1.2 | *The Human Condition*

This section contains many quotations that express general views of human life. The operative word here is "general." We have tried to exclude anything that does not comment on the state of man in general terms, that does not offer general recommendations or prescriptions for the conduct of life, or that does not deal generally with what might be called "the phenomenon of man."

The general descriptions of that phenomenon include portrayals of human nature in terms of its distinctive traits, discussions of the range of human abilities or capacities, comments on man's propensities and proclivities, and enumerations of human traits.

The quotations assembled here are not exclusively descriptive of man's condition. Some evaluate it, varying from self-pity at one extreme to self-satisfaction at the other. Still another line of passages raises general questions about the difficulties of living like a human being; these are accompanied by quotations that offer counsel or guidance for facing up to the trials and tribulations of human life.

Some of the statements collected here might have been placed in the preceding section, dealing with the grandeur and misery of man, and some in Section 1.8 on LIFE AND DEATH: THE FEAR OF DEATH. They are here because the terms in which they are stated are identical with terms that are central to quotations that belong here and nowhere else.

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1 Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.

He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

Job 14:1–2

2 Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.

Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. . . .

When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity.

Psalm 39:4–11

3 *Apollo.* Insignificant
mortals, who are as leaves are, and now flourish
and grow warm
with life, and feed on what the ground gives, but
then again
fade away and are dead.

Homer, *Iliad,* XXI, 463

4 *Odysseus.* The cruel belly, can you hide its ache?
How many bitter days it brings! Long ships
with good stout planks athwart—would fighters
rig them
to ride the barren sea, except for hunger?

Homer, *Odyssey,* XVII, 287

5 Oh! would that Nature had denied me birth
Midst this fifth race, this iron age of earth;
That long before within the grave I lay,
Or long hereafter could behold the day!
Corrupt the race, with toils and griefs oppress'd,
Nor day nor night can yield a pause of rest:
Still do the gods a weight of care bestow,
Though still some good is mingled with the woe.
Jove on this race of many-languaged man
Speeds the swift ruin, which but slow began;
For scarcely spring they to the light of day,
E'er age untimely strews their temples gray.
No fathers in the sons their features trace;
The sons reflect no more the father's face:
The most with kindness greets his guest no more;
And friends and brethren love not as of yore.
Reckless of Heaven's revenge, the sons behold
The hoary parents wax too swiftly old,
And impious point the keen dishonouring tongue,
With hard reproofs, and bitter mockeries hung;
Nor grateful in declining age repay
The nurturing fondness of their better day.

Now man's right hand is law; for spoil they wait,
And lay their mutual cities desolate.
Unhonour'd he, by whom his oath is fear'd,
Nor are the good beloved, the just revered.
With favour graced, the evil doer stands,
Nor curbs with shame nor equity his hands;
With crooked slanders wounds the virtuous man,
And stamps with perjury what hate began.
Lo! ill-rejoicing Envy, wing'd with lies,
Scattering calumnious rumours as she flies,
The steps of miserable men pursue,
With haggard aspect, blasting to the view:
Till those fair forms, in snowy raiment bright,
Quit the broad earth, and heavenward soar from sight:
Justice and Modesty, from mortals driven,
Rise to th' immortal family of heaven:
Dread sorrows to forsaken man remain;
No cure of ills; no remedy of pain.

Hesiod, *Works and Days*

6 *Cassandra.* Alas, poor men, their destiny. When all goes well
a shadow will overthrow it. If it be unkind
one stroke of a wet sponge wipes all the picture out;
and that is far the most unhappy thing of all.

Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1327

7 *Amasis.* My wish for myself and for those whom I love is to be now successful, and now to meet with a check; thus passing through life amid alternate good and ill, rather than with perpetual good fortune. For never yet did I hear tell of anyone succeeding in all his undertakings, who did not meet with calamity at last, and come to utter ruin.

Herodotus, *History,* III, 40

8 When a child is born [to the Trausi] all its kindred sit round about it in a circle and weep for the woes it will have to undergo now that it is come into the world, making mention of every ill that falls to the lot of humankind; when, on the other hand, a man has died, they bury him with laughter and rejoicings, and say that now he is free from a host of sufferings, and enjoys the completest happiness.

Herodotus, *History,* V, 4

9 And now, as he looked and saw the whole Hellespont covered with the vessels of his fleet, and all the shore and every plain about Abydos as full as possible of men, Xerxes congratulated himself on his good fortune; but after a little while he wept.

Then Artabanus, the king's uncle (the same who at the first so freely spake his mind to the king, and advised him not to lead his army against Greece), when he heard that Xerxes was in tears, went to him, and said:—

"How different, sire, is what thou art now doing, from what thou didst a little while ago! Then thou didst congratulate thyself; and now, behold! thou weepest."

"There came upon me," replied he, "a sudden pity, when I thought of the shortness of man's life, and considered that of all this host, so numerous as it is, not one will be alive when a hundred years are gone by."

Herodotus, *History,* VII, 45–46

10 *Chorus.* Not to be born surpasses thought and speech.
The second best is to have seen the light
And then to go back quickly whence we came.
The feathery follies of his youth once over,
What trouble is beyond the range of man?
What heavy burden will he not endure?
Jealousy, faction, quarreling, and battle—
The bloodiness of war, the grief of war.
And in the end he comes to strengthless age,
Abhorred by all men, without company,
Unfriended in that uttermost twilight
Where he must live with every bitter thing.

Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus,* 1224

11 *Orestes.* Alas,
we look for good on earth and cannot recognize it
when met, since all our human heritage runs mongrel.
At times I have seen descendants of the noblest family
grow worthless though the cowards had courageous sons;
inside the souls of wealthy men bleak famine lives
while minds of stature struggle trapped in starving bodies.
How then can man distinguish man, what test can he use?
the test of wealth? that measure means poverty of mind;
of poverty? the pauper owns one thing, the sickness
of his condition, a compelling teacher of evil;
by nerve in war? yet who, when a spear is cast across
his face, will stand to witness his companion's courage?
We can only toss our judgments random on the wind.

Euripides, *Electra,* 367

12 Someone will say: Yes, Socrates, but cannot you hold your tongue, and then you may go into a foreign city, and no one will interfere with you? Now I have great difficulty in making you [men of Athens] understand my answer to this. For if I tell you that to do as you say would be a disobedience to the God, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that daily to discourse about virtue, and of those other things about which you hear me examining myself and others, is the greatest

good of man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living, you are still less likely to believe me. Yet I say what is true, although a thing of which it is hard for me to persuade you.

Plato, *Apology,* 37B

13 *Socrates.* And now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened:—Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you [Glaucon] will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

I see.

And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Yes, he said.

And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Very true.

And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

No question, he replied.

To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

That is certain.

And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision—what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them—will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

Far truer.

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

True, he said.

And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he is forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities.

Not all in a moment, he said.

He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

Certainly.

Last of all he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

Certainly.

He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold?

Clearly, he said, he would first see the sun and then reason about him.

And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

Certainly, he would.

And if they were in the habit of conferring honours among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honours and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer,

Better to be the poor servant of a poor master,

and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner?

Yes, he said, I think that he would rather suffer anything than entertain these false notions and live in this miserable manner.

Imagine once more, I said, such an one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

To be sure, he said.

And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable), would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if anyone tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.

No question, he said.

This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed—whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

I agree, he said, as far as I am able to understand you.

Moreover, I said, you must not wonder that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell; which desire of theirs is very natural, if our allegory may be trusted.

Plato, *Republic,* VII, 514A

14 It is sweet, when on the great sea the winds trouble its waters, to behold from land another's deep distress; not that it is a pleasure and delight that any should be afflicted, but because it is sweet to see from what evils you are yourself exempt. It is sweet also to look upon the mighty struggles of war arrayed along the plains without sharing yourself in the danger. But nothing is more welcome that to hold the lofty and serene positions well fortified by the learning of the wise, from which you may look down upon others and see them wandering all abroad and going astray in their search for the path of life, see the contest among them of intellect, the rivalry of birth, the striving night and day with surpassing effort to struggle up to the summit of power and be masters of the world.

O miserable minds of men! O blinded breasts! in what darkness of life and in how great dangers is passed this term of life whatever its duration!

Lucretius, *Nature of Things,* II

15 The man who is sick of home often issues forth from his large mansion, and as suddenly comes back to it, finding as he does that he is no better off abroad. He races to his country-house, driving his jennets in headlong haste, as if hurrying to bring help to a house on fire: he yawns the moment he has reached the door of his house, or sinks heavily into sleep and seeks forgetfulness, or even in haste goes back again to town. In this way each man flies from himself (but self from whom, as you may be sure is commonly the case, he cannot escape, clings to him in his own despite).

Lucretius, *Nature of Things,* III

16 O mortals, blind in fate, who never know
To bear high fortune, or endure the low!

Virgil, *Aeneid,* X

17 He [Aemilius Paulus] began to discourse of fortune and human affairs. "Is it meet," said he, "for him that knows he is but man, in his greatest prosperity to pride himself, and be exalted at the conquest of a city, nation, or kingdom, and not, rather, well to weigh this change of fortune, in which all warriors may see an example of their common frailty, and learn a lesson that there is nothing durable or constant? For what time can men select to think themselves secure, when that of victory itself forces us more than any to dread our own fortune? And a very little consideration on the law of things, and how all are hurried round, and each man's station changed, will introduce sadness in the midst of the greatest joy."

Plutarch, *Aemilius Paulus*

18 Nothing is more intractable than man when in felicity, nor anything more docile, when he has been reduced and humbled by fortune.

Plutarch, *Lucullus*

19 Good fortune will elevate even petty minds, and give them the appearance of a certain greatness and stateliness, as from their high place they look down upon the world; but the truly noble and resolved spirit raises itself, and becomes more conspicuous in times of disaster and ill fortune.

Plutarch, *Eumenes*

20 Know you not that in the course of a long time many and various kinds of things must happen; that a fever shall overpower one, a robber another, and a third a tyrant? Such is the condition of things around us, such are those who live with us in the world: cold and heat, and unsuitable ways of living, and journeys by land, and voyages by sea, and winds, and various circumstances which surround us, destroy one man, and banish another, and throw one upon an embassy and another into an army. Sit down, then, in a flutter at all these things, lamenting, unhappy, unfortunate, dependent on another, and dependent not on one or two, but on ten thousands upon ten thousands.

Epictetus, *Discourses,* III, 24

21 Of human life the time is a point, and the substance is in a flux, and the perception dull, and the composition of the whole body subject to putrefaction, and the soul a whirl, and fortune hard to divine, and fame a thing devoid of judgement. And, to say all in a word, everything which belongs to the body is a stream, and what belongs to the soul is a dream and vapour, and life is a warfare and a stranger's sojourn, and after-fame is oblivion.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations,* II, 17

22 To have contemplated human life for forty years is the same as to have contemplated it for ten thousand years. For what more wilt thou see?

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations,* VII, 49

23 The art of life is more like the wrestler's art than the dancer's, in respect of this, that it should stand ready and firm to meet onsets which are sudden and unexpected.

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations,* VII, 61

24 Murders, death in all its guises, the reduction and sacking of cities, all must be to us just such a spectacle as the changing scenes of a play; all is but the varied incident of a plot, costume on and off, acted grief and lament. For on earth, in all the succession of life. it is not the Soul within but the Shadow outside of the authentic man, that grieves and complains and acts out the plot on this world stage which men have dotted with stages of their own constructing. All this is the doing of man knowing no more than to live the lower and outer life.

Plotinus, *Third Ennead,* II, 15

25 Another of the king's chief men . . . presently added: "The present life of man, O king, seems to me, in comparison of that time which is unknown to us, like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper in winter, with your commanders and ministers, and a good fire in the midst, whilst the storms of rain and snow prevail abroad; the sparrow, I say, flying in at one door, and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry storm; but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, into the dark winter from which he had emerged. So this life of man appears for a short space, but of what went before, or what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant."

Bede, *Ecclesiastical History,* II, 13

26 O wretched lot of man, when he hath lost that for which he was made! O hard and terrible fate! Alas, what has he lost, and what has he found? What has departed, and what remains? He has lost the blessedness for which he was made, and has found the misery for which he was not made. That has departed without which nothing is happy, and that remains which, in itself, is only miserable. Man once did eat the bread of angels, for which he hungers now; he eateth now the bread of sorrows, of which he knew not then. Alas! for the mourning of all mankind, for the universal lamentation of the sons of Hades! He choked with satiety, we sigh with hunger. He abounded, we beg. He possessed in happiness, and miserably forsook his possession; we suffer want in unhappiness and feel a miserable longing, and alas! we remain empty.

Why did he not keep for us, when he could so easily, that whose lack we should feel so heavily? Why did he shut us away from the light, and cover us over with darkness? With what purpose did he rob us of life, and inflict death upon us? Wretches that we are, whence have we been driven out; whither are we driven on? Whence hurled? Whither consigned to ruin? From a native country into exile, from the vision of God into our present blindness, from the joy of immortality into the bitterness and horror of death. Miserable exchange of how great a good, for how great an evil! Heavy loss, heavy grief heavy all our fate!

Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogium,* I

27 Man's nature may be looked at in two ways: first, in its integrity, as it was in our first parent before sin; secondly, as it is corrupted in us after the sin of our first parent. Now in both states human nature needs the help of God as First Mover to do or will any good whatsoever. . . . But in the state of integrity of nature, as regards the sufficiency of the operative power, man by his natural endowments could will and do the good proportionate to his nature, such as the good of acquired virtue, but not surpassing good, as the good of infused virtue. But in the state of corrupt nature, man falls short even of what he could do by his nature, so that he is unable to fulfil it by his own natural powers. Yet because human nature is not altogether corrupted by sin, so as to be shorn of every natural good, even in the state of corrupted na-

ture it can, by virtue of its natural endowments, work some particular good, as to build dwellings, plant vineyards, and the like; yet it cannot do all the good natural to it, so as to fall short in nothing, just as a sick man can of himself make some movements, yet he cannot be perfectly moved with the movements of one in health, unless by the help of medicine he be cured.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I–II, 109, 2

28 *Cacciaguida.* Thou shalt abandon everything beloved most dearly; this is the arrow which the bow of exile shall first shoot.
Thou shalt make trial of how salt doth taste another's bread, and how hard the path to descend and mount upon another's stair.

Dante, *Paradiso,* XVII, 55

29 He will be successful who directs his actions according to the spirit of the times, and . . . he whose actions do not accord with the times will not be successful. Because men are seen, in affairs that lead to the end which every man has before him, namely, glory and riches, to get there by various methods; one with caution, another with haste; one by force, another by skill; one by patience, another by its opposite; and each one succeeds in reaching the goal by a different method. One can also see of two cautious men the one attain his end, the other fail; and similarly, two men by different observances are equally successful, the one being cautious, the other impetuous; all this arises from nothing else than whether or not they conform in their methods to the spirit of the times.

Machiavelli, *Prince,* XXV

30 The world is like a drunken peasant. If you lift him into the saddle on one side, he will fall off on the other side. One can't help him, no matter how one tries. He wants to be the devil's.

Luther, *Table Talk,* 630

31 Those who accuse men of always gaping after future things, and teach us to lay hold of present goods and settle ourselves in them, since we have no grip on what is to come (indeed a good deal less than we have on what is past), put their finger on the commonest of human errors—if they dare to call an error something to which Nature herself leads us in serving the continuation of her work, and which, more zealous for our action than for our knowledge, she imprints in us like many other false notions. We are never at home, we are always beyond. Fear, desire, hope, project us toward the future and steal from us the feeling and consideration of what is, to busy us with what will be, even when we shall no longer be.

Montaigne, *Essays,* I, 3, Our Feelings Reach Out

32 It is pleasanter to laugh than to weep, . . . because it is more disdainful, and condemns us more than the other; and it seems to me that we can never be despised as much as we deserve. Pity and commiseration are mingled with some esteem for the thing we pity; the things we laugh at we consider worthless. I do not think there is as much unhappiness in us as vanity, nor as much malice as stupidity. We are not so full of evil as of inanity; we are not as wretched as we are worthless.

Montaigne, *Essays,* I, 50, Of Democritus and Heraclitus

33 We have as our share inconstancy, irresolution, uncertainty, grief, superstition, worry over things to come, even after our life, ambition, avarice, jealousy, envy, unruly, frantic, and untamable appetites, war, falsehood, disloyalty, detraction, and curiosity. Indeed we have strangely overpaid for this fine reason that we glory in, and this capacity to judge and know, if we have bought it at the price of this infinite number of passions to which we are incessantly a prey.

Montaigne, *Essays,* II, 12, Apology for Raymond Sebond

34 Alas, poor man! You have enough necessary ills without increasing them by your invention, and you are miserable enough by nature without being so by art. You have real and essential deformities enough without forging imaginary ones.

Montaigne, *Essays,* III, 5, On Some Verses of Virgil

35 We are great fools. "He has spent his life in idleness," we say; "I have done nothing today." What, have you not lived? That is not only the fundamental but the most illustrious of your occupations. "If I had been placed in a position to manage great affairs, I would have shown what I could do." Have you been able to think out and manage your own life? You have done the greatest task of all. To show and exploit her resources Nature has no need of fortune; she shows herself equally on all levels and behind a curtain as well as without one. To compose our character is our duty, not to compose books, and to win, not battles and provinces, but order and tranquility in our conduct. Our great and glorious masterpiece is to live appropriately. All other things, ruling, hoarding, building, are only little appendages and props, at most.

Montaigne, *Essays,* III, 13, Of Experience

36 What man that sees the ever-whirling wheele
Of Change, the which all mortall things doth sway,
But that therby doth find, and plainly feele,
How Mutability in them doth play
Her cruell sports, to many mens decay?

Spenser, *Faerie Queene,* Bk. VII, VI, 1

37 Full little knowest thou that hast not tride,
What hell it is, in suing long to bide:
To loose good dayes, that might be better spent;
To wast long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed to day, to be put back to morrow;
To feed on hope, to pine with feare and sorrow;
To have thy Princes grace, yet want her Peeres;
To have thy asking, yet waite manie yeeres;
To fret thy soule with crosses and with cares;
To eate thy heart through comfortlesse dispaires;
To fawne, to crowche, to waite, to ride, to ronne,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undonne.
Unhappie wight, borne to desastrous end,
That doth his life in so long tendance spend!
Spenser, *Complaints:* Mother Hubberds Tale, 895

38 *King Henry.* O God! methinks it were a happy life,
To be no better than a homely swain;
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run,
How many make the hour full complete;
How many hours bring about the day;
How many days will finish up the year;
How many years a mortal man may live.
When this is known, then to divide the times:
So many hours must I tend my flock;
So many hours must I take my rest;
So many hours must I contemplate;
So many hours must I sport myself;
So many days my ewes have been with young;
So many weeks ere the poor fools will ean;
So many years ere I shall shear the fleece:
So minutes, hours, days, months, and years,
Pass'd over to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.
Shakespeare, *III Henry VI,* II, v, 21

39 *Puck.* Lord, what fools these mortals be!
Shakespeare, *Midsummer-Night's Dream,* III, ii, 115

40 *Lewis.* There's nothing in this world can make me joy:
Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale
Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man.
Shakespeare, *King John,* III, iv, 107

41 *Gratiano.* You look not well, Signior Antonio;
You have too much respect upon the world:
They lose it that do buy it with much care:
Believe me, you are marvellously changed.
Antonio. I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.
Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice,* I, i, 73

42 *Brutus.* There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves
Or lose our ventures.
Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar,* IV, iii, 218

43 *Duke.* Thou seest we are not all alone unhappy:
This wide and universal theatre
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
Wherein we play in.
Jaques. All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts.
Shakespeare, *As You Like It,* II, vii, 136

44 *Macbeth.* To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* V, v, 19

45 *3rd Fisherman.* Master, I marvel how the fishes live in the sea.
1st Fisherman. Why, as men do a-land; the great ones eat up the little ones. I can compare our rich misers to nothing so fitly as to a whale; a' plays and tumbles, driving the poor fry before him, and at last devours them all at a mouthful. Such whales have I heard on o' the land, who never leave gaping till they've swallowed the whole parish, church, steeple, bells, and all. . . .
Pericles. [*Aside*] How from the finny subject of the sea
These fishers tell the infirmities of men;
And from their watery empire recollect
All that may men approve or men detect!
Shakespeare, *Pericles,* II, i, 30

46 *Prospero.* Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air,
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, that great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.
Shakespeare, *Tempest,* IV, i, 148

47 Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.
Shakespeare, *Sonnet LX*

48 Ah, but says *Sancho,* your strolling Emperor's Crowns and Sceptres are not of pure Gold, but Tinsel and Copper. I grant it, said Don *Quixote;* nor is it fit the Decorations of the Stage should be real, but rather Imitations, and the Resemblance of Realities, as the Plays themselves must be; which, by the way, I wou'd have you love and esteem, *Sancho,* and consequently those that write, and also those that act 'em; for they are all instrumental to the Good of the Commonwealth, and set before our Eyes those Looking-glasses that reflect a lively Representation of human Life; nothing being able to give us a more just Idea of Nature, and what we are or ought to be, than Comedians and Comedies. Prithee tell me, Hast thou never seen a Play acted, where Kings, Emperors, Prelates, Knights, Ladies, and other Characters, are introduced on the Stage? One acts a Ruffian, another a Soldier; this Man a Cheat, and that a Merchant; one plays a designing Fool, and another a foolish Lover: But the Play done, and the Actors undress'd, they are all equal, and as they were before. All this I have seen, quoth *Sancho.* Just such a Comedy, said Don *Quixote,* is acted on the great Stage of the World, where some play the Emperors, others the Prelates, and, in short, all the Parts that can be brought into a Dramatick Piece; till Death, which is the Catastrophe and End of the Action, strips the Actors of all their Marks of Distinction, and levels their Quality in the Grave. A rare Comparison, quoth *Sancho,* though not so new, but that I have heard it over and over. Just such another is that of a Game at Chess, where while the Play lasts, every Piece has its particular Office; but when the Game's over, they are all mingl'd and huddled together, and clapp'd into a Bag, just as when Life's ended we are laid up in the Grave. Truly, *Sancho,* said Don *Quixote,* thy Simplicity lessens, and thy Sense improves every Day.
Cervantes, *Don Quixote,* II, 12

49 If a man meditate much upon the universal frame of nature, the earth with men upon it (the divineness of souls except) will not seem much other than an anthill, whereas some ants carry corn, and some carry their young, and some go empty, and all to and fro a little heap of dust.
Bacon, *Advancement of Learning,* Bk. I, VIII, 1

50 Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same is consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.
Hobbes, *Leviathan,* I, 13

51 For the laws of nature, as *justice, equity, modesty, mercy,* and, in sum, *doing to others as we would be done to,* of themselves, without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions, that carry us to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like. And covenants, without the sword, are but words and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore, notwithstanding the laws of nature (which every one hath then kept, when he has the will to keep them, when he can do it safely), if there be no power erected, or not great enough for our security, every man will and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art for caution against all other men. And in all places, where men have lived by small families, to rob and spoil one another has been a trade, and so far from being reputed against the law of nature that the greater spoils they gained, the greater was their honour; and men observed no other laws therein but the laws of honour; that is, to abstain from cruelty, leaving to men their lives and instruments of husbandry. And as small families did then; so now do cities and kingdoms, which are but greater families (for their own security), enlarge their dominions upon all pretences of danger, and fear of invasion, or assistance that may be given to invaders; endeavour as much as they can to subdue or weaken their neighbours by open force, and secret arts, for want of other caution, justly; and are remembered for it in after ages with honour.
Hobbes, *Leviathan,* II, 17

52 For the World. I count it not an Inn. but an Hospital; and a place not to live, but to die in.
Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici,* II, 11

53 When I have occasionally set myself to consider the different distractions of men, the pains and

perils to which they expose themselves at court or in war, whence arise so many quarrels, passions, bold and often bad ventures, etc., I have discovered that all the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact, that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber. A man who has enough to live on, if he knew how to stay with pleasure at home, would not leave it to go to sea or to besiege a town. A commission in the army would not be bought so dearly, but that it is found insufferable not to budge from the town; and men only seek conversation and entering games, because they cannot remain with pleasure at home.

But, on further consideration, when, after finding the cause of all our ills, I have sought to discover the reason of it, I have found that there is one very real reason, namely, the natural poverty of our feeble and mortal condition, so miserable that nothing can comfort us when we think of it closely.

Pascal, *Pensées,* II, 139

54 Let us imagine a number of men in chains and all condemned to death, where some are killed each day in the sight of the others, and those who remain see their own fate in that of their fellows and wait their turn, looking at each other sorrowfully and without hope. It is an image of the condition of men.

Pascal, *Pensées,* III, 199

55 The last act is tragic, however happy all the rest of the play is; at the last a little earth is thrown upon our head, and that is the end forever.

Pascal, *Pensées,* III, 210

56 As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep; and, as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. . . . I looked and saw him open the book and read therein; and, as he read, he wept, and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, "What shall I do?" . . .

Now I saw, upon a time, when he was walking in the fields, that he was (as he was wont) reading in this book, and greatly distressed in his mind; and as he read, he burst out, as he had done before, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?"

Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress,* I

57 Behold the child, by Nature's kindly law,
Pleas'd with a rattle, tickled with a straw:
Some livelier play-thing gives his youth delight,
A little louder, but as empty quite:
Scarfs, garters, gold, amuse his riper stage;
And beads and pray'r-books are the toys of age:
Pleas'd with this bauble still, as that before;
'Till tir'd he sleeps, and Life's poor play is o'er!

Pope, *Essay on Man,* Epistle II, 275

58 It is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains still the same, in its principles and operations. The same motives always produce the same actions: The same events follow from the same causes. Ambition, avarice, self-love, vanity, friendship, generosity, public spirit: these passions, mixed in various degrees, and distributed through society, have been, from the beginning of the world, and still are, the source of all the actions and enterprises, which have ever been observed among mankind.

Hume, *Concerning Human Understanding,* VIII, 65

59 We are placed in this world, as in a great theatre, where the true springs and causes of every event are entirely concealed from us; nor have we either sufficient wisdom to foresee, or power to prevent, those ills with which we are continually threatened. We hang in perpetual suspense between life and death, health and sickness, plenty and want, which are distributed amongst the human species by secret and unknown causes, whose operation is oft unexpected, and always unaccountable.

Hume, *Natural History of Religion,* III

60 I live in a constant endeavour to fence against the infirmities of ill health, and other evils of life, by mirth; being firmly persuaded that every time a man smiles,—but much more so, when he laughs, it adds something to this Fragment of Life.

Sterne, *Tristram Shandy,* Dedication

61 What is the life of man! Is it not to shift from side to side?—from sorrow to sorrow?—to button up one cause of vexation—and unbutton another?

Sterne, *Tristram Shandy,* IV, 31

62 "Do you believe," said Candide, "that mankind have always been cutting one another's throats; that they were always liars, knaves, treacherous and ungrateful; always thieves, sharpers, highwaymen, lazy, envious and gluttons; always drunkards, misers, ambitious and blood-thirsty; always backbiters, debauchees, fanatics, hypocrites and fools?" "Do you not believe," said Martin, "that hawks have always preyed upon pigeons, when they could light upon them?"

Voltaire, *Candide,* XXI

63 "I [The Old Woman] want to know which is the worst;—to be ravished an hundred times by negro pirates, to run the gauntlet among the Bulgarians, to be whipped and hanged, to be dissected, to row in the galleys; in a word, to have suffered all the

miseries we have undergone, or to stay here, without doing anything?" "That is a great question," said Candide.

Voltaire, *Candide,* XXX

64 "Let us work," said Martin, "without disputing; it is the only way to render life supportable."

All their little society entered into this laudable design, according to their different abilities. Their little piece of ground produced a plentiful crop. Cunegonde was indeed very homely, but she became an excellent pastry cook. Paquetta worked at embroidery, and the old woman took care of the linen. There was no idle person in the company, not excepting even Girofflee; he made a very good carpenter, and became a very honest man.

As to Pangloss, he evidently had a lurking consciousness that his theory required unceasing exertions, and all his ingenuity, to sustain it. Yet he stuck to it to the last; his thinking and talking faculties could hardly be diverted from it for a moment. He seized every occasion to say to Candide, "All the events in this best of possible worlds are admirably connected. If a single link in the great chain were omitted, the harmony of the entire universe would be destroyed. If you had not been expelled from that beautiful castle, with those cruel kicks, for your love to Miss Cunegonde; if you had not been imprisoned by the inquisition; if you had not travelled over a great portion of America on foot; if you had not plunged your sword through the baron; if you had not lost all the sheep you brought from that fine country, Eldorado, together with the riches with which they were laden, you would not be here to-day, eating preserved citrons, and pistachio nuts."

"That's very well said, and may all be true," said Candide; "but let's cultivate our garden."

Voltaire, *Candide,* XXX

65 It needs twenty years to lead man from the plant state in which he is within his mother's womb, and the pure animal state which is the lot of his early childhood, to the state when the maturity of the reason begins to appear. It has needed thirty centuries to learn a little about his structure. It would need eternity to learn something about his soul. It takes an instant to kill him.

Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary:* General Reflection on Man

66 "They are surely happy," said the prince, "who have all these conveniencies, of which I envy none so much as the facility with which separated friends interchange their thoughts."

"The Europeans," answered Imlac, "are less unhappy than we, but they are not happy. Human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed."

Johnson, *Rasselas,* XI

67 *Johnson.* We would all be idle if we could.

Boswell, *Life of Johnson (Apr. 3, 1776)*

68 For though management and persuasion are always the easiest and the safest instruments of governments, as force and violence are the worst and the most dangerous, yet such, it seems, is the natural insolence of man that he almost always disdains to use the good instrument, except when he cannot or dare not use the bad one.

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations,* V, 1

69 There are two very natural propensities which we may distinguish in the most virtuous and liberal dispositions, the love of pleasure and the love of action. If the former is refined by art and learning, improved by the charms of social intercourse, and corrected by a just regard to economy, to health, and to reputation, it is productive of the greatest part of the happiness of private life. The love of action is a principle of a much stronger and more doubtful nature. It often leads to anger, to ambition, and to revenge; but when it is guided by the sense of propriety and benevolence, it becomes the parent of every virtue, and, if those virtues are accompanied with equal abilities, a family, a state, or an empire may be indebted for their safety and prosperity to the undaunted courage of a single man. To the love of pleasure we may therefore ascribe most of the agreeable, to the love of action we may attribute most of the useful and respectable, qualifications. The character in which both the one and the other should be united and harmonised would seem to constitute the most perfect idea of human nature.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* XV

70 In the fall and the sack of great cities an historian is condemned to repeat the tale of uniform calamity: the same effects must be produced by the same passions; and when those passions may be indulged without control, small, alas! is the difference between civilised and savage man.

Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* LXVIII

71 I think I may fairly make two postulata.

First, that food is necessary to the existence of man.

Secondly, that the passion between the sexes is necessary and will remain nearly in its present state.

These two laws, ever since we have had any knowledge of mankind, appear to have been fixed laws of our nature, and, as we have not hitherto seen any alteration in them, we have no right to conclude that they will ever cease to be what they now are without an immediate act of power in that Being who first arranged the system of the

universe, and for the advantage of his creatures, still executes, according to fixed laws, all its various operations. . . .

Assuming then, my postulata as granted, I say that the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man.

Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio. A slight acquaintance with numbers will show the immensity of the first power in comparison of the second.

By that law of our nature which makes food necessary to the life of man, the effects of these two unequal powers must be kept equal.

This implies a strong and constantly operating check on population from the difficulty of subsistence. This difficulty must fall somewhere and must necessarily be severely felt by a large portion of mankind.

Through the animal and vegetable kingdoms, nature has scattered the seeds of life abroad with the most profuse and liberal hand. She has been comparatively sparing in the room and the nourishment necessary to rear them. The germs of existence contained in this spot of earth, with ample food, and ample room to expand in, would fill millions of worlds in the course of a few thousand years. Necessity, that imperious all-pervading law of nature, restrains them within the prescribed bounds. The race of plants and the race of animals shrink under this great restrictive law. And the race of man cannot, by any efforts of reason, escape from it. Among plants and animals its effects are waste of seed, sickness, and premature death; among mankind, misery and vice. The former, misery, is an absolutely necessary consequence of it. Vice is a highly probable consequence, and we therefore see it abundantly prevail, but it ought not, perhaps, to be called an absolutely necessary consequence. The ordeal of virtue is to resist all temptation to evil.

This natural inequality of the two powers of population and or production in the earth and that great law of our nature which must constantly keep their effects equal form the great difficulty that to me appears insurmountable in the way to the perfectibility of society. All other arguments are of slight and subordinate consideration in comparison of this. I see no way by which man can escape from the weight of this law, which pervades all animated nature. No fancied equality, no agrarian regulations in their utmost extent, could remove the pressure of it even for a single century. And it appears, therefore, to be decisive against the possible existence of a society all the members of which should live in ease, happiness, and comparative leisure, and feel no anxiety about providing the means of subsistence for themselves and families.

Consequently, if the premises are just, the argument is conclusive against the perfectibility of the mass of mankind.

Malthus, *Population,* I

72 *Oswald.* Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
'Tis done, and in the after-vacancy
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:
Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
And shares the nature of infinity.

Wordsworth, *The Borderers,* III, 405

73 *Mr. Bennet.* For what do we live, but to make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn?

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* LVII

74 *Demogorgon.* To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory!

Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound,* IV, 570

75 Human life must be some kind of mistake.

Schopenhauer, *Vanity of Existence*

76 If we turn from contemplating the world as a whole, and, in particular, the generations of men as they live their little hour of mock-existence and then are swept away in rapid succession; if we turn from this, and look at life in its small details, as presented, say, in a comedy, how ridiculous it all seems! It is like a drop of water seen through a microscope, a single drop teeming with *infusoria;* or a speck of cheese full of mites invisible to the naked eye. How we laugh as they bustle about so eagerly, and struggle with one another in so tiny a space! And whether here, or in the little span of human life, this terrible activity produces a comic effect.

Schopenhauer, *Vanity of Existence*

77 Alas, poor devil! spectres are appointed to haunt him: one age he is hagridden, bewitched; the next, priestridden, befooled; in all ages, bedevilled. And now the Genius of Mechanism smothers him worse than any Nightmare did; till the Soul is nigh choked out of him, and only a kind of Digestive, Mechanic life remains.

Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus,* III, 3

78 Like a God-created, fire-breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane.

Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus,* III, 8

79 In the hour of death the only adequate consolation is that one has not evaded life, but has endured it. What a man shall accomplish or not accomplish, does not lie in his power to decide; he is not the One who will guide the world; he has only to obey. Everyone has, therefore, first and foremost (instead of asking which place is most comfortable for him, which connection is the most advantageous to him), to assure himself on the question of where Providence can use him, if it so pleases Providence. The point consists precisely in loving his neighbor, or, what is essentially the same thing, in living equally for every man. Every other point of view is a contentious one, however advantageous and comfortable and apparently significant this position may be. Providence cannot use one who has placed himself there, for he is plainly in rebellion against Providence. But he who duly took that overlooked, that despised and disdained place, without insisting on his earthly rights, without attaching himself to just one single man, essentially existing equally for all men, he will, even though he apparently achieves nothing, even if he becomes exposed to the derision of the poor, or to the ridicule of his superiors, or to both insult and ridicule, yet in the hour of death, he will confidently dare say to his soul: "I have done my best; whether I have accomplished anything, I do not know; whether I have helped anyone, I do not know; but that I have lived for them, that I do know, I know it from the fact that they insulted me. And this is my consolation, that I shall not have to take the secret with me to the grave, that I, in order to have good and undisturbed and comfortable days in life, have denied my kinship to other men, kinship with the poor, in order to live in aristocratic seclusion, or with the distinguished, in order to live in secret obscurity."

Kierkegaard, *Works of Love,* I, 2C

80 Life is a festival only to the wise. Seen from the nook and chimney-side of prudence, it wears a ragged and dangerous front.

Emerson, *Heroism*

81 Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

Tennyson, *In Memoriam,* CVI

82 There are certain queer times and occasions in this strange mixed affair we call life when a man takes this whole universe for a vast practical joke, though the wit thereof he but dimly discerns, and more than suspects that the joke is at nobody's expense but his own. However, nothing dispirits, and nothing seems worth while disputing. He bolts down all events, all creeds, and beliefs, and persuasions, all hard things visible and invisible, never mind how knobby; as an ostrich of potent digestion gobbles down bullets and gun flints. And as for small difficulties and worryings, prospects of sudden disaster, peril of life and limb; all these, and death itself, seem to him only sly, good-natured hits, and jolly punches in the side bestowed by the unseen and unaccountable old joker. That odd sort of wayward mood I am speaking of, comes over a man only in some time of extreme tribulation; it comes in the very midst of his earnestness, so that what just before might have seemed to him a thing most momentous, now seems but a part of the general joke.

Melville, *Moby Dick,* XLIX

83 Consider the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider also the devilish brilliance and beauty of many of its most remorseless tribes, as the dainty embellished shape of many species of sharks. Consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began.

Consider all this; and then turn to this green, gentle, and most docile earth; consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself? For as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half-known life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return!

Melville, *Moby Dick,* LVIII

84 All men live enveloped in whale-lines. All are born with halters round their necks; but it is only when caught in the swift, sudden turn of death, that mortals realise the silent, subtle, everpresent perils of life.

Melville, *Moby Dick,* LX

85 Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify.

Thoreau, *Walden:* Where I Lived, and What I Lived For

86 Why I left the woods? I do not think that I can tell. . . . Perhaps it is none of my business, even if it is yours. . . . There was a little stagnation, it may be. About two o'clock in the afternoon the world's axle creaked as if it needed greasing. . . . Perhaps if I lived there much longer, I might live there forever. One would think twice before he accepted heaven on such terms. A ticket to Heaven must include tickets to Limbo, Purgatory, and Hell.

Thoreau, *Journal (1851)*

87 We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the Sun-illuminated Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Checkerboard of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

FitzGerald, *Rubáiyát,* LXVIII-LXIX

88 Ah, Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remold it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

FitzGerald, *Rubáiyát,* XCIX

89 It is a very plain and elementary truth, that the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every one of us, and, more or less, of those who are connected with us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game. . . . It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of the two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated—without haste, but without remorse.

T. H. Huxley, *A Liberal Education*

90 There are three material things, not only useful, but essential to life. No one "knows how to live" till he has got them.

These are pure air, water, and earth.

There are three immaterial things, not only useful, but essential to life. No one knows how to live till he has got them also.

These are admiration, hope, and love.

Admiration—the power of discerning and taking delight in what is beautiful in visible form and lovely in human character; and, necessarily, striving to produce what is beautiful in form and to become what is lovely in character.

Hope—the recognition, by true foresight, of better things to be reached hereafter, whether by ourselves or others; necessarily issuing in the straightforward and undisappointable effort to advance, according to our proper power, the gaining of them.

Love—both of family and neighbour, faithful and satisfied.

Ruskin, *An Idealist's Arraignment of the Age*

91 Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Arnold, *Dover Beach*

92 As a general rule, people, even the wicked, are much more naïve and simple-hearted than we suppose. And we ourselves are, too.

Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov,* Pt. I, I, 1

93 *Tom Sawyer.* There's plenty of boys that will come hankering and gruvvelling around when you've got an apple, and beg the core off you; but when *they've* got one, and you beg for the core and remind them how you give them a core one time, they make a mouth at you and say thank you 'most to death, but there ain't-a-going to *be* no core.

Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer Abroad,* I

94 Do not will anything beyond your power: there is a bad falseness in those who will beyond their power.

Especially when they will great things! For they awaken distrust in great things, these subtle false-coiners and stageplayers:—

—Until at last they are false towards themselves, squint-eyed, whited cankers, glossed over with strong words, parade virtues and brilliant false deeds.

Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* IV, 73

95 If my reader can succeed in abstracting from all conceptual interpretation and lapse back into his immediate sensible life at this very moment, he will find it to be what someone has called a big blooming buzzing confusion, as free from contradiction in its 'much-at-onceness' as it is all alive and evidently there.

William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy,* IV

96 Who can decide offhand which is absolutely better, to live or to understand life? We must do both alternately, and a man can no more limit himself to either than a pair of scissors can cut with a single one of its blades.

William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy,* IV

97 Men are not gentle, friendly creatures wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked, but . . . a powerful measure of desire for aggression has to be reckoned as part of their instinctual endowment. The result is that their neighbour is to them not only a possible helper or sexual object, but also a temptation to them to gratify their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without recompense, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and kill him. *Homo homini lupus;* who has the courage to dispute it in the face of all the evidence in his own life and in history?

Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* V

98 Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of *Either-Ors,* between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities. When forced to recognize that the extremes cannot be acted upon, it is still inclined to hold that they are all right in theory but that when it comes to practical matters circumstances compel us to compromise.

Dewey, *Experience and Education,* I

99 Happiness is the only sanction of life; where happiness fails, existence remains a mad and lamentable experiment.

Santayana, *Life of Reason,* I, 10

100 That life is worth living is the most necessary of assumptions and, were it not assumed, the most impossible of conclusions.

Santayana, *Life of Reason,* I, 10

101 Between the laughing and the weeping philosopher there is no opposition: *the same facts* that make one laugh make one weep. No whole-hearted man, no sane art, can be limited to either mood.

Santayana, *Persons and Places,* X

102 Nothing can be meaner than the anxiety to live on, to live on anyhow and in any shape; a spirit with any honour is not willing to live except in its own way, and a spirit with any wisdom is not over-eager to live at all.

Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine,* I

1.3 | *The Ages of Man*

YOUNG AND OLD

The quotations assembled here fall into two groups; on the one hand, statements about the general course of human life from birth to death—its various stages or periods and its developmental pattern; on the other hand, considerations of the differences be-

tween youth and age—the advantages and disadvantages of each, as well as the contrasts and conflicts between them.

Different writers enumerate and characterize the stages of human life differently, but they all appear to agree about the general pattern of human development—its cycle of growth and decline. Each of the main periods of human life has its defenders and its detractors—those who praise the innocence, exuberance, and joy of infancy and childhood and those who condemn the savagery and self-indulgence of the young; those who admire the full-bloom of human maturity, the calm of old age, the wisdom gained with years; and those who paint the opposite picture of crotchety and crabbed inflexibility in the aged, verging on the frailties and ineptitudes of the senile. A few quotations express the view that the best of human life lies in the middle years between youth and age.

Quotations on other aspects of the varying relationships between the young and the old will be found in Section 2.2 on PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

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1 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

The days of our years are three-score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Psalm 90:9–10

2 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.

Ecclesiastes 11:9–10

3 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened.

And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;

Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Ecclesiastes 12:1–7

4 *Priam.* For a young man all is decorous
when he is cut down in battle and torn with the sharp bronze, and lies there
dead, and though dead still all that shows about him is beautiful;
but when an old man is dead and down, and the dogs mutilate
the grey head and the grey beard and the parts that are secret,
this, for all sad mortality, is the sight most pitiful.

Homer, *Iliad,* XXII, 71

5 *Penelope.* Men grow old soon in hardship.

Homer, *Odyssey,* XIX, 361

6 *Odysseus.* "My strange one,
must you again, and even now,
urge me to talk? Here is a plodding tale;
no charm in it, no relish in the telling.
Teirêsias told me I must take an oar
and trudge the mainland, going from town to town,
until I discover men who have never known
the salt blue sea, nor flavor of salt meat—
strangers to painted prows, to watercraft
and oars like wings, dipping across the water.
The moment of revelation he foretold
was this, for you may share the prophecy:
some traveller falling in with me will say:
'A winnowing fan, that on your shoulder, sir?'
There I must plant my oar, on the very spot,
with burnt offerings to Poseidon of the Waters:
a ram, a bull, a great buck boar. Thereafter