

Aphoristic Appendage to *On Truthtelling*

1.

Every breath is a salute to life.

2.

Life is one big exclamation with little in the way of explanation.

3.

Poverty goes featureless, even when recognized.

4.

The big house you have will not halt the decay of your flesh; maintaining it might hasten it, however.

5.

Oftentimes, the only difference between the winner and the loser is the will of the former to go further.

6.

Life is the reward and punishment for having been born.

7.

Never was anything more furtive than wrong never tampered with.

8.

You don't blame a good plow horse for wearing out the traces.

9.

Disappointment hammers away at determination.

10.

Though a river does mighty work, it follows the path of least resistance.

11.

Womanhood – a great river running through the course of my life in which, though I've been permitted to splash about on occasion, I've been forbidden to bathe or slake my thirst.

12.

One chooses one's philosophy like one chooses a good pair of shoes – for comfort and fit.

13.

Few, indeed, must there be who get what they want out of life and, very

few, indeed, who get more.

14.

To be a good creator type is to create a type.

15.

Human greatness is human pride and human perversity that, despite everything that can be said against it, ends up having more said for it.

16.

The scholarly ideal is to be an excellent cartographer of other people's thoughts.

17.

What do we go to the theatre or cinema for if not to see what we normally don't see, that is, people undressing themselves, spiritually or psychologically speaking?

18.

Sometimes I feel like I go about in life like a box of flesh with eye slits.

19.

In politics, both hypocrisy and hyperbole are the order of the day.

20.

In war time, hypocrisy and hyperbole not only are the order of the day but raised to the status of virtues.

21.

If youth were all it's cracked up to be, one would surely loathe one's later years.

22.

If wisdom were all it's cracked up to be, one would surely loathe fools.

23.

The madman's talking to himself was the only thing that kept him sane.

24.

Professional philosophers no more want falsehood done away with than doctors illness or policemen crime.

25.

Reasoning about complicated matters in philosophy is always at fault because it always leaves out some complication.

26.

Politics has the same relation to truth that a hammer has to a nail driven into hard wood.

27.

We are all punished with a death for all the sins that weren't discovered.

28.

Terrorism is the witchcraft and black magic of the twenty-first century. It's seen everywhere even when it's not seen.

29.

To call somebody or something the worst in international affairs is always an excuse to do the worst.

30.

Old age: being in the wrong for having lived too long.

31.

Old folks home: the place where they keep dead people alive.

32.

When all is said and done, it may very well be that the best truth is a good lie.

33.

There are always people willing to ride on or ride out a prejudice particularly when it has their best interests at heart.

34.

Anything can be objectified and therefore objected to.

35.

The miracle keeps repeating itself and so becomes mundane.

36.

Man and woman: the victim and victimizer of each other.

37.

So many deaths over a life should reconcile us to it.

38.

Living one's life at the best boils down to having a choice how to suffer.

39.

Much of what we now call evil was at one time done in the name of good.
Much of what is now done in the name of good will one day be called evil.

40.

You have to live with things every single day until death takes all away.

41.

Better silence than a cheerful conventional greeting from the beloved who no longer loves you.

42.

Today's truth is tomorrow's prejudice.

43.

What starts off as a powerful argument ends up merely as the power of those who no longer feel a need or reason to argue.

44.

A conscientious writer is one who doesn't cheat or, if he does, keeps it to a minimum.

45.

All who are aging are more or less experts at losing while living on.

46.

Injustice begins where justice is assumed to be absolutely known and, on this basis, justifying every means by which to establish its rule.

47.

There is both a collective intelligence and a collective stupidity that far surpass anything any individual is capable of.

48.

Even the simplest things are complicated beyond measure. A thought for those who would wish to uncomplicate everything.

49.

Nothing is more common than combining self-interest with a sense of moral superiority.

50.

The most common and yet most wrong-headed thing in the world is a prejudice which doesn't recognize itself as such.

51.

Most people would prefer to judge and condemn the moral failings of others rather than to understand them. And this for the reason that they see any attempt to understand them as an attempt to excuse them. And this in turn for reasons which have less to do with honour or honesty on their part than with, on the one hand, a secret fear of what they themselves might be or might be construed as being and, on the other, an often barely repressed smugness and sense of superiority.

52.

Both the good and the gold are malleable metals and both can be easily counterfeited.

53.

Everything past becomes in some sense contemporary.

54.

A: Why are old people so anxious to tell you their age?

B: Because they want to turn this negative into a positive.

55.

What we truly love is what is closest to us, be it our beliefs, our feelings, our hopes, our needs – or other people.

56.

Party politics is a lot of imperfect players pointing out in imperfect ways the imperfections of their opponents.

57.

Those who condemn hate so hatefully should look into (but they never do) their own hearts.

58.

Wine to vinegar, that's what life is, that's what love is, oh God!...

59.

In childhood we are immersed in the present. In youth we are drunk with it. In later years, we fill it with all our plans and projects. And in the final years, we stuff our past into it.

60.

In politics one inevitably adopts the policy of thinking the best about one's own side and the worst about the other.

61.

Just as one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist, so one man's journalist is another man's propagandist.

62.

Get back to yourself if you want to know the truth of things. After all, there may be some small corner where you will find, however hidden, a doubt, a division, a renegade element, truly in line with what you think.

63.

Flight of fancy: When we – the whole of humanity, that is – find some way of proceeding that goes beyond the one of routinely thinking, morally, politically, and culturally speaking, the best of ourselves and the worst of our enemies, there will be the coming of some practise, principle, or passion into the world almost divine as a human possibility. Needless to say, it will have to do what has never been done before: subvert all forms of the will to power. High or low, weak or strong, justified or not, all manifestations of this drive must become the opposite of our virtue. In this way, all strife will end if not all struggle – as the sun sets on our tumultuous spiritual life.

64.

The most common vice is counterfeiting virtue.

65.

To state the matter generally, war constitutes the best part of history but not the best part of our lives.

66.

People often think about a matter to come up with an opinion on it so they then don't have to think about it.

67.

What is the game of truth? It is the game that, ironically enough, allows systematic error, deception, and falsehood to play their part, so that this much-valued and many-sided activity, vast in its implications, full of plans, projects, programs, quests, discoveries, claims, schemes, and illusions, can go on indefinitely, putting into play all that matters more in the long run – interest, passion, adventure, inspiration, hope, belief, direction, commitment, etc. – than final answers.

68.

What is the game of truth? It is the play of truth in the finite – its appearance, presentation, verification, authorisation, and codification – while partaking of the infinite where none of these operations have a beginning or end.

69.

What is the game of truth? It is the game that forever conjures up the belief in imperishable truths even though these truths, insofar as they belong to this world, can only be written down on perishable material. In other words, if the "parchment" is destroyed, these truths are supposed to endure, be it in the mind of God, be it in some other form, be it in a

universe that is considered to be – although scientific theory now challenges this – eternal.

70.

Truth is idealized as something stationary or static whereas all the evidence, historical, empirical, or otherwise, shows it to be constantly in motion. However, certain elements, moving much more slowly, give the appearance of being fixed.

71.

When the claim to truth is also the claim to goodness, to the highest levels of ethics, morality, justice, wisdom, and even holiness, there is this paradoxical and often “horrifying” result: little tolerance for opposing claims.

72.

Capital punishment – to think that everyone has this hanging over their head!

73.

Being quick to condemn others is a sure sign of someone who would no sooner confess his sins in public – bare his soul to the world – than be condemned as he himself condemns. Being quick to condemn others is a sure sign, in other words, of the hypocrite that, to some degree or other, exists in all of us.

74.

A thing not fully known – which at bottom is the nature of all things – is open to so many possible interpretations that, when someone says that such-and-such an interpretation is the correct one and, being the *only* correct one, therefore a fact, he is surely the hero of the day but the defeated champion of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.

75.

Lead the most glorious life imaginable, leave a monument of whatever kind, and rest assured that someone will come along one day and piss on it!

76.

Everybody says they want peace and not war. And yet everybody reads the newspaper or watches TV looking for what? Peace?

77.

Peace, among other things, can be boring. War, among other things, can be exciting. Need it be added that boredom and excitement have little to do with morality?

78.

When war offers a prize to a people, it is generally heralded. It will likely be deemed good not only by bringing certain advantages but also by adhering

to some moral principle. Precisely here, however, is the fig leaf for much that would otherwise be called evil.

79.

Always the same. No matter how successful the life, the sad ending.

80.

One of the most offensive epithets there is, however common it may be, is not in the slightest way racist, sexist, ageist, elitist, or even speciesist. There is something remarkable about how this term, reductive not only with respect to the anatomy, is able to span the personal and the universal. However, if there is something less than universal about this word, some prejudice, in other words, it would have to be the rather bizarre one of negatively characterizing everything except the simplest forms of life.

81.

Personhood seems to be so important – what could be more important? – until one thinks of all the people who have lived and died since the beginning of time and now are completely forgotten.

82.

Personhood is the gift of the moment, irrespective of the person who gives it, past or present, real or imagined.

83.

Suppose all thought, even the greatest, amounts to having a prejudice of one kind or another. The only remedy then, it seems, would be to have one prejudice countering another prejudice in a repeated, diverse, and wide-ranging way. But then (happy thought!) isn't this precisely what is going on in a world of free thought each and every day?

84.

An aphorism wants to be both understood and not understood: understood by the most sensitive ears; not understood by anything less.

85.

Just as a poem, an aphorism probably won't mean much unless it comes close to one's own thoughts and sensibilities, in which case it is like a piece of coal turning into a diamond.

86.

An aphorism, if it's to have the deepest view or widest outlook, must leave moralising to others.

87.

Few arguments are won in the long run by mocking, vilifying, or intimidating those with a different point of view but, in the short term, it must be very effective because it's done all the time.

88.

If one gets off to a bad start, one is usually not in the race. In certain respects, this is as true today as it was at any time. However, in a number of parts of the world, both in the distant and not-so distant past, if one got off to a bad start in life, one was, in a manner of speaking, not even in the human race.

89.

Feelings! Feelings! To think that something so fleeting can, by shaking us to the core, draw the thinnest of lines between the most exuberant life and stone-cold death!

90.

Being humorous is the risk of either offending some or many, or entertaining few or none at all. Sometimes these two risks can be taken without the slightest problem; other times it's a disaster.

91.

One should consider the possibility, however outrageous this may seem, that, morally speaking, we are all at the same level when all elements and circumstances not in our control are factored in.

92.

Getting old is either a complete retreat from the field or a constant struggle

to remain relevant.

93.

One sometimes gets the impression that life was made for the young and that everything else is a mere backdrop or secondary affair.

94.

Suppose there are an infinite number of universes just as there are an infinite number of stars in the heavens. What then? For one thing, it seems that, with a corresponding number of worlds, our poor little planet wouldn't be that unique. It wouldn't be the place that it more or less is now, that is, this orbiting spherical body so teeming with life that, in the face of such a miracle, it is often said: "Well, there may or there may not be others like it."

No, however unique a jewel it is in our universe, it would be but one of an infinite number of such jewels. It would be in a scheme that goes beyond any scheme, a universe that goes beyond any universe, a totality that goes beyond all theories treating the universe as if it were our backyard or even some open field.

95.

When the ancient Egyptians built tombs for their kings, did they know – did they have any feeling or suspicion apart from their belief in the afterlife (but this would have been sacrilegious!) – they were constructing time capsules?

96.

Perhaps, in a manner of speaking, the individual has always been a hyped-up affair. After all, under the aspect of eternity, what is really significant and worthy of worship is this matrix in which individuals can flower up over and over.

97.

What a strange thing! When we are with convivial company on a celestial night, the conversation with close ones seems more real than the stars!

98.

Words, words, words! We take them like air and water, without a thought, and yet they're absolutely essential to what we are!

99.

All political struggle has the characteristic of raising the rightness of its position (for, being war-like, it must fashion suitable weapons) to the status of a virtually untouchable ideal.

100.

If it is the case that, even in science, there can never be an account that is absolutely complete, that gives the full measure of all things, then how much more this must be the case, at least for those of us who are not "religious," in everything that doesn't quite qualify as science!

101.

What is generally considered to be true and what is generally considered to be good form complex fields of interests and beliefs that, however much they overlap, never quite coincide.

102.

It is more truthful to be negative than positive to the extent that it is recognized that, beyond all human concerns of a more or less positive nature, the negative is not something that should, will, or can be eliminated.

103.

Loose talk will always be with us as much as learned discourse insofar as the world forever falls short of becoming a monastery, a courtroom, a laboratory, and a classroom of epic proportions.

104.

When all is said and done, one is valued according to the contribution one makes to the moment. At the same time, this contribution can vary greatly, extending even to the dead and their participation.

105.

The great prejudice and optical illusion that puts us at the center of things persists even in the face of now knowing we're but a speck in the universe.

The saving grace seems to be that the singularity of ourselves as this speck, our special way of being as this speck, the myriad interpretations we have of ourselves as this speck – all this leaves little room for thinking we're just this speck and nothing else, that it's not possible we're in fact much more than this speck and, indeed, a speck that, if understood correctly, is at the center of things.

106.

Perhaps no human being, in his own lifetime, has been more exalted and deified than Ramses II. And yet we all know that, at a certain point in history, his monuments were buried in sand and his name almost forgotten.

107.

In politics, both hypocrisy and hyperbole are the order of the day. In war time, it goes even further: they are raised to the status of virtues.

108.

When making a difficult or dubious decision, perhaps one should ask, "Will I be able to live with this decision for the rest of my life?"

109.

There are things that even the wisest and most righteous person in the

world won't reveal about himself. For would this person, whoever this person might be, want everyone else to know how much he fell short of being wise and righteous?

110.

According to scientists, natural catastrophes on a global scale have occurred more than once and wiped out nearly all life on this planet. Such a prehistory, covering an immense span of time, suggests both a certain precariousness and a certain perdurability. While all life can be threatened at any time, the planet itself seems to have a good chance of surviving and even exploding with life after its being nearly decimated. Now given this state of affairs and the current threats of nuclear arms and global warming, wouldn't it be advisable to be more modest even in one's political thinking? Wouldn't it be the right thing, given that existential threats of a global nature will be with us for generations to come, to avoid making serious matters sound like a "cosmic joke"? In other words, instead of making *Save the Planet!* the rallying cry of future generations, wouldn't it be advisable to have something less presumptuous and more authentic? Something that doesn't overstate our capacity to control the future and, and at the same time, doesn't try to mask our primarily egocentric concerns? Finally, something that would reach deep into our whole history and not simply speak idly about our modern day role?

Help us to save us from ourselves, whatever powers may be, and forgive us our trespasses, especially those against all other living creatures!

111.

The human race is one long relay race. From generation to generation, the baton is passed, this business of continuing on with some things and starting anew with others. It is incessant and vigorous and, God only knows, in some ways mindless. It is the future as we see it, which is always limited in its revealing of itself, but sufficiently so nonetheless to fill us with hopes, dreams, and best wishes.

112.

Much of our lives are spent wishing for this or that to make us a bit happier or to get rid of some inconvenience, discomfort, or heartache. Yet if we have a pain in our stomach that persists and persists, how much we would give up of this or that, even of what we formally wished for, if only *this* would get rid of *that*!

113.

Do you want to create something like a large-scale human family? Do you want the whole human race to act in a much closer, more congenial, and caring way? Well, then, let each and everyone go out and sojourn with as many people as possible, in as many different lands as possible, and over as many years as possible. Let each and everyone sit down with these people in a very intimate setting, listen to all their stories both good and

bad, and avoid any sort of quick or easy judgments. Let this action be carried out and, for sure, within a few years, all tribalism and nationalism will lose their justification, all racial barriers will break down, and all prejudices will be robbed of the ground in which they spring up. But if you sense, as you may very well do, a problem here, if you protest that such an idea is wholly impractical, well, then, quite frankly, you've put your finger on the reason why the human race has never been a family. Certainly it's not because the people of this world aren't capable of it. No, it's because the world, simply by being a world, forever imposes itself as distance.

114.

There are people full of hatred who view others as not being entitled to their innocence and, if things reach a fever pitch, not being entitled to go without punishment.

115.

What is a newspaper? It is many things but one thing it never fails to be is a gossip column willing to exalt a person one minute and execrate him the next.

116.

Youth is many glorious things but it seldom is glorious wisdom.

117.

The advantage of slogans, simple arguments, and rallying cries is that they influence, motivate, and galvanize people widely and even from one generation to the next. The disadvantage is that they are never an attempt – and here is their great shortcoming – to do justice to the complexity of a situation. As a consequence, they are inevitably challenged over time (it may take more than a few generations) and subject to being discarded, modified, or replaced. At the very least, they grow weaker in their effect, often becoming little more than platitudes.

118.

Response to the world-hater: It seems to me you want a judgment against the world with as little justification as the act of faith in it you condemn.

119.

A: Most people don't have an original idea in their head.

B: But perhaps they live a better life than you do.

A: I have no way of contesting this point.

120.

Are you worried about being emasculated by the opposite sex, dear sirs?

Well, time has been doing this for hundreds of thousands of years to those who grow too old.

121.

A: To give credit where credit is due, I'm entertained by the news, no matter how bad it is.

B: How can one speak of entertainment if the news is horrible?

A: By not paying attention to the moral objection implicit in your question which I don't think is aimed at the enjoyment per se, but rather at the admission of such enjoyment. In other words, the feeling, emotion, state of mind, or whatever you want to call it is probably what a lot of people, including yourself, experience. So what you're truly objecting to is an admission that doesn't come with contrition, that doesn't register this enjoyment of bad news – even horrible news – as a sort of secret sin.

B: Well, isn't that precisely what it is, no matter how many people you want to tar with the same brush?

A: I see you're excited and, since I haven't much time, I'll simply say that

these matters touch on both psychology and theology. If you're in the psychology camp as I am, then the answer to your question is no. If you're in the theology camp as you seem to be, then the answer is yes.

B: Theology! Good heavens, what're you talking about?

A: Sin and going to heaven and being good and all that sort of thing. Anyway, I've told you where I stand. Now I've got to go.

122.

Taking a stand on current issues is rightly treated as a virtue that many should adopt but wrongly as a principle that all should follow.

123.

Do glorious summer days need cold dreary ones to be truly appreciated? There is this story that a young man named Akhenaten went on a mysterious voyage with his father that took them over land and sea. Shortly after they came back to Egypt, his father died and Akhenaten, now the supreme ruler of Egypt, overthrew all the traditional gods and, to the consternation of many, made sun worship the state religion.

124.

Societies that attain a high level of moral development but, at the same time, wreak death and destruction in other parts of the world are, to say the least, setting themselves up for a fall.

125.

If well expressed and not threatening our convictions, a point of view different from our own can be, when duly considered, not only tolerable but pleasurable.

126.

An aphorism doesn't state with certainty what is hardly ever certain. This is an advantage to the extent that even the most refined illusions have limited benefits.

127.

A: The word *terrorist* gets a lot of play these days.

B: Yes, similar to words in the past like *blasphemer*, *witch*, and *unbeliever*.

A: Are you suggesting that, like these words, it will eventually lose its effectiveness?

B: That, my friend, doesn't require a crystal ball to predict.

128.

A: Love is the highest word for me! Love! Love! Love!

B: I hate to disagree with you, my friend, but love for me is not the highest word. It's too nebulous, too over-used, too, I might even say, pretentious.

A: Well then, what for you is the highest word?

B: I've already said it . . . friend.

129.

When the last glimmer of sexual attraction is absent, when the face is wrinkled or faded, we perceive the loss in ourselves or in others – and we mourn.

130.

Let us not fool ourselves! When it comes to sheer aggression, there's still enough difference between men and women that, in a war where the battlefield remains the dominant theatre, it will hardly register as a

dismissible factor.

131.

Blaming the world for, in whatever way imaginable, coming to an end is like blaming one's body for not holding up indefinitely.

132.

"And, lo, a great miracle befell the earth! All weapons were renounced, all wealth distributed equally, all fear and hatred banished from the hearts of men! And all that pertains to health, happiness, and security was finally given to each and every one of the inhabitants of this planet and, behold, as a lesser miracle that all could well appreciate, all could even go so far as to celebrate given how different things had been in every part of the world and over a long period of time – as a lesser miracle, I say, there was this strange secondary effect of there being nothing left, in this now perfect world, to report on the evening news."

133.

Motto of today's world: Do good but net a profit.

134.

You have the flavour of what you created in your mouth. It stays sweet for a while. But then the flavour is finally lost, the mouth is dry, and you must start over again.

135.

If the term "fake news" means not giving a balanced account of matters and events of mostly a political, cultural, or military nature, then it's merely the rechristening of a very old practise.

136.

It is not so difficult to determine where highest wisdom and greatest stupidity come together. It is the point at which the world would be ruined either by abandoning the search for the greatest good or by universally applying it.

137.

Viewing the world as infinitely complex is essentially at odds with viewing ourselves as its master controllers. Yet the second view is probably as

necessary as the first from the standpoint that, by shuttling between these two views, we can avoid a totally pessimistic outlook as much as a totally foolish one.

138.

For some of us but by no means all, our relationship with friends and family, as dear as it is, is superseded by another: our relationship with the world.

139.

One way to get rid of a bad conscience: Look out over the world. See evil wherever one can find it. Imagine it where it doesn't exist. Exaggerate it where it does exist. And then say to oneself: "You see! I have no right to my guilty conscience!"

140.

So many people say this or that and so many people talk through their hat.

141.

Given that the world is forever changing, the good that views itself as definitive and final must inevitably find itself falling short.

142.

There is nothing more common than people who, waving the banner of justice, find reason to perpetrate their own forms of injustice.

143.

The good, like gold, is a malleable metal. It can take many forms, lend itself to many uses, and even mix with base elements.

144.

Generally speaking, it's easy to feed a prejudice because there are so many facts to support it among all those that don't but can be conveniently ignored.

145.

Having a prejudice is an inescapable principle if having principles is itself a respectable version of the former.

146.

All minor things of the world, if taken together, are of such colossal importance that all great events, even if taken together, are dwarfed by them.

147.

To be invisible is not to be unimportant. It is simply to be invisible.

148.

What is the ego? – A soap bubble that extends itself to the limits of the universe.

149.

What is life? – Pristine moments among a lot of other stuff that isn't always agreeable or attractive.

150.

What is death? – A cliché.

151.

If life were one big happy moment, death would be impossible.

152.

The believer says to the unbeliever: "Believe!" In effect, he wants a miracle.

153.

Without mother love, everything would've been killed in the egg.

154.

Certain arguments are always able to convince certain people. It's on this basis that vital sustenance is given to all social movements.

155.

Arguments are of course much more useful than aphorisms. But arguments tend to date, whereas aphorisms do not.

156.

The main objection to arguments: They say both too little and too much.

157.

In James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*, what is remarkable is that, by portraying Leopold Bloom in an extremely thorough and profound way, even his most shameful thoughts and actions – sexual, masturbatory, scatological, voyeuristic, and so on – do not rob him of the dignity and respect that many of his other thoughts and actions rightly bestow on him.

158.

An unwritten but glaringly obvious rule of the news media when it comes to reporting on rival or enemy nations: *Don't blur the picture. Keep it simple. It's us versus them. It's good versus evil.*

159.

Universal peace will come when the curtain is drawn on life as we know it.

160.

In effect, most of the world enjoys peace. It is the reversal of this situation, however, that always haunts us. What we experience now, globally speaking, is more like a small number of distant earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

161.

If we were truly fair in our judgements, we wouldn't make them until all pertinent elements had been weighed and measured. For a host of reasons, however, nothing is less common. This judgment itself, however, should be tempered with another one, namely that, in practise, we have to live with

faulty judgements, given that perfect ones would be deferred indefinitely.

162.

There is this old saying: Every man has his price. If anyone is so confident as to say, "This could never apply to me," he is probably foolish enough, given the right circumstances, to end up illustrating it as a more or less valid principle.

163.

Between inflicting one's sadness and suffering on others and having others afflicted by them, between a more or less active principle and a more or less passive one, the difference is very little. Certainly there is a moral distinction but whatever cruelty is involved is usually undetectable and whatever indifference or lack of consideration can be observed or felt is more deserving of forgiveness than condemnation.

164.

In the area of morality, reducing things to a common denominator is a double-edged sword. While there is justice in including the voices of as many people as possible, there is also injustice when, in the form of public opinion, these voices conflate three separate stages of justice. Fortunately,

there is the court system where only a certain number of voices are heard and where moving precipitately from accusation to conviction to punishment is firmly resisted.

165.

Who doesn't like to be flattered? Small wonder it ranges from one of the most common pleasures to one of the most common ways of taking advantage of others.

166.

It's hard to put winning friends and influencing people together with being honest to the point of hardness.

167.

What is it about human sexuality that drives it to the extremes? A short answer would be that it's implicated not only in the most sublime aspects of the human condition, but also in those that are the most voracious and duplicitous.

168.

Death isn't held up by a beautiful day; beautiful days aren't held up by death.

169.

Noxious gases overhead – our nightmare!

170.

The expression *This Should Not Be* has no doubt been a factor in stopping bad things from happening and will no doubt be the same in the future. Of course this doesn't rule out certain uses of it today from contradicting those of yesterday or, for that matter, certain uses of it tomorrow from contradicting those of today.

171.

Every generation more or less forgets the preceding ones. On this basis, it's no uncommon thing to grow up thinking, "Yes, we are unique! This generation that I'm a happy member of!"

172.

Man without society would be like Robinson Crusoe without Friday, without his well-stocked island, without his own name and identity.

173.

Eternity is in the moment, and the moment is in eternity.

174.

Science, as wonderful as it is, is always a simplification of what is "The Greater Wonder."

175.

A. When I think badly of life, I see it as a miasma of boring routine, frustrated desires, and anxiety.

B. You can think better if not well of all this if you consider one other possibility.

A. Which is?

B. Losing your good name and reputation. It's the hell on earth especially

reserved for human beings.

176.

What separates a good reputation from a bad one? Often not much more than an accusation.

177.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said that the line between good and evil cuts across every human heart. . . . How many people are willing to take this to heart?

178.

In any argument, even a philosophical one, winning the argument competes with getting to the truth of a matter.

179.

Civilization is a crowning achievement at one end of the spectrum and a cancerous threat at the other.

180.

Given our extremely long, primitive, and even animalistic pre-history, it would be fair to characterize civilization as humanity's crowning achievement. For five thousands years, this magnificent cancer has grown and spread itself over the planet

181.

When calls for punishment fill the air, it's largely the desire for revenge that's being expressed. Anything going by the name of justice here, whatever else might be said, camouflages an atavistic propensity that civilized behaviour shows no sign of leaving behind.

182.

Barring a few exceptions, we human beings leave the earth with a body and sometimes a mind almost unrecognizable from the ones we had. It's the epitaph forced on us which perhaps can only be erased by some all-encompassing "eulogy."

183.

The young are vital, irrepressible, full of zeal, and often idealistic to the point of risking their lives in the street and fighting without mercy.

184.

Partisan politics: The best thing that can be said about it is that it ultimately gets things done, is difficult to replace, is sometimes entertaining, and is probably the most effective way of exposing the divergences from the truth that both sides so earnestly occupy themselves with.

185.

Perhaps we underestimate the courage it takes to be old and sick and still smile.

186.

It's clear that not all of us are constituted to abide the old and the sick. Their degenerated state warns us, frightens us, and repels us all at the same time.

187.

In Stoicism, suicide was considered to be, under certain conditions, not only acceptable but honourable. In Christianity, it was considered to be, for the longest time, both wrong and shameful. . . . Now where do we stand?

188.

If civilization is humanity's crowning achievement, then perhaps human rights are the crowning achievement of civilization. But let's not forget that this historical development remains open-ended and precarious. Any self-congratulations will always be premature given the possibility of forces so capricious or titanic that this project, to put it mildly, is put into jeopardy.

189.

It's fortunate that the the moral faults and failings of others generate interest on the basis of what is largely hidden, that is, the non-moral or amoral aspects of our psyche. After all, take away our rampant curiosity, our cleverly disguised ego, our desire for revenge in things big and small and, by God, it would be a miracle if civilized proceedings could go on!

190.

Secret life: the constant measuring of one's self against others – the highs and lows.

191.

In the vast majority of situations, superficiality in the moral sphere goes hand-in-hand with an assumed superiority.

192.

In the areas where the greatest demands upon our time and attention are not vital, simplicity is always an easier and quicker sell than precision.

193.

Arguing to a conclusion is like running in a race in which the baton is the prize often not worth passing on.

194.

“We are such stuff as dreams are made on,” says Shakespeare, “and our little life is rounded with a sleep.” But can anyone live with this? No, because every moment contradicts it even though every century confirms it.

195.

Every generation takes pride in being so different from the previous one. What an illusion! . . . but perhaps a necessary one.

196.

For two thousand years, Christianity, the religion that teaches love, mercy, charity, tolerance, and so on, has been caught up in war and conquest. This is proof positive that, when the need arises, people are willing to say almost anything, including that black is sometimes white and vice versa.

197.

“Yes, that man is a monster but, if you stretch your imagination, you’ll see him as once having been a child. If he’d had the germ of monstrosity in

him then, you wouldn't have known it. Now you, who are burning with the desire to eradicate him from the face of the earth, what about your emotions? Don't you see what we all have in common and, no matter how different we are from him, what it might be named?"

198.

Insatiable Eros: The dream of getting into a succession of amorous adventures on summer evenings without end.

199.

Wisdom would say, "Accept what one is and what one has." Imagination and Desire are all the contrary.

200.

When we idealize – so beautiful! – we become complicit in something hardly noticeable, something incremental, something that should be called cruelty. Perhaps it's necessary to go down the road a bit, to experience the full effects of the ideal in operation before we can see that what falls short of or outside the ideal is quite often ignored, forgotten, or devalued and, at worst, persecuted.

201.

The world has ended and we didn't know what hit us. Was it a meteor? Was it an asteroid? Was it nuclear war? . . . Now the entire planet is dark and silent. Just as it was millions upon millions of years ago. But wait! There are still some remnants of life! Not much but enough to go on! Enough to start over!

202.

Whether the pyramids or any such structures rise again or whether things go off in an entirely different direction is a mystery that we must abide. As star time, however, it will become the revelation that's already on its way and, indeed, virtually delivered.

203.

If it were possible to honour the individuality of every single person who has ever lived, a gargantuan project would unfold with as much richness and colour as the greatest novel.

204.

However death comes, there is the violence of the breath being cut off, the vital organs being shut down, and the final thoughts being scattered or thrown into darkness. The defunct person is put into a hole or scattered to the four winds, leaving only a virtual or remembered self to reassert his presence, his individuality, his meaning, and so on. If not for the latter, death's robber hand would carry away everything.

205.

To think of it! When we're not immediately present to ourselves or to others, we're nothing more than virtual or remembered selves!

206.

Polemics! How much of our talking time is taken up with it! Especially in politics! Can anyone avoid it, or at least anyone discussing uncertain or controversial issues? No one. Therefore we're all consigned, at least at some time or other, to being less interested in getting to the truth of a matter than winning some argument.

207.

As far as common expressions go, the saying, "There's no fool like an old fool," seems doubly cruel.

208.

Argumentation that goes on in a more or less homogeneous group is peaceful enough. But when it comes to the same between radically different groups, it's more like taking up arms and, quite frankly, using them.

209.

What a multitude of micromovements it took to go from light, heat, dust, rock, water, and various gases to life as we now know it!

210.

Patience! So easy to preach and so easy to practise – under the right conditions.

211.

In politics as in war, a more or less neutral outcome results in both sides declaring victory.

212.

Until we realize how important winning is to us, we will never grasp the extent to which the values of honesty and truthfulness can be put out of play.

213.

“What! You see a world full to cracking with different things and you tell me eternity is empty!” (“Just imagine all you can’t see!”)

214.

Yes, planet Earth is nothing but a soap bubble in space. But what a soap bubble!

215.

Rather than being proud of ourselves for this or that, we should be proud of the planet. It's done the best job.

216.

Without suffering, there would be no thinking. Without thinking, there would be a lot less suffering.

217.

A lot of things done nowadays that could be put down to bad taste or bad judgement are stigmatized. Diverse interests, be they in the name of greater justice or in the name of disseminating information, converge in a sort of calculated "socially approved" calumny. Whether the latter is aimed at the individual or at the collectivity, a moral high ground is assumed that, whatever its merits, cannot be fully realized without a power struggle. In short, any thought of doing away with victimization – with forcing some people to go down so that others may go up – is an illusion.

218.

A. If I had to reveal all aspects of my sexual life, I'd be deeply ashamed.

B. Why?

A. Simply because there are so many aspects. . . . Do I have to go into it any further?

219.

In a certain sense, human sexuality is open to everything. In another sense, open sexuality is dynamite. Taken together, these two senses imply practices that society has sometimes tolerated in the shade and sometimes punished with utmost severity.

220.

Two things an aphorism has going for it is its desire neither to exaggerate nor to avoid what can be said. Or, more precisely, not to exaggerate what others exaggerate and not to avoid what others avoid.

221.

It's certain that an argument can change a person's way of thinking. It's also certain that, relative to the amount of time it takes to do this, other factors can play in and become increasingly more important.

222.

Trying to anchor right and wrong in something other than what people hold and believe at a particular time is an intellectual dead end.

223.

Moral relativism is considered by many to be immoral. This is the extent of their argument.

224.

We all know where moral absolutism leads: To the bonfire!

225.

Us against them! Us against them! So much entertainment for us and them! Or else so much horror!

226.

An aphorism has no agenda other than giving the best expression to what is truly thought.

227.

It's possible to be politicized in many different ways. Rightly politicized insofar as there are many different causes that proceed from strong arguments and evident problems or injustices. Wrongly politicized insofar as, in this very same area, there often arises an uncommon level of self-assurance not divorced from showing contempt for all not within the magic circle of presumably unassailable convictions.

228.

What is true and what is good are never completely in sync except in those belief systems that inevitably betray this ideal, this perfect union, as will to

power.

229.

Being perfectly good, if such a thing can be imagined, would mean having to be totally in step with changing conditions, making adjustments at a computer-like rate with virtually superhuman foresight.

230.

Our thoughts and feelings are shaped so much by the day-to-day that it's impossible to know what direction they could take as various aspects of custom and culture.

231.

Besides the present, the only guide to the future is the past which is marked by periods of peace punctuated by war, by great technological developments interfused with all sorts of cooperative and competitive forces. Given this history, one may conjecture that a world-wide catastrophe is in the offing, possibly sending us back to an agrarian age.

232.

Yes, truth can speak to power but, of course, to present matters in this reduced or binary way is itself a departure from keeping truth separate from power (or power separate from truth).

233.

Some people are in the “enviable” position of becoming increasingly famous after they’re no longer alive.

234.

It never fails to surprise us that some people incredibly famous and successful in their own lifetime are, within a few generations, not known to the general public.

235.

Who isn’t a sucker for a spectacle? It’s just that some are more seduced and taken in than others.

236.

A. It's a parody, right?

B. A parody today but who knows about tomorrow?

A. Are you serious? I have a hard time believing that such a thing could happen.

B. Organized mass murder has been done before.

A. But across the whole world and with a whole sex being exterminated?

B. As I said, it would have to be done in a certain way. It has to be the catalyst for a new beginning.

A. But you make this horror sound comical with your idea of a sperm bank for this – what should I call it? – thousand-year Reich.

B. We can laugh at this but the general idea is concrete steps must be taken for the preservation of the race.

A. And what about boys who come after? Are they to be massacred too?

B. Perhaps we are taking this all too seriously.

A. Let me read what you wrote here.

237.

Here is a modest proposal which I think will fit in well with the mores of a not insignificant number of people nowadays. It's an idea I came up with in light of what I think is not only necessary for the betterment of humankind, but for its very survival.

What I'm referring to is nothing more and nothing less than the ritual sacrifice of all male human beings. Admittedly, this would be a colossal undertaking of which the logistics appear to be insurmountable.

This proposal is therefore modest in the sense that I don't know how it would be carried out. The details elude me but the grand plan comes before my eyes in almost religious terms.

In order to wipe the slate clean and start things afresh, in order to save the world from that half of humanity that most threatens it, there must be this sacrifice of half the human race which, however necessary, however well motivated, however humanely carried out, could still be viewed as a crime. But let me add quickly that this criminal act, however holy and blessed, is necessary for bringing into being a long process of expiation and atonement that will power the *mythos* and morality for the next thousand years.

In other words, it's only by having this "original sin" that salvation can be worked out as recompense, as redeeming factor, as the paradise on earth that all will be dedicated to bringing about. In explicitly religious terms, it would mean returning to the divine conditions before the Fall by, paradoxically enough, bringing about the fall of man.

238.

This hungering for recognition that each and everyone of us has – is it ever satiated? Could it ever be? . . .

239.

In the dominant religions of today there is this God that demands to be recognized. Imagine! An all-powerful being presumably upset by a lack of attention! If ever there was a projection of a human quality into the divine sphere, this must be it!

240.

Science is wonderful but, just as it's been for hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of years, we still have to put up with growing old and dying. Not that this should change but . . .

241.

Perhaps the stars talk to one another but if their talk exceeds ours as much as our talk exceeds the ticking of a clock or the beating of a metronome, what would we know about it?

242.

Each of us is married to the moment which, throughout life, is an indissoluble union. Past, present, and future are always packed into it – in

miniature, so to speak – so that it takes in all relationships, be they dead and gone or alive and present. It even takes in the “reconciliation” or “reunion” we look for at the end. Whether the latter is practical or not, whether it can be realized in this world or not, it speaks of our ongoing desire to love and to be loved.

243.

Once one realizes how dependent most people’s thinking is on what others think in the group or society to which they belong, it becomes difficult to believe that their stances on various matters are based on timeless principles.

244.

If everything was light and frivolous, childhood would be a condition persisting throughout life and not just one that can make a return at the end of it.

245.

One invents a word like “micro-aggression,” freely uses it against others, and never gives a thought that this itself is an illustration of the phenomenon in question.

246.

Having pessimistic thoughts about things in general is not the same as having them on a personal level. The first can usually be tolerated no matter how many years go by. The second rarely goes without a cutting short of one's years in one way or another.

247.

Imagine if tomorrow all services were cut off and all stores closed down!

248.

The bounty of today's society is absolutely essential if barbarism is not to rear up and make a mockery of any pretensions we might have of having got beyond it.

249.

For most of us, the day-to-day reality is much closer to peace and cooperation than it is to hostility and war. This is a fact celebrated in a multitude of ways, to be sure, but which also relegates everything that might be considered contrary to this to the status of being merely a

diversion, a sort of virtual reality.

250.

When somebody uses the expression “we’re on the right side of history,” the intention is to indicate that the political aims and agenda of a certain party or movement are destined to triumph. Of course this may be true but it’s still rather presumptuous to think one can know the history of the future unless it’s the near future (and nothing more than this) that’s truly meant.

251.

No matter how famous and successful one gets, one is always haunted by the feeling that one is a fraud because, at some level or other, one senses the gap between public and private perception.

252.

Take a work like *Animal Farm*. Even the animals end up exploiting other animals.

253.

Any group or class, no matter what their moral and political convictions, ends up being corrupted by power (the desire for gain being, like gravity, a cosmic principle). And the more power, the greater the corruption.

254.

Now tell me about the Brave New World that's coming.

255.

From Newton to Einstein, gravity goes from being an attraction between bodies in space to being space that, along with time, is curved by bodies. In other words, it goes from being a mystery that most people understand to one that – physicists and mathematicians exempted – hardly anyone understands.

256.

When one hears the language of war nowadays, one realizes that the same mentality exists today as existed five thousand years ago. Peoples and countries that pride themselves on their good graces are, in the face of

some external threat, willing to unleash unmitigated horror.

257.

It would be fair to say that an empire is showing signs of decline when what it expects from itself as a model society and what it expects from itself as an imperial force grow disparate to the point of absurdity.

258.

For the birth of an aphorism, one is always counting on a state of mind that, at odd unaccountable moments, has the purity of a prism. Most of the time, it's quite the opposite: either cloudy and confused or else self-absorbed and fatuous.

259.

If every person were a model of good behaviour, the world would no doubt be far safer. The question is, however, how much do we desire safety over other things. Would a certain moral, political and cultural homogeneity, one resulting from everyone being right-thinking and right-acting, be tolerable? Could the world ever become a single community? How inhuman and despicable it seems to rule out such a possibility. Rather, it seems that the best in all of us wants to keep this dream alive even if

(but to say this of course is pure speculation) it leads us in its own way to the apocalypse.

260.

You see what the problem is, all you intellectuals who claim to know and occupy the moral high ground? If you can't give priority to the hardship and death that your own country is responsible for, then all your other attempts at being authoritative on issues of right and wrong, however well argued they may be, are permanently open to being challenged and dismissed.

261.

Once one is a public figure, especially one who is greatly admired and respected, it becomes very difficult to talk on all issues with the same level of openness and sincerity. The reason for this is, apart from the difficulty of admitting ignorance in some area or other, one has to deal with an idealized image that doesn't easily withstand any contrary effects.

262.

Here is man in all his glorious presumption! He invents theories about the beginning and end of stars and even the universe, but where, pray tell, is the theory about the beginning and end of theories?

263.

You will find enough people who say they're for world peace but few who would be willing to give up some of their luxuries or take a significant drop in their standard of living for it.

264.

Walt Whitman! So wholly optimistic about humankind! So all-encompassing! So democratic! So confident about the future! So creative with the past! So in love with the present! So American!

265.

Love loves to flatter and to be flattered. Add to this all sorts of sensual pleasures and delights and one has that all-too fleeting thing called romantic love.

266.

When the consequences of going to war are far from certain, when the leaders don't really have the desire to get involved in a military confrontation, the frightening rhetoric that emanates from hostile nations is

pure theatre. In most instances, its worst outbreaks will be forgotten. On the other hand, there is always the chance that, due to unexpected circumstances, what was supposed to remain mere posturing or positioning on the world stage suddenly transforms into an implacable commitment to setting it on fire.

267.

The ancient Egyptians must have had a burning desire to avoid old age as much as death. Not only did they die relatively young, but they also believed they would have a rejuvenated body in the afterlife. Further, their hieroglyphics only portray young people. Imagine this in a civilization that went through thousand-year periods of being young, middle-aged, and old!

268.

What is comforting as an eternal prospect: the cyclical return and the straight line towards some new development or destination.

269.

Generally speaking, a person who is preoccupied with right and wrong is attracted to the political sphere. When the preoccupation is with truth and falsehood, however . . .

270.

The ideal is not separate from the real but rather impressed upon it, resisting it as well as being resisted by it: dynamic tension, creative impulse, intermittent competition and cooperation. Pathway to and palette of all emotions and sensibilities. Changing contour of a living landscape for every head and heart, in every head and heart.

271.

"The best defence is an offence." Could any saying be more descriptive of the rivalry between political opponents?

272.

If everything that came from outside of us were taken into consideration (but this of course isn't possible from a moral, legal, political, social, or cultural standpoint), we could hardly be judged to be any more responsible for the best that we do than the worst that we do.

273.

Sex! The subject so out in the open and yet so confined and concealed! So

common in practise (but perhaps not so common as the talk of it and certainly not so common as the thought of it) and yet so private and obscure! Gateway to pleasure and also to shame! Thorn in the side of many whose sexual life can't match their fantasies or who find it a trial or betrayal of their "higher" purpose. Creator of people and yet seldom thought for this alone! Sublime and messy departure from the ordinary! Short-lived hell or long-lived nuisance! Married bliss or pornographic recourse and relief!

274.

An aphorism shouldn't single out some people for blame while treating all others as being more or less innocent because so much else, be it in speech or writing, is already devoted to this.

275.

Nothing is more certain than, if some individual, group, class, institution, organization, or alliance has power, it is given a greater moral authority than it would otherwise have. However, such power can never be so great as to prevent either a swift or slow erosion of this authority because morality itself can never be monopolised and can always become a counterpower.

276.

All human freedom is the product of an implacable fate whose rough way of measuring out things might be summed up as follows: "All people are free but some are more free than others."

277.

A despicable commonplace: the practise of, when reporting on some contentious issue, putting one side in the best possible light while the other in the worst.

278.

All arguments are suspect on a sliding scale in relation to the degree in which they are partisan and therefore polemical and therefore prone to giving top priority to winning over other arguments (with the "fairness" principle or "accuracy" factor being correspondingly affected).

279.

When it comes to violence, to the worst that human beings are capable of doing to one another, there is a double standard so immense (essentially

running from the condemnation of and even punishment for slight acts of aggression to the approval of atrocities), so long-lasting, so entrenched, so robust, so resistant to any capture at the level of practical morality that, when all is said and done, one is almost forced to the conclusion that it would take a Second Coming to get rid of it.

280.

The moment of death is when the world stops circulating through us and we start circulating through it.

281.

Most of us think from day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month, and year-to-year. Should it be any surprise when, in five, ten, twenty, fifty, or a hundred years, something happens that hardly anyone has thought of or planned for?

282.

Being concerned with the true at the expense of the good could be viewed as being cold, uncaring, and even reprehensible. Being concerned with the good at the expense of the true, on the other hand, could be viewed as being flaccid, vulnerable, and wide open to corruption.

283.

Walt Whitman managed to maintain his optimism even in the face of the horrors of the American Civil War. Seemingly all wounds resulting from this conflagration, as well as all those resulting from earlier ones, would be spiritually healed as the Great New Democracy spread its influence everywhere and made for the brotherhood of man. The positive, forward-looking, even "prophetic" attitude taken up by him throughout much of *Leaves of Grass* shows little sign of wanting or being able to extrapolate on the above-mentioned horrors to foresee the ones of the twentieth century. In this regard, his optimism was a product of his times. Though by no means innocent, the America of the mid and late nineteenth century still seemed to have all the ideals and energy in place to right all wrongs.

284.

A great nation in the throes of an identity crisis: continuity versus discontinuity, reform versus revolution, the "model society" project versus the imperial one.

285.

A. Burning issues of the day are falling stars destined to go out very quickly.

B. Oh, in most cases that's true but when one of these becomes a conflagration, it's more like a giant meteorite.

286.

What is proven humanly possible over and over: an ecstatic combination of moral certitude and extreme violence.

287.

Even if the issue of not being objective for various reasons is put aside, a free press is really not so free as it makes itself out to be. After all, being a business, it has to report a fair amount of news every day even when what's going on isn't much different from the day before.

288.

What's hardly ever admitted, being such a sensitive area, is that virtually everyone is looking for a way to be on top. But this lust for power and superiority, which is present even in this aphorism, can play itself out in a multitude of ways and seemingly keep company with the angels as well as the devils.

289.

While it's relatively easy to take up a radical or extreme position within some political movement it's extremely difficult, on the other hand, to maintain an ambiguous or equivocal position when there's some highly charged moral consensus.

290.

What makes morality so different from most subjects is that, although highly complex, everyone thinks they understand it. The reason for this is the assumption that, due to so much having already been rejected or refined in it, a sort of historical endpoint has been reached. It is largely assumed, in other words, that the times we live in and the culture we have are so advanced that our knowledge of good and evil has reached a culminating point and, minus a few finishing touches, can't change or go beyond what it is.

291.

"Cherry-picking is the act of pointing to individual cases or data that seem to confirm a particular position, while ignoring a significant portion of related cases or data that may contradict that position." – *Wikipedia*.
A good deal of the news we receive every day fits this definition perfectly.

292.

Would it really be possible to live without disliking or hating anything? Yes, but only if every single moment of our life was filled with the opposite. But of course this itself isn't possible (for even children have their ups and downs), so we end up having to be content with a sort of intermediate state. For many of the non-bliss-filled moments of our life, in other words, we rather like our dislike of things and even enjoy our hatred of them.

293.

There are a number of people nowadays who talk about religion as if it were the worst thing that had ever happened to the world. This is a huge subject of course that allows for many paths of investigation. However, there is one thing that strikes the imagination of at least some of us not so quick to condemn age-old practises. Mindful of what can never be dismissed as a possibility, namely, an apocalyptic event, we ask the following question: how many of these scoffers, if they could see the end coming not only for themselves but for their loved ones and all they hold dear, wouldn't sink to their knees in a second and pray for some act of salvation well beyond reason or scientific explanation?

294.

Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* seems to be his response to the question:

“How can I justify myself and everything else at the highest possible level?”
With such an immense project in sight, it seems that he, first, casts all restraint to the wind, spiritually speaking, and, second, comes up with a poetic vision exalting himself and everything else ad infinitum and without remainder.

295.

Personal and public hygiene: Just as we have to wear a public mask on a multitude of occasions, so we have to remove it (or have it removed) at least once in a while and in whatever way possible. After all, it does get dirty (not to mention sticky) underneath it.

296.

If we listen to the talk or read the books of people who communicate at a high level and we appreciate and understand them, does not our mind become in some sense the same as theirs?

297.

A. I had the thought the other day that people in olden times must have been better-looking on average than they are today because they died younger.

B. What a thing to say!

A. I say it not with respect to wanting any change of policy in this regard, but only in light of the common belief that everything we have today is so much better than it was yesterday.

B. I don't know what to say.

A. Well, it was just a thought. . . .

298.

It's seldom admitted that, while morality is undoubtedly caught up in history as specific foundational moments and avenues of progress and development, it's also caught up in radically changing circumstances. In other words, it's not so predictable as is commonly assumed and, indeed, if the truth be told, contains a powerful X factor.

299.

If only one could wake up every morning and, rain or shine, think "Oh, this is like being on vacation! I wonder what we'll do today!"

300.

Of course it's an illusion but when you're young, it does seem you can't go

wrong.

301.

A. How many injustices have you committed?

B. Too many to count.

A. Big ones or small ones?

B. Mostly small ones.

A. To friends, family, or strangers?

B. To all.

A. Do you deserve to live?

B. I've already been sentenced to death – just like you.

302.

In the Western World, the policy of being deeply humanist on the domestic front and rather hawkish or militaristic on the foreign, although by no means a new phenomenon, seems to be reaching its apogee. The question then is: Can such a state of affairs go on for very long if, as to be expected, it generates increasing tension – moral, political, and cultural – between the two sides of this policy?

The answer seems to be that one or the other side must collapse, resulting in either a militarily oriented takeover of the civil part of society or a humanistic takeover of the military side. In the latter case, however, a

problem still emerges in that institutions set up for the defence of society, if they ultimately renounce war, might render this society vulnerable to another type of takeover, namely, one that comes from the outside. In the case of a very powerful society, fearful of no enemies, perhaps this risk could be taken. However, it would indeed be an astounding feat for a number of reasons, not least among these being that this great society could never be certain it would keep its favoured position among less powerful but unfriendly nations.

303.

The most comprehensive thought is no doubt the most unwieldy and most unwelcome. It throws up and throws out all oppositions to the vanishing point.

304.

At a certain point in the human cycle, things turn around: daughters criticize mothers, sons criticize fathers – from generation to generation. Are the children who become grown-up sons and daughters generally fair in their criticism? Are the sons and daughters who become fathers and mothers any different from the fathers and mothers they themselves criticized? The answer to both these questions is yes and no. One thing is certain: that each and every one of them, from generation to generation, receives a certain amount of abuse due to one debilitating feature: they

can never be perfect.

305.

The Great Pyramids: A magnificent monument to anonymity on a massive scale – from the ground up, from the top down, from inside to outside, from below ground to above ground.

It seems that the designers and builders wanted to efface themselves. Could it be that they were not interested in a collective masterpiece but only a divine project? Could it be that they wanted to leave no trace of themselves but only of the gods who had built them or transplanted them to earth as a few choice stars?

Could it be that a belief in an extra-terrestrial world has never been as intense, as all-pervasive, as “democratic” as it was then?

Perhaps every partaker of this original experience was promised that their anonymity would be more than compensated by an everlasting recognition in the life to come.

306.

It is perhaps in our relationship to animals that we first developed a moral conscience. After all, it must have become increasingly evident that our extraordinary power over them – over these essentially innocent creatures that gave us all we needed and wanted – caused enormous suffering that had to be atoned for in some way.

307.

Besides the pharaohs, there was a powerful priesthood in ancient Egypt. Today there are some who view Egyptologists as being more or less the same: scientists who, no less devoted to their professional well-being than to the pursuit of knowledge, presume to have answered a number of fundamental questions in their field. On the other hand, the Egyptologists look down on their critics and those who offer alternative answers as being a ragtag group engaged in pseudo-science. It's certain that both sides are right in their own way, which leaves only time to determine who is right and who is wrong on any particular issue.

308.

The danger of becoming a public figure is that one can end up speaking less and less authentically on more and more issues.

309.

Excitement, headiness, the spirit of solidarity, the conviction that one is fighting for the just cause, the wholesale belief that some outrage has been committed and needs to be addressed – all these are the main drivers of the radicalization of youthful energies and the corresponding idealistic or quasi-idealistic outlook.

310.

An aphorism is an act of comprehending as far as possible while not losing sight of one's basic ignorance.

311.

Both commending and condemning without restraint usually have little to do with extending understanding and a lot to do with a *limited* understanding.

312.

Argumentation is part of pushing back the frontiers of knowledge and understanding. At the same time, it can only do so by running to excess, by claiming too much, by building its tower too high. As a consequence, it is forever requiring inspection, repair, renovation, and, indeed, when not collapsing on its own, demolition.

313.

Selling illusions! What a traffic there has been in this from time immemorial!

314.

The latest argument presented on a matter has a great advantage over all previous ones: it can rather convincingly pose as the final one.

315.

If subjects of debate were large pots and arguments handles, the first would be covered with the second in all shapes and sizes.

316.

With all its tendencies and proclivities, sex is a monster. If anyone doubts this, let them explain why it's still an issue after thousands of years (unlike, for example, bowel movements).

317.

A. When I look up at the cold stars, I receive this cheering message: "Take heart! It's not the end of the world if the world comes to an end. After all, there are trillions of others. It's just that you can't see them."

B. Cold comfort that is for the billions of people on this planet!

A. I know what you're saying. It pertains to our concern for our own personal death. But this is precisely what each of us has to deal with. I don't say it's the only way. I only say it's my way.

318.

Isn't it something of a miracle that a person from past ages can speak to us, and, speaking almost like our contemporary, inform us about what it was like to live and think in his day?

319.

People can say all they want against this or that. But when it comes right down to it, the world would be a lot poorer – indeed, would be no world at all – without all these *this's* and *that's*.

320.

Note: Leo Tolstoy was a ferocious critic of war. He believed that it should be eradicated from the face of the Earth. But when it came to writing his greatest novel, he didn't call it *Peace*. No, he called it *War and Peace*.

321.

An institution can only work on the basis of systematic thought. Herein lies the tendency – or prejudice, if you will – to consider it to be the highest form of thought.

322.

And they tell us that hurricanes and volcanoes are necessary! (This is the “beyond good and evil” of the scientists.)

323.

With the stupendous technological advances in the art of war, conflict between countries increasingly takes on the look of a collective death wish.

324.

Yes, it's fine to say that war has become obsolete on account of mutually assured destruction. But who will be the first to lay down their arms? Who will be the first to destroy them? Who will trust their neighbour enough to do that? For when it comes to countries, the neighbour is only as trustworthy as the person or people who happen to be in power. . . .

There's the rub!

325.

A. I must confess that, when I go to a large grocery store and look around, I don't view all the people there – people of different ages, shapes, and sizes – as Walt Whitman seems to have viewed his fellow man.

B. Walt Whitman?

A. The great nineteenth century American poet who exalted people despite their differences and despite their imperfections. In fact, I would go so far as to say that he likened their imperfections to perfections.

B. The only way I could do that would be in a drug-induced state.

A. Yes, but the trouble with being on drugs is it can go one way or the other.

326.

All countries distrust one another but, as it stands today, with good reason. All these same countries are trying not only to get their slice of the pie, but the biggest slice possible.

327.

We look at politicians nowadays – powerful, ambitious people with all their imperfections on display. It can be a bit discouraging. But to give credit where credit is due, they get a job done.

328.

If all world leaders were of the stamp of Marcus Aurelius, perhaps one could say (but nothing is certain): “The world is in good hands. The philosopher kings rule.”

329.

With systematic thought, we have an engine that runs institutions and society most efficiently but, under certain circumstances, can also run them into the ground.

330.

What! Blame a people? A country? A religion? A whole historical period? You can't get away with that! You might as well blame the whole human race – including yourself!

331.

If the historical development of inter-tribal and international relations were measured as technological development, our present age could be determined as taking the first steps towards the use of bronze or iron.

332.

Where does academic, argumentative, or systematic thought often fall down or fall short? In the area of capturing some insight or idea that falls outside its precincts.

How does it redeem itself? By accepting what it initially rejects. A certain passage of time, a certain professional realignment or readjustment, and a certain realization about how wrong it was – all these are necessary before justice is done.

333.

A. Look at the intestines and their operation! Don't they provide evidence of our blind humble worm-like origins?

B. So what? We already know about evolution.

A. I was trying to come up with a vivid image of it. It came to me while I was on the crapper.

B. Yes, but do you really have to tell us about it?

A. You're right. The origin of my idea and the origin of ourselves are the same – an unpleasant truth.

334.

It's not that armchair critics aren't necessary. It's just that they often give the impression that, if they were in charge, the problems they speak of would be instantly resolved.

335.

One thing that Einstein touched upon but is not generally recognized (for there are many who think knowledge is merely observation and calculation) is the immense role that the imagination plays in giving birth to scientific theories.

336.

Perhaps more than ever before, commerce defines our culture. As much as this might not be the best way to go, it's difficult to have a clear idea of some other path. A radical change of attitude, character, and habits, however, can no more be ruled out than a radical change of environment, circumstances, or conditions. But the latter might come at such a high price that, like a huge debt that can never be paid off, it doesn't bear thinking

about.

337.

Yes, knowledge is wonderful but suppose everything is infinitely complex. Then it's merely our way of comprehending as well as possible a vast array of phenomena.

338.

If knowledge weren't in some sense over-simplification, it would be like an encyclopedia with articles never requiring updating.

339.

Even science is always simplifying, but in such a complex way that it often seems to be doing the opposite.

340.

At every moment in history, there must have been at least a few people excited about being on the cutting edge of something.

341.

What does Nazi Germany show us? That a whole mass of people can be led by the nose if those in power are able to intoxicate a sizable minority, sedate a majority, and, whenever or wherever they choose, intimidate, frighten, and terrorize.

342.

If we could eliminate stupidity, we would do it very selectively. After all, some of it is entertaining, some creates employment for the less stupid, some offers us that extremely popular pastime of criticizing others, and, finally, we have to admit, some is in ourselves.

343.

There is no greater stupidity than that which, playing itself out to be smart, proves to be disastrous.

344.

How much of human affairs and industry, when we view them for the first time, without the cold, critical, calculating, judgmental, and sometimes

contemptuous eye of experience, is like nature in the raw, a delight to behold and nothing more!

345.

It's almost comical! All these countries that claim to be securing the peace while armed to the teeth and within a hair's breadth of letting everything go at each other!

346.

Clever person, beware your ability to make accurate predictions! For it may happen that you start making predictions that you would like to come true as if they *must* come true!

347.

A. A strong woman beating a weak man, that's not a problem to accept. But a strong woman beating a strong man, well, that's something that can happen of course, but not without raising some questions.

B. I won't argue with you on this. I'll just say it might fit the present situation. But what about the future? Couldn't everything be realigned?

A. Of course everything could be realigned. Everything could be destroyed

too. The point being it's impossible to know all the ramifications of this or anything else.

B. But you seem to be taking a pessimistic view of the matter.

A. How can I do otherwise without throwing away my own proper identity?

348.

An argument is all about consistency and control. An aphorism is about catching some idea on the fly and, if judged good, giving it the best possible expression.

349.

If we could view every good as a gift, and not as something owed or deserved, then the bad wouldn't be eliminated but at least it wouldn't weigh as heavily on us as it normally does.

350.

One thing that's hard to wrap one's head around no matter how much one tries is that nature is both beautiful and brutal – in almost every part!

351.

Most often the brutality in nature is very subtle and discreet. It doesn't seize our senses as does the apparent harmony.

352.

There are some books that are talked about more than they are read. Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is one of them, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is another. Now suppose these books were anonymously published. Would they have attracted so much attention? Would scholars have spent countless hours poring over them? Would the one be considered an important historical moment and the other a literary masterpiece? Or, if no connection could be drawn between them and the authors, would the first be considered an autobiographical monstrosity and the second a literary one? In short, can marketing take many different forms and, as one of them, delineate a powerful or illustrious context that makes all the difference between valuing and not valuing a work?

353.

Everyone is stalked by death but, by God, when you get old, you feel it breathing down your neck!

354.

With respect to many contemporary issues, it may do well to keep in mind that they can be easily erased by earth-shaking events.

355.

When one party or country starts talking about the atrocities committed by some other to which it is hostile, beware, beware! It's often the first step towards the justification of *committing* atrocities!

356.

An argument is an aphorism that moves outside its comfort zone and into, one might say, a combat zone.

357.

In the scheme of things, the ego is an exceptional awareness unashamedly exaggerating itself.

358.

First it's our grandparents' generation that gets picked off. Then it's our parents' generation. And then finally it's our generation. Happy days!

359.

Distractions! Distractions! When aren't they needed, be they innocuous or otherwise, to lighten the daily load or spice up the all-too-familiar? Only childhood, youthful exuberance, love, and drunkenness seem to nullify this need – periods of our lives or states of mind so caught up in one big distraction (to exaggerate a bit) that no others are required.

360.

A. It's part of our culture to prop up the dying, to keep them going as long as possible. But at what cost to the happiness, well-being, and perhaps even the dignity and sincerity of all concerned? I'm referring to what we often have to say to each other at such times that's not particularly true to our feelings.

B. What's the alternative?

A. A culture in which someone dies with almost everyone in a festive mood. As if the stricken person were going off for a miraculous cure. As if it were such a happy moment that invitations should be sent out. . . . Oh, I know it

sounds crazy! Death and dying aren't really beautiful. Despite all the efforts to plaster or paint over the ugliness, we're still left with the corpse or something on its way to being one.

B. This is brutal, insensitive talk! Besides, it contradicts what you were saying about making the dying process attractive.

A. I said things the way I did so as not to pretend that revulsion isn't at the heart of at least some of our reactions to death and dying. As for the rest, it would take a complete overhaul of our collective imagination to make this process attractive and, possibly with humour, revulsion free.

361.

Yes, anyone can get whacked but, at least when you're young, this isn't one of your daily thoughts (unless you're in a combat zone).

362.

Absolute transparency would dictate admitting that most of our daily whimsical, non-practical thoughts are, apart from the few real insights and good ideas we have, repetitive rubbish.

363.

Most people don't stop to think that opinions are based not only on knowledge but on lack of knowledge and that, if one had complete knowledge (which is of course impossible), one would have no opinions whatsoever.

364.

What we call memory is only the conscious part of something vastly greater that's thousands if not millions of years old.

365

Anyone who harshly judges the past on the basis of the values of the present shows signs of something they obviously don't consider to be a vice, namely, a massive superiority complex.

366.

There are many strange contradictions. One is fighting for peace. Another is acting high and mighty while promoting equality.

367.

Is the aphorism a line of thought without the courage to become an argument? Yes, to the extent that getting into battles and taking risks is courageous. No, to the extent that, by being a lone voice and not drawing support from a like-minded community, its courage is simply of a different order.

368.

An argument is always prone to overstating the case it is making – that is, to exaggerate – because it can often do so without being called out or at least called out very often.

369.

Stereotypes are often offensive and meant to do harm but, by the same token, treating them as outright falsehoods is, in the name of combating them, the will to untruthfulness forged by the will to win – or to win over – at all costs.

370.

The world is full of both beauty and horror and sometimes it's not so easy to say where one ends and the other begins.

371.

Make no mistake. Since earliest times, the vastly greater part of human activity has been cooperation. It's just that the opposite belongs to the category of relatively short-term events and developments that have left the deepest impress on our collective psyche.

372.

Yes, the binary way of thinking – the “yes or no” or “true or false” way of construing or constituting reality – is dominant in science. But will anyone claim that discussing current events or the politics of the day is scientific? Why then is there this collective will to treat public matters, even those of a controversial nature, as if their structure and movement were as accessible to the mind as chemical or physical events? What generates this rush to find solid ground that, in the flux of things, can only prove illusory? What if not the heat of the moment, the lack of concern for long-term findings, the “unscientific” approach to this flux, and the multitude of desires and interests that comprise it?

373.

And are you surprised that many historical events are shrouded in mystery? Why, think of the events today. Are they so clear?

374.

Every argument, no matter what it is, always leaves out something. That's why there's always room for a counter-argument ad infinitum.

375.

If one hungers for clarity on an issue – and most people do – then one has no choice: one must be a partisan.

376.

Why are absolute truths such a hot commodity? Because all who believe in them can claim, implicitly or otherwise, that others should believe in them and, if they don't, they must be either ignorant or ill-willed.

377.

Certain high-profile intellectuals of today play the same role as the high priests of yesterday.

378.

Coming off the weakness of childhood and the still-weakness of adolescence is the strength of young adulthood that, as if to make up for its humble origins, is certainly not shy about showing and exercising itself.

379.

Think of it! It's virtually impossible to go around in public, at least on a regular basis, completely nude. However, this is not primarily because of strict laws but rather because of a powerful taboo whose import seems to be that, if one breaks it, one is taking the most radical step any human being can take, that is, rejecting one's identity as a human being and returning to one's identity as an animal.

380.

The world is like an ocean floor full of the most amazing diversity. However,

the optics of the moment can mislead us into thinking that certain exotic plants and animals are far more populous than they actually are.

381.

The notion of good versus evil is a royal falsehood because, while being absolutely necessary in human commerce and communication (almost everyone has to buy into it), it's a gross misrepresentation of these very same things. In short, all is much more confused (or complicated) but dynamically related, every person, every group, every organization being a receptor of both the most noble and the most ignoble impulses.

382.

There are people who can do bad things without suffering from a bad conscience and there are people who cannot. However, it's not assured that the second group is better (or better off) than the first for, if they don't come to grips with their situation, they can be every bit as dangerous.

383.

The most common way to be not wholly truthful – even downright untruthful – is to be highly selective in what one speaks truthfully (aka the art of the newspaper).

384.

Morality in political combat is a weapon resorted to and used without scruple.

385.

Every night the mind goes on holiday for several hours and the body tastes death on the other side of all worry and pain.

386.

It's quite amazing that the mind can take in the whole of everything almost without remainder and yet be so far from knowing the details of things in countless different areas.

387.

So much in philosophy is an idealization of the human condition with the emphasis on the Good. So much in the daily news, however, gives the impression of constant wrong-doing and systemic injustices. Indeed, the distance between these two is so great that it appears both are extreme or at fault and that between them is the happy hunting ground where they

coexist and, perhaps to some extent, feed off each other.

388.

Of all the sayings handed down to us from the past, perhaps none have been more honoured by men's words and less honoured by men's deeds than the following: "Judge not lest ye be judged" and "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."

389.

A. Shakespeare said: "But to the waist do the gods inherit; beneath is all the fiends'."

B. That's the way I feel – even on my best days.

390.

It's ridiculous to think there will be universal peace or justice as long as there are people who can look upon others as their enemy. For even if they do so in the name of good, there will always be the temptation to do bad by arguing that the end justifies the means.

391.

How many of us are guilty of gorging on the latest news and then, for some reason or other, complaining that it gives us indigestion?

392.

The good-evil dichotomy is the axis upon which action is taken drastically and irrevocably.

393.

Whoever feels morally superior to others – and perhaps that means all of us – let him imagine all he would do or wouldn't do if he feared no repercussions.

394.

Without the element of fear, there would be no morality. However, the whole game demands pretending the contrary.

395.

Staying alive each and every day depends on a lot of brains besides our own.

396.

The pain that comes from making a stupid mistake, especially in front of others, is like that coming from a hard blow to the body.

397.

Making a stupid mistake is often like walking onto swampy ground and getting caught before one knows it.

398.

Thinking about one's stupidity is like a gnawing cancer until one ends up forgiving one's self for it (or forgetting that it ever happened).

399.

When perfect justice is done, all facts are taken into consideration. The courtroom best approximates this ideal. For the most part, what occurs outside the courtroom – in the news, public discussion, films, and even in many books and documentaries – falls short of this.

400.

A. Yesterday he was right beside me. Today he's in his grave.

B. This distance between the "right beside me" and the "in his grave" – we live with the thought of its being so great and we're constantly reminded of its being so little.

A. You're always speaking about death. Why should young ears or even not so young ears care about this?

B. I speak about death for myself and to myself.

A. And?

B. Let those with young-old ears listen in on the conversation if they wish.

401.

Trying to persuade and trying to be objective amount to a conflict of interests that can only be minimized.

402.

The power of persuasion goes hand-in-hand with perpetuating the belief that one is being completely informed about a matter.

403.

The pedagogical and the propagandistic combined: In the public arena, much of what goes down as thought is more like hitting on the same nail. However, it would be wrong to think this constant repetition has no design or purpose. Rather, it is meant to teach a certain way of thinking to a specific audience or, better, teach the language of this way of thinking (that is, all its idioms, arguments, and so on) so that one ends up with something that – surprise! – barely requires thinking.

404.

What is science? Essentially a body of interlocking and non-interlocking ideas based on and elevated by a rigorous, massive, and ongoing attempt to understand the nature of things. Or, to say it with less formality and a bit facetiously, science is glorified opinion.

405.

Don't place too much faith in the public. The people who show up to see a prince crowned will also show up to see him beheaded.

406.

Human beings are so exceedingly social that they have imagined obligations, appointments, and even retirement plans after death.

407.

We are thrown into the world before we know it. Living a life is the long reorientation process taking us from being nothing to being somebody with a distinct destiny.

408.

Thinking the worst of others is not unrelated to thinking the best of ourselves.

409.

Who hasn't seen it? The ferocious animal that catches another by the throat. And we? . . .

410.

Make no mistake about it! However great and good a person may be, there will always be some who, for reasons as diverse as their political ends or personal demons, will drag him into the mud.

411.

On the one side there is what could be called the country taste for a culture of familiarity and homogeneity. On the other side there is what could be called the city taste for a culture of difference and diversity. These opposing features, which are to be found in virtually every society, are at the roots of the monstrous struggle currently tearing apart Western civilization. In other words, although this struggle is morally and politically charged to the hilt, although it involves people calling each other the most horrid names, it is fundamentally a difference in orientation, preference, habit, and a conditioned way of being.

412.

Until the day we've learned to start the conversation about our adversaries in a way different from what's the norm today, we won't be able to say there's been even a jot of progress in this area.

413.

When there's a scandal, the steam roller of public opinion can be so frightening that even those only remotely connected to it take active measures to prove there's *no* connection between them and it.

414.

The ego can be destructive just as a river that overflows its banks. But the first can no more be separated from society's most vital interests than the second from the earth's most fertile regions.

415.

To look at a fish in an aquarium and think: "Yes, at a very early point in my development as a human being, I wasn't much different from it!"

416.

If a brain such as Darwin's can produce the theory of evolution and Einstein's the theory of relativity, then why not imagine every brain, though its owner be consigned to oblivion, making its contribution to the great river of human development or the great ocean of human awareness?

417.

If there's any saying that might be called hackneyed yet keeps its freshness over time, it must be "politics makes strange bedfellows" simply for the reason that the bedfellows really do turn out to be strange.

418.

Anything scandalous in the camp of the adversary is blood in the water for those who wish to see it in disarray.

419.

As everyday spectators of events at the local, national, and international level, we are often glued to things that, if they happened to us, would unglue us completely.

420.

Irony of ironies! It could very well be that the most subtle avant-garde thought, once popularized, becomes more dogmatic, emotional, and anti-intellectual than the thought to which it opposes itself.

421.

The newspaper has a vested interest in detecting and reporting on wrongdoing that, being profit-oriented, doesn't prevent it from doing its own kind of mischief.

422.

Every time the same facts are interpreted in a different way, a slight alteration occurs in the depiction of the world. This is a subtle or not so subtle process that goes on indefinitely and that, at any particular time, allows for a number of ways to "determine reality". . . . You ask if there are alternative worlds. Be assured there are and they're not so very far!

423.

We cannot live without the notions of good and evil but nobody has ever

proven that this opposition exists sub specie aeternitatis despite an immense effort throughout history to think, imagine, believe, and claim otherwise.

424.

The two great poles of attraction in human affairs are change and permanence. In some instances it's the first that dominates; in others it's the second. Perhaps the most extensive representatives of these two poles are science (including technology) and religion (including diverse forms of metaphysical belief). But the first is no more absolute than the second since it always depends on fixed units and parts and the second no more absolute than the first since it can always die out and be replaced.

425.

Today, as always, there is this practice of wielding words as weapons with the violence and brutality that doing it in the name of good seems to license.

426.

One measure of a happy life might be managing to get through it without being resentful over the worst.

427.

In politics hypocrisy is blatant but more accepted than outrage against it would ever indicate.

428.

In the court of public opinion, the general rule is (in case no one has noticed) guilty until proven innocent.

429.

A. I'm addicted to the news.

B. But you're always complaining about it.

A. I must be addicted to my complaining then.

430.

A change of interests, tastes, predilections, objectives, and even ideas:
how much of this is to fill a void that wasn't there when we were younger?

431.

It's quite possible that all warfare would cease and universal peace prevail if one day we were offered incontrovertible proof that the end of the world was nigh.

432.

Let us imagine a person perfect in every way. And then let us imagine this same person falling off from perfection and developing some minor defect. Rest assured there would be at least one other person who, noticing this minor defect and with malice in his heart, would treat it as if it were the mark of Cain.

433.

Perhaps the most common vice in politics is the practice of trying to make the other side look as if it were always in the wrong.

434.

Just as truth is the first casualty of war, so is it the perennial one in the political arena.

435.

A: I love my hate because it boils me up and gives me one of those moments of peak intensity that makes me feel truly alive.

B: That certainly is a frank admission of why you hate.

A: And it's so complicated! I even hate those who hate for the same reason.

B: But that smacks of hypocrisy, don't you think?

A: Who cares? Does an addict scruple about such matters? Just give me another fix!

436.

In geopolitics so much is theatre that it's safe to say the real play is offstage.

437.

After arriving at some goal or advanced stage in life, we usually don't find it too difficult to forget all the messiness that was part of our getting there.

438.

Sexually charged incidents or situations are common enough and may be criminal or criminalized for reasons as diverse as the ways in which both primal behaviour and primary codes of conduct manifest themselves.

439.

When it comes to thinking, believing, and expressing ourselves on a host of matters, we all live in a bubble that might be best called the NOW.

440.

All his life he was a smart operator,
And he got away with a lot;
But then he was finally caught;
And yet he still tried to be a smart operator (believe it or not),
For that's all he was ever taught.

441.

Here is someone who wants to be moral to the core. He seems to be a

saint. Here is another who wants to *know* morality to the core. He seems to be both divine and demonic. He wants to know truth – but at what cost?

442.

When a new moral outlook moves beyond intellectual circles and finds adherents at a more popular level, it's not long before the whole of society is affected. But what is indispensable as part of this process is that an increasing number of leaders, celebrities, and opinion makers add their voice to the proceedings. How much of this is sincere and how much is self-serving or a form of self-protection is one of those discomfiting questions that tends to be raised only privately.

443.

Being successful in politics at the highest level means giving the impression that one is playing the game of good versus evil while playing one's game *beyond* good and evil.

444.

The best that we can do with all our laws is limit the worst. As for getting rid of it, a way has yet to be discovered.

445.

Think of it! Only a few hundred years ago it was possible to be burnt at the stake for speaking against the Church. To be sure, corruption was rampant in a monetary or material sense but how this pales in comparison with the spiritual corruption which saw it become the tool of the Prince of Darkness and traitor to the Prince of Peace.

446.

The moral sensibilities of an age are the boggy ground on which many are caught, some innocent and some not.

447.

The moral sensibilities of an age are like a great net that sometimes captures more than it should but is seldom prosecuted for overfishing.

448.

If there is a tendency in society to rank offences in terms of their gravity (or even their depravity) until this peaks somewhere in the area of greatest moral sensibility, there is also a counter-tendency that plays down

differences and degrees of severity in this selfsame area.

449.

There are some words used in public and repeated on a regular basis that are clearly intended to make one feel more than to make one think. Perhaps this is not so bad in and of itself for feelings do have a great deal of raw power. On the other hand, if ever there was a doubled-edged sword capable of doing both good and evil, this must be it.

Additional thought: Even words can start off healthy and vigorous only to be corrupted over time.

450.

Being a genius usually means being worse than a lot of people at a good many things but incomparably better at one.

451.

The dream of one day being in the spotlight and the nightmare of one day being caught in a searchlight: have ever these two poles of human desire and destiny been closer than they are today?

452.

Never has violent imagery been so common and widespread – so socially acceptable, one might say – as it is today. And never have acts of random violence been so common and widespread despite our outrage and repeated outcries against them. Would it not be inappropriate to suggest that there is some inconsistency here?

453.

Every living organism exploits its surroundings. There lies Original Sin.

454.

Be assured that human beings can be conditioned to feel guilty about everything and anything. Christianity started this and we're still not finished with it. Indeed, it's even possible to imagine a day we'll feel guilty about nothing less than our very presence on the planet. How we'll be able to get rid of our guilt then without getting rid of ourselves is a question that doesn't easily bear dwelling upon.

455.

The social instinct, bond, or contract is so strong that, under certain circumstances, it can lead one to welcoming death, be it on an individual, collective, or institutional basis.

456.

Perhaps one explanation for the expansion and longevity of certain beliefs is their having, besides some key narrative and core principles or concepts of great range and depth, secondary aspects that may be eliminated, modified, or simply avoided by adherents who, for diverse reasons, are not receptive to them.

457.

No instinct is stronger than the social for the simple reason that it can count for more than survival.

458.

The social instinct is 24-7 (or almost); the sexual sporadic or episodic at best.

459.

A: What is your endgame with these aphorisms?

B: Most people want to analyze, comment, and critique locally. I want to do this globally.

460.

The social is deeply tied up with identity. Wherever the second is lacking, so is the first. So it is that whoever is not identified as being one of us, whoever is the enemy, whoever is viewed as being a product or tool and little else – lose their so-called human rights (whatever the case may be elsewhere or among others) and often their life.

461.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's basic idea was that the human race started off in a state of innocence (which he identified as primitive society) and was corrupted by civilization. Basically what he did was follow the biblical account (Garden of Eden, Original Sin, Fall from Grace, etc.) only update it with philosophical argument.

462.

A Modern-Day Parable: He'd thought of himself as a good person. He'd forgotten his sins. People liked him. He rose in the world. Then one day he had enemies. They exposed his sins. He tried to repent. But what he said came across as false or, if not false, certainly not sufficient to excuse him from public condemnation and possibly a criminal sentence. He suffered of course but so did his family. After he died, they still suffered. Collateral damage as it was later called by some people.

463.

They say a revolution devours its own children. Hell, so does Mother Earth – every day!

464.

If we become friendly, really intimate with death, then why should it come like a thief in the night?

465.

What in a leader can be responsible for extraordinary successes can also be

responsible for enormous losses, namely, an unshakable self-confidence.

466.

In the area of morality, a powerful example or illustration, even if only mythical (or, perhaps, especially if mythical), will have a far greater impact than argument when it comes to modifying the behaviour of the majority of people.

467.

A: Beware those who condemn too quickly, my friend, for surely it's not the milk of human kindness they have flowing in their veins.

B: No, but maybe they have the call of justice ringing in their hearts.

A: Ringing in their ears, perhaps, but in their hearts? Anyway, let's just say you're right. Then it seems to me there's an eternal dynamic in which justice springs out of injustice and injustice out of justice.

B: The two are completely opposite.

A: Idealistically speaking you're right but realistically speaking you're wrong.

B: And what about this distinction between ideal and real? It seems to me you're against all oppositions.

A: Yes, I'll admit the ideal crosses over into the real and vice-versa. So maybe we're both right.

B: A completely unsatisfactory conclusion!

A: Have you ever heard of a completely satisfactory one?

B: Yes, two plus two equals four. If that's not satisfactory, let me put forward some highly successful theory as an example.

A: A theory can always be overturned by more information, more observations, etc.

B: This conversation is going nowhere.

A: So I'll go back to my original question: Have you ever heard of a completely satisfactory conclusion?

B: I've heard of the completely satisfactory conclusion of killing one's opponent.

A: That won't do in your case, my friend, for although you're hostile to what I'm saying, you have the milk of human kindness, as I believe, flowing in your veins.

468.

How to describe prehistory in a few words: Speed, strength, size, stealth, savagery, super senses, and sabre-like teeth and claws slowly being matched and then put to shame by tools and teamwork of ever increasing sophistication.

469.

Once human beings had fire in their possession, it was as if the universe had made a decision.

470.

The fact that philosophers keep coming back to the question, What is Philosophy?, shows that philosophy is fundamentally the problem of itself but not in the sense that this problem has to be or should be solved (except in the paradoxical sense of its acquiring direction and meaning by trying to do so). No, it's only in the sense that there is no final answer to the question of what it is or, for that matter, what anything is.

471.

The two main political factions look at the violence committed by the other side or even slightly associated with it and try to make the case that it's the worst. What silliness or, at least, what silliness this would be if violence were truly the issue at stake!

472.

Wittgenstein's Wrecking Ball

Basically what Ludwig Wittgenstein showed in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is that, beyond bare facts about the world, what any one says about it can only be said by contradicting what others say. It follows that the sum total of what is said about the world beyond bare facts is, logically speaking, nonsense, i.e., $(W = A \ \& \ W = \sim A) \ \& \ (W = B \ \& \ W = \sim B) \ \& \ (W = C \ \& \ W = \sim C) \ \& \$

Note: The above is but one take on Wittgenstein. Since it's not a bare fact about the world, it too can be contradicted.

Further Note: Wittgenstein's himself paradoxically consigned his work to perdition. The strictest of all logicians, he recognized it as being fundamentally self-contradictory.

473.

Has anyone ever noticed the striking resemblance between party politics and team sports? In both cases, one supports one's side and fights like the devil to win every match. Of course this may go on for many years. But it's also possible that, for whatever reason, one ends up playing on the other side of the field. Then one of course fights like the devil to win every match against those one formerly called one's friends, teammates, comrades in arms, etc. Has anyone ever noticed that lifelong loyalty is not a featured part of the ethic of either one of these two activities?

474.

How difficult it is to realize that our interpretation of things is a folding out from ourselves of a particular world view that has already been folded in!

475.

Oh, to think that every day in the past was once as bright and new as any day today and now can only be seen as if through a glass darkly!

476.

If every person, particularly at the end of a long active life, were put on trial and, by virtue of the most searching inquiry, made to reveal all that was worst about their character past and present, public and private, then not even the most honoured man or woman would escape a blow to their self-esteem that, to any onlooker with a heart, would seem to be an act of utmost cruelty.

477.

Today's society warehouses the old – and it presumably does so with a good conscience – in places called Senior Citizens Homes as if they wanted

nothing more than to be away from young people.

478.

Child (angrily): I didn't ask to be born!

Parent: Yeah, you didn't apply for it like I did.

479.

Maximizing the sins of one's opponent or enemy; minimizing one's own: the greatest sin that humanity perpetrates in its bid to bring enlightenment to all.

480.

There is much that we gainsay – much that we critique and condemn – that in subterranean ways offers up something by no means unrelated to pleasure.

481.

There's virtually no position in philosophy, that, if one looks hard enough,

doesn't allow for the discovery of new arguments to prop it up.

482.

Given that nothing is closer to us than our own thoughts, if they become our enemy, it's likely we'll have to confront a long-term, insidious, and debilitating foe.

483.

It's possible there are people who live their whole life without sin but, if so, they are far from being tormented saints who've had to overcome themselves.

484.

Twenty-five hundred years of philosophy and numerous philosophical systems have provided ample material for what can only be described as the fashionable and partisan elements of this activity.

485.

Things are so complex and contradictory that a great simplifier will always be welcome. Indeed, if he comes along in troubled times and offers some speedy solution, he will be given nothing short of – and sometimes much more than – a hero's welcome.

486.

The greatest, most desired, most common, and most subtle falsehood is that wherein it is said that the truth of such and such a matter is at bottom a simple affair.

487.

Truth is idealized as being absolutely identical to itself. In practise, however, it wars against falsehood in a way that makes these two opposites forever interpenetrate and overlap themselves.

488.

Honoured in one corner, hated in another: has there ever been a person in high position who has escaped this fate?

489.

Student: What did Wittgenstein mean by the *unsayable*?

Professor of Philosophy: Yes, there's much to be said on this matter. Let me begin by . . .

490.

If one were to do a survey of all the positions taken up over the last two hundred years on various subjects and in various fields; if one were to take note of all the arguments put forward that support these positions and that seem to be presented in a rigorous, conscientious, and thorough way, then one must surely reach the conclusion that argumentative certainty is one of the most tenacious and inexpungible illusions we have.

491.

What is the *trompe l'oeil* of argumentation? That the latest argument, seemingly irrefutable, seemingly so in step with the times or, for that matter, all time, can't be other than the last word or else very close to it.

492.

Philosophy's eternal predicament is that it must be both highly conservative and highly liberal: highly conservative in its commitment to perpetuating itself, highly liberal in its commitment to challenging and even risking itself.

Note: It's not a question of one being beneficial and the other not. The eternal predicament of philosophy is its condition of possibility.

493.

Think of it! If the people we criticize in any way, shape, or form were able to be in our company at every moment and interrupt, rebut, and criticize us, it's quite likely we'd either be driven crazy or forced to adopt a strict rule of silence.

494.

Map all the concern that you have for yourself onto others and they should not be any more mysterious in their innermost depths than you are to yourself.

495.

Yes, the herd means much to the animal who belongs to it but when one of them is taken down by a predator, the others look on indifferently. Or so it seems. For it could be that what's in us is also in them, only muted, concealed.

496.

When we're young, every moment is like an invitation, a seduction. When we're old, it's more like a confrontation or at best a challenge.

497.

Whatever threatens one's interests can easily lead to moral or ethical blind spots. Or, to put it another way, finding expedients to avoid having a bad conscience is part of the human condition.

498.

Our fine age has something new to offer to the palate culturally speaking: moral hypersensitivity dished up with extreme crudity (if not cruelty).

499.

While philosophy, as opposed to science, tends to go around in circles, it has one advantage over the other in that its major texts never go out of date. In short, good reading is there for those who cannot do without it.

500.

The all too familiar can one day become the all too distant, something especially observable, sadly enough, among those who once shared many a meal, many a good laugh, and many a fond moment together.

501.

What ultimately are incompatible but at the same time absolutely vital in philosophy are the drive to clarity and the drive to comprehensiveness.

502.

The greatest democracy is the kingdom of death where great and small, rich and poor, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, strong and weak, wise and foolish, famous and forgotten, blessed and cursed find their pre-existing commonality.

503.

The leader of a country, particularly one that is a world power, is likely to find his principles elastic enough when confronted with the choice between keeping to the moral high ground and abandoning it for some tactical reason or strategic purpose.

504.

The whole (art) of argumentation lies in singling out and outlining the weak or missing points in somebody's discourse while giving the impression that one's own is absolutely free of them.

505.

There is this about philosophy: one can choose the one one finds most suitable – for there are certainly enough of them – and wear it like a shell (or a shoe) for the rest of one's life.

506.

A: Coming back to Nietzsche later in life, one finds it excessive. And yet one still remains a Nietzschean. Why?

B: Perhaps because he said louder and longer than anyone else what you believe, namely, that what is called evil is every bit as necessary as what is called good and that the two together spell life.

A: But people will object that evil must be eliminated. And that anyone who implies otherwise is himself evil.

B: Evil will no more be eliminated than the fight against it or all the evil done in the name of fighting against it.

A: It's that complicated?

B: Only for those with eyes to see this sort of thing. The rest prefer the binary view. It fits in better with what's usually said on the matter.

507.

A: I'm sure most people take me to be a good person but if they saw my worst moments, I'd be pierced to the quick. On the other hand, I'm very good at forgiving myself these moments.

B: So it's not getting caught by others that makes you so forgiving of yourself. Don't you see a problem with that?

A: I'm haunted by my imperfections in a world itself imperfect and capable of being both just and unjust. No doubt I've escaped some blows it could have delivered but, as far as justice goes, it's not always easy to say where it is.

B: The law tells us where it is.

A: Oh, no doubt! It's just that it can come with a fair bit of cruelty. Something I manage to avoid even in my worst moments.

508.

The great philosopher's works aren't widely read but his political views are well known. Since they're compatible with hundreds of thousands if not millions of other people's, he's hailed from all quarters as being a man of genius.

509.

Taken in the broadest sense, there are so many inequalities in society that justice is required as a great harmonizing and homogenizing counterbalance.

510.

Justice will be free of injustice the day it disappears as concept, theory, practice, and institution.

511.

The idea of eradicating inequality is an absurdity that nonetheless results in an ongoing process of correcting whatever aspects of it are deemed to be harmful.

512.

One advantage of philosophy is that it's a conversation you can return to without worrying too much about what you missed while away.

513.

It's quite possible that women will take over the planet with the mission of saving it from all sorts of man-made problems. How successful will they be? That's another question.

Additional thought: Perhaps nothing will save it short of giving it back to the animals.

514.

When it comes to foreseeing the future, even the best of minds fall short. So much remains unseen as the present steals into the future and slowly lights up its vast halls.

515

So many of the people that we pass every day – are they real or are they ghosts? Real if we happen to talk to them or touch them. Ghosts if we don't

and never will.

516.

Interests stand so close to ideals that arguing in defence of the latter is hardly ever a thoroughly innocent or honest affair.

517.

It's not pure reason but rather a changing world that makes what was formerly reasonable unreasonable and what was formerly unreasonable reasonable.

518.

A: Sometimes you sound like you're on the right, sometimes on the left. What gives?

B: Have you heard the parable about putting new wine into old bottles? In a literal sense, it means that the wine can cause the bottles to burst. In a figurative sense, it can mean that new ways of thinking dislodge and destroy old frames of reference. Right and left, conservative and liberal, religious and progressive – what are these but oppositions that get so much use from so many people it's getting harder and harder on the

ears!. . . . Oh, I don't know where it's all going! I just know it will go!

519.

When certain people do certain things in the arts, in the sciences, or in sports, they seem almost superhuman. But when they talk politics (as some are wont to do), they aren't much different from anyone else. Of course this isn't to deny the tremendous aura they carry over to what otherwise is most likely a mediocre event.

520.

Hyper-masculinity, hyper-femininity, and everything that exists or may exist in-between isn't likely to disappear from the world. Of course one species or other may dominate for a time (just as it goes with trees in a forest) and may even result in the decimation of others. But just as there is more than one forest, one region, one climate, one country, so there are always instances and possibilities of different outcomes. In point of fact, a world is this drive to diversity – one might even say hyper-diversity – and anything less would be the end of it.

521.

Look at how it is in the animal world! With a good many of them, courage

has limited value since they usually have more reason to flee than to fight. On the other hand, limited courage would be the end of those that must bring down other animals, some possibly as dangerous as they are.

522.

We could say this about the opposition between men and women, namely, that it's the scene of intermittent or even constant struggle with varying degrees of injustice, suffering, and so on. On the other hand, all that one need do is look at the literature if not life itself to see how compelling and passionate in character it has been (not to mention foundational) and, without being clairvoyant, predict that the disappearance of it would change the world irrevocably.

523.

The vast majority of people are very good, learned, and wise in a few areas but terribly ignorant in everything else. If this weren't true, it would be impossible for some political pied piper to come along, lead them by the nose, and, in some cases, off the cliff.

524.

A: Oh, it's easy enough today to say that Adolf Hitler was a monster

(what's difficult today is to say otherwise), but how many were saying this in the 1930's?

B: But they weren't able to see everything we can see today: extermination camps, millions dying on the battlefield, and so on.

A: All very true, I can't contest this. But how is it that a monster remains so completely imperceptible to so many people?

B: You have your idea. What is it?

A: It's the idea that he wasn't so imperceptible as a monster in the 1930's but that this was counterbalanced (i.e, this readily accessible view of him as a demonically driven character) by the general belief that he was doing great things. Only when everything went terribly wrong, when horror, death, and destruction enveloped the German people, was his fate sealed forever.

B: So you're saying if the Germans won the war . . .

A: I'm not saying anything except where they were in the 1930's is where we all potentially are.

525.

We are as actors on a stage. Put into different roles, we would learn to speak the lines we thought we never would.

526.

If only every generation could hear certain representatives of all the preceding ones to know that they too thought they could cut through the Gordian knot of morality.

527.

In morality there is no modesty.

528.

The nature of morality isn't trying to understand it but decking oneself up in it.

529.

All political news and commentary function like a giant stomach that consumes, along with important matters, a horrible amount of trash. The digestive and defecatory processes of this operation are not often easy to distinguish.

530.

There are no pure arguments that, by themselves, change a person's way of thinking but only good or effective ones that change the way of thinking of a person who, for reasons often not revealed or understood, is already predisposed to having his mind changed.

531.

Lieutenant X killed Lieutenant Y in an extremely daring, dramatic, and spectacular way. This incident happened some time after Lieutenant Y had played an especially mean trick on Lieutenant X that, although not fatal, caused him to suffer horribly. Immediately after having killed his fellow officer, Lieutenant X broke down and cried. Later he thought to himself that his reaction must have been due to there being a number of witnesses present. After all, he knew very well that, even while he was crying, he was secretly exalting.

532.

Why party politics can never be a wholly honest affair: First of all, it's a highly competitive game with winning being, if not everything, of considerable importance. Second, it's largely based on trying to please an immense populace composed of many different groups with often conflicting interests. Third, party loyalty often demands following an official

line despite whatever disagreement one might have with it. Finally, there are very few occasions on which any serious self-criticism isn't toxic in this environment.

533.

A: Why, I sometimes feel it in myself too! This speaking in a pretentious way! This overstepping the bounds of what one truly knows! This pontificating! This playing the authority figure!

B: Your space is little so what does it matter?

A: Oh, but perhaps my space is big! Perhaps it's the future!

B: But now you're overstepping the bounds of what you truly know.

A: I'm constantly doing this but also constantly reminding myself of it.

B: And is there greatness in this?

A: I will think so until I find a thinker who has gone further in this direction than I have.