing over the Graeco-Roman world; an obscure monk like
Luther bathed Europe in blood. The voice of a Galileo or a Newton will never
have the least echo among the masses. The inventors of genius hasten the march
of civilization. The fanatics and the hallucinated create history.
   -- Gustave Le Bon

Now, if you play straight with me, you'll find me a considerate employer. But
cross me, and you'll soon discover that under this playful, boyish, exterior
beats the heart of a ruthless, sadistic maniac.
   -- _Blackadder II_: "Head"

Is knowledge knowable? If not, how do we know this?
   -- Woody Allen

... that power of accurate observation which is commonly called cynicism by
those who have not got it.
   -- George Bernard Shaw, in "Weber's Der Freischütz", 18 July 1894

But the Machine God... Ah, He is a special God. He loves his gears and his
pumps, his springs and his transistors, his printed circuits and his boilers.
He is not a jealous God, like some, but he is an attentive God. He tends to
business, and keeps his world of machines functioning. But every now and then,
every once in a while, every few centuries in a mind that is Machine and not
Man, the Machine God finds one He can care about more than the others.
   -- Harlan Ellison, "Ernest and the Machine God"
To make a name for learning / when other roads are barred, / take something very easy / and make it very hard.
-- Piet Hein

Things need not have happened to be true. Tales and dreams are the shadow-truths that will endure when mere facts are dust and ashes, and forgot.
-- Neil Gaiman, _Sandman_ #19: _A Midsummer Night's Dream_

To conclude, all other living creatures live orderly and well, after their own kind: we see them flock and gather together, and ready to make head and stand against all others of a contrary kind: the lions as fell and savage as they be, fight not with one another: serpents sting not serpents, nor bite one another with their venomous teeth: nay the very monsters and huge fishes of the sea, war not amongst themselves in their own kind: but believe me, man at man's hand receiveth most harm and mischief.
-- Pliny the Elder, the Natural History, tr. Philemon Holland

The plot involves ... excuse me for a moment, while I laugh uncontrollably at having written the words "the plot involves". I'm back. The plot involves a mysterious painter...
-- Roger Ebert, reviewing _The Beyond_

For non-deterministic read "Inhabited by pixies."
-- Anonymous

In a world deeply divided between those who are prepared to believe nothing and those who are ready to believe anything, it is a tricky business to enter into a discussion of matters that can be dismissed either as miracles or as lies.
-- Denis Johnston, _The Brazen Horn_

I used to look down on the world for being corrupt, but now I adore it for the utter magnificence of that corruption.
-- Richard J. Needham

One of the busiest areas of feminist research today is the gender critique of the sciences.... Students are taught ... that Newton's Law of Mechanics and Einstein's relativity are gender-laden. Regarding the latter, Sandra Harding says that the only remedy is "to reinvent science and theorizing itself to make sense of women's social experience."
-- Christina Hoff Sommers

Puns are little "plays on words" that a certain breed of person loves to spring on you and then look at you in a certain self-satisfied way to indicate that he thinks that *you* must think that he is by far the cleverest person on Earth now that Benjamin Franklin is dead, when in fact what you are thinking is that if this person ever ends up in a lifeboat, the other passengers will hurl him overboard by the end of the first day even if they have plenty of food and water.
-- Dave Barry, "Why Humor Is Funny"

The waste that he hated, I thought, was through him like blood in his veins. He had saved nails and wasted life. He had lived alone, but if he was a hermit he was neither religious nor philosophical.... He worked hard all his life at being himself, but there were no principles to examine when his life was over. It was as if there had been a moral skeleton which had lacked the flesh of the intellect and the blood of experience. The life that he could recall totally was not worth recalling; it was a box of string too short to be saved.
-- Donald Hall, "A Hundred Thousand Straightened Nails"

*Ocean*, n. A body of water occupying about two-thirds of a world made for man who has no gills.
-- Ambrose Bierce, _The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary_

There are too many people, and too few human beings.
-- Robert Zend

Institutions feel no pain. Only people can feel the relentless pain of
illiteracy, the desperate bafflement of a mind unskilled in the ways of logic and thoughtful attention, and dimly aware, but aware nevertheless, of its own confusion. Schools do not have minds; they have guidelines. Their guidelines run, when it isn't too inconvenient, as far as what they are not at all ashamed to call the parameters of basic minimum competency. Basic minimum competence (why *do* they need that *y*?) is not literacy. It is, however, just enough a counterfeit literacy to convince the minimally competent to fancy themselves literate, except, of course, for those moments of desperate pain.

I end with a word on the new symbols which I have employed. Most writers on logic strongly object to all symbols... I should advise the reader not to make up his mind on this point until he has well weighed two facts which nobody disputes, both separately and in connexion. First, logic is the only science which has made no progress since the revival of letters; secondly, logic is the only science which has produced no growth of symbols.
-- Augustus De Morgan

I have stolen more quotes and thoughts and purely elegant little starbursts of *writing* from the Book of Revelation than anything else in the English language -- and it is not because I am a biblical scholar, or because of any religious faith, but because I love the wild power of the language and the purity of the madness that governs it and makes it music.
-- Hunter S. Thompson, _Generation of Swine_

I have never managed to lose my old conviction that travel narrows the mind.
-- G.K. Chesterton, "What is America?", in _What I Saw in America_

In fact, one thing that I have noticed... is that all of these conspiracy theories depend on the perpetrators being endlessly clever. I think you'll find the facts also work if you assume everyone is endlessly stupid.
-- Brian E. Moore

"Necessity is the mother of invention" is a silly proverb. "Necessity is the mother of futile dodges" is much closer to the truth. The basis of growth of modern invention is science, and science is almost wholly the outgrowth of pleasurable intellectual curiosity.
-- Alfred N. Whitehead

I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which, when you looked at it in the right way, did not become still more complicated.
-- Poul Anderson

When I returned to the soil, I had a ten-cent screwdriver and the mechanical skill of a turtle. Today, thanks to unremitting study, I can change a fuse so deftly that it plunges the entire county into darkness.
-- S.J. Perelman

_Fiat justitia, ruat coelum_. (Do the right thing even if the heavens fall.) It's not nearly as naive a maxim as it seems, because in the real world it often turns out that doing what is morally the right thing is also, in practical terms, the right thing to do.
-- Gwynne Dyer

A sincere compliment is always grateful to a lady, so long as you don't try to knock her down with it.
-- Mark Twain

When *I* come upon anything -- in Logic or in any other hard subject -- that entirely puzzles me, I find it a capital plan to talk it over, *aloud*, even when I am all alone. One can explain things so *clearly* to one's self! And then, you know, one is so *patient* with one's self: one *never* gets irritated at one's own stupidity!
-- Lewis Carroll

The purpose of the present course is the deepening and development of difficulties underlying contemporary theory...
-- A. A. Blasov
This is probably true in today's market, if you just grafted in some free software. However, we are also talking about how a market would work where software does not need to be rewritten and reinvented literally thousands of times because people don't have any choice. Perhaps the software that would be written would finally be more useful than add-on cruft for MS-DOS or lousy "applets" for Netscape or the umpteenth bad implementation of some marginally useful class for C++. e.g., I don't think "good enough" would be workable in a world of predominantly free software. The unfree code (it won't go away any time soon) would also be held up to much higher standards than is done today.

-- Erik Naggum, in _gnu.misc.discuss_

University President: "Why is it that you physicists always require so much expensive equipment? Now the Department of Mathematics requires nothing but money for paper, pencils, and erasers... and the Department of Philosophy is better still. It doesn't even ask for erasers."

-- Told by Isaac Asimov

I won't eat any cereal that doesn't turn the milk purple.

-- Bill Watterson, _The Authoritative Calvin and Hobbes_

... the genes almost *always* accurately reproduce. If they don't, you get one of the following results: One, monsters -- that is, grossly malformed babies resulting from genetic mistakes. Years ago most monsters died, but now many can be saved. This has made possible the National Football League.

-- Cecil Adams

I think it would be totally inappropriate for me to even contemplate what I am thinking about.

-- Don Mazankowski, (Mazankowski was the Canadian Finance Minister for most of the 1980s.)

How can we hope to remain economically competitive in a world in which... 90% of Dutch high-school students take advanced math courses and 100% of teachers in Germany have double majors, while the best we can say about our "pocket of excellence" is that 75% of [American] students have learned to "critique tactfully?"

-- Barbara J. Alexander

If there's anything the Institute has too much of already, it's concord and placidity. There's no tension on the premises, no crackle in the air, no sense at all that there are mad geniuses lurking about. "I wish we had more crazy people here," Freeman Dyson has said. Just so.

-- Ed Regis, _Who Got Einstein's Office?_

We have our spasms of revolt, our flarings up of peekaboo waists, free love and "art," but a mighty backwash of piety fetches each and every one of them soon or late.

-- H.L. Mencken, "The Butte Bashkirtseff"

Here you come again with your arithmetical conundrums, when I am suffering death with a cold in the head.

-- Mark Twain

Considered in its entirety, psychoanalysis won't do. It is an end product, moreover, like a dinosaur or a zeppelin; no better theory can ever be erected on its ruins, which will remain for ever one of the saddest and strangest of all landmarks in the history of twentieth century thought.

-- Sir Peter Medawar

The genius of you Americans is that you never make clear-cut stupid moves, only complicated stupid moves which make us wonder at the possibility that there may be something to them [which] we are missing.

-- Gamel Nasser

There is a theory which states that if ever anyone discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be
replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable.

-- Douglas Adams, _The Restaurant at the End of the Universe_

Heroin wasn't around then. It was introduced as a "safe" alternative to morphine, just as methadone was then introduced as a "safe" alternative to heroin. As usual, the drug problem had to be continuously invented, or there would not be one.

-- Christopher Pettus

[Disney's machine] has placed a Mickey Mouse hat on every little developing personality in America. As capitalism, it is a work of genius; as culture, it is mostly a horror.

-- Richard Schickel, _The Disney Version_

About those crude, hate-filled cartoons in your Lesbian, Gay and Bi issue: they're meant to subvert and debunk the stereotypical notion that all gay people are imbued with Wildean wit, right?

-- C. Doerksen, in a letter to the McGill Daily

Human beings, for all their pretensions, have a remarkable propensity for lending themselves to classification somewhere within neatly labelled categories. Even the outrageous exceptions may be classified as outrageous exceptions!

-- W.J. Reichmann

As a wise programmer once said, "Floating point numbers are like sandpiles: every time you move one, you lose a little sand and you pick up a little dirt." And after a few computations, things can get pretty dirty.

-- Kernighan and Plauger, _The Elements of Programming Style_

Men do not invent Myths. They only invent fables, and tell lies. True Myths create themselves, and find their expression in the men who serve their purpose.

-- Denis Johnston, _The Brazen Horn_

Sir Howard: It is the truth, Cicely, and nothing but the truth. But the English Law requires a witness to tell the *whole* truth.

Lady Cicely: What nonsense! As if anybody ever knew the whole truth about anything!

-- George Bernard Shaw, _Captain Brassbound's Conversion_

I've always thought that the most extraordinary special effect you could do is to buy a child at the moment of its birth, sit it on a little chair and say, "You'll have three score years and ten," and take a photograph every minute. "And we'll watch you and photograph you for ten years after you die, then we'll run the film." Wouldn't that be extraordinary? We'd watch this thing get bigger and bigger, and flower to become extraordinary and beautiful, then watch it crumble, decay, and rot.

-- Clive Barker

A committee is a cul-de-sac down which ideas are lured and then quietly strangled.

-- Sir Barnett Cocks

Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findesth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called Today; for the night cometh, wherein no man can work.

-- Thomas Carlyle, _Sartor Resartus_

The bigger the real-life problems, the greater the tendency for the discipline to retreat into a reassuring fantasy-land of abstract theory and technical manipulation.

-- Tom Naylor

I don't like that they're not calculating anything. I don't like that they
don't check their ideas. I don't like that for anything that disagrees with an experiment, they cook up an explanation... It is precise mathematically, but the mathematics is far too difficult for the individuals that are doing it, and they don't draw their conclusions with any rigour. So they just guess.

-- Richard P. Feynman, on superstring theory

Seek those who find your road agreeable, your personality and mind stimulating, your philosophy acceptable, and your experience helpful. Let those who do not, seek their own kind.

-- Henri Fabre

I would rather live and love where death is king than have eternal life where love is not.

-- Robert G. Ingersoll

Spring is here. For the love of heaven, let's open our windows or we'll all die, suffocated by our false fears.

-- Lysiane Gagnon

_Propero's Books_ is the _Terminator 2_ for intellectuals.

-- Peter Greenaway

Psychographic marketing techniques helped Raid roach spray marketers discover that the reason low-income Southern women were the heaviest users of roach spray was that "a lot of their feelings about the roach were very similar to the feelings that they had about the men in their lives," said the advertising executive on the account. They said the roach, like the man in their life, "only comes around when he wants food." The act of spraying roaches and seeing them die was satisfying to this frustrated, powerless group.

-- American Demographics, Nov. 1991

The age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists and calculators has succeeded: and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever.

-- Edmund Burke, _Reflections on The Revolution in France_

Fans are interesting things. Rush fans just can't comprehend why the rest of the world doesn't like Rush. REM fans consider the rest of the world beneath their refined dignities to notice. Kate Bush fans love the rest of the world, and the world loves them, but spend long nights plotting to knife one another in the back.

-- Richard Darwin, "Gradenza"

My philosophy of life is that the meek shall inherit nothing but debasement, frustration, and ignoble deaths...

-- Harlan Ellison

I consider that the golden rule requires that if I like a program I must share it with other people who like it. Software sellers want to divide the users and conquer them, making each user agree not to share with others. I refuse to break solidarity with other users in this way.

-- Richard Stallman, from the GNU Manifesto

"First," said Opus, reading from the government manual, "Gather shovels. Second, quickly and without panic, take refuge in countryside... Dig shallow trenches. Lie down in trenches, cover self with wooden door or like object and await blast. After shock wave passes, emerge and go to nearest emergency Civil Defense Center and fill out emergency change of address forms."

-- Berke Breathed, _Bloom Country Babylon_

Never be fatalistic about the inevitability of nuclear war or the destruction of our environment. There are *ways* to avoid the holocaust and to make the world a cleaner place. We must never cease to search for them.

-- Victor F. Weisskopf

Of government, at least in democratic states, it may be said briefly that it is an agency engaged wholesale, and as a matter of solemn duty, in the performance of acts which all self-respecting individuals refrain from as a matter of common decency.
-- H.L. Mencken

*Boffin:* A Puffin, a bird with a mournful cry, got crossed with a Baffin, a mercifully obsolete Fleet Air Arm aircraft. Their offspring was a Boffin, a bird of astonishingly queer appearance, bursting with weird and sometimes inopportune ideas, but possessed of staggering inventiveness, analytical powers and persistence. Its ideas, like its eggs, were conical and unbreakable. You push the unwanted ones away, and they just roll back.
-- George Philip Chamberlain

He felt that his whole life was some kind of dream and he sometimes wondered whose it was and whether they were enjoying it.

But then... it used to be so simple, once upon a time.
Because the universe was full of ignorance all around and the scientist panned through it like a prospector crouched over a mountain stream, looking for the gold of knowledge among the gravel of unreason, the sand of uncertainty and the little whiskery eight-legged swimming things of superstition.
Occasionally he would straighten up and say things like "Hurrah, I've discovered Boyle's Third Law." And everyone knew where they stood. But the trouble was that ignorance became more interesting, especially big fascinating ignorance about huge and important things like matter and creation, and people stopped patiently building their little houses of rational sticks in the chaos of the universe and started getting interested in the chaos itself -- partly because it was a lot easier to be an expert on chaos, but mostly because it made really good patterns that you could put on a t-shirt.
-- Terry Pratchett, _Witches Abroad_

Barney turned his little squinty blue eyes on me. "We go to the garrick now and become warbs," he said. "The hell we do!" I thought to myself quickly.
-- James Thurber, "The Black Magic of Barney Haller", in _The Thurber Carnival_

They're all so highly educated, you know. Education is a great shield against experience. It offers so much, ready-made and all from the best shops, that there's a temptation to miss your own life in pursuing the lives of your betters. It makes you wise in some ways, but it can make you a blindfolded fool in others.
-- Robertson Davies, _World Of Wonders_

When you search a database, you browse through recent material, often covering no more than the last ten years. Cutting off the past in this way streamlines the search. But a musing cut off from historical roots loses the fertile exposure to false starts, abandoned pathways, and unheard-of avenues. An exclusive focus on the recent past curtails our mental musings, and a narrow awareness sacrifices the intuitive mind.
-- Michael Heim, "Logic and Intuition", in _The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality_

At their potlatch ceremonies these people would compete with each other in burning and destroying their money and valuable possessions, and accordingly their ideal was the man who would perhaps seem to us a paranoid megalomaniac or possibly an industrial magnate.
-- J.A.C. Brown, on the Kwakiutl tribe, _Techniques of Persuasion_

Although I know her soft body / I cannot sound out her heart; / Yet we have but to make a few lines on a chart / And the distance of the farthest stars / In the sky can be measured.
-- The Sixth Dalai Lama

The spreadsheet matrix is a creative prison bound by A1 and Z1000. Walls. A psychological prison. Unlike the Black Death, nobody sees this malady. There will be no cure. Soon it will be too late.
-- John C. Dvorak

No God is sane. How could it be? To be a Man is so much less taxing, and most men are mad. Consider the God. How much more deranged the Gods must be, merely
to exist. There can be no doubt: consider the Universe and the patterns without
reason upon which it is run. God is mad. The God of Music is mad. The Timegod
is punctual, but he is mad. And the Machine God is mad.

-- Harlan Ellison, "Ernest and the Machine God"

**Fast, fat computers breed slow, lazy programmers.**

-- Robert Hummel

They who dream by day are cognizant of many things which escape those who dream
only by night.

-- Edgar Allan Poe, "Eleonora"

We must also have a special care to know the right ministring of a compound,
and how to find out the just proportion of weight therein; for the goodness of
the operations of things, consists chiefly in the due proportion and measure of
them: And unless the mixtion be every way perfect, it availeth little in
working.

-- Giambattista Della Porta, _Natural Magick_

It was very strange that I, who knew the whole extent of space and time, and
counted the wandering stars like sheep, overlooking none, that I who was the
most awakened of all beings, I, the glory which myriads in all ages had given
their lives to establish, and myriads had worshipped, should now look about me
with the same overpowering awe, the same abashed and tongue-tied worship as
that which human travellers in the desert feel under the stars.

-- Olaf Stapledon, _Star Maker_

The philosophers of the Middle Ages demonstrated both that the Earth did not
exist and also that it was flat. Today they are still arguing about whether the
world exists, but they no longer dispute about whether it is flat.

-- Vilhjalmur Stefansson, _The Standardization of Error_

All the evils of publishing can be traced to one source -- copyright.

-- Stefan Stykolt, quoted by Kildare Dobbs in _The Living Name_

Perhaps I'm old and tired, but I always think that the chances of finding out
what really is going on are so absurdly remote that the only thing to do is to
say hang the sense of it and just keep yourself occupied.


I can speak French but I cannot understand it.

-- Mark Twain

The skeptic may be pardoned for thinking that hypertext encourages irrelevance.
What the user can end up with is little more than a series of footnotes,
marginalia, and "see also" references -- items that have historically been
relegated to second-class citizenship in the good old book format, with the
added benefit of not having to stare at a lousy screen display to read them...
Indeed, when you boil it down to its rudiments, hypertext seems to make one
major claim: it makes computers work almost as well as books.

-- Stephen Manes

Testing? That's scheduled for first thing after 3.0 ships. Quality is job
Floating Point Error; Execution Terminated.

-- Benjamin Ketcham, on applications for Microsoft Windows, in
 _comp.os.unix.advocacy_

God has made Canada one of those nations which cannot be conquered and cannot
be destroyed, except by itself.

-- Norman Angell, "Canada's Best Service for British Ideals"

To those who think that the law of gravity interferes with their freedom, there
is nothing to say.

-- Lionel Tiger, _The Imperial Animal_, with Robin Fox

The basic fact about human existence is not that it is a tragedy, but that it
is a bore. It is not so much a war as an endless standing in line.

-- H.L. Mencken
If you travel to the States... they have a lot of different words than like what we use. For instance: they say "elevator", we say "lift"; they say "drapes", we say "curtains"; they say "president", we say "seriously deranged git".

-- Alexei Sayle

Adorable in her not-very-bright submissiveness, charming in her childlike delight in shiny floors, even forgivable in her spiteful competition for the whitest, brightest wash, Madison Avenue's girl-next-door is all the American male could wish for -- unless, by some miscarriage, he should fancy human companionship.

-- Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran

To create a community of radical scholars, men and women who recognize that rules and social conventions are arbitrary, but have mastered them nonetheless -- a community which shares such a scorn and disrespect for the present society that it can embrace the whole bundle of rules and subvert them thereby -- that should be our goal.

-- Howard Adelman, "In Search of a University", _The University Game_

One such utopian dream was Charles Ives's Universe Symphony. This was a work with hundreds or thousands of participants, spread out across the valleys, on hillsides and on mountaintops. It was to be so gigantic, so inclusive that no single individual could ever assume mastery or control of it. Anyone who wished to do so could add to it. It was only an idea then, but one which excites our imagination enormously. To imagine ourselves as participants in a Universe Symphony is to give more critical attention to our performance than is the case if we merely consider ourselves to be in a dumpyard. We analyze and criticize the music better; we recognize the soloists, the conductors, the prima donnas; we listen to the talents and faults of each.

-- R. Murray Schafer, _The Tuning of the World_

Andy and Flo live in the past, and when faced with something they don't like or understand, they do the sensible thing -- ignore it.

-- Reg Smythe

At least one way of measuring the freedom of any society is the amount of comedy that is permitted, and clearly a healthy society permits more satirical comment than a repressive, so that if comedy is to function in some way as a safety release then it must obviously deal with these taboo areas. This is part of the responsibility we accord our licensed jesters, that nothing be excused the searching light of comedy. If anything can survive the probe of humour it is clearly of value, and conversely all groups who claim immunity from laughter are claiming special privileges which should not be granted.

-- Eric Idle

May every young scientist remember... and not fail to keep his eyes open for the possibility that an irritating failure of his apparatus to give consistent results may once or twice in a lifetime conceal an important discovery.

-- Patrick Blackett

I had always loved beautiful and artistic things, though before leaving America I had had a very little chance of seeing any.

-- Emma Albani

Many businessmen fail to understand Python principles -- the ultimate absurdity was an offer from America to buy the "format" of the Python shows, that is, _Monty Python_ without the Pythons -- corporate methods do not have the conceptual framework to deal with an anarchist collective, run by intelligent and arrogant comedians who have proved that their method works.

-- Robert Hewison, _Monty Python: The Case Against_

It is unworthy of excellent men to lose hours like slaves in the labour of calculation which could safely be relegated to anyone else if machines were used.

-- Gottfried Von Leibniz
His [Alan Turing's] high-pitched voice already stood out above the general murmur of well-behaved junior executives grooming themselves for promotion within the Bell corporation. Then he was suddenly heard to say: "No, I'm not interested in developing a *powerful* brain. All I'm after is just a *mediocre* brain, something like the President of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company."

-- Andrew Hodges, _Alan Turing: The Enigma_

The FDA has so many rules that can be gotten around that the consumer has no protection at all. You never know what you're eating. I'm horrified when I discover the nature of ingredients in consumer products as a result of my scientific work.

-- Tina Chen

In its broadest ecological context, economic development is the development of more intensive ways of exploiting the natural environment.

-- Richard Wilkinson

Errors using inadequate data are much less than those using no data at all.

-- Charles Babbage

Society is a republic. When an individual endeavors to lift himself above his fellows, he is dragged down by the mass, either by means of ridicule or of calumny. No one shall be more virtuous or more intellectually gifted than others. Whoever, by the irresistible force of genius, rises above the common herd is certain to be ostracized by society, which will pursue him with such merciless derision and detraction that at last he will be compelled to retreat into the solitude of his thoughts.

-- Heinrich Heine

Do you know about the Eleventh Commandment? It says, "Thou shalt not bore God, or he will destroy your universe."

-- John Lilly

The most important art in the last fifty years in this country is boring art. What is important about John Cage or Jackson Pollock is it's boring.

-- Peter Sellars, quoted in _A World Of Ideas II_

Literature is being taught as though it were only political medicine or political poison -- a view that is not only illiberal but illiterate.

-- Louis Menand

In our impatience to test our ideological wings, too many students are trying to fly before they even know what feathers are; too many students use half-baked versions of some cultural theory they overheard in the cafeteria line-up as a valid justification for their actions. Like Newman's ideal student, we too learn as we go along -- only now students use an idea like a weapon, to intimidate and destroy, instead of as one tool in a constructive tool box. How often have students, speaking in class, either justified themselves or cudgelled some rival into silence and submission by evoking a great name or theory?

-- Derek Webster

One could not be a successful scientist without realizing that, in contrast to the popular conception supported by newspapers and mothers of scientists, a goodly number of scientists are not only narrow-minded and dull, but also just stupid.

-- James Watson

I cannot afford to waste my time making money.

-- Jean Louis Agassiz

... one ought to recognize that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and that one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end. If you simplify your English, you are freed from the worst follies of orthodoxy. You cannot speak any of the necessary dialects, and when you make a stupid remark, its stupidity will be obvious, even to yourself. Political language -- and with variations this is true of all
political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists -- is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. One cannot change this all in a moment, but one can at least change one's own habits, and from time to time, one can even, if one jeers loudly enough, send some worn-out and useless phrase -- some *jackboot*, *Achilles' heel*, *hotbed*, *melting pot*, *acid test*, *veritable inferno* or other lump of verbal refuse -- into the dustbin where it belongs.  
-- George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language"

The lecturer should give the audience full reason to believe that all his powers have been exerted for their pleasure and instruction.  
-- Michael Faraday

The real danger from advertising is that it helps to shatter and ultimately destroy our most precious non-material possessions: the confidence in the existence of meaningful purposes of human activity and respect for the integrity of man.  
-- Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy

Shun no toil to make yourself remarkable by some talent or other; yet do not devote yourself to one branch exclusively. Strive to get clear notions about all. Give up no science entirely; for science is but one.  
-- Seneca

Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased by tales, so is the other.  
-- Francis Bacon, "Of Death"

Physics is becoming so unbelievably complex that it is taking longer and longer to train a physicist. It is taking so long, in fact, to train a physicist to the place where he understands the nature of physical problems that he is already too old to solve them.  
-- Eugene Wigner

It constantly confounds me that not only the young, but also many certified intellectuals accept uncritically the superiority of spontaneous or unconscious products of mind over those subjected to conscious, rational control.  
-- Roger Shattuck

In a purely technical sense, each species of higher organism is richer in information than a Caravaggio painting, Bach fugue, or any other great work of art.  
-- Edward O. Wilson

It may be objected by some that I have concentrated too much on the dry bones, and too little on the flesh which clothes them, but I would ask such critics to concede at least that the bones have an austere beauty of their own.  
-- A.B. Pippard, _Classical Thermodynamics_

Michael W. Fox, vice-president of the Humane Society, said that, "to call an animal with whom you share your life a 'pet', is reminiscent of men's magazines where you (a figure of speech, don't take it personally) have the Pet of the Month." It is supposed that the continued use of the word "pet" to designate dogs or cats threatens to reduce their level of respect to the current status of twentieth century North American women. Now that's radical.  
-- The McGill Red Herring

The charm of history and its enigmatic lesson consist in the fact that, from age to age, nothing changes and yet everything is completely different.  
-- Aldous Huxley, _The Devils of Loundun_

Some people have so much respect for their superiors they have none left for themselves.  
-- Peter McArthur

Thermodynamics is the kingdom also of running current history as well as polemics, not to mention verbosity. In no other discipline have the same equations been published over and over again so many times by different authors.
in different ill-defined notations and therefore claimed as his own by each; in no other has a single author seen fit to publish essentially the same ideas over and over again within a period of twenty years; and nowhere else is the ratio of talk and excuse to reason and result so high.

-- Clifford Truesdell

When inward life dries up, when feeling decreases and apathy increases, when one cannot affect or even genuinely touch another person, violence flares up as a daimonic necessity for contact, a mad drive forcing touch in the most direct way possible.

-- Rollo May, _Love and Will_

Professor Branestawm, like all great men, had simple tastes. He wore simple trousers with two simple legs. His coat was simply fastened with safety pins because the buttons had simply fallen off...

-- Norman Hunter, "The Professor Invents a Machine"

The puppets which perform before the curtains / are already an illusion. / A painting of puppets has moved still further / from reality. / But just consider that the sky / is also a vast curtain: / then which of us is not an actor on this stage?

-- Hsü Wei, "Inscribed on Paintings for the People of Hangchow", translated by Jonathan Chaves in _The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry_

For that moment she shared an overwhelming sense of wonder and elation -- the joy and beauty of pure mathematics. It was the only language possible in that narrow instant of triumph.

-- David Brin, "Dr. Pak's Preschool"

Privately owned radio has often been successful in its own terms: profitability, stability, unflagging mediocrity.

-- Keith Davey

I will, therefore, take occasion to assert that the higher powers of the reflective intellect are more decidedly and more usefully tasked by the unostentatious game of draughts than by all the elaborate frivolity of chess. In this latter, where the pieces have different and *bizarre* motions, with various and variable values, what is only complex, is mistaken (a not unusual error) for what is profound.

-- Edgar Allan Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"

We owe most of what we know to about one hundred men. We owe most of what we have suffered to another hundred or so.

-- R.W. Dickson

In all such cases there is one common circumstance -- the system has a quantity of potential energy, which is capable of being transformed into motion, but which cannot begin to be so transformed till the system has reached a certain configuration, to attain which requires an expenditure of work, which in certain cases may be infinitesimally small, and in general bears no definite proportion to the energy developed in consequence thereof. For example, the rock loosed by frost and balanced on a singular point of the mountain side, the little spark which kindles the great forest, the little word which sets the world a-fighting, the little scruple which prevents a man from doing his will, the little spore which blights all the potatoes, the little gemmule which makes us philosophers or idiots. Every existence above a certain rank has its singular points: the higher the rank the more of them. At these points, influences whose physical magnitude is too small to be taken account of by a finite being, may produce results of the greatest importance.

-- James Clerk Maxwell

Above all nations is humanity.

-- Goldwin Smith

There's only one me, and I'm stuck with him.

-- Robert L. Stanfield
What is this life if, full of care, / We have no time to stand and stare?  
-- W.H. Davies, "Leisure"

There are, of course, several things in Ontario that are more dangerous than wolves. For instance, the step-ladder.  
-- J.W. Curran

We have beside us a mountain of Books, Magazines, Pamphlets and Newspapers, that have been accumulating for the last two months, unopened and unread. Like a Turk, in the dim twilight of his Harem, we scarcely know which to choose, but, we shall commence at the apex of the pyramid, and dig downwards.  
-- Joseph Howe

There's a saying among prospectors, "Go out looking for one thing, and that's all you'll ever find."  
-- Robert Flaherty

As a child I lived in the prairie province of Saskatchewan, and it was there that I ran into the curious assumption that the world around me was full of common people. This was never said in so many words. It was just understood that greatness or extra value as a human being existed only among the dead, or else it was an attribute of someone far away, whom one never met. I grew up feeling the full weight of my insignificance, and slowly, slowly began to build up my ego. Receiving no help from the environment, I withdrew from it into a world of imagination which was particularly illuminated by fiction stories which I read...  
-- A.E. Van Vogt

In the early October of that year, in the cathedral hush of a Quebec Indian summer with the lake drawing into its mirror the fire of the maples, it came to me that to be able to love the mystery surrounding us is the final and only sanction of human existence.  
-- Hugh MacLennan

Food is rotting in warehouses, being burned and dumped into the sea. It is the money system destroying food to maintain prices.  
-- William Aberhart

In order to invent the airplane you must have at least a thousand years' experience dreaming of angels.  
-- Arnold Rockman

For a person to live in a country, and to be ignorant of its history on almost every issue that comes up, means that he is really walking around in the dark all the time. I think that history can give you a sense of courage in a difficult and dark world. You can say to yourself: I at least know something about this world, I know how it got the way it is, I know where it's possibly going, not certainly but possibly. I can stand up against the world.  
-- Donald Creighton

Somehow the people who do as they please seem to get along just about as well as those who are always trying to please others.  
-- Bob Edwards

Of all national assets archives are the most precious; they are the gift of one generation to another and the extent of our care of them marks the extent of our civilization.  
-- Sir Arthur G. Doughty, _The Canadian Archives and Its Activities_

That is not really a question I can answer. I try and understand him, thus making him live again for the reader. But it is as if you were asking me if I like one of the characters in my novels -- you neither like nor dislike them. You have to bring them alive. That is all.  
-- Peter Ackroyd, when asked if he liked Sir Thomas More, subject of one of Ackroyd's biographies

There seems to be a strong correlation between people who relish tough football and people who relish intimidating and beating the hell out of Commies,
hippies, protest marchers and other opposition groups. Watching well-advertised strong men knock other people around, make them hurt, is in the end like other tastes. It does not weaken with feeding. It grows.
-- John McMurtry

Some people say the animals see the straight path and flee from it in fear, for they know it was built by men.
-- James Houston

A Canadian settler *hates* a tree, regards it as his natural enemy, as something to be destroyed, eradicated, annihilated by all and any means. The idea of useful or ornamental is seldom associated here even with the most magnificent timber trees, such as among the Druids had been consecrated, and among the Greeks would have sheltered oracles and votive temples. The beautiful faith which assigned to every tree of the forest its guardian nymph, to every leafy grove its tutelary divinity, would find no votaries here. Alas! for the Dryads and Hamadryads of Canada!
-- Anna Jameson

A day without a pun is a day without sunshine; there is gloom for improvement.
-- John S. Crosbie

Every time I try to define a perfectly stable person, I am appalled by the dullness of that person.
-- J.D. Griffin

Art history is the nightmare from which art is struggling to awake.
-- Robert Fulford

It is a rotten world / Artful politicians are its bane / Its saving grace is the / Artlessness of the young / And the wonders of the sky.
-- Epitaph, Ross Bay Cemetery, Victoria

Some commentators have suggested that I do not really exist, that I am the figment of the imagination of certain newspaper columnists and television producers. Personally, I reject this extreme view.
-- Pierre Trudeau

The German method is to go to the principle of things, to select the wrong principle, and to build on that.
-- Louis Dudek

Every woman needs one man in her life who is strong and responsible. Given this security, she can proceed to do what she really wants to do -- fall in love with men who are weak and irresponsible.
-- Richard J. Needham

In some of the poorer areas of the world it is sadly true that sex is the only luxury available to the ordinary man. Whether the ordinary woman also considers it a luxury is open to question.
-- Hugh L. Keenleyside

"Why is _The McGill Daily?_" / Asked the pessimist sourly. / "Thank God," said the optimist gaily, / "That it isn't hourly!"
-- A.J.M. Smith

Wherever a set of alternative possible routes toward achieving a given end presents itself, a student movement will tend to choose the one which involves a higher measure of violence or humiliation directed against the older generation.
-- Lewis S. Feuer

And after all, why should I go to bed every night? Sleep is only a habit.
-- Cornelius Van Horne

You could dress up a pigeon in a tiny suit of evening clothes and put a tiny silk hat on his head and a tiny gold-headed cane under his wing and send him walking into my room at night. It would make no impression on me. I would not
shout, "Good god almighty, the birds are in charge!" But you could send an owl into my room, dressed only in the feathers it was born with, and no monkey business, and I would pull the covers over my head and scream.

-- James Thurber, "There's An Owl in My Room", in _The Thurber Carnival_

I know a lot of my friends who won't drive a car that is of a model more than two years old. A great many of us have machinery in our heads that is of a model a hundred years old.

-- J.S. Woodsworth, quoted by F.H. Underhill in _In Search of Canadian Liberalism_

But I was not, to use the theological phrase, *receptive*. The great obstacle to the influx of grace was my own perfect happiness, and it is well known that God takes no thought for the happy, any more than He does for birds and puppies, perhaps realizing they have no need of Him and mercifully letting them alone.

-- John Glassco, _Memoirs of Montparnasse_

The stupidity of a stupid man is mercifully intimate and reticent, while the stupidity of an intellectual is cried from the rooftops.

-- Peter Ustinov, _Dear Me_

If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders fields.

-- John McCrae, "In Flanders Fields"

This is a work of fiction. All the characters in it, human and otherwise, are imaginary, excepting only certain of the fairy folk, whom it might be unwise to offend by casting doubts on their existence. Or lack thereof.

-- Neil Gaiman, _Books of Magic_ III

It is an important and popular fact that things are not always what they seem. For instance, on the planet Earth, man had always assumed that he was more intelligent than dolphins because he had achieved so much -- the wheel, New York, wars and so on -- whilst all the dolphins had ever done was muck about in the water having a good time. But conversely, the dolphins had always believed that they were far more intelligent than man -- for precisely the same reasons.


Information is not knowledge. Knowledge is not wisdom. Wisdom is not truth. Truth is not beauty. Beauty is not love. Love is not music. Music is the *best!*

-- Frank Zappa, _Joe's Garage_

The mind, in fact, is trained to be able to deal with routine: the routine of working in an office, the routine of working in a factory, the routine even of teaching, the routine of going to school. The mind is routinized. And under those circumstances it is understandable that the most uncreative and frequently destructive aspects of the human mind are brought out.

-- Murray Bookchin

A wise man can do no better than to turn from the churches and look up through the airy majesty of the wayside trees with exultation, with resignation, at the unconquerable unimplicated sun.

-- Llewelyn Powys, _The Pathetic Fallacy_

One form to rule them all, one form to find them, one form to bring them all and in the darkness rewrite the hell out of them.

-- Digital Equipment Corporation, in a comment from SENDMAIL Ruleset 3

I love religion. I could make up religions all day. I sort of think that in an ideal world I'd like to be a religion designer. I'd like people come up to me and say, "I need a religion." I'd go talk to them for awhile, and I'd design a religion for them. That would be a great job. There's a need for people like that. Fortunately, seeing that one can't actually do it, I get paid for sort of making them up anyway.
-- Neil Gaiman

I look around and it's obvious to me: spreadsheet programming is turning the users into humorless accountant types. It is the embodiment of the bookkeeper's thought pattern. If you don't already have this peculiar pattern, then using a spreadsheet for any length of time will slowly turn your mind into the mind of a bookkeeper. The final result is not unlike the creation of mindless pod people seen in _Invasion of the Body Snatchers_.

-- John C. Dvorak

I'm aware someone might pump a few bullets into me. But that won't deter me because I believe what I do is important. We have a safer, better society as a result. I felt it was my duty. And I've never regretted it.

-- Dr. Henry Morgentaler, quoted in the _Toronto Globe and Mail_, Nov. 3, 1998

Advertising reaches out to touch the fantasy part of people's lives. And, you know, most people's fantasies are pretty sad.

-- Frederik Pohl, _The Way The Future Was_

What is termed "disrespect for law" in fact may only be the manifestation of a burning desire for justice. Order, like law, to be respected, must deserve respect. Disrespect for an order that does not deserve respect ought not to be condemned as degeneration, but commended as a healthy regeneration. What I am concerned about is that lawyers and judges too often regard "order" as a shield for the protection of privilege.

-- J.C. McRuer

We can't go on living on a planet that's two-thirds slum -- not with safety.

-- Arnold Smith

If I die, the turtle will carry the secret of the trip and reveal it at the proper time.

-- George L. Stathakis

Mathematical concepts and facts gain in vividness and clarity if they are well connected with the world around us and with general ideas, and if we obtain them by our own work through successive stages instead of in one lump.

-- George Pólya

And they all agreed that the expression *on* the face was not one of happiness. There were many possible explanations for that expression, but no one would have said terror, for it was not terror. They would not have said helplessness, for it was not that, either. They might have settled on a pathetic sense of loss, had their sensibilities run that deep. but none of them would have felt that the expression said, with great finality: a man may truly live in his dreams, his noblest dreams, but only, *only* if he is worthy of those dreams.

-- Harlan Ellison, "Delusion for a Dragon Slayer"

Jargon: Jargon consists of words, phrases and syntactic usages which make communication easier between insiders in any field of study while making it harder for outsiders, thereby linguistically enforcing the elitism of expertise. Unless you use jargon liberally your career is likely to stagnate, especially in the computer industry.

-- Forsyth and Rada, _Machine Learning_ (definition in the glossary)

... it is the peculiar and perpetual error of human intellect to be more moved and excited by affirmatives than by negatives; whereas it ought properly to hold itself indifferently disposed toward both alike.

-- Francis Bacon, "Idols of the Mind"

I never make stupid mistakes. Only very, very clever ones.

-- The Doctor, in John Peel's _Timewyrm: Genesys_

But the only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible.

-- Arthur C. Clarke, "Hazards of Prophecy: The Failure of Imagination"
Whenever I hear the word "share" I would reach for a gun if I had one. "Share" is frequently followed by the word "feelings," and I have enough of my own thank you; please do us both a favor and repress yours.

-- Stewart Brand

Society does not need more children; but it does need more loved children. Quite literally, we cannot afford unloved children -- but we pay heavily for them every day. There should not be the slightest communal concern when a woman elects to destroy the life of her thousandth-of-an-ounce embryo. But all society should rise up in alarm when it hears that a baby that is not wanted is about to be born.

-- Garrett Hardin

That is the problem with this rich and anguished generation. Somewhere a long time ago they fell in love with the idea that politicians -- even the slickest and brightest presidential candidates -- were real heroes and truly exciting people. That is wrong on its face. They are mainly dull people with corrupt instincts and criminal children.

-- Hunter S. Thompson, _Generation of Swine_

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reasons for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.

-- Albert Einstein

It should, therefore, be the goal of formal educational programs to train the programmer to the point where he can use his tools as tools to further his learning.

-- Gerald M. Weinberg, _The Psychology of Computer Programming_

I am engaged in teaching, at graduate level, in producing one variety of "mathematical engineer." The most powerful test I know of for an applicant to be one of my students is that he have an absolute mastery of his native tongue: you just need to listen to him.

-- E.W. Dijkstra

And I have no desire to get ugly. / But I cannot help mentioning that the door of a bigoted mind opens outwards so that the only result of the pressure of facts upon it is to close it more snugly.

-- Ogden Nash, "Seeing Eye to Eye Is Believing"

There is a pleasure sure / In being mad, which none but madmen know.

-- John Dryden, _The Spanish Friar_, II, i

It was Larry, of course, who started it. The rest of us felt too apathetic to think of anything except our own ills, but Larry was designed by Providence to go through life like a small, blond firework, exploding ideas in other people's minds, and then curling up with cat-like unctuousness and refusing to take any blame for the consequences.

-- Gerald Durrell, _My Family and Other Animals_

Law I: The difficulty of using a program is proportional to its usefulness, inversely proportional to its speed, size, and ease of learning, and is a constant.

Law II: When multitasking applications on a personal computer, difficulty is conserved and is a constant.

Law III: Creativity is inversely proportional to the memory size of a computer.

-- Robert Hummel

In practically any comedy or tragedy of Shakespeare one cannot read twenty lines without being made aware that, behind the clowns, the criminals, the heroes, behind the flirts and the weeping queens, beyond all that is agonizingly or farcically human, and yet symbiotic with man, immanent in his consciousness and consubstantial with his being, there lie the everlasting
data, the given facts of planetary and cosmic existence on every level, animate and inanimate, mindless and purposively conscious.
-- Aldous Huxley, _The Devils of Loudun_

In the past decade or so, the women's magazines have taken to running home-handyperson articles suggesting that women can learn to fix things just as well as men. These articles are apparently based on the ludicrous assumption that "men" know how to fix things, when in fact all they know how to do is "look" at things in a certain squinty-eyed manner, which they learned in Wood Shop; eventually, when enough things in the home are broken, they take a job requiring them to transfer to another home.
-- Dave Barry, "Heat? No Sweat"

I don't do crack. I don't do heroin. And I don't do desktop publishing.
-- Stephen Manes

What is now proved was once only imagined.
-- William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"

Nothing ever begins.
There is no first moment; no single word or place from which this or any other story springs.
The threads can always be traced back to some earlier tale, and to the tales that preceded that; though as the narrator's voice recedes the connections will seem to grow more tenuous, for each age will want the tale told as if it were of its own making.
Thus the pagan will be sanctified, the tragic becomes laughable; great lovers will stoop to sentiment, and demons dwindle to clockwork toys.
Nothing is fixed. In and out the shuttle goes, fact and fiction, mind and matter, woven into patterns that may have only this in common: that hidden amongst them is a filigree which will with time become a world.
-- Clive Barker, _Weaveworld_

Seek simplicity, and distrust it.
-- Alfred North Whitehead

And who can doubt that it will lead to the worst disorders when minds created free by God are compelled to submit slavishly to an outside will? When we are told to deny our senses and subject them to the will of others? When people devoid of whatsoever competence are made judges over experts and are granted authority to treat them as they please? These are the novelties which are apt to bring about the ruin of commonwealths and the subversion of the state.
-- Galileo Galilei

One need not be a chamber to be haunted; / One need not be a house; / The brain has corridors surpassing / Material place.
-- Emily Dickinson, "Time and Eternity"

Mathematics has its paradoxes, astronomy its uncertainties (about what is being measured), physics having suffered certain metaphysical relapses can survive only by swallowing entire jugs of wholly contradictory measurements. As for psychology, its most brilliant and its most scandalous success has been in a realm of theory in which measurement is as welcome as Macduff at Dunsinane.
-- James R. Newman

If man were immortal he could be perfectly sure of seeing the day when everything in which he had trusted should betray his trust, and, in short, of coming eventually to hopeless misery. He would break down, at last, as every good fortune, as every dynasty, as every civilization does. In place of this we have death.
-- Charles Sanders Peirce

The tendency to believe that things never change, the inertia of daily existence, is a staple of living. It has always been a delusion.
-- Donald A. Wollheim

Humanity has advanced, when it has advanced, not because it has been sober, responsible, and cautious, but because it has been playful, rebellious, and
immature.  
-- Tom Robbins

... I think Bergman would never have been celebrated as much had he made films in English because the language is so cynical. If you say "I'm full of fear," or "I'm full of pain," in an English movie, people fall out of the seats with laughter.
-- Paul Cox

It is true greatness to have in one the frailty of a man and the security of a god.
-- Seneca

I'm not religious at all, but I don't believe in death. Death is a very beautiful thing. I believe *that*. ... I won't ever see you, darling, but it's been very nice talking to you. Life is very beautiful, you know.
-- Sheila Florance

The wonderful childlike game of infinite planes and smooth, perfect bodies, reality unwrinkled, cast a web of consoling order, infinite trajectories and infinitesimal instants, harmonic truths. From that cartoon realm it was always necessary to slip back, cloaking exhilarating flights of imagination in a respectable deductive style. But that did not mean, when the papers appeared in the learned journals, disguised by abstracts and references and ornate, distancing Germanic mannerisms -- that did not mean you forgot being in that other place, the beautiful world where Mind met Matter, the paradise you never mentioned.
-- Gregory Benford, "Newton Sleep"

Imaginative literature in the service of rebellion, or satanism, quickly sinks into exhibitionism or obscurity. Imaginative literature as the expression of a deeply apprehended truth, poetry which interprets to a man the myth of his own age, can in the hands of Dante, of Shakespeare, of Cervantes, of Camoes and of Goethe, help to raise the level of a whole civilization.
-- J.M. Cohen

When I investigate and when I discover that the forces of the heavens and the planets are within ourselves, then truly I seem to be living among the gods.
-- Leon Battista Alberti

Canadian consumers race across the border to buy the kind of cheap goods that a country with low wages and a third-rate social security system can produce. So empty are their lives, apparently, that a three-hour lineup of cars at the border coming back is viewed as an acceptable trade-off.
-- Charles Gordon

There is a tendency among some Pagans to want to be back in, let us say, sixth-century Wales instead of wanting a *transformed* world. Going back to sixth-century Wales is a fantasy that is dear to me. It's part of the archetypal dream. But that is all it is. Nobody really wants to go back into the past except a bunch of space cookies. It is not modern technology that is desensitizing. It is the misuse of it that is.
-- Gwydion Pendderwen

To live well in the present, to live decently and humanely, *we must see into the future.*
-- Robert Scholes, _Structural Fabulation_

In the design of fission reactors man was not an innovator but an unwitting imitator of nature.
-- George A. Cowan, "A Natural Fission Reactor"

The aim of this article has been to show that our most successful theories in physics are those that explicitly leave room for the unknown, while confining this room sufficiently to make the theory empirically disprovable. It does not matter whether this room is created by allowing for arbitrary forces as Newtonian dynamics does, or by allowing for arbitrary equations of state for matter, as General Relativity does, or for arbitrary motions of charges and
dipoles, as Maxwell's electrodynamics does. To exclude the unknown wholly as a "unified field theory" or a "world equation" purports to do is pointless and of no scientific significance.
-- Sir Hermann Bondi

Once a new technology rolls over you, if you're not part of the steamroller, you're part of the road.
-- Stewart Brand, _The Media Lab_

The road ahead can hardly help being strewn with many a mistake. The main point is to get those mistakes made and recognized as fast as possible!
-- John A. Wheeler

Chaos often breeds life, when order breeds habit.
-- Henry Brooks Adams

As for the passions and studies of the mind, avoid envy, anxious fears, anger fretting inwards, subtle and knotty inquisitions, joys and exhilarations in excess, sadness not communicated. Entertain hopes, mirth rather than joy, variety of delights rather than surfeit of them, wonder and admiration (and therefore novelties), studies that fill the mind with splendid and illustrious objects (as histories, fables, and contemplations of nature).
-- Francis Bacon, "Of Regiment of Health"

To see the world in a grain of sand, / And a heaven in a wild flower; / Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, / And eternity in an hour.
-- William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence"

The world will never starve for wonders; but only for want of wonder.
-- G.K. Chesterton

The happiness of life is made up of minute fractions -- the little soon forgotten charities of a kiss or smile, a kind look, a heartfelt compliment, and the countless infinitesimals of pleasurable and genial feeling.
-- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

To live by medicine is to live horribly.
-- Carl Linnaeus

It was better, he thought, to fail in attempting exquisite things than to succeed in the department of the utterly contemptible.
-- Arthur Machen, _The Hill of Dreams_

So far as modern science is concerned, we have to abandon completely the idea that by going into the realm of the small we shall reach the ultimate foundations of the universe. I believe we can abandon this idea without any regret. The universe is infinite in all directions, not only above us in the large but also below us in the small.
-- Emil Wiechert

Technology is a gift of God. After the gift of life it is perhaps the greatest of God's gifts. It is the mother of civilizations, of arts and of sciences.
-- Freeman Dyson, _Infinite in All Directions_

The most likely way for the world to be destroyed, most experts agree, is by accident. That's where we come in; we're computer professionals. We cause accidents.
-- Nathaniel Borenstein

Worlds may freeze and suns may perish, but there stirs something within us now that can never die again.
-- H.G. Wells

There are two futures, the future of desire and the future of fate, and man's reason has never learned to separate them.
-- Desmond Bernal

The art of drawing conclusions from experiments and observations consists in
evaluating probabilities and in estimating whether they are sufficiently great or numerous enough to constitute proofs. This kind of calculation is more complicated and more difficult than it is commonly thought to be...
-- Antoine Lavoisier

I don't mind occasionally having to reinvent a wheel; I don't even mind using someone's reinvented wheel occasionally. But it helps a lot if it is symmetric, contains no fewer than ten sides, and has the axle centered. I do tire of trapezoidal wheels with offset axles.
-- Joseph Newcomer

... men may second their fortune, but cannot oppose it; that they may weave its warp, but cannot break it. Yet they should never give up, because there is always hope, though they know not the end and move towards it along roads which cross one another and as yet are unexplored; and since there is hope, they should not despair, no matter what fortune brings or in what travail they find themselves.
-- Niccolo Machiavelli, _The Discourses_

An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is an adventure wrongly considered.
-- G.K. Chesterton, "On Running After Ones Hat", in _All Things Considered_

... equally it appeared to us as unreasoning Creativity, at once blind and subtle, tender and cruel, caring only to spawn and spawn the infinite variety of beings, conceiving here and there among a thousand inanities a fragile loveliness.
-- Olaf Stapledon, _Star Maker_

I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book.
-- Groucho Marx

For the difference between art and entertainment is, finally, one not so much of direction as of degree: though all entertainment is not art, all art must include entertainment. "Entertaining" means interest-holding, and what bores and fails to involve has no real artistic value. Granted, art makes demands; it entertains those who are willing and able to feel, perceive, and think more deeply and arduously -- more courageously if you will -- rather than those who always want to leave their thoughts behind, most likely because thought has abandoned them.
-- John Simon

MAN: But I am a man.
WOMAN: Yes, to a degree. That is a trifle abnormal. But not insurmountable.
-- Myrna Lamb, "But What Have You Done For Me Lately"

The greatest damage done by advertising is precisely that it incessantly demonstrates the prostitution of men and women who lend their intellects, their voices, their artistic skills to purposes in which they themselves do not believe and that it teaches the essential meaninglessness of all creations of the mind; words, images and ideas.
-- Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy

... there are those who think that Zeffirelli's Hamlet is the way to treat Shakespeare. I think that cinema can handle much more. We somehow expect cinema to provide us with meaning, to console us. But that's not the purpose of art.
-- Peter Greenaway

Beware of bugs in the above code; I have only proved it correct, not tried it.
-- Donald E. Knuth

In a manner which matches the fortuity, if not the consequence, of Archimedes' bath and Newton's apple, the [3.6 million year old] fossil footprints were eventually noticed one evening in September 1976 by the palaeontologist Andrew Hill, who fell while avoiding a ball of elephant dung hurled at him by the ecologist David Western.
London has always provided the landscape for my imagination, if that does not sound too pretentious, and I suppose becomes a character -- a living being -- within each of my books. Perhaps I am writing its history, or biography, by indirection -- certainly I think, all of my books, biography and fiction alike, are single chapters in the book which will only be completed at the time of my death. Then I hope the city itself will be seen as a metaphor for the nature of time and the presence of the past in human affairs.

-- Peter Ackroyd, in an interview in October 1998

We owed so much to Herbert's ever cheerful industry and readiness, that I often wondered how I had conceived that old idea of his inaptitude, until I was one day enlightened by the reflection, that perhaps the inaptitude had never been in him at all, but had been in me.

-- Charles Dickens, _Great Expectations_

Thus the metric system did not really catch on in the States, unless you count the increasing popularity of the nine-millimeter bullet.

-- Dave Barry

I should be able to whisper something in your ear, even if your ear is 1000 miles away, and the government disagrees with that. [GQ magazine in England] quoted me on that -- they changed one letter. It said I should be able to whisper something in your "car", even though I am 1000 miles away. I wonder what the people in England think of me.

-- Philip Zimmermann

Now therefore, that my mind is free from all cares, and that I have obtained for myself assured leisure in peaceful solitude, I shall apply myself seriously and freely to the general destruction of all my former opinions.

-- Rene Descartes, first Meditation

A successful tool is one that was used to do something undreamed of by its author.

-- S.C. Johnson

... the social sciences were for all those who had not yet decided what to do with their lives, and for all those whose premature frustrations led them into the sterile alleys of confrontation.

-- Peter Ustinov, _Dear Me_

Well, allow me to introduce myself to you as an advocate of Ornamental Knowledge. You like the mind to be a neat machine, equipped to work efficiently, if narrowly, and with no extra bits or useless parts. I like the mind to be a dustbin of scraps of brilliant fabric, odd gems, worthless but fascinating curiosities, tinsel, quaint bits of carving, and a reasonable amount of healthy dirt. Shake the machine and it goes out of order; shake the dustbin and it adjusts itself beautifully to its new position.

-- Robertson Davies, _Tempest-Tost_

I have a friend who told me that the greatest computer system ever built by mankind was by the Druids at Stonehenge. Well, that's an old story. But what I like was that he felt that the Druids didn't die out, they just went bankrupt trying to debug the software.

-- James Finkle

Romans disapproved of Greek sports because the athletes competed nude. That was shocking. On the other hand, people dripping with blood and dying for entertainment was fine. This is strangely similar to the moral standards of today's commercial television and family movies.

-- John Ralston Saul, _On Equilibrium_

We tend to idealize tolerance, then wonder why we find ourselves infested with losers and nut cases.

-- Patrick Hayden

However, we must not lose sign of the fact that to digitize ideas, there first
must be ideas. Consequently, creativity and imagination -- or whatever stimulates them -- must stop being the privileges of a precious few and become important parts of values that need to be promoted in every order of life -- not just in education.

-- Llorenç Valverde, "Rites, Rituals, and the Passage of Time: Change in a Technological Age", in _On The Internet_, September/October 1998

In essence, the God of the Abrahamic religions has only one law, since all the other laws are just special cases of it. The law is: "If I tell you to do something, then do it, for no better reason than because I say so. Even if I tell you to kill your own kid, don't bother asking why -- I don't have to give you a reason. Just do it." This law does not profit us. It puts those who accept it in the habit of equating right conduct with obedience, and that helps many people to be willing to slaughter one another because somebody told them to.

On the other hand, there are a lot of things which do profit us. One of the most consistently profitable things we do is ask "Why?".

-- Paul Filseth, in _alt.atheism.moderated_, 16 May 1999

Chemistry is physics without thought; mathematics is physics without purpose.

-- Anonymous

The beauty of mechanical problems is that they are often visible to the naked and untrained eye. If white smoke is rising from a disk drive, that is probably where the problem lies (unless your disk drive has just elected the new Pope).

-- John Bear, _Computer Wimp_

I think that every artist dreams of renewing the forms which came before, but I think very few can be considered to have achieved that. We are all dwarves standing upon the shoulders of the giants who preceded us, and I think we must never forget that. After all, even iconoclasts only exist with respect to that which they destroy.

-- Peter Greenaway

... here is my advice as we begin the century that will lead to 2081. First, guard the freedom of ideas at all costs. Be alert that dictators have always played on the natural human tendency to blame others and to oversimplify. And don't regard yourself as a guardian of freedom unless you respect and preserve the rights of people you disagree with to free, public, unhampered expression.

-- Gerard K. O'Neill, _2081_

I like to browse in occult bookshops if for no other reason than to refresh my commitment to science.

-- Heinz Pagels, _The Dreams of Reason_

There is, of course, a certain amount of drudgery in newspaper work, just as there is in teaching classes, tunnelling into a bank, or being President of the United States. I suppose that even the most pleasurable of imaginable occupations, that of batting baseballs through the windows of the RCA Building, would pall a little as the days ran on.

-- James Thurber, "Memoirs of a Drudge", in _The Thurber Carnival_

In a paper awaiting publication [Paul Horowitz] and [Carl] Sagan list about 50 odd signals from the Megachannel ExtraTerrestrial Assay I and its twin outside Buenos Aires, META II. Some have characteristics that rule out their being messages from extraterrestrials. But dozens remain, suspended forever in time like a ringing phone that you picked up a nanosecond too late.

-- Sharon Begley

You have to walk carefully in the beginning of love; the running across fields into your lover's arms can only come later when you're sure they won't laugh if you trip.

-- Jonathan Carroll, _Outside the Dog Museum_

The truth is that even big collections of ordinary books distort space, as can readily be proved by anyone who has been around a really old-fashioned secondhand bookshop, one of those that look as though they were designed by M.
Escher on a bad day and has more staircases than storeys and those rows of shelves which end in little doors that are surely too small for a full-sized human to enter. The relevant equation is: Knowledge = power = energy = matter = mass; a good bookshop is just a genteel Black Hole that knows how to read.

-- Terry Pratchett, _Guards! Guards!_

Numbers and lines have many charms, unseen by vulgar eyes, and only discovered to the unwearied and respectful sons of Art. In features the serpentine line (who starts not at the name) produces beauty and love; and in numbers, high powers, and humble roots, give soft delight.

-- E. De Joncourt

"Every minute dies a man, / Every minute one is born"; I need hardly point out to you that this calculation would tend to keep the sum total of the world's population in a state of perpetual equipoise, whereas it is a well-known fact that the said sum total is constantly on the increase. I would therefore take the liberty of suggesting that in the next edition of your excellent poem the erroneous calculation to which I refer should be corrected as follows: "Every moment dies a man / And one and a sixteenth is born." I may add that the exact figures are 1.067, but something must, of course, be conceded to the laws of metre.

-- Charles Babbage, in a letter to Alfred, Lord Tennyson

The criterion of simplicity is not necessarily based on the speed of the algorithm or in its complexity in serial computers.

-- Armand De Callatay, _Natural and Artificial Intelligence_

Imitation of nature is bad engineering. For centuries inventors tried to fly by emulating birds, and they have killed themselves uselessly... You see, Mother Nature has never developed the Boeing 747. Why not? Because Nature didn't need anything that would fly at 700 mph at 40,000 feet: how would such an animal feed itself?... If you take Man as a model and test of artificial intelligence, you're making the same mistake as the old inventors flapping their wings. You don't realize that Mother Nature has never needed an intelligent animal and accordingly, "has never bothered to develop one." So when an intelligent entity is finally built, it will have evolved on principles different from those of Man's mind, and its level of intelligence will certainly not be measured by the fact that it can beat some chess champion or appear to carry on a conversation in English.

-- Anonymous, quoted in Jacques Vallee's _The Network Revolution_

We are so accustomed to disguise ourselves to others that in the end we become disguised to ourselves.

-- La Rochefoucauld

I'm not very keen for doves or hawks. I think we need more owls.

-- Senator George Aiken

There's nothing remarkable about it. All one has to do is hit the right keys at the right time and the instrument plays itself.

-- Johann Sebastian Bach

As life moves to this electronic frontier, politicians and corporations are starting to exert increasing control over the new digital realm, policing information highways with growing strictness. Before we even realize we're there, we may find ourselves boxed into a digital ghetto, denied simple rights of access, while corporations and government agencies make out their territory and roam free. So who will oppose the big guys? Who's going to stand up for our digital civil liberties? Who has the techno-literacy necessary to ask a few pertinent questions about what's going down in cyberspace? Perhaps the people who have been living there the longest might have a few answers.

-- Mark Bennett

Lovely girls are terribly insecure. They are convinced that their legs are too thick, and their bottoms are too big, and their bosoms are too small. They are convinced that their nose is the wrong shape, that their ears stick out, and that their eyes are too close together. They need a man who will tell them they are exactly right as they are. They do not believe him, but they need to hear...
it said.
-- Richard J. Needham

Copying all or parts of a program is as natural to a programmer as breathing, and as productive. It ought to be as free.
-- Richard Stallman

We have plenty of information technology -- what is perhaps needed now is more intelligence technology, to help us make sense of the growing volume of information stored in the form of statistical data, documents, messages, and so on. For example, not many people know that the infamous hole in the ozone layer remained undetected for seven years as a result of infoglut. The hole had in fact been identified by a US weather satellite in 1979, but nobody realised this at the time because the information was buried -- along with 3 million other unread tapes -- in the archives of the National Records Centre in Washington DC. It was only when British scientists were analysing the data much later in 1986 that the hole in the ozone was first "discovered".
-- Tom Forester

And so, the best of my advice to the originators and designers of Ada has been ignored. In this last resort, I appeal to you, representatives of the programming profession in the United States, and citizens concerned with the welfare and safety of your own country and of mankind: Do not allow this language in its present state to be used in applications where reliability is crucial, i.e., nuclear power stations, cruise missiles, early warning systems, antiballistic missile defense systems. The next rocket to go astray as a result of a programming language error may not be an exploratory space rocket on a harmless trip to Venus: it may be a nuclear warhead exploding over one of our own cities. An unreliable programming language generating unreliable programs constitutes a far greater risk to our environment and to our society than unsafe cars, toxic pesticides, or accidents at nuclear power stations. Be vigilant to reduce the risk, not to increase it.
-- C. A. R. Hoare, 1980 Turing Award Lecture

Here we have a game that combines the charm of a Pentagon briefing with the excitement of double-entry bookkeeping.
-- Cecil Adams, on role-playing games, in _The Straight Dope_

Here lies, extinguished in his prime, / a victim of modernity: / but yesterday he hadn't time--- / and now he has eternity.
-- Piet Hein

When you have once seen the glow of happiness on the face of a beloved person, you know that a man can have no vocation but to awaken that light on the faces surrounding him; and you are torn by the thought of the unhappiness and night you cast, by the mere fact of living, in the hearts you encounter.
-- Albert Camus

Childbirth is *not* a miracle. Life is *not* sacred. When you have twenty thousand nomads huddled between two rivers in the Middle East and that's it for Homo sapiens, when one in five children is a live birth, one in ten living past the age of ten, *then* childbirth *is* a miracle and life *is* sacred. When the average age of a grandmother in Philadelphia's housing projects is twenty-five, to call childbirth a miracle is at least a tasteless joke and at worst a true obscenity.
-- Dave Sim, cerebus #142

Well, yes I drove a cab in San Francisco, and in New York I worked as a part-time social worker. Phil Glass and I had a moving company for a short period of time. I did all kinds of odd jobs ... 
-- Steve Reich

The way of the portable computer user is as a stony path strewn with plugs and sockets, all the wrong size...
-- Terry Pratchett, in _alt.fan.pratchett_

Now, think about a kid in 5th grade today. They've grown up with Nintendo and arcade-quality games on their computers. They've grown up with zillions of
utilities which typically have been polished for years. They've grown up with operating environments that, no matter what we may think of them, are orders of magnitude more sophisticated and complex than what we started with. What's their motivation to program? It's going to be years of work before their programs can equal the quality and capability of stuff they can get just by asking. When I started programming, I spent a lot of time writing games. Is a kid who's used to animated 256-color action games with sound going to bother, when the best they can do is produce some text or a few lines moving around on the screen? And as everything moves toward GUI-ness, that places another obstacle in their path -- the work needed to put a GUI on something may well be beyond them, let alone actually providing any functionality. Sometimes I wonder if we aren't the last generation to care about the guts of the machine. We were introduced to computers when they were simple enough that we could make them do interesting tricks even as young children. Today, through the fruits of our own efforts, "interesting" is a much tougher goal, and I don't know whether our children will make it in significant numbers.
   -- James W. Birdsall, in _alt.folklore.computers_

I like the stars. It's the illusion of permanence, I think. I mean, they're always flaring up and caving in and going out. But from here, I can pretend... I can pretend that things last. I can pretend that lives last longer than moments. Gods come, and gods go. Mortals flicker and flash and fade. Worlds don't last; and stars and galaxies are transient, fleeting things that twinkle like fireflies and vanish into cold and dust. But I can pretend.
   -- Neil Gaiman, _Sandman_ #48: _Journey's End_

Nothing is built on stone; all is built on sand, but we must build as if the sand were stone.
   -- Jorge Luis Borges

In all large corporations, there is a pervasive fear that someone, somewhere is having fun with a computer on company time. Networks help alleviate that fear.
   -- John C. Dvorak

More computing sins are committed in the name of efficiency (without necessarily achieving it) than for any other single reason -- including blind stupidity.
   -- W.A. Wuld, "A Case against the GOTO", _SIGPLAN Notices_, November 1972

If you've been reading the trend sections of your weekly newsmagazines, you know that "yuppies" are a new breed of serious, clean-cut, ambitious, career-oriented young person that probably resulted from all that atomic testing. They wear dark, natural-fiber, businesslike clothing even when nobody they know has died. In college, they major in Business Administration. If, to meet certain academic requirements, they have to take a liberal-arts course, they take Business Poetry.
   -- Dave Barry, "Yup The Establishment"

The argument that we have to condition children to horrors is now seen as fallacious; there is no question of introducing them to horrors, because the horrors already known to them are far in excess of anything we experience as adults.
   -- P.M. Pickard, _I Could a Tale Unfold: Violence, Horror & Sensationalism in Stories for Children_

I see these two legendary men as symbolic of the American dream. Their position atop a vast religious/cable television/Bad Hair empire shows the entire world that America truly is the Land of Opportunity(tm), where Narrow-Minded, Really Dumb Guys can, and regularly do, get to the top.
   -- Ron Barber, on Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, in _alt.fan.lemurs_

*pixel*, n.: A mischievous, magical spirit associated with screen displays. The computer industry has frequently borrowed from mythology: Witness the sprites in computer graphics, the demons in artificial intelligence, and the trolls in the marketing department.
   -- Jeff Meyer, a.k.a. Moriarty on Usenet
These petitioners had no conception of art; to them a picture was a symbol of something else, and very readily the symbol became the reality. They were untouched by modern education, but their government was striving with might and main to procure this inestimable benefit from them; anticlericalism and American bustle would soon free them from belief in miracles and holy likenesses. But where, I ask myself, will mercy and divine compassion come from then? Or are such things necessary to people who are well fed and know the wonders that lie concealed in an atom? I don't regret economic and educational advance; I just wonder how much we shall have to pay for it, and in what coin.  
-- Robertson Davies, _Fifth Business_

We shouldn't surrender so readily to only half understanding all kinds of things. Try harder to understand, and then when you have understood take a little time out maybe to explain to others.  
-- Irving Kaplansky, quoted in _More Mathematical People_

Much perverse incompetence comes from managers and/or secretaries trying to use words whose meanings they don't know. Some people go through their entire careers in a fog this way. They're often C or D students who got accustomed to being confused in class, and who now, after years of practice, have lost all awareness that it is *possible* to understand things clearly and know the exact meaning of every word that one uses. I know that as a teacher, I find my biggest challenge is reaching people who are accustomed to being confused, and no longer consider confusion undesirable.  
-- Michael A. Covington, in _alt.folklore.computers_.

No, I wouldn't go as far as some of my fellow [mental] calculators and indiscriminately welcome all numbers with open arms: not the horny-handed, rough-and-tough bully 8 or the sinister 64 or the arrogant, smug, self-satisfied 36. But I do admit to a very personal affection for the ingenious, adventurous 26, the magic, versatile 7, the helpful 37, the fatherly, reliable (if somewhat stodgy) 76...  
-- Hans Eberstark, from the introductory comment to Steven B. Smith's _The Great Mental Calculators_

EMI may have been gambling when it signed Kate Bush, but it was a gamble that paid... only EMI had a Kate Bush, and the idiosyncratic nature of Bush's music made the construction of a Kate Bush clone an accomplishment almost beyond the powers of imagination.  
-- Holly Kruse, "In Praise of Kate Bush", in _On Record_

The programmer, like the poet, works only slightly removed from pure thought-stuff. He builds his castles in the air, from air, creating by exertion of the imagination. Few media of creation are so flexible, so easy to polish and rework, so readily capable of realizing grand conceptual structures. (As we shall see later, this very tractability has its own problems.)  
-- Frederick P. Brooks, Jr., _The Mythical Man-Month_

I do not have a psychiatrist and I do not want one, for the simple reason that if he listened to me long enough, he might become disturbed.  
-- James Thurber, "Carpe Noctem, If You Can", in _Credos and Curios_

"Since the invasion of Grenada," a military source informed me, "we call it C^5. That's Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Confusion."  
-- Barbara Garson, _The Electronic Sweatshop_

There are two kinds of researchers: those that have implemented something and those that have not. The latter will tell you that there are 142 ways of doing things and that there isn't consensus on which is best. The former will simply tell you that 141 of them don't work.  
-- David Cheriton, paraphrased in _comp.os.minix_; available in an archive entitled _Linux_is_obsolete.Z_.

When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am 50, I read them openly. When I became a man, I put away childish things -- including the fear of childishness and the desire to be grown-up.
A little retrospection shows that although many fine, useful software systems have been designed by committees and built as part of multipart projects, those software systems that have excited passionate fans are those that are the products of one or a few designing minds, great designers. Consider Unix, APL, Pascal, Modula, the Smalltalk interface, even Fortran; and contrast them with Cobol, PL/I, Algol, MVS/370, and MS-DOS.

-- Frederick P. Brooks, Jr.

I would, however, recommend to every one of my Readers, the keeping a Journal of their Lives for one Week, and setting down punctually their whole Series of Employments during that Space of Time. This kind of Self-Examination would give them a true State of themselves, and incline them to consider seriously what they are about. One Day would rectifie the Omissions of another, and make a Man weigh all those indifferent Actions, which, though they are easily forgotten, must certainly be accounted for.

-- Joseph Addison, in the Spectator for March 4, 1712

In contrast, too many new programmers write as if there were no programmers before them and there shall come none after them. The best of the new breed learn to program from learn-by-example-in-21-days textbooks of very low quality; the worst learn from guesswork and trial and error with a Pavlovian focus on pain avoidance. None of them learn to do it right from a master of the art of programming. Instead, they learn from watching other programs perform. I blame the intense redirection of energy away from programming to user interface design on this lack of ability to read the language from programmer to computer.

-- Erik Naggum, in _gnu.misc.discuss_

But in our enthusiasm, we could not resist a radical overhaul of the system, in which all of its major weaknesses have been exposed, analyzed, and replaced with new weaknesses.

-- Bruce Leverett, "Register Allocation in Optimizing Compilers"

Computer literacy is a contact with the activity of computing deep enough to make the computational equivalent of reading and writing fluent and enjoyable. As in all the arts, a romance with the material must be well under way. If we value the lifelong learning of arts and letters as a springboard for personal and societal growth, should any less effort be spent to make computing a part of our lives?

-- Alan Kay

Confront a child, a puppy, and a kitten with a sudden danger; the child will turn instinctively for more assistance, the puppy will grovel in abject submission, the kitten will brace its tiny body for a frantic resistance.

-- H.H. Munro

I went on to test the program in every way I could devise. I strained it to expose its weaknesses. I ran it for high-mass stars and low-mass stars, for stars born exceedingly hot and those born relatively cold. I ran it assuming the superfluid currents beneath the crust to be absent -- not because I wanted to know the answer, but because I had developed an intuitive feel for the answer in this particular case. Finally I got a run in which the computer showed the pulsar's temperature to be less than absolute zero. I had found an error. I chased down the error and fixed it. Now I had improved the program to the point where it would not run at all.

-- George Greenstein, _Frozen Star: Of Pulsars, Black Holes and the Fate of Stars_

The first symptom of love in a young man is timidity, in a girl it is boldness. The two sexes have a tendency to approach, and each assumes the qualities of the other.

-- Victor Hugo

Larger projects generally do not meet one or more of the criteria for success: schedule, budget, or customer satisfaction. Furthermore, a post-mortem of the large project will not pinpoint the explicit causes of failure.
The good Christian should beware of mathematicians and all those who make empty prophecies. That danger already exists that mathematicians have made a covenant with the devil to darken the spirit and confine man to the bonds of Hell.

-- St. Augustine

I fear the the new object-oriented systems may suffer the fate of LISP, in that they can do many things, but the complexity of the class hierarchies may cause them to collapse under their own weight.


Why do we behave like this? I believe that it is because operating systems have had for many years the reputation of being very difficult to write and you had better not mess with them. It's also been policy that machines are very fast and it doesn't matter if you execute two or three times as many instructions as necessary; by the time you've debugged a faster version the processors will be three times as fast as they are now anyhow. Nor does it matter (it's policy) that over-general programs are too big. Memory's cheap. I think this attitude is exceptionally bad. It leads to big clumsy implementations, and, when used in a teaching environment, corrupts the minds of the young, which isn't our proper business.


The feeling persists that no one can simultaneously be a respectable writer and understand how a refrigerator works, just as no gentleman wears a brown suit in the city. Colleges may be to blame. English majors are encouraged, I know, to hate chemistry and physics, and to be proud because they are not dull and creepy and humorless and war-oriented like the engineers across the quad. And our most impressive critics have commonly been such English majors, and they are squeamish about technology to this very day. So it is natural for them to despise science fiction.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

So where the sheer incompetence of politicians and generals used to start wars, the sheer incompetence of us computer people has now put an end to it. No mean feat. For centuries humanity has been looking for the Weapon That Would End War Forever. We have found it. War has ended, not with the bang of a bomb, but with the gentle whisper of crashing software.

-- Gerard Stafleu

One thing they don't tell you about doing experimental physics is that sometimes you must work under adverse conditions... like a state of sheer terror.

-- W.K. Hartmann

I think that it is hard to read such material without amusement. I feel a little admiration as well. I would never write, "It happened one frosty look of trees waving gracefully against the wall." I almost wish I could. Poor poets endlessly rhyme love with dove, and they are constrained by their highly trained mediocrity never to write a good line. In some sense, a stochastic process can do better; it at least has a chance.

-- J.R. Pierce, on randomly generated sentences, in "Symbols, Signals, and Noise"

Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly.

-- G.K. Chesterton

Athens built the Acropolis. Corinth was a commercial city, interested in purely materialistic things. Today we admire Athens, visit it, preserve the old temples, yet we hardly ever set foot in Corinth.

-- Harold Urey

Sooner or later I suppose the want will be supplied, in that commercial system in which supply immediately answers to demand, and in which everybody seems to be thoroughly dissatisfied and unable to get anything he wants.
-- G.K. Chesterton, in "How to Write a Detective Story"

Be neither a conformist or a rebel, for they are really the same thing. Find your own path, and stay on it.
-- Paul Vixie

Data is a lot like humans: It is born. Matures. Gets married to other data, divorced. Gets old. One thing that it doesn't do is die. It has to be killed.
-- Arthur Miller

When the folklorist drew the villagers' attention to the authentic version, they replied the old woman had forgotten, that her great grief had almost destroyed her mind. It was the myth that told the truth, the real story was already only a falsification. Besides, was not myth truer by the fact that it made the real story yield a deeper and richer meaning, revealing a tragic destiny?
-- Mircea Eliade, _The Myth of the Eternal Return_

GUIs normally make it simple to accomplish simple actions and impossible to accomplish complex actions.
-- Doug Gwyn, in _comp.unix.wizards_ on June 22, 1991

To those accustomed to the precise, structured methods of conventional system development, exploratory development techniques may seem messy, inelegant, and unsatisfying. But it's a question of congruence: precision and flexibility may be just as dysfunctional in novel, uncertain situations as sloppiness and vacillation are in familiar, well-defined ones. Those who admire the massive, rigid bone structures of dinosaurs should remember that jellyfish still enjoy their very secure ecological niche.
-- Beau Shell, "Power Tools for Programmers"

My work speaks far more eloquently than I do, and if people get anything at all out of the tracks, whether it's what I intended or not, then that's great. But I don't care if people like me or not -- I am what I am, I do the best I can, and that's what matters.
-- Kate Bush, in an interview in _Details_ magazine, March 1994

*Cyberspace*, n.: The juncture of digital information and human perception, the "matrix" of civilization where banks exchange money (credit) and information seekers navigate layers of data stored and represented in virtual space. Buildings in cyberspace may have more dimensions than physical buildings do, and cyberspace may reflect different laws of existence. It has been said that cyberspace is where you are when you are having a phone conversation or where your ATM money exists. It is where electronic mail travels and it resembles the Toontown in the movie Who Framed Roger Rabbit?
-- Michael Heim, from the glossary of _The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality_

It makes more sense to distinguish _different kinds_ of causes, rather than caused versus uncaused actions, or causes we know versus causes we don't. If we find out somebody committed assault because physiologically, his brain made the victim look like a leaping tiger, then we don't punish him. If we find he did it because physiologically, he's a jerk, then we do.
-- Paul Filseth, in _alt.atheism.moderated_, 10 May 1999

Now you've gone and changed the question, from "what will we be using" to "what will be possible?" Although many people will do something for no reason other than that it's possible, most will still be running the same old word processing, spreadsheet, and database applications. What will be possible, though, is that outfits like Microsoft will be able to write even more bloated code than they do now, full of more dazzling but otherwise useless bells and whistles that will seduce users into spending even more money they don't have for capabilities they don't need. And the programs will become so complex that the consulting and training industries will continue to grow, while puzzled users will scratch their heads and wonder why things couldn't be simpler.
-- Charlie Gibbs, on computer applications in the year 2001, In _alt.folklore.computers_, 16/03/94.
Alex Johnson of the Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service reports that soon afterward, Dave Barry admitted to hacking Ms. [Tonya] Harding's e-mail account himself. Mr. Barry vigorously defended his actions, saying that reporters do such things "... all the time." Mr. Barry's editor at the Miami Herald also defended Mr. Barry's actions, likening them to watching the dismemberment of chickens on television.

-- CPSR Newsletter (XXX get more detailed source)

Man is a small thing, and the night is very large and full of wonders.

-- Lord Dunsany, _The Laughter of the Gods_

If you want to write software that's fast or portable or well structured, despite years of evolution, you have to care about it and put effort into it. It's easy to be sloppy, but it comes back to haunt you. The only way to make something fast is to care about performance from the beginning and put real effort into getting it. The only way to keep the code clean and maintainable is to constantly put effort into that aspect of it. Resist the temptation to make quick fixes. Or if a quick fix just has to be done for some reason, make a point of going back and doing it right. These things do not happen automatically and they won't happen if you don't care about them. The main reason why a lot of software today is bloated and complicated and obscure and buggy is that people don't care. They may care in the sense that if you ask them they say, "Yes, we care," but the fact is they don't put any effort into it. They don't care enough to work on it.

-- Henry Spencer, quoted In _Amateur Computerist_ vol. 5 no. 1/2

The notion that an anonymous posting needs to be traceable to its source is a product of the unification of the old time conservative desire to squelch free speech with the new fangled politically correct liberal desire to squelch free speech.

-- Perry E. Metzger

I hope you'll forgive me for not bothering to consult the actual Windoze help pages for the program. If this were Unix and manpages, I would expect and deserve criticism for not RTFMing, but Windoze help without fail exhausts my patience with page after hypertext page explaining that I should click on the "open file" button to open a file, and never answering any real questions that anyone above sea slug on the neuron count scale would really ask.

-- Benjamin Ketcham, in _comp.os.unix.advocacy_.

There's an old story about the person who wished his computer were as easy to use as his telephone. That wish has come true, since I no longer know how to use my telephone.

-- Bjarne Stroustrup

The weirder you're going to behave, the more normal you should look. It works in reverse, too. When I see a kid with three or four rings in his nose, I know there is absolutely nothing extraordinary about that person.

-- P.J. O'Rourke, _Give War a Chance_

Einstein argued that there must be simplified explanations of nature, because God is not capricious or arbitrary. No such faith comforts the software engineer.


C++ is too complicated. At the moment, it's impossible for me to write portable code that I believe would work on lots of different systems, unless I avoid all exotic features. Whenever the C++ language designers had two competing ideas as to how they should solve some problem, they said "OK, we'll do them both". So the language is too baroque for my taste.

-- Donald E. Knuth, in a Computer Literacy Bookshops interview.

"That's the duty of the old," said the Librarian, "to be anxious on behalf of the young. And the duty of the young is to scorn the anxiety of the old."

-- Philip Pullman, _The Golden Compass_

Also, you have to understand...when I was a very young kid, I went to visit my
grandfather's grave. My grandfather was an alcoholic who died in the gutter. Literally. And was buried in a pauper's grave. Ever been to a pauper's grave? Lead pipe. Brass number. You check the roster to find out who's buried. No name, no date. He passed through his life without leaving footprints. It terrified me beyond the capacity of words to convey to you.

-- J. Michael Straczynski, in _rec.arts.sf.tv.babylon5_.

"The journey is long, the end uncertain, and there is more dark along the way than light, but you can whistle. Come with me by the wall of the great tombyards of all time which lie a billion years ahead. What shall we whistle as we stroll in our rocket, hoping to make it by the vast darkness where shadows wait to seize and keep us?"
"Follow me.
"I know a tune.
"Here...*listen.*"

-- Ray Bradbury, _Mars and the Mind of Man_

To understand this whole area, you have to stop thinking like a viewer and start thinking like a network programming exec. (Start by lowering your IQ about 15 points.)

-- J. Michael Straczynski, in _rec.arts.sf.tv.babylon5_.

... the Intelligentsia (scientists apart) are losing all touch with, and all influence over, nearly the whole human race. Our most esteemed poets and critics are read by our most esteemed critics and poets (who don't usually like them much) and nobody else takes any notice. An increasing number of highly literate people simply ignore what the 'Highbrows' are doing. It says nothing to them. The Highbrows in return ignore and insult them.

-- C.S. Lewis

Hoarders can get power over you by making programs proprietary because you feeling that you need the programs. The more you get used to feeling you need them, the harder it is to refuse demands. That's why using proprietary programs like Mathematica is not good for you: it trains you to a habit of helplessness. The way make yourself immune to the owners' power is to say, "I don't need this program. And with those conditions, I don't want it."

-- Richard M. Stallman, in _gnu.misc.discuss_.

So it was with a morbid curiosity that I got a hold of (without paying) Christopher Priest's book on the long-awaited _The Last Dangerous Visions_. I expected it to be about the same caliber as the recent wave of harassment against [Harlan] Ellison, enacted mainly by Charles Platt and Gary Groth; two entities recognizable as human beings solely through a vague fealty to bilateral symmetry.

-- Brian Siano, in _rec.arts.sf.tv.babylon5_.

When I was 15, we had one of those things where you do a battery of tests and then they bring a careers advisor in to talk to you about careers, and the careers advisor said, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "I want to write American comics." And there was a very, very, very long pause. And then he said, "Well, how do you go about doing that?" And I said, "Well, you're the careers advisor, I thought you were gonna tell me." And there was another really, really, really long pause, and then he looked at me rather desperately and said, "Have you ever thought about accountancy?"


The error which underlies the very existence of this debate is that there is some kind of perfect Platonic form of the computer language, which some real languages reflect more perfectly than others. Plato was brilliant for his time but reality is not expressable in terms of arbitrary visions of perfection, and furthermore, one programmer's ideal is often another's hell.

-- Paul Vixie, in _comp.lang.modula3_.

All governments, without exception, lie all the time, on every subject. They lie constantly, impenitently, and unashamedly. Nothing that any government ever says, at any time, can be assumed to be true. The sooner you recognize this fact, the easier and more pleasant your life will become.
Only the person who has been trained to think can be trusted to feel.
-- Ambrose Bierce

I was always brought up to believe that language is the master, you are the
servant. I was taught to believe that language is almost out of control and you
can barely hold on to it.
-- Eric McCormack

The record demonstrates that the growth of the Internet has been and continues
to be phenomenal. As a matter of constitutional tradition, in the absence of
evidence to the contrary, we presume that governmental regulation of the
content of speech is more likely to interfere with the free exchange of ideas
than to encourage it. The interest in encouraging freedom of expression in a
democratic society outweighs any theoretical but unproven benefit of
censorship.
-- From the US Supreme Court's decision overturning the CDA

The biggest difference between Heaven's Gate and mainstream Christianity is
that the Heaven's Gate people never tried to brainwash my kids.
-- Rev. Ivan Stang

When a person spends a lot of time using a computer system, the configuration
of that computer system becomes the city that he lives in. Just as the way our
houses and furniture are laid out, determines what it's like for us to live
among them, so does the computer system that we use, and if we can't change
the computer system that we use to suit us, then our lives are really under the
control of others. And a person who sees this becomes in a certain way
demoralized: "It's no use trying to change those things, they're always going
to be bad. No point even hassling it. I'll just put in my time and ... when
it's over I'll go away and try not to think about it any more'.
-- Richard Stallman

One of my first memories is of my father calling excitedly to say, "Look". He
was looking up at the sky. I couldn't see what I was to look at. Then he said,
"Listen"," and I heard this peculiar sort of sound, very distant. He kept
saying, "Look higher, look higher", and I did. Then I saw my first skein of
goose and heard their call. He took my hand and said to me, "Those are the
whales of the sky."
-- Jeannette Hainen, quoted in _A World Of Ideas II_

... in wondering why free software is so good these days it occured to me that
the propagation of free software is one gigantic artificial life evolution
experiment, but the metaphor isn't perfect. Programs are thrown out into the
harsh environment, and the bad ones die. The good ones adapt rapidly and become
very robust in short order. The only problem with the metaphor is that the
process isn't random at all. Python *chooses* to include Tk's genes; Linux
decides to make itself more suitable for symbiosis with X, etcetera. Free
software is artificial life, but better.
-- Aaron Watters (comp.lang.python, 29 Sep 1994)

The brain thinks not by adding two and two to make four, but like a sheet of
wet paper on which drops of watercolour paints are being splashed, merging into
unforeseen configurations.
-- Guy Claxton, _Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind_

Consumers are like roaches -- you spray them and they get immune after a while.
-- David Lubars

A book reads the better which is our own, and has been so long known to us,
that we know the topography of its blots, and dog's ears, and can trace the
dirt in it to having read it at tea with buttered muffins.
-- Charles Lamb

We have found to our horror that computer programs live on for decades,
long after the machines and compilers that caused their misshape have died. We
thus live in the purgatory created by our hackerish enthusiasm.

But the tight feedback mechanism between hardware/compiler optimizations
and the software 'literature' ensures that the poor programming styles of the
past will persist (because they are 'efficient' on machines optimized for these
poor programming styles) and will leave little room for optimizing better
styles.

We must force ourselves to break out of this cycle by writing excellent
programs, and then molding compilers and machines to make these programs
efficient, rather than vice versa. Excellent programs do not happen by
accident, but require very hard work. We must proactively seek elegance, as
elegance will not find us on its own.

-- Henry Baker, "Garbage In/Garbage Out: When Bad Programs Happen to
Good People"

Just as poetry strives to resolve the tension between form and meaning, so
programming must resolve the conflict between intelligibility and concision.

-- Emanuel Derman, _My Life as a Quant_

Teaching is the process of curing the amnesia into which every generation is
born. Teaching is the opposite of Alzheimer's disease in that it builds memory
and consciousness, rather than stealing them. The memory is collective--the
history of the human race, of Western thought and values, of this nation's
experience, of a family's past--but it all contributes to the identity of the
individual who receives it.

-- William Thorsell

Science and technology multiply around us. To an increasing extent they dictate
the languages in which we speak and think. Either we use those languages, or we
remain mute.

-- J.G. Ballard, from the introduction to _Crash_.

Intelligence is derived from two words--inter and legere -- inter meaning
'between' and legere meaning 'to choose.' An intelligent person, therefore, is
one who has learned 'to choose between.' He knows that good is better than
evil, that confidence should supersede fear, that love is superior to hate,
that gentleness is better than cruelty, forbearance than intolerance,
compassion than arrogance, and that truth has more virtue than ignorance.

-- J. Martin Klotsche

The chief value in going to college is that it's the only way to learn it
really doesn't matter.

-- George Edwin Howes

Language is the amber in which a thousand precious thoughts have been safely
embedded and preserved. . . . Words convey the mental treasures of one period
to follow; and laden with this, their precious freight, they sail safely across gulfs of time in which empires have suffered shipwreck
and the languages of common life have sunk into oblivion.

-- Richard Trench

Upon my desk lies Wired Style: Principles of English Usage in the Digital Age,
a title nearly as offensive in concept as it is in execution. Its creators
somehow managed to forsake the Wired "my brain is melting" color scheme, but
its lime green pages, wire binding, and flourescent orange cardboard casing
embody the same principle of flash over utility.

-- Paul Phillips,


The mark of an educated man is not in his boast that he has built his mountain
of facts and has stood on top of it, but in his admission that there may be
other peaks in the same range with men on top of them, and that, though their
views of the landscape may be different from his, they are none the less
legitimate.

-- E.J. Pratt

Classical-rock is like things done by Deep Purple or ELP, where the band played
a rock thing and then the orchestra did a pathetic classic-like thing, ... I
hate any connection between me and that. And I also hate New Age. That term
used to mean 'Hair' and the Age of Aquarius. Now it's stuff for getting your hair done and relaxing. It's just *boring*... I'm just me...
Pythonesque-world-classical-folk-whatever.
-- Mike Oldfield

Persichetti could do everything and do it well, but you didn't really care.
-- Steve Reich, on his former composition teacher Vincent Persichetti

The plural of anecdote is not data.
-- Roger Brinner

Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.
-- Mark Twain

There are books in which the footnotes, or the comments scrawled by some reader's hand in the margin, are more interesting than the text. The world is one of those books.
-- George Santayana

The late twentieth century has become a new collector's age, a vast resurgence of the campy spirit that led Walpole to cram Strawberry Hill with medieval garbage. The future, should there be one, will inherit from the twentieth century far more junk that it can have any use for; it will also, very likely, inherit no standards for distinguishing junk from nonjunk.
-- Walter Kendrick, _The Thrill of Fear: 250 Years Of Scary Entertainment_

The best mathematicians either don't get on boards and panels or don't do any work if they are appointed.
-- Ralph P. Boas, Jr., quoted in _More Mathematical People_

From age eight until I was sixteen, I used to sit in the corner and listen to the smart-alec intellectuals of the 1920's expounding. I learned a lot but said little. After a while I began to suspect that they really didn't know what they were talking about. Perhaps this explains why to this day I can never get excited about philosophical ideas.
-- George B. Dantzig, quoted in _More Mathematical People_

Free software, to me, means the ability of programmers to form a community within which they can speak the same language, which I hope will be the language of *programming*, not each of the many dialects we use.
-- Erik Naggum, in _gnu.misc.discuss_

Amnesia is not knowing who one is and wanting desperately to find out. Euphoria is not knowing who one is and not caring. Ecstasy is knowing exactly who one is -- and still not caring.
-- Tom Robbins, _Another Roadside Attraction_

I have one very basic rule when it comes to "good ideas". A good idea is not an idea that solves a problem cleanly. A good idea is an idea that solves *several* things at the same time. The mark of good coding is not that the program does what you want, it's that it *also* does something that you didn't start out wanting.
-- Linus Torvalds

It's a unification of a Pythagorean sense of perfection which in its mathematical exactitude recalls what is divine. We realize that the world has been ordained, that it is ordered, that it does make sense, that it has been thought of, and behind every imperfect form that we see, there is a perfect form that has been badly imitated in our mortal world.
-- Peter Sellars, on music, quoted in _A World Of Ideas II_

Increasingly, people seem to misinterpret complexity as sophistication, which is baffling -- the incomprehensible should cause suspicion rather than admiration.
-- Niklaus Wirth
We have not, however, passed out of the Net’s magic period. It’s still more potent to say, of some bit of information, “I found it on the Internet,” than to say, “I read it in a book.” Case in point: this newspaper recently began publishing, at the bottom of news stories, Internet addresses deemed in some way to be relevant to the subject. Can anyone remember _The Globe_ or any other daily paper showing such bibliographic regard for books?

-- Robert Everett-Green

Ideas are our only truly renewable resource.

-- Joel Hodgson

There were pools of light among the stacks, directly beneath the bulbs which Philip had switched on, but it was now with an unexpected fearfulness that he saw how the books stretched away into the darkness. They seemed to expand as soon as they reached the shadows, creating some dark world where there was no beginning and no end, no story, no meaning. And if you crossed the threshold into that world, you would be surrounded by words; you would crush them beneath your feet, you would knock against them with your head and arms, but if you tried to grasp them they would melt away. Philip did not dare turn his back upon these books. Not yet. It was almost, he thought, as if they had been speaking to each other while he slept.

-- Peter Ackroyd, _Chatterton_

The really great visual experience today is to fly over a huge city and look down into the night. It’s like a tremendous jubilant Christmas tree. You just feel life is worth living -- when you come down you may have some doubts.

-- Gyorgy Kepes

Ideal conversation must be an exchange of thought, and not, as many of those who worry most about their shortcomings believe, an eloquent exhibition of wit or oratory.

-- Emily Post, _Etiquette_

There is only *one* Education, and it has only *one* goal: the freedom of the mind. Anything that needs an adjective, be it civics education, or socialist education, or Christian education, or whatever-you-like education, is *not* education, and it has some *different* goal. The very existence of modified "educations" is testimony to the fact that their proponents cannot bring about *what they want* in a mind that is free. An "education" that cannot do its work in a free mind, and so must "teach" by homily and precept in the service of *these* feelings and attitudes and beliefs rather than *those*, is pure and unmistakable tyranny.


Many accounts over the past centuries suggest that the blood of the supposed revenant is an apotropaic against attacks by revenants. . . . Indeed, Bargheer provides a recipe: in Pomerania it was recommended that one dip part of the shroud in the blood of the revenant, leach the blood out into brandy, and drink the mixture to protect oneself against revenants. Whether or not vampires drank the blood of human beings, we have most persuasive evidence that human beings have drunk the blood of vampires.

-- Paul Barber, _Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality_

Nothing is more humbling than to look with a strong magnifying glass at an insect so tiny that the naked eye sees only the barest speck and to discover that nevertheless it is sculpted and articulated and striped with the same care and imagination as a zebra. Apparently it does not occur to nature whether or not a creature is within our range of vision, and the suspicion arises that even the zebra was not designed for our benefit.

-- Rudolf Arnheim

The four points of the compass are logic, knowledge, wisdom, and the unknown. Some do bow in that final direction. Others advance upon it. To bow before the one is to lose sight of the three. I may submit to the unknown, but never to the unknowable.

-- Roger Zelazny, _Lord of Light_

W.V.O. Quine has been one of the most ruthless of recent appliers of this
principle [Ockham's razor.] I recall an exchange in print (a fest-schrift, around 1980) where someone quoted Shakespeare's "There are more things on heaven and earth, than are dreamed of in your philosophy" at Quine. Quine responded something like, "Possibly, but my concern is that there not be more things in my philosophy than are in heaven and earth."
-- David Lyndes

... an isolated person requires correspondence as a means of seeing his ideas as others see them, and thus guarding against the dogmatisms and extravagances of solitary and uncorrected speculation. No man can learn to reason and appraise from a mere perusal of the writing of others. If he live not in the world, where he can observe the publick at first hand and be directed toward solid reality by the force of conversation and spoken debate, then he must sharpen his discrimination and regulate his perceptive balance by an equivalent exchange of ideas in epistolary form.
-- H.P. Lovecraft, in a letter to Frank Belknap Long, 3 Nov 1930

I worry that, especially as the Millennium edges nearer, pseudoscience and superstition will seem year by year more tempting, the siren song of unreason more sonorous and attractive. Where have we heard it before? Whenever our ethnic or national prejudices are aroused, in times of scarcity, during challenges to national self-esteem or nerve, when we agonize about our diminished cosmic place and purpose, or when fanaticism is bubbling up around us -- then, habits of thought familiar from ages past reach for the controls.

-- Carl Sagan, _The Demon-Haunted World: Science As a Candle in the Dark_

Creation, to me, is to try to orchestrate the universe to understand what surrounds us. Even if, to accomplish that, we use all sorts of strategems which in the end prove completely incapable of staving off chaos.
-- Peter Greenaway

During many ages there were witches. The Bible said so. The Bible commanded that they should not be allowed to live. Therefore the Church, after doing its duty in but a lazy and indolent way for 800 years, gathered up its halters, thumbscrews, and firebrands, and set about its holy work in earnest. She worked hard at it night and day during nine centuries and imprisoned, tortured, hanged, and burned whole hordes and armies of witches, and washed the Christian world clean with their foul blood. Then it was discovered that there was no such thing as witches, and never had been. One does not know whether to laugh or to cry.
-- Mark Twain, _Europe and Elsewhere_

... from my early reading of fairy tales and genii etc. etc. my mind had been habituated *to the Vast* and I never regarded *my senses* in any way as the criteria of my belief. . . . Should children be permitted to read romances, and relations of giants and magicians and genii? I know all that has been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative. I know no other way of giving the mind a love of the Great and the Whole.
-- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

True guidebooks should lead you to things and leave you at the door, lists of places where certain kinds of experiences may be had. If you are reading you cannot see, and the other way around. Travelers should read only after dark.
-- Robert Harbison, _Eccentric Spaces_

I was walking along Park Avenue and passed a blind man with a cup. I put a quarter in it, as I always do, and walked on and then words went through my head--"dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon"--and then I looked at my watch and it was exactly noon and I couldn't help it; right in the middle of the street I began to cry.
-- Isaac Asimov, in an unpublished letter, quoted in _The Joy of Writing_.

Don't forget, and don't let your reader forget, that the small world in which you have held him for the last hour or two hasn't ended. Be aware, and make him
aware, that tomorrow all of its remaining inhabitants will pick up the broken fragments of their lives, and carry on.

-- Joseph Hansen

It is in the places where history was made that history is most sorely felt.

-- Jeffrey Jacobs

The days come and go like muffled and veiled figures sent from a distant friendly party, but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away.

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

The cop named Joe took it and turned it over. "What is it?" he asked me. "It's an old zither our guinea pig used to sleep on," I said. It was true that a guinea pig we once had would never sleep anywhere except on the zither, but I should never have said so. Joe and the other cop looked at me a long time. They put the zither back on the shelf.

-- James Thurber, "The Night the Ghost Got In", in _The Thurber Carnival_

When I consider how little of a rarity children are, -- that every street and blind alley swarms with them, -- that the poorest people commonly have them in most abundance, -- that there are few marriages that are not blest with at least one of these bargains, -- how often they turn out ill, and defeat the fond hopes of their parents, taking to vicious courses, which end in poverty, disgrace, the gallows, etc. -- I cannot for my life tell what cause for pride there can possibly be in having them. If they were young phoenixes, indeed, that were born but one in a year, there might be a pretext. But when they are so common --

-- Charles Lamb, "A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People"

There are at least three themes which are utterly taboo as far as most American publishers are concerned. The two others are: a Negro-White marriage which is a complete and glorious success resulting in lots of children and grandchildren; and the total atheist who lives a happy and useful life, and dies in his sleep at the age of 106.

-- Vladimir Nabokov, writing in defence of his novel _Lolita_

It's easy to understand a fundamentalist world. It's just impossible to live in one.

-- Ian Brown, in a review of the Starr report in the Globe & Mail, 09/19/1998

The spectator sport in Canada is hockey, not the sexual activities of our leaders. ... The Canadian people aren't nearly as starry-eyed in believing politicians are perfect. They hold a more healthy notion of their politicians as human beings.

-- Alexa McDonough, quoted in the Globe & Mail, 09/19/1998

In 1971 when I joined the staff of the MIT Artificial Intelligence lab, all of us who helped develop the operating system software, we called ourselves hackers. We were not breaking any laws, at least not in doing the hacking we were paid to do. We were developing software and we were having fun. Hacking refers to the spirit of fun in which we were developing software. The hacker ethic refers to the feelings of right and wrong, to the ethical ideas this community of people had -- that knowledge should be shared with other people who can benefit from it, and that important resources should be utilized rather than wasted.

-- Richard Stallman, quoted in MEME 2.04

I do not suppose that a Man loses his Time, who is not engaged in publick Affairs, or in an illustrious Course of Action. On the contrary, I believe our Hours may very often be more profitably laid out in such Transactions as make no Figure in the World, than in such as are apt to draw upon them the Attention of Mankind. One may become wiser and better by several Methods of Employing one's self in Secrecy and Silence, and do what is laudable without Noise or Ostentation.
No matter what we choose to say of it, Canada is a whole series of accidents. If it should expire in its present form the world would survive and so, almost certainly, would Canada's separate parts. I don't expect my children to suffer much if Quebec should withdraw or Canada withdraw from Quebec. ... Yet it's been a lovely place to grow up in, whether it was an accident or not.

-- Ralph Allen, _The Man from Oxbow: The Best of Ralph Allen_

To call such persons "humorists", a loose-fitting and ugly word, is to miss the nature of their dilemma and the dilemma of their nature. The little wheels of their invention are set in motion by the damp hand of melancholy.

-- James Thurber, "Preface to A Life", in _The Thurber Carnival_

A doctor saves lives -- it's up to people to create lives that are worth saving.

-- Philip Gold, in _Maclean's_, Nov. 1974

Don't you know that love isn't just going to bed? Love isn't an act, it's a whole life. It's staying with her now because she needs you; it's knowing you and she will still care about each other when sex and daydreams, fights and futures -- when all that's on the shelf and done with. Love -- why, I'll tell you what love is: it's you at seventy-five and her at seventy-one, each of you listening for the other's step in the next room, each afraid that a sudden silence, a sudden cry, could mean a lifetime's talk is over.

-- Brian Moore, _The Luck of Ginger Coffey_

So, if this were indeed my Final Hour, these would be my words to you. I would not claim to pass on any secret of life, for there is none, or any wisdom except the passionate plea of caring ... Try to feel, in your heart's core, the reality of others. This is the most painful thing in the world, probably, and the most necessary. In times of personal adversity, know that you are not alone. Know that although in the eternal scheme of things you are small, you are also unique and irreplaceable, as are all of your fellow humans everywhere in the world. Know that your commitment is above all to life itself.

-- Margaret Laurence

Users should know that the system exists because of the idealistic vision of the GNU Project. Users should know that we worked for years towards this goal, at a time when most people said it was impossible and foolish. Then they will see that idealism is sometimes the only way to achieve an important practical result. Some of them will take this idealism seriously, and come to value their freedom strongly enough to help defend it when it is threatened. And that is what our community needs more than anything else.

-- Richard M. Stallman, on the linux-kernel mailing list, 6 Apr 1999

"Bime by I go hunt grotches in de voods." If you are susceptible to such things, it is not difficult to visualize grotches. They fluttered into my mind: ugly little creatures, about the size of whippoorwills, only covered with blood and honey and the scrapings of church bells.

-- James Thurber, "The Black Magic of Barney Haller", in _The Thurber Carnival_

In this manner an astounding mass of abstruse erudition, historical precedent, juridical texts, and oral testimony, drawn indiscriminately from Europe and Asia, was heaped and piled up over every point, until the real issue and its true aspect lay lost, hid, and shrivelled like a mummy under a huge pyramid. The dreary and flat waste of the voluminous record is studded here and there by these monuments of useless labour set up against each other by the indefatigable energy of the disputants.

-- Sir Alfred Lyall, from the section on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, in _Notable Historical Trials_, vol. 3

What men, in their imbecility, constantly mistake for a deficiency of intelligence in women is merely an incapacity for mastering small and trivial tricks. A man thinks that he is more intelligent than his wife because he can add up figures more accurately and because he understands the lingo of the stock market, and follows the doings of political mountebanks, and knows the
minutiae of some sordid and degrading business or profession, say soap selling or the law. But these puerile talents are not really signs of intelligence; they are merely accomplishments, and they differ only in degree from the accomplishments of a trained chimpanzee.

The truth is that the capacity for mastering them is the sign of a petty mind, and Havelock Ellis, in his great study of English genius, shows that men of genius almost invariably lack it. One could not think of Shakespeare or Goethe or Beethoven multiplying 3,456,754 by 79,999 without making a mistake, nor could one think of them remembering the price of this or that stock last July, or the number of beans in a pound, or the freight rate on steel beams from Akron, Ohio, to Newport News, or concerning themselves about the cost of producing a stick of chewing gum, or the pay of street car conductors, or the credit of some obscure shopkeeper in Memphis, Tenn. Such idiotic concerns are beneath the dignity of first-rate minds.

That women always try to evade them -- that they have little capacity for the childish complexity of tricks upon which men base their so-called business and professional skill and cunning -- this is but one more proof of their intellectual aristocracy. They are not stumped by such enterprises because they are difficult, but because they are trivial.

-- H. L. Mencken, "Meditations on the Fair"

I fantasized that finally not being tied down to a dependent would give my spontaneous nature a chance to grow and flower. Then I realized that not only didn't I have much of a spontaneous nature but that the reason I wasn't partaking of the constant barrage of interesting activities and social events all around me was because I was a lazy sloth.

-- Merrill Markoe, "Pets and the Single Girl", in _How to Be Hap-Hap-Happy Like Me_

When I left my boxed township of Illinois farmland to attend my dad's alma mater in the lurid jutting Berkshires of western Massachusetts, I all of a sudden developed a jones for mathematics. I'm starting to see why this was so. College math evokes and cathartis a Midwesterner's sickness for home. I'd grown up inside vectors, lines and lines athwart lines, grids -- and, on the scale of horizons, broad curving lines of geographic force, the weird topographical drain-swirl of a whole lot of ice-ironed land that sits and spins atop plates. The area behind and below these broad curves at the seam of land and sky I could plot by eye before I came to know infinitesimals as easements, an integral as schema. Math at a hilly Eastern school was like waking up; it dismantled memory and put it in light. Calculus was, quite literally, child's play.

-- David Foster Wallace, "Derivative Sport in Tornado Alley", in _A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again_

Waves wash off the peach blossoms; / wind twirls catkins down; / can spring colors possibly be allowed to stay? / Our four eyes stare at each other; / our resentments are concealed. / Gold Tooth Road, / Gold Horse Road -- / places for broken-hearted goodbyes.

The brown sparrow and the dragonfly / can't perch on the same tree. / The purple swallow and the shrike / fly off in opposite directions. / A new resentment starts again just as in the past; / she is wrong, / I am wrong, / in lonely inn beneath wild mountains / we grieve at setting sun.


It makes for happiness to be what you can, when you cannot be what you would.

-- Girolamo Cardano

It is in the power of everybody, with a little courage, to hold out a hand to someone different, to listen, and to attempt to increase, even by a tiny amount, the quantity of kindness and humanity in the world. But it is careless to do so without remembering how previous efforts have failed, and how it has never been possible to predict for certain how a human being will behave. History, with its endless procession of passers-by, most of whose encounters have been missed opportunities, has so far been largely a chronicle of ability gone to waste. But next time two people meet, the result could be different. That is the origin of anxiety, but also of hope, and hope is the origin of humanity.
Serafina Pekkala considered, and then said, "Perhaps we don't mean the same thing by choice, Mr Scoresby. Witches own nothing, so we're not interested in preserving value or making profits, and as for the choice between one thing and another, when you live for many hundreds of years, you know that every opportunity will come again. We have different needs. You have to repair your balloon and keep it in good condition, and that takes time and trouble, I see that; but for us to fly, all we have to do is tear off a branch of cloud-pine; any will do, and there are plenty more. We don't feel cold, so we need no warm clothes. We have no means of exchange apart from mutual aid. If a witch needs something, another witch will give it to her. If there is a war to be fought, we don't consider cost one of the factors in deciding whether or not it is right to fight. Nor do we have any notion of honour, as bears do, for instance. An insult to a bear is a deadly thing. To us... inconceivable. How could you insult a witch? What would it matter if you did?"

-- Philip Pullman, _The Golden Compass_

[On the interior of the human body] What economy of colors there, compared to a tropical fish or a sunrise or even a pigeon's neck -- dull red, indistinct gray buff, some splotches of green. But what opulence of forms -- serpents, goblets, tapestries, coils, pouches, conch shells, washboards, sheets, waves, curls, fountains of translucent tissue.

-- Charles LeBaron, quoted in Christine Quigley's _The Corpse: A History_

My father looked at me sternly with that look I would learn to know so well, and said: "Justin, on n'attaque jamais l'individu. On peut être en désaccord complet avec quelqu'un sans pour autant le dénigrer." ... Parce que la simple tolérance n'est pas assez: il faut un respect réel et profond de chaque être humain, peu importe ses croyances, ses origines, et ses valeurs.

-- Justin Trudeau, in the eulogy for his father, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, 3 Oct 2000

I am falling / Like a stone / Being born again / Into the sweet morning fog.

-- Kate Bush, "The Morning Fog"

A perilous trade, indeed, is that of a man who has to bring his tears and laughter, his recollections, his personal griefs and joys, his private thoughts and feelings to market to write them on paper, and sell them for money. Does he exaggerate his grief, so as to get his reader's pity for a false sensibility? feign indignation, so as to establish a character for virtue; elaborate repartees, so that he may pass for a wit; steal from other authors, and put down the theft to the credit side of his own reputation for ingenuity and learning? feign originality? affect benevolence or misanthropy? appeal to the gallery gods with claptraps and vulgar baits to catch applause?

-- W.M. Thackeray, _The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century_

See how ignorant you are of your own self; there is no land so distant or so unknown to you, nor one about which you will so easily believe falsehoods.

-- Guigo, _Meditations_ (circa 1110-1116)

_Horas non numero nisi serenas_ -- is the motto of a sun-dial near Venice. There is a softness and a harmony in the words and in the thought unparalleled. Of all conceits it is surely the most classical. "I count only the hours that are serene." What a bland and care-dispelling feeling! How the shadows seem to fade on the dial-plate as the sky lours, and time presents only a blank unless as its progress is marked by what is joyous, and all that is not happy sinks into oblivion! What a fine lesson is conveyed to the mind -- to take no note of time but by its benefits, to watch only for the smiles and neglect the frowns of fate, to compose our lives of bright and gentle moments, turning always to the sunny side of things, and letting the rest slip for our imaginations, unheeded or forgotten! How different from the common art of self-tormenting!

-- William Hazlitt, _On a Sun-Dial_

Annie and I had a deep-seated need to learn all the facts surrounding Galen's murder. Although we were very different people in many ways, we shared the same basic values. One of these was a belief in the redemptive power of truth. If
the truth didn't always set us free, at least it kept us clean and made our lives less complicated.
   -- Gregory Gibson, _Goneboy: A Walkabout_

Agents, conclude Shneiderman, are crutches that don't work, mere invitations to mediocrity. They are "things that think for people who don't."
   -- Ben Shneiderman, quoted in Andrew Leonard's _Bots_

How would it be if we remembered nothing / except the garbage and the rubbishing. / The takeaways, the throwaways, the takeovers, / The flakes and breakups, the disjected members / Scattered across the landscape, across everything?
   Nothing stands up, nothing stands clear and whole, / Everything bits and pieces, all gone stale, / All to the tip, the midden topped up high / With what we used, with what we threw away: How would it be if this was all we could feel?
   That will not be. Remembering, or feeling, / Or knowing anything of anything. / Will be the last we know of all this stuff. / It will be there for others, seekers of / Things that remain of us, who then are nothing.
   -- Anthony Thwaite

A money lender. He serves you in the present tense; he lends you in the conditional mood; keeps you in the subjunctive; and ruins you in the future.
   -- Joseph Addison

1. Nothing and no one is immune from criticism.
2. Everyone involved in a controversy has an intellectual responsibility to inform himself of the available facts.
3. Criticism should be directed first to policies, and against persons only when they are responsible for policies, and against their motives or purposes only when there is some independent evidence of their character.
4. Because certain words are legally permissible, they are not therefore morally permissible.
5. Before impugning an opponent's motives, even when they legitimately may be impugned, answer his arguments.
6. Do not treat an opponent of a policy as if he were therefore a personal enemy of the country or a concealed enemy of democracy.
7. Since a good cause may be defended by bad arguments, after answering the bad arguments for another's position present positive evidence for your own.
8. Do not hesitate to admit lack of knowledge or to suspend judgment if evidence is not decisive either way.
9. Only in pure logic and mathematics, not in human affairs, can one demonstrate that something is strictly impossible. Because something is logically possible, it is not therefore probable. "It is not impossible" is a preface to an irrelevant statement about human affairs. The question is always one of the balance of probabilities. And the evidence for probabilities must include more than abstract possibilities.
10. The cardinal sin, when we are looking for truth of fact or wisdom of policy, is refusal to discuss, or action which blocks discussion.
   -- Sidney Hook, suggested rules for democratic discourse, from "The Ethics of Controversy"

We share half of our genome with the banana, a fact more evident in some of my acquaintances than others.
   -- Sir Robert May, at Davos 2001

Slowly, we're bringing the risks of online banking to projectile weaponry.
   -- Anatole Shaw, in RISKS digest 21.02

I must tell you that it will mean some change in your writing style. All four-letter words must be omitted and, in future, please no references to screwing, buggery or to any perverted acts. I admit that won't leave you much to write about, but that's the price of loyalty.
   -- Jack McClelland, in a letter to Mordecai Richler

There is no clearly traceable figure or pattern in this phase of his life. If he knew where he was going, it is not apparent from this distance. He fell down a great deal during this period, because of a trick he had of walking into
himself.
-- James Thurber, from the introduction to _The Thurber Carnival_

Recipe for Loon Soup: Do not make loon soup.
-- _The Eskimo Cookbook_

We must avoid duplication of effort, because that is being done by others.
-- Arthur Mitchell

To attack a man for talking nonsense is like finding your mortal enemy drowning in a swamp and jumping in after him with a knife.
-- Sir Karl Popper

None could break the Web, no wings of fire. / So twisted the cords, & so knotted / The meshes: twisted like to the human brain.
-- William Blake

The mere idea of even attempting to account for ourselves defeated us. We settled instead for explaining, by means of elaborate mime and sign language, that we were barking mad.
-- Douglas Adams & Mark Carwardine, _Last Chance to See_

When one has stopped loving somebody, one feels that he has become someone else, even though he is still the same person.
-- Sel Shonagon, _The Pillow Book_

Canadians are nice and fun; in fact, they are very much like us Americans, except they're smart. They know their history *and* ours.
-- Mary Jo Pehl, "A Guide to Guided Tours"

The movie never ends, but if you wait long enough it gets to a point where it's over.
-- Roger Ebert, reviewing _Tidal Wave_

After a beverage offered by Mrs. X and some polite chat, we all board the X's fashionable all-terrain vehicle -- a necessity for their active, all-terrain lifestyle -- all terrains in this case being concrete, asphalt, pavement, *and* cement.
-- Merrill Markoe, _Merrill Markoe's Guide to Love_

One of the surest of tests is the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion.
-- T.S. Eliot, "Massinger", in _The Sacred Wood_

And now, I feel myself becoming impatient with Olmsted. Why can't he just get on with it? We expect the lives of people -- especially people who achieve great things -- to neatly follow a grand design. I think of Michelangelo or Mozart or Cézanne. Their lives resemble a game of building blocks. The blocks at the bottom are arranged first and not haphazardly, since they will support the upper levels. As the construction progresses, and more blocks are added, the structure gets taller and taller. It is carefully assembled so as not to topple. Following Olmsted's life is more like putting together a picture puzzle. All sorts of odd-shaped pieces are lying on the table. Two or three form a bit of sky, others a fragment of foliage. Here is something that might -- or might not -- be water. It's not yet clear how these fragments come together. Some pieces don't seem to fit anywhere. Yet all the pieces of the jigsaw are necessary. Only when the last piece is in place -- when the puzzle is complete -- does the design make itself evident.
-- Witold Rybczynski, _A Clearing in the Distance_

Are you guys really old, or do you just read a lot?
-- Frank Conniff's favorite MST3K fan letter

You claim to seek progress, but you succeed mainly in whining.
-- Dennis Ritchie, in his Anti-Forward to _The UNIX-HATERS Handbook_

After Zot! finished its first ten issue run in late '85, I took a year and a half break (not entirely voluntary, since the book was losing money at the time) and, apart from moving office furniture, I also decided to do a giant-sized one shot filled with nothing but pure senseless violence from beginning to end. I have since been credited by Alan Moore with getting the 90's started four years early.

-- Scott McCloud, describing his one-shot comic DESTROY!, on www.scottmccloud.com

Whenever I do things because I want to do it and because it seems fun or interesting and so on and so forth, it almost always works. And it almost always winds up more than paying for itself. Whenever I do things for the money, not only does it prove a headache and a pain in the neck and come with all sorts of awful things attached, but I normally don't wind up getting the money, either. So, after a while, you do sort of start to learn [to] just forget about the things where people come to you and dangle huge wads of cash in front of you. Go for the one that seems interesting because, even if it all falls apart, you've got something interesting out of it. Whereas, the other way, you normally wind up getting absolutely nothing out of it.

-- Neil Gaiman, in an interview in January Magazine

It is one of the many graveyards which are the Great War's chief heritage. The chronicle of its battles provides the dreariest literature in military history; no brave trumpets sound in memory for the drab millions who plodded to death on the featureless plains of Picardy and Poland; no litanies are sung for the leaders who coaxed them to slaughter. The legacy of the war's political outcome scarcely bears contemplation: Europe ruined as a centre of world civilisation, Christian kingdoms transformed through defeat into godless tyrannies, Bolshevik or Nazi, the superficial difference in their ideology counting not at all in their cruelty to common and decent folk. All that was worst in the century which the First World War had opened, the deliberate starvation of peasant enemies of the people by provinces, the extermination of racial outcasts, the persecution of ideology's intellectual and cultural hate-objects, the massacre of ethnic minorities, the extinction of small national sovereignties, the destruction of parliaments and the elevation of commissars, gauleiters and warlords to power over voiceless millions, had its origins in the chaos it left behind.

-- John Keegan, _The First World War_

... how much we really know about the vaults and caverns which lie somewhere under the structure of a great nation -- about these psychic catacombs in which all our concealed desires, our fearful dreams and evil spirits, our vices and our forgotten and unexpiated sins, have been buried for generations? In healthy times, these emerge as the spectres in our dreams. ... But suppose, now, that all of these things generally kept buried in our subconscious were to push their way to the surface, as in the blood-cleansing function of a boil? Suppose that this underworld now and again liberated by Satan bursts forth, and the evil spirits escape the Pandora's box?

-- Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen, in August 1936, from _Diary of a Man in Despair_

It is a fact that the world is flat. It is a fact that Thalidomide stops morning sickness. It is a fact that feeding dead sheep to cows is an efficient method for raising livestock. That antibiotics do not remain in livestock at the time of human consumption. That cigarettes do not cause cancer. That men are more rational than women. That the Maginot Line will stop the German army. That deregulated money-markets will produce an efficient economy. That large mechanical fishing boats will create a more efficient fishery. That radiation-based foot-measurement machines are helpful in buying the right-sized shoe. That spraying asbestos on our walls and ceilings creates an effective insulation for buildings. That spraying insecticides onto roadsides will reduce governmental mowing costs. That deregulated airways will encourage competition among airlines.

Among all of these, the fact to last the longest as a fact is the one which states that the world is flat. It must therefore be the truest of the group. Indeed, the most rational.
**-- John Ralston Saul, _On Equilibrium_**

I live a quiet Life, but not a pleasant one: My Children govern without loving me, my Servants devour & despise me, my Friends caress and censure me, my Money wastes in Expences I do not enjoy, and my Time in Trifles I do not approve. every one is made Insolent, & no one Comfortable. my Reputation unprotected, my Heart unsatisfied, my Health unsettled.

-- Hester Thrale, in her diary entry for 26 September -- 1 October 1782

Even a library cataloguing system is stylized and reflects the interests and reading habits of librarians and library users. The only framework inclusive enough to embrace all man's undertakings with equal objectivity is the garbage dump.

-- R. Murray Schafer, _The Tuning of the World_

Clarity is not everything, but there is little without it.

-- Edward Tufte, _Envisioning Information_

"I am afraid of cows. I think I have cow phobia. I have nightmares about cows. Once upon a time a cow chased me in Yugoslavia and I can't forget it. So you can just imagine what it was like: every time I left the tent to get food, this cow would come up and stare at me, and I'd be terrified. I even learned to say, 'Get lost, mate,' or something Australian like that to the cow ... but no good ... so I bought a cow."

"You were afraid of cows and you bought a cow?"

"Yes. When you have one of these big fears, you should confront it; and it was better for me to be frightened of my own cow than by somebody else's cow. Anyway, we needed the milk."

-- John Pilger, interviewing Valentina Makeev in _A Secret Country: The Hidden Australia_

Consistently, the less time spent with one's children, the more positive one's parenting experience.

-- Sandra Tsing Loh

In a dying civilisation, political prestige is the reward not of the shrewdest diagnostician but of the man with the best bedside manner. It is the decoration conferred on mediocrity by ignorance.

-- Eric Ambler, _A Coffin for Dimitrios_

New and significant prehuman fossils have been unearthed with such unrelenting frequency in recent years that the fate of any lecture notes can only be described with the watchword of a fundamentally irrational economy -- planned obsolescence. Each year, when the topic comes up in my courses, I simply open my old folder and dump the contents into the nearest circular file. And here we go again.

-- Stephen Jay Gould, "Bushes and Ladders in Human Evolution", in _Ever Since Darwin_

Why not telegraph to London, I thought, *for some music to review?* Reviewing has one advantage over suicide. In suicide you take it out of yourself: in reviewing you take it out of other people.

-- George Bernard Shaw, in "Criticism and Suicide", 3 January 1890

To explain all nature is too difficult a task for any one man or even for any one age. Tis much better to do a little with certainty and leave the rest for others that come after, than to explain all things by conjecture without making sure of any thing.

-- Isaac Newton, _Opticks_

"I regularly get emails from strangers telling me about this Terribly Important new XML language they've cooked up, to which the standard rejoinder is 'get in touch when you have some software to show me.'"

"Or less Canadianly, 'Shut up and show me the code.'"

-- Tim Bray and John Cowan on xml-dev

In all other respects his paper is a wonderful example of what a multitude of
words can do towards obliterating meaning.  
-- Sir John Herschel

As far as I can tell, calling something philosophical is like greasing a pig to make it hard to catch.  
-- Eric Pepke

A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things men have always done. If a story seems moral, do not believe it. If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie. There is no rectitude whatsoever. There is no virtue. As a first rule of thumb, therefore, you can tell a true war story by its absolute and uncompromising allegiance to obscenity and evil.  
-- Tim O'Brien, _The Things They Carried_

I hate Hyndland. You'll find its like in any large city. Green leafy suburbs, two cars, children at public school and boredom, boredom, boredom. Petty respectability up front, intricate cruelties behind closed doors.  
-- Louise Welsh, _The Cutting Room_

He knows that there are in the soul tints more bewildering, more numberless, and more nameless than the colours of an autumn forest; he knows that there are abroad in the world and doing strange and terrible service in it crimes that have never been condemned and virtues that have never been christened. Yet he seriously believes that these things can every one of them, in all their tones and semi-tones, in all their blends and unions, be accurately represented by an arbitrary system of grunts and squeals. He believes that an ordinary civilized stockbroker can really produce out of his own inside noises which denote all the mysteries of memory and all the agonies of desire.  
-- G.K. Chesterton, in "Watts' Allegorical Paintings"

Ruin, in an ancient country like China, amid appealing simplicity like this, can be accepted smilingly; even the final and greatest ruin of death. Further, since in imagination human beings can prefigure this last irreparable loss, and then retrospectively assay once more the transitoriness of mortal existence, one learns not to reproach oneself excessively for errors of the past, and conceding ultimate defeat, to consult one's intimate moods, one's own quiet and small desires.  
-- George N. Kates, _The Years That Were Fat: The Last of Old China_

In the end, just to cut his losses and get out of it clean, Randy had to hire a lawyer of his own. The final cost to him was a hair more than five thousand dollars. The software was never legally sold to anyone, and indeed could not have been; it was so legally encumbered by that point that it would have been like trying to sell someone a rusty Volkswagen that had been dismantled and its parts hidden in attack dog kennels all over the world.  
-- Neal Stephenson, _Cryptonomicon_

On one occasion, I took him [Harry Houdini] to a magicians' meeting in my car, which that season was a Ford Model T coupe with a front seat of only two-person width and with the doorcatches inconveniently placed behind a person's elbow. When he tried to twist around and work the catch, Houdini found it stuck and in all seriousness, he demanded, "Say -- how do you get out of this thing?" It wasn't until I had reached across and pulled the knob for him that he began laughing, because he, of all people, couldn't get out of a Ford coupe.  
-- Walter B. Gibson, in _Houdini on Magic_

When, shortly after taking office as president, George W. Bush was asked what he would do about global warming, his answer was, "We will not do anything that harms our economy, because first things first are the people who live in America." Asked whether the president would call on drivers to sharply reduce their fuel consumption, the White House press secretary, Ari Fleischer, replied, "That's a big no. The President believes that it's an American way of life, and that it should be the goal of policymakers to protect the American way of life. The American way of life is a blessed one."  
-- Peter Singer, _The President of Good and Evil_
... during those last weeks we received a shocking call from an American
staffer, whose name I have long forgotten. He was engaged in some sort of
planning exercise and wanted to know how many Rwandans had died, how many were
refugees, and how many were internally displaced. He told me that his estimates
indicated that it would take the deaths of 85,000 Rwandans to justify risking
the life of one American soldier. It was macabre, to say the least.

-- Roméo Dallaire, _Shake Hands With The Devil_

"There is today too much pleading of sincerity," Briggé said. "Let me have men
who are doubtful, who struggle with their consciences, who sometimes are
confused by right and wrong, whose perceptions fail, whose troubled minds lead them
this way and that and even to dark places they should not go. I do not
care for these certain men who insist that what they feel is the truth as
though their sincerity alone were enough to excuse their fanatic hearts.
Doliffe's virtues bring suffering and agony in their wake. His sincerity is
neither here nor there."

-- Ronan Bennett, _Havoc in Its Third Year_

As democracy is perfected, the office represents, more and more closely, the
inner soul of the people. We move toward a lofty ideal. On some great and
glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at
last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.

-- H.L. Mencken, _The Evening Sun_

Ten years later, as a postdoctoral researcher at Oxford in 1976, I experienced
a minor epiphany about ambition's degradation. At age 16 or 17, I had wanted to
be another Einstein; at 21, I would have been happy to be another Feynman; at
24, a future T.D. Lee would have sufficed. By 1976, sharing an office with
other postdoctoral researchers at Oxford, I realized that I had reached the
point where I merely envied the postdoc in the office next door because he had
been invited to give a seminar in France. In much the same way, by a process
options theorists call time decay, financial stock options lose their potential
as they approach their own expiration.

-- Emanuel Derman, _My Life as a Quant_

Nun 1: Sir, it is only a play... with music. Do not distress yourself.
Cosimo: It is only a play... with music? Does God say the same at every
death? It is only a play... with music? When I die, will someone say the same?
He was only a prince. He died. It was only a play... with music.
Nun 2: (Very quietly) Sir, be grateful for the music. Most of us die in
silence.

-- Peter Greenaway, _The Baby of Mâcon_

And in the end, yes, all we have is the question of whether we go with dignity
and honor, knowing that we have lived our lives with passion and compassion in
equal measure. For me, that knowledge is enough to sustain me when the game is
finally called on account of darkness.

-- J. Michael Straczynski, in _rec.arts.sf.tv.babylon5_

Now it is time that we were going, I to die and you to live; but which of us
has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but God.

-- Plato, from _The Apology_, quoting Socrates's final words at his
trial

The clarity of Socrates' situation is remarkable. ... his exit is wonderfully
seductive. It is calm, clear, convincing. Friends are present, wise words are
said, the ethical unfolding of life is tied up in a neat package. And then he
slips away, slowly becoming stone-cold from the feet up. It is our fantasy of
the normal death, with the addition of social and prophetic implications, to
say nothing of heroic proportions. Again, most of us will likely drop dead on a
subway platform, in the middle of an orgasm or straining on a toilet seat early
in the morning. The real tragedy of death may be just how often it is comic.

-- John Ralston Saul, _On Equilibrium_

It is unfortunate, however, that even a well-ordered life cannot lead anybody
safely around the inevitable doom that waits in the sky. As F. Hopkinson Smith
long ago pointed out, the claw of the sea-puss gets us all in the end.
... don't waste too much effort in searching for conspiracies. Most of the harm done in the world is out of stupidity, not by design. Be on the watch for skulduggery... but don't fall into the trap of thinking that every evil thing that occurs in the world is part of some diabolic master plan. The notion that whatever is wrong with the world can be blamed on somebody (never, of course, one's self) is a rather infantile carryover from the childhood days when our parents were thought to be all-powerful and therefore all-responsible.

-- Gerard K. O'Neill, _2081_

As I walked out to the plane in the balmy air of a Sydney September night, my mind flew back to the dusty cemetery where my father was buried. Where, I wondered, would my bones come to rest? It pained me to think of them not fertilizing Australian soil. Then I comforted myself with the notion that wherever on the earth was my final resting place, my body would return to the restless red dust of the western plains. I could see how it would blow about and get in people's eyes, and I was content with that.

-- Jill Ker Conway, _The Road from Coorain_

The principle of maximum diversity operates both at the physical and at the mental level. It says that the laws of nature and the initial conditions are such as to make the universe as interesting as possible. As a result, life is possible but not too easy. Always when things are dull, something new turns up to challenge us and to stop us from settling into a rut. Examples of things which make life difficult are all around us: comet impacts, ice ages, weapons, plagues, nuclear fission, computers, sex, sin and death. Not all challenges can be overcome, and so we have tragedy. Maximum diversity often leads to maximum stress. In the end we survive, but only by the skin of our teeth.

-- Freeman Dyson, _Infinite in All Directions_

There are men who serve us, like the consul at Trollesund. And there are men we take for lovers or husbands. You are so young, Lyra, too young to understand this, but I shall tell you anyway and you'll understand it later: men pass in front of our eyes like butterflies, creatures of a brief season. We love them; they are brave, proud, beautiful, clever; and they die almost at once. They die so soon that our hearts are continually racked with pain. We bear their children, who are witches if they are female, human if not; and then in the blink of an eye they are gone, felled, slain, lost. Our sons, too. When a little boy is growing, he thinks he is immortal. His mother knows he isn't. Each time becomes more painful, until finally your heart is broken. Perhaps that is when Yambe-Akka comes for you. She is older than the tundra. Perhaps, for her, witches' lives are as brief as men's are to us.

-- Philip Pullman, _The Golden Compass_

If there's another world, he lives in bliss; / If there is none, he made the best of this.

-- Robert Burns, "Epitaph on William Muir"

When I was born, I cried myself; / when I die, others will cry. / When I cried, others were happy; / when others cry, I too should feel joy. / "Alas, it passes away so fast!" / The windblown wheel, rolling like a carriage. / They change the torch, but not the fire: / the later flame is still the older flame. / How laughable, the people of this world, / frantically making offerings to Buddha and immortals! / Spiritual alchemy just exhausts the body, / and bowing in worship hurts your head. / In the end, all return to the vastness, / like wind whose form can never be grasped. / Indeed, when called / that is when I'll go; / with a smile, I follow with the crowd.

-- Yüan Mei, "Happy About Being Old", translated by Jonathan Chaves in _The Columbia Book of Later Chinese Poetry_

It was a wasted life, but God forbid that one should be hard upon it, or upon anything in this world that is not deliberately and coldly wrong . . .

-- Charles Dickens, in a letter to his friend John Forster.

Rest in peace. The mistake shall not be repeated.

-- Cenotaph in Hiroshima
Ahead, there were such sights unfolding: friends and places they'd feared gone forever coming to greet them, eager for shared rapture. There was time for all their miracles now. For ghosts and transformations; for passion and ambiguity; for noon-day visions and midnight glory. Time in abundance. For nothing ever begins. And this story, having no beginning, will have no end.

-- Clive Barker, _Weaveworld_

My old cat is dead / Who would butt me with his head. / He had the sleekest fur, / He had the blackest purr, / Always gentle with us / Was this black puss, / But when I found him today / Stiff and cold where he lay, / His look was a lion's, / Full of rage, defiance: / O! he would not pretend / That what came was a friend / But met it in pure hate. / Well died, my old cat.

-- Hal Summers, "My Old Cat"

I don't believe in an afterlife, so I don't have to spend my whole life fearing hell, or fearing heaven even more. For whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse.

-- Isaac Asimov

I regret that I will never know the results of my own autopsy.

-- Bill Cheswick, in an interview in ;login:, Feb. 1998

May you go safe, my friend, across that dizzy way / No wider than a hair, by which your people go / From earth to Paradise; may you go safe today / With stars and space above, and time and stars below.

-- Lord Dunsany

"Can you tell me the time of the last complete show?"
"You have the wrong number."
"Eh? Isn't this the Odeon?"
I decide to give a Burtonian answer.
"No, this is the Great Theatre of Life. Admission is free but the taxation is mortal. You come when you can, and leave when you must. The show is continuous. Good-night."

-- Robertson Davies, _The Cunning Man_