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.

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 mea­  
sure of my days, what it is; that I may know how  
frail I am.

Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth; 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.

**22**

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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 for­  
tune. For never yet did I hear tell of anyone suc­  
ceeding 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 laugh­  
ter and rejoicings, and say that now he is free  
from a host of sufferings, and enjoys the comple-  
test happiness.

Herodotus, *History,* V, 4

9 And now, as he looked and saw the whole Helles­  
pont 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, *Electro,* 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

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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,*

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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 loftv and serene Dositions

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 mo­  
ment 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 can­  
not 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 for­  
tune and human affairs. "Is it meet," said he, "for  
him that knows he is but man, in his greatest pros­  
perity to pride himself, and be exalted at the con­  
quest of a city, nation, or kingdom, and not, rath­  
er, 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 se­  
lect to think themselves secure, when that of victo­  
ry 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 sad­  
ness 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.

**Phitarr.h. *Etimenti***

26 *Chapter 1. Man*

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 anoth­  
er, 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 anoth­  
er, 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 sub­  
stance is in a flux, and the perception dull, and  
the composition of the whole body subject to pu­  
trefaction, 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 be­  
longs to the body is a stream, and what belongs to  
the soul is a dream and vapour, and life is a war­  
fare 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 spec­  
tacle 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 hap­  
py, and that remains which, in itself, is only mis­  
erable. 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 for­  
sook 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 na­  
ture 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 endow­  
ments 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 alto­  
gether corrupted by sin, so as to be shorn of every  
natural good, even in the state of corrupted na-

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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 be-

loved 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 ac­  
cording 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 var­  
ious methods; one with caution, another with  
haste; one by force, another by skill; one by pa­  
tience, another by its opposite; and each one suc­  
ceeds 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 success­  
ful, 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 fu­  
ture 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 al­  
ways beyond. Fear, desire, hope, project us toward  
the future and steal from us the feeling and con­  
sideration 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, . . . be­  
cause 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 con­  
sider 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 inani­  
ty; 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 ap­  
petites, 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 de­  
formities 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 idle­  
ness," we say; "I have done nothing today."  
What, have you not lived? That is not only the  
fundamental but the most illustrious of your occu­  
pations. "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 great­  
est 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 bat­  
tles 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

28 *Chapter 1. Man*

*31* 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 Jcnown, 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-mor-

row,

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

*1.2. The Human Condition* 29

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, Arid 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 instru­  
mental to the Good of the Commonwealth, and  
set before our Eyes those Looking-glasses that re­  
flect a lively Representation of human Life; noth­  
ing being able to give us a more just Idea of Na­  
ture, and what we are or ought to be, than  
Comedians and Comedies. Prithee tell me, Hast  
thou never seen a Play acted, where Kings, Em­  
perors, Prelates, Knights, Ladies, and other Char­  
acters, 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 Catas­  
trophe 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 divine-  
ness 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 navi­  
gation, nor use of the commodities that may be  
imported by sea; no commodious building; no in­  
struments 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, mer­  
cy,* 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 cau­  
tion 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 instru­  
ments of husbandry. And as small families did  
then; so now do cities and kingdoms, which are  
but greater families (for their own security), en­  
large their dominions upon all pretences of dan­  
ger, 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 Hos­  
pital; arid 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

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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, *Pensees,* 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 re­  
main 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, *Pensees,* 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, *Pensees,* 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  
sleptj I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold  
I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a cer­  
tain 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 na­  
tions 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 enter­  
prises, 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 threat­  
ened. 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 vou 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, high­  
waymen, lazy, envious and gluttons; always drun­  
kards, 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

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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 al­  
ways the easiest and the safest instruments of gov­  
ernments, as force and violence are the worst and  
the most dangerous, yet such, it seems, is the natu­  
ral insolence of man that he almost always dis­  
dains 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 learn­  
ing, 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 be­  
comes the parent of every virtue, and, if those vir­  
tues are accompanied with equal abilities, a fam­  
ily, 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 unit­  
ed 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 calam­  
ity: the same effects must be produced by the  
same passions; and when those passions may be  
indulged without control, small, alas! is the differ­  
ence between civilised and savage man.

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

71 I think I may fairly make two pbstulata.

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

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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 argu-

ment 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 in-

finite; 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, bede­  
villed. And now the Genius of Mechanism smoth­  
ers 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

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79 In the hour of death the only adequate consola­  
tion is that one has not evaded life, but has en­  
dured it. What a man shall accomplish or not ac­  
complish, 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 fore­  
most (instead of asking which place is most com­  
fortable for him, which connection is the most ad­  
vantageous 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 can­  
not 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 distin­  
guished, 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-na­  
tured 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 ear­  
nestness, 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 be­  
neath 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 eter­  
nal 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, everpres-  
ent perils of life.

Melville, *Moby Dick,* LX

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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 Heav­  
en 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, *Rubdiydt,* 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, *Rubdiydt,* 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 wom­  
an 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 uridisappointable 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 naive 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 gruwelling 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 re­  
mind 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

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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 contra­  
diction 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 bet­  
ter, 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 at­  
tacked, but ... a powerful measure of desire for  
aggression has to be reckoned as part t>f their in­  
stinctual 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 posses-

sions, 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 oppo-  
sites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms  
of *Either-Ors,* between which it recognizes no inter­  
mediate 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 cir­  
cumstances compel us to compromise.

Dewey, *Experience and Education,* I

99 Happiness is the only sanction of life; where hap­  
piness fails, existence remains a mad and lament­  
able 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 philoso­  
pher there is no opposition: *the same facts* that  
make one laugh make one weep. No whole-heart­  
ed 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-

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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.

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 plea­  
sure 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 arc 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.

Teiresias 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