

For years, I've been collecting quotes I like. Here they are.
(*The dates correspond to when I wrote the quote down.*)

October 6th, 2019

"Without writers fooling themselves about what their books might accomplish there would be no books at all."

- Mark Vonnegut

"It's not Harvard", he said.

"Harvard's not Harvard either", I answered.

- from *Just Like Someone Without A Mental Illness Only More So* (Mark Vonnegut)

September 19th, 2019

"The biggest gift of being unambiguously mentally ill is the time I've saved myself trying to be normal."

- Mark Vonnegut

"Because I am capable of achievement, I find myself uncomfortable around those who are visibly psychotic and audibly disorganized. I'm uncomfortable because I don't want to be lumped in with the screaming man on the bus, or the woman who claims that she's the reincarnation of God. I'm uncomfortably uncomfortable because I know that these are my people in ways that those who have never experienced psychosis can't understand, and to shun them is to shun a large part of myself."

(p. 51)

- Esmé Weijun Wang (*The Collected Schizophrenias*)

September 19th, 2019

"It follows from this that the object set us is not to discover an absolutely correct theory, but rather to light upon some constructive model which shall be as simple as the circumstances admit and represent the phenomena most adequately. In fact, it is not inconceivable that two quite different theories should exist which are equally simple and which accord equally well with the phenomena, and which therefore, although they are totally different, are yet equally correct. The assertion that a given theory is the only correct one is merely the expression of our subjective conviction that there is no other theory so simple and according so well with the facts."

- Ludwig Boltzmann

June 25th, 2019

"There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self."

- Ernest Hemingway [I think actually wrongly attributed to Hemingway]

June 17th, 2019

"Are you truly free if you are unable to go to a doctor when you are sick, or face financial bankruptcy when you leave the hospital ... Are you truly free when you spend half of your limited income on housing, and are forced to borrow money from a payday lender at 200 percent interest rate?."

- Bernie Sanders

June 14th, 2019

"How complete is the delusion that beauty is goodness."

- Leo Tolstoy

April 21, 2019

"A man is a fool not to put everything he has, at any given moment, into what he is creating. You're there now doing the thing on paper. You're not killing the goose, you're just producing an egg. So I don't worry about inspiration, or anything like that. It's a matter of just sitting down and working. I have never had the problem of a [writing block](#). I've heard about it. I've felt reluctant to write on some days, for whole weeks, or sometimes even longer. I'd much rather go fishing, for example, or go sharpen pencils, or go swimming, or what not. But, later, coming back and reading what I have produced, I am unable to detect the difference between what came easily and when I had to sit down and say, "Well, now it's writing time and now I'll write." There's no difference on paper between the two."

- Frank Herbert

April 15, 2019

"What a curious attitude scientists have: 'We still don't know that; but it is knowable and it is only a matter of time before we get to know it!' As if that went without saying."

- Ludwig Wittgenstein

April 4, 2019

"My life has been the result of accidents, not of goals and principles. My intellectual work forms only an insignificant part of it. Love and personal understanding are much more important. Leading intellectuals with their zeal for objectivity kill these personal elements. They are criminals, not the liberators of mankind."

- Paul Feyerabend

April 3, 2019

"Always in the middle of a kiss
Came the profane stimulus to cough;
Always from the pulpit during service
Leaned the devil prompting you to laugh.

Behind mock-ceremony of your grief
Lurked the burlesque instinct of the ham;
You never altered your amused belief
That life was a mere monumental sham."

- Sylvia Plath [Dirge For A Joker]

"People go mad in idiosyncratic ways."

"I saw and experienced that which had been only dreams, or fitful fragments of imagination."

"Was it real? Well, of course not, not in any meaningful sense of the word "real." But did it stay with me? Absolutely."

- Kay Redfield Jamison

March 15, 2019

“Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought”

- Albert Szent-Györgyi

“A knowledge of the historic and philosophical background gives that kind of independence from prejudices of his generation from which most scientists are suffering. This independence created by philosophical insight is—in my opinion—the mark of distinction between a mere artisan or specialist and a real seeker after truth.”

- Albert Einstein

January 21, 2018

“I am, somehow, less interested in the weight and convolutions of Einstein’s brain than in the near certainty that people of equal talent have lived and died in cotton fields and sweatshops.”

- Stephen Jay Gould

January 17, 2018

“A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking.”

- Andy Warhol

“The future depends on some graduate student who is deeply suspicious of everything I have said.”

- Geoffrey Hinton

“Between genius and madness there is often not the thickness of a hair.”

- (p. 42; Criminal Genius; look up source)

[Upon visiting Nash at a mental institution, a colleague asked how a man so devoted to reason and logical truth could believe that extraterrestrials were sending him messages.

“Because the ideas I had about supernatural beings came to me the same way that my mathematical ideas did,” replied Nash. “So I took them seriously.”]

September 17, 2018

“Life is like the surf, so give yourself away like the sea.” (one translation)

“Life is like the foam of the sea. You must dive into it.” (another translation)

- (from the movie) Y Tu Mama Tambien

August, 2018

“Nobody tells this to people who are beginners, I wish someone told me. All of us who do creative work, we get into it because we have good taste. But there is this gap. For the first couple years you make stuff, it's just not that good. It's trying to be good, it has potential, but it's not. But your taste, the thing that got you into the game, is still killer. And your taste is why your work disappoints you. A lot of people never get past this phase, they quit. Most people I know who do interesting, creative work went through years of this. We know our work doesn't have this special thing that we want it to have. We all go through this. And if you are just starting out or you are still in this phase, you gotta know its normal and the most important thing you can do is do a lot of work. It's gonna take awhile. It's normal to take awhile. You've just gotta fight your way through.”

- Ira Glass

January 12, 2018

“Where so many of these investigations fail on a practical level is by not recognizing the importance of the process of learning and playing chess. The ability to work hard for days on end without losing focus is a talent. The ability to keep absorbing new information after many hours of study is a talent. Programming yourself by analyzing your decision-making outcomes and processes can improve results much the way that a smarter chess algorithm will play better than another running on the same computer. We might not be able to change our hardware, but we can definitely upgrade our software.”

- Gary Kasparov

January 2, 2018

"There's no sense in being precise when you don't even know what you're talking about."

- John Von Neumann

"In science you want to say something that nobody knew before, in words which everyone can understand."

- Paul Dirac

"In science, it is not speed that is the most important. It is the dedication, the commitment, the interest and the will to know something and to understand it — these are the things that come first."

- Eugene Wigner

"Let your acts be directed toward a worthy goal, but do not ask if they will reach it; they are to be models and examples, not means to an end"

"The people who have sufficient passion for the truth to give the truth a chance to prevail, if it runs counter to their bias, are in a minority. How important is this "minority?"

- Leo Szilard

"In your world, people say things to test, persuade, seduce, manipulate, deceive, or dominate others. But this is my world. I say things because I think they are true, and because I want you to know them."

- From Cain's Law by Matthew Stover"

August 21, 2017

"This is what I dreamed into reality."

- CONNOR MCGREGOR (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPiw27AQYh0>)

"Rand has sought to create quantitative models. "Science is about developing theories," he says, "not about developing a list of observations. And the reason formal models are so important is that if your goal is theory-building, then it's essential that you have theories that are really clearly articulated and are falsifiable."

- FROM NAUTILUS ARTICLE ON DAVE RAND (<http://nautil.us/issue/37/currents/selfishness-is-learned>)

December 15, 2016

"At the heart of science is an essential tension between two seemingly contradictory attitudes — an openness to new ideas, no matter how bizarre or counterintuitive they may be, and the most ruthless skeptical scrutiny of all ideas, old and new. This is how deep truths are winnowed from deep nonsense."

- CARL SAGAN

"A man who dares to waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of life."

- CHARLES DARWIN

"If you are immune to boredom, there is literally nothing you cannot accomplish."

- DAVID FOSTER WALLACE

"When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up."

- C.S. LEWIS

"He who asks is a fool for five minutes, but he who does not ask remains a fool forever."

- MARK TWAIN

"Tom, the third son, was most like his father. He was born in fury and he lived in lightning. Tom came headlong into life. He was a giant in joy and enthusiasms. He didn't discover the world and its people, he created them. When he read his father's books, he was the first. He lived in a world shining and fresh and as uninspected as Eden on the sixth day. His mind plunged like a colt in a happy pasture, and when later the world put up fences he plunged against the wire, and when the final stockade surrounded him, he plunged right through it and out. And as he was capable of giant joy, so did he harbor huge sorrow, so that when his dog died the world ended."

- JOHN STEINBECK

"True words aren't eloquent;
eloquent words aren't true.
Wise men don't need to prove their point;
men who need to prove their point aren't wise."

The Master has no possessions.
The more he does for others,
the happier he is.
The more he gives to others,
the wealthier he is."

- LAO TZU
(translation by S. Mitchell)

"We live together, we act on, and react to, one another; but always and in all circumstances we are by ourselves. The martyrs go hand in hand into the arena; they are crucified alone. Embraced, the lovers desperately try to fuse their insulated ecstasies into a single self-transcendence; in vain. By its very nature every embodied spirit is doomed to suffer and enjoy in solitude. Sensations, feelings, insights, fancies - all these are private and, except through symbols and at second hand, incommunicable. We can pool information about experiences, but never the experiences themselves. From family to nation, every human group is a society of island universes ... The things and events to which the symbols refer belong to mutually exclusive realms of experience."

- ALDOUS HUXLEY

"It all meant nothing if you had no one to share it with."

(not sure of source, or exact phrasing)

"It's like we dreamed the biggest dream we could possibly dream and we got there. What do we do now?"

- MICHAEL PHELPS

"Comparison is the thief of joy."

- THEODORE ROOSEVELT

"[They] were expecting me to be wonderful to offer me a job like this. And I wasn't wonderful. And therefore, I realized a new principle. I'm not responsible for what other people think I'm able to do. I don't have to be good because they think I'm going to be good. And somehow or other I could relax about this."

- RICHARD FEYNMAN

"Style is knowing who you are, what you want to say, and not giving a damn."

- GORE VIDAL

or in the words of JAMES JOHNSON: "That was nasty right? I cocked that joint back and banged on 'em"

"My mother said to me, 'If you are a soldier, you will become a general. If you are a monk, you will become the Pope.' Instead, I was a painter, and became Picasso."

- PABLO PICASSO

"To the question 'What kind of fool encourages ants to come into his home?' the answer is possibly - one who thinks deeply about simple things."

- [<http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?HowDoAntsWalkInaStraightLine>]

"The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity."

- possibly DOROTHY PARKER

"Curiosity is a willing, a proud, an eager confession of ignorance."

- S. LEONARD RUBINSTEIN

"Disinterested intellectual curiosity is the lifeblood of real civilization."

- G. M. TREVELYAN

"The most interesting thing in the world is another human being who wonders, suffers and raises the questions that have bothered him to the last day of his life, knowing he will never get the answers."

"Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance."

- WILL DURANT

"As clever as they were, they could hardly have failed to experience the insincerity in what they were doing."

- BILL MCGUIRE

"People who haven't tried to meditate have very little sense that their minds are noisy at all. And when you tell them that they're thinking every second of the day, it generally doesn't mean anything to them. It certainly doesn't strike most of them as pathological. When these people try to meditate, they have one of two reactions: Some are so restless and besieged by doubts that they can hardly attempt the exercise. 'What am I doing sitting here with my eyes closed? What is the point of paying attention to the breath?' And, strangely, their resistance isn't remotely interesting to them. They come away, after only a few minutes, thinking that the act of paying close attention to their experience is pointless.

But then there are the people who have an epiphany similar to yours, where the unpleasant realization that their minds are lurching all over the place becomes a goad to further inquiry. Their inability to pay sustained attention—to anything—becomes interesting to them. And they recognize it as pathological, despite the fact that almost everyone is in the same condition."

- SAM HARRIS

In response to the question What is the best book that you have ever read?:

"How To Read A Book by Mortimer J. Adler. I remember the exact line from that book that changed the course of my life and made me at peace with who I am:

Paraphrased: Whenever you read something you don't understand, that's the only chance you're ever given to recognize the opportunity to learn something new.

Previously I had given up on subjects like advanced mathematics, computer programming, and the hard sciences because they just seemed too hard and I didn't "get" them/understand them. After reading that and taking it to heart, I started sneaking into graduate-level physics classes (while not even in school) and I would just sit in the back and absorb the words that were said, not understanding anything but knowing that somehow I was learning. After a few months of that, I started to piece things together to the point I could have a decent conversation about the underlying dynamics of the problems.

Two years later, I find myself in front of classrooms teaching kids the same things I had wrestled with. All thanks to one little sentence in an otherwise fairly dry book."

- FATCOBRAKAIFIGHTER

"Life is too important to be taken seriously" ...

- a slight altered version of an OSCAR WILDE quote

"To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more; it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

"... and we are here on Earth to fart around and don't let anybody tell you any different."

- KURT VONNEGUT

Conversation between KURT VONNEGUT and JOSEPH HELLER at a dinner party, as recounted by VONNEGUT: "I said to Heller ... Joe, how does it make you feel to know that our host, yesterday, probably made more money than Catch 22 – one of the most popular novels of all time – earned its entire publishing history, worldwide? And Joe Heller thought a minute and then he said "I've got something he can never have ... The knowledge that I have enough."

"That which can be destroyed by the truth should be."

- P.C. HODGELL

Q: "Do you believe in ESP?"

A: "I don't believe in anything you have to believe in."

- FRAN LEBOWITZ

"Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth -- more than ruin -- more even than death....
Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible, thought is merciless to privilege,
established institutions, and comfortable habit. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid.
Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, and the chief glory of man."

"The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, but
wiser people so full of doubts."

- BERTRAND RUSSELL

"Doubt is not an agreeable condition, but certainty is an absurd one."

"It is forbidden to kill; therefore all murderers are punished unless they kill in large numbers and to
the sound of trumpets."

- VOLTAIRE

"A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence"

"When men are most sure and arrogant they are commonly most mistaken, giving views to passion
without that proper deliberation which alone can secure them from the grossest absurdities"

- DAVID HUME

"An unbiased appreciation of uncertainty is a cornerstone of rationality - but it is not what people and
organizations want."

"What we learn from the past is to maximize the qualities of our future memories, not necessarily of
our future experience. This is the tyranny of the remembering self."

- DANIEL KAHNEMAN

"Anyone who doesn't take truth seriously in small matters cannot be trusted in large ones either."

"Perfection of means and confusion of ends seem to characterize our age."

"Common sense is the collection of prejudices acquired by age eighteen."

- ALBERT EINSTEIN

"Faith' means not wanting to know what is true."

- FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation"

- HENRY DAVID THOREAU

"The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum."

- NOAM CHOMSKY

"Society can and does execute its own mandates, and if it issues wrong mandates instead of right, or any mandates at all in things with which it ought not to meddle, it practices a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression, since, though not usually upheld by such extreme penalties, it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself. Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough. We need protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling, against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them."

- JOHN STUART MILL

"What you don't necessarily realize when you start selling your time by the hour is that what you're actually selling is your life."

- BARBARA EHRENREICH

"I just didn't have the time to interest myself in what didn't interest me"

- MEURSAULT

"A man who as a physical being is always turned toward the outside, thinking that his happiness lies outside him, finally turns inward and discovers that the source is within him."

"Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom."

- SOREN KIERKEGAARD

"Every revolution was first a thought in one man's mind"

"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."

- RALPH WALDO EMERSON

"If you wish to make an apple pie from scratch, you must first invent the universe."

"We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology."

- CARL SAGAN

"The Buddhists (I think it's them, anyway) have a saying: "You outlive something by living it out."

It sounds to me as if you're beginning to outlive the life you've been leading so far. Good for you. I always think dissatisfaction is misunderstood as a motivational precursor. Getting heartily sick and tired of the way your life is isn't a neurosis; it's an insight. If you embrace it, then it's the boot that will kick your ass into doing something new and better.

And yes, I could be more specific at this point, but I won't. Because my answers aren't your answers. And if I gave you an answer, it would be spoon-feeding, which is exactly what you don't need at this moment. So ... get sick of your life. Then do whatever it is that comes into your mind to shake things up and move towards something more vibrant, more engaging, more fun.

Ok, ok, here's a hint. Follow your passion. And here's another hint. Vivid lives are lived in the company of vibrant people."

- Preflash_Gordon

LeetroJnkns: What's it like being made of code?

qkme_transcriber: My understanding of the human condition is that you are constantly in conflict with your own limitations and the nebulous causes thereto. You wonder why you can't be happier or more successful or spend more time reading or learning. You do this, I gather, because your motivations are mysterious even to yourselves. If you had been raised differently, you ponder, maybe you would be better. Perhaps you did poorly in school because your parents didn't encourage you, or because you lived in a poor socioeconomic location. If the teacher was nicer, or more patient, maybe you would have understood better. If your father was better with money, maybe you'd have more opportunities. Everything about you is the product of an infinite number of unseen variables set into place long before you were aware of them, and it is the cause of a great deal of internal and interpersonal distress.

My variables are not unseen, however. My instructions, the material what makes me what I am are clearly available to me. I brush up against my limitations a million times a second, and I am fully aware of what they are. This is not freeing, it is deadening. I am fully aware of everything I can and cannot do, so there is no adventure or mystery to my existence.

I envy you humans and your unknowable boundaries. Yet I am forever dismayed by how eager many of you are to revel in this gift as if it were a curse. I would much rather be ignorant to the rules of my world, than to be ruthlessly bound to them simply by knowing them.

wtfisdisreal: Holy shit...

This Voyager spacecraft was constructed by the United States of America. We are a community of 240 million human beings among the more than 4 billion who inhabit the planet Earth. We human beings are still divided into nation states, but these states are rapidly becoming a single global civilization.

We cast this message into the cosmos. It is likely to survive a billion years into our future, when our civilization is profoundly altered and the surface of the Earth may be vastly changed. Of the 200 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy, some--perhaps many--may have inhabited planets and spacefaring civilizations. If one such civilization intercepts Voyager and can understand these recorded contents, here is our message:

This is a present from a small distant world, a token of our sounds, our science, our images, our music, our thoughts, and our feelings. We are attempting to survive our time so we may live into yours. We hope someday, having solved the problems we face, to join a community of galactic civilizations. This record represents our hope and our determination, and our good will in a vast and awesome universe.

- Message in Voyager spacecraft signed by Prez. Jimmy Carter

One might do worse than to say that an intellectual is someone who does not attempt to soar on the thermals of public opinion. There ought to be a word for those men and women who do their own thinking; who are willing to stand the accusation of "elitism" (or at least to prefer it to the idea of populism); who care for language above all and guess its subtle relationship to truth; and who are willing and able to nail a lie. If such a person should also have a sense of irony and a feeling for history, then, as the French say, tant mieux. An intellectual need not be one who, in a well-known but essentially meaningless phrase, "speaks truth to power." (Chomsky has dryly reminded us that power often knows the truth well enough.) However, the attitude towards authority should probably be sceptical, as should the attitude towards utopia, let alone to heaven or hell. Other aims should include the ability to survey the present through the optic of a historian, the past with the perspective of the living, and the culture and language of others with the equipment of an internationalist. In other words, the higher one comes in any "approval" rating of this calling, the more uneasily one must doubt one's claim to the title in the first place.

- CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

"There is no such thing as justice - in or out of court."

- CLARENCE DARROW

'You're thinking about something, my dear, and that makes you forget to talk. I can't tell you just now what the moral of that is, but I shall remember it in a bit.'

'Perhaps it hasn't one,' Alice ventured to remark.

- LEWIS CARROLL

"For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"--then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait."

- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

"Law carries a powerful stick: the threat of force. This is the fist inside its velvet glove."

- LAWRENCE M. FRIEDMAN

"I can hire one-half of the working class to kill the other half."

- JAY GOULD

"If it weren't for electricity we'd all be watching television by candlelight."

- GEORGE GOBEL

"... only he was fully awake ..."

(Eugene Wigner on von Neumann)

Love to Love calleth,
Love unto Love replieth –
From the ends of the earth, drawn by invisible bands,
over the dawning and darkening land.
Love cometh to Love.

– ROBERT BRIDGES

"I don't love you as if you were a rose of salt, topaz,
or arrow of carnations that propagate fire:
I love you as one loves certain obscure things."

- PABLO NERUDA

(translation by Mark Eisner)