

is quick and ironical; either subject or object must immediately collapse and evaporate altogether. All objects must become modifications of the subject or all subjects aspects or fragments of the object. . . . Reflection must . . . separate them, if knowledge (that is, ideas with eventual application and practical transcendence) is to exist at all. In other words, action must be adjusted to certain elements of experience and not to others, and those chiefly regarded must have a certain interpretation put upon them by trained apperception. The rest must be treated as moonshine and taken no account of except perhaps in idle and poetic reverie. In this way crude experience grows rea-

sonable and appearance becomes knowledge of reality.

Santayana, *Life of Reason*, I, 6

55 April 26. Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.

Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, V

6.3 | Truth

Though it is not included among the passages here quoted, a memorable statement by Josiah Royce provides an apt introduction to the subject under consideration. "A liar," Professor Royce once said, "is a man who willfully misplaces his ontological predicates"—a man who, believing that something *is* the case, declares in speech that it is not the case; or believing that something is not the case, declares that it is. Accordingly, it is impossible to prevaricate in speech unless one thinks that one has the truth about the matter in question. When is anyone in that state of mind? Aristotle's answer to that question, in a famous passage quoted below, provides the basis for Royce's remark. We possess the truth mentally, he said, when we think that that which is, *is*, or that that which is not, *is not*. Falsity in the mind, like prevarication in speech, consists in thinking that which *is*, *is not*, or that which *is not*, *is*.

This classic definition of truth is acceptable only to those who affirm the existence of a reality independent of the knowing mind—a reality to which the mind can con-

form or fail to conform. In the absence of the possibility of a correspondence between the mind and an independent reality that it attempts to know, truth for the mind would have to consist in the internal coherence and consistency of its own thoughts. But even for those who hold that an independent reality provides the ultimate test of the mind's claim to possessing the truth, consistency—the avoidance of contradiction—is also of critical importance.

The question, *What is truth?*, to be answered by one or another definition of it, must never be confused with the question, *How can we tell whether a particular statement under consideration is true or false?* Answering the latter question, many of the philosophers quoted formulate different sets of criteria for discriminating between the true and the false; as, for example, William James and John Dewey in their promulgation of what came to be called "the pragmatic theory of truth," which, while it did not exclude the criterion of internal consistency, stressed the point that our best assurance of the truth of

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a statement comes from our finding that it works successfully when put into practice. "The true," said James, "is the expedient in the way of our thinking."

In addition to offering definitions of truth itself and enumerating the criteria for determining whether a particular statement is true or false, the passages here collected discuss the unity of Truth with a capital T as contrasted with the multiplicity of truths; the immutability of whatever is true in and of itself as against the mutability of the human mind's claims to knowing what is true and false; the difference between the truth of true statements about what is the case and the truth of true statements about what ought to be done or sought; the moral obli-

gation to pursue and love the truth, and to be unswerving in one's adherence to it, a higher loyalty even than the one we owe to our friends; the necessity of complete freedom of expression and discussion for the cooperative pursuit of truth; and the acknowledgment of human fallibility in that pursuit.

The extent of that fallibility and the proneness of the human mind to error are discussed in Section 6.4 and points there made are further developed in Sections 6.5 and 6.6, where the questioning of human opinions and beliefs leads to skeptical doubts about the human mind's ability ever to get at the truth.

- 1 Truth lies at the bottom of a well.

Democritus (qu. by Diogenes Laertius,
Lives of the Philosophers)

- 2 *Socrates*. Protagoras . . . says that man is the measure of all things, and that things are to me as they appear to me, and that they are to you as they appear to you. Do you agree with him, or would you say that things have a permanent essence of their own?

Hermogenes. There have been times, Socrates, when I have been driven in my perplexity to take refuge with Protagoras; not that I agree with him at all. . . .

Soc. But if Protagoras is right, and the truth is that things are as they appear to any one, how can some of us be wise and some of us foolish?

Her. Impossible.

Soc. And if, on the other hand, wisdom and folly are really distinguishable, you will allow, I think, that the assertion of Protagoras can hardly be correct. For if what appears to each man is true to him, one man cannot in reality be wiser than another.

Her. He cannot.

Soc. Nor will you be disposed to say with Euthydemus, that all things equally belong to all men at the same moment and always; for neither on his view can there be some good and other bad, if virtue and vice are always equally to be attributed to all.

Her. There cannot.

Soc. But if neither is right, and things are not relative to individuals, and all things do not

equally belong to all at the same moment and always, they must be supposed to have their own proper and permanent essence: they are not in relation to us, or influenced by us, fluctuating according to our fancy, but they are independent, and maintain to their own essence the relation prescribed by nature.

Her. I think, Socrates, that you have said the truth.

Plato, *Cratylus*, 386A

- 3 Of the nature of the soul, though her true form be ever a theme of large and more than mortal discourse, let me speak briefly, and in a figure. And let the figure be composite—a pair of winged horses and a charioteer. Now the winged horses and the charioteers of the gods are all of them noble and of noble descent, but those of other races are mixed; the human charioteer drives his in a pair; and one of them is noble and of noble breed, and the other is ignoble and of ignoble breed; and the driving of them of necessity gives a great deal of trouble to him. I will endeavour to explain to you in what way the mortal differs from the immortal creature. The soul in her totality has the care of inanimate being everywhere, and traverses the whole heaven in divers forms appearing:—when perfect and fully winged she soars upward, and orders the whole world; whereas the imperfect soul, losing her wings and drooping in her flight at last settles on the solid ground—there, finding a home, she receives an earthly frame which appears to be self-moved, but is really moved by her power; and this composi-

tion of soul and body is called a living and mortal creature. For immortal no such union can be reasonably believed to be; although fancy, not having seen nor surely known the nature of God, may imagine an immortal creature having both a body and also a soul which are united throughout all time. Let that, however, be as God wills, and be spoken of acceptably to him. And now let us ask the reason why the soul loses her wings!

The wing is the corporeal element which is most akin to the divine, and which by nature tends to soar aloft and carry that which gravitates downwards into the upper region, which is the habitation of the gods. The divine is beauty, wisdom, goodness, and the like; and by these the wing of the soul is nourished, and grows apace; but when fed upon evil and foulness and the opposite of good, wastes and falls away. Zeus, the mighty lord, holding the reins of a winged chariot, leads the way in heaven, ordering all and taking care of all; and there follows him the array of gods and demigods, marshalled in eleven bands; Hestia alone abides at home in the house of heaven; of the rest they who are reckoned among the princely twelve march in their appointed order. They see many blessed sights in the inner heaven, and there are many ways to and fro, along which the blessed gods are passing, every one doing his own work; he may follow who will and can, for jealousy has no place in the celestial choir. But when they go to banquet and festival, then they move up the steep to the top of the vault of heaven. The chariots of the gods in even poise, obeying the rein, glide rapidly; but the others labour, for the vicious steed goes heavily, weighing down the charioteer to the earth when his steed has not been thoroughly trained:—and this is the hour of agony and extremest conflict for the soul. For the immortals, when they are at the end of their course, go forth and stand upon the outside of heaven, and the revolution of the spheres carries them round, and they behold the things beyond. But of the heaven which is above the heavens, what earthly poet ever did or ever will sing worthily? It is such as I will describe; for I must dare to speak the truth, when truth is my theme. There abides the very being with which true knowledge is concerned; the colourless, formless, intangible essence, visible only to mind, the pilot of the soul. The divine intelligence, being nurtured upon mind and pure knowledge, and the intelligence of every soul which is capable of receiving the food proper to it, rejoices at beholding reality, and once more gazing upon truth, is replenished and made glad, until the revolution of the worlds brings her round again to the same place. In the revolution she beholds justice, and temperance, and knowledge absolute, not in the form of generation or of relation, which men call existence, but knowledge absolute in existence absolute; and beholding the other true existences in like manner,

and feasting upon them, she passes down into the interior of the heavens and returns home; and there the charioteer putting up his horses at the stall, gives them ambrosia to eat and nectar to drink.

Such is the life of the gods; but of other souls, that which follows God best and is likeliest to him lifts the head of the charioteer into the outer world, and is carried round in the revolution, troubled indeed by the steeds, and with difficulty beholding true being; while another only rises and falls, and sees, and again fails to see by reason of the unruliness of the steeds. The rest of the souls are also longing after the upper world and they all follow, but not being strong enough they are carried round below the surface, plunging, treading on one another, each striving to be first; and there is confusion and perspiration and the extremity of effort; and many of them are lamed or have their wings broken through the ill-driving of the charioteers; and all of them after a fruitless toil, not having attained to the mysteries of true being, go away, and feed upon opinion. The reason why the souls exhibit this exceeding eagerness to behold the plain of truth is that pasturage is found there, which is suited to the highest part of the soul; and the wing on which the soul soars is nourished with this. And there is a law of Destiny, that the soul which attains any vision of truth in company with a god is preserved from harm until the next period, and if attaining always is always unharmed. But when she is unable to follow, and fails to behold the truth, and through some ill-hap sinks beneath the double load of forgetfulness and vice, and her wings fall from her and she drops to the ground, then the law ordains that this soul shall at her first birth pass, not into any other animal, but only into man; and the soul which has seen most of truth shall come to the birth as a philosopher, or artist, or some musical and loving nature; that which has seen truth in the second degree shall be some righteous king or warrior chief; the soul which is of the third class shall be a politician, or economist, or trader; the fourth shall be a lover of gymnastic toils, or a physician; the fifth shall lead the life of a prophet or hierophant; to the sixth the character of a poet or some other imitative artist will be assigned; to the seventh the life of an artisan or husbandman; to the eighth that of a sophist or demagogue; to the ninth that of a tyrant;—all these are states of probation, in which he who does righteously improves, and he who does unrighteously, deteriorates his lot.

Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246A

4 I cannot refute you, Socrates, said Agathon:—Let us assume that what you say is true.

Say rather, beloved Agathon, that you cannot refute the truth; for Socrates is easily refuted.

Plato, *Symposium*, 201B

5 *Socrates*. I would ask you to be thinking of the truth and not of Socrates: agree with me, if I seem to you to be speaking the truth; or if not, withstand me might and main, that I may not deceive you as well as myself in my enthusiasm, and like the bee, leave my sting in you before I die.

Plato, *Phaedo*, 91A

6 *Socrates*. I should not like to have my words repeated to the tragedians and the rest of the imitative tribe—but I do not mind saying to you, that all poetical imitations are ruinous to the understanding of the hearers, and that the knowledge of their true nature is the only antidote to them. . . . I have always from my earliest youth had an awe and love of Homer, which even now makes the words falter on my lips, for he is the great captain and teacher of the whole of that charming tragic company; but a man is not to be revered more than the truth.

Plato, *Republic*, X, 595A

7 *Athenian Stranger*. The greatest and highest truths have no outward image of themselves visible to man, which he who wishes to satisfy the soul of the enquirer can adapt to the eye of sense, and therefore we ought to train ourselves to give and accept a rational account of them; for immaterial things, which are the noblest and greatest, are shown only in thought and idea, and in no other way.

Plato, *Statesman*, 286A

8 As there are in the mind thoughts which do not involve truth or falsity, and also those which must be either true or false, so it is in speech. For truth and falsity imply combination and separation. Nouns and verbs, provided nothing is added, are like thoughts without combination or separation; 'man' and 'white', as isolated terms, are not yet either true or false.

Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, 16^a10

9 The least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousandfold.

Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, 271^b9

10 To give a satisfactory decision as to the truth it is necessary to be rather an arbitrator than a party to the dispute.

Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, 279^b11

11 The investigation of the truth is in one way hard, in another easy. An indication of this is found in the fact that no one is able to attain the truth adequately, while, on the other hand, we do not collectively fail, but every one says something true about the nature of things, and while individually we contribute little or nothing to the truth, by the union of all a considerable amount is amassed. Therefore, since the truth seems to be like the pro-

verbial door, which no one can fail to hit, in this respect it must be easy, but the fact that we can have a whole truth and not the particular part we aim at shows the difficulty of it.

Perhaps, too, as difficulties are of two kinds, the cause of the present difficulty is not in the facts but in us. For as the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 993^a30

12 It is right . . . that philosophy should be called knowledge of the truth. For the end of theoretical knowledge is truth, while that of practical knowledge is action (for even if they consider how things are, practical men do not study the eternal, but what is relative and in the present). Now we do not know a truth without its cause; and a thing has a quality in a higher degree than other things if in virtue of it the similar quality belongs to the other things as well (e.g. fire is the hottest of things; for it is the cause of the heat of all other things); so that that which causes derivative truths to be true is most true. Hence the principles of eternal things must be always most true (for they are not merely sometimes true, nor is there any cause of their being, but they themselves are the cause of the being of other things), so that as each thing is in respect of being, so is it in respect of truth.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 993^b19

13 Of one subject we must either affirm or deny any one predicate. This is clear, in the first place, if we define what the true and the false are. To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true: so that he who says of anything that it is, or that it is not, will say either what is true or what is false; but neither what is nor what is not is said to be or not to be.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1011^b24

14 It would perhaps be thought to be better, indeed to be our duty, for the sake of maintaining the truth even to destroy what touches us closely, especially as we are philosophers or lovers of wisdom; for, while both are dear, piety requires us to honour truth above our friends.

Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1096^a13

15 The man who loves truth, and is truthful where nothing is at stake, will still more be truthful where something is at stake; he will avoid falsehood as something base, seeing that he avoided it even for its own sake; and such a man is worthy of praise. He inclines rather to understate the truth; for this seems in better taste because exaggerations are wearisome.

Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1127^b3

- 16 The states by virtue of which the soul possesses truth by way of affirmation or denial are five in number, i.e. art, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophic wisdom, intuitive reason; we do not include judgement and opinion because in these we may be mistaken.
Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1139b16
- 17 Those who object that that at which all things aim is not necessarily good are, we may surmise, talking nonsense. For we say that that which every one thinks really is so; and the man who attacks this belief will hardly have anything more credible to maintain instead.
Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1172b35
- 18 Nature has instilled in our minds an insatiable desire to see truth.
Cicero, *Disputations*, I, 19
- 19 We don't believe a liar even when he tells the truth.
Cicero, *Divination*, II, 71
- 20 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;
And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
John 8:31-32
- 21 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.
Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.
John 18:37-38
- 22 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?
Galatians 4:16
- 23 A liar ought to have a good memory.
Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, IV, 2
- 24 Veritable truth is not accordance with an external; it is self-accordance; it affirms and is nothing other than itself and is nothing other; it is at once existence and self-affirmation.
Plotinus, *Fifth Ennead*, V, 2
- 25 And I looked upon other things, and I saw that they owed their being to You, and that all finite things are in You: but in a different manner, being in You not as in a place, but because You are and hold all things in the hand of Your truth, and all things are true inasmuch as they are: nor is falsehood anything, save that something is thought to be which is not.
Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, 15
- 26 I have met many who wished to deceive, but not one who wished to be deceived.
Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 23
- 27 Why does truth call forth hatred? Why is Your servant treated as an enemy by those to whom he preaches the truth, if happiness is loved, which is simply joy in truth? Simply because truth is loved in such a way that those who love some other thing want it to be the truth, and, precisely because they do not wish to be deceived, are unwilling to be convinced that they are deceived. Thus they hate the truth for the sake of that other thing which they love because they take it for truth. They love truth when it enlightens them, they hate truth when it accuses them. Because they do not wish to be deceived and do wish to deceive, they love truth when it reveals itself, and hate it when it reveals them. Thus it shall reward them as they deserve: those who do not wish to be revealed by truth, truth will unmask against their will, but it will not reveal itself to them. Thus, thus, even thus, does the human mind, blind and inert, vile and ill-behaved, desire to keep itself concealed, yet desire that nothing should be concealed from itself. But the contrary happens to it—it cannot lie hidden from truth, but only truth from it. Even so, for all its worthlessness, the human mind would rather find its joy in truth than falsehood. So that it shall be happy if, with no other thing to distract, it shall one day come to rejoice in that sole Truth by which all things are true.
Augustine, *Confessions*, X, 23
- 28 Lying is wrong even to save chastity.
Augustine, *On Lying*, VII, 10
- 29 He who says that some lies are just, must be judged to say no other than that some sins are just, and therefore some things are just which are unjust: than which what can be more absurd?
Augustine, *To Consentius, Against Lying*, 18
- 30 "If any man makes search for truth with all his penetration, and would be led astray by no deceiving paths, let him turn upon himself the light of an inward gaze, let him bend by force the long-drawn wanderings of his thoughts into one circle; let him tell surely to his soul, that he has, thrust away within the treasures of his mind, all that he labours to acquire without. Then shall that truth, which now was hid in error's darkening cloud, shine forth more clear than Phœbus's self. For the body, though it brings material mass which breeds forgetfulness, has never driven forth all light from the mind. The seed of truth does surely cling with-

in, and can be roused as a spark by the fanning of philosophy. For if it is not so, how do ye men make answers true of your own instinct when teachers question you? Is it not that the quick spark of truth lies buried in the heart's low depths? And if the Muse of Plato sends through those depths the voice of truth, each man has not forgotten and is but reminding himself of what he learns."

When she [Philosophy] made an end, I said, "I agree very strongly with Plato; for this is the second time that you have reminded me of these thoughts. The first time I had lost them through the material influence of the body; the second, when overwhelmed by this weight of trouble."

Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, III

- 31 As the good denotes that towards which the appetite tends, so the true denotes that towards which the intellect tends. Now there is this difference between the appetite and the intellect, or any knowledge whatsoever, that knowledge is according as the thing known is in the knower, whilst appetite is according as the desirer tends towards the thing desired. Thus the term of the appetite, namely good, is in the thing desirable, and the term of knowledge, namely true, is in the intellect itself.

Now as good exists in a thing so far as that thing is related to the appetite—and hence the aspect of goodness passes on from the desirable thing to the appetite, according as the appetite is called good if the thing desired is good, so, since the true is in the intellect in so far as it is conformed to the thing understood, the aspect of the true must pass from the intellect to the thing understood, so that also the thing understood is said to be true in so far as it has some relation to the intellect.

Now a thing understood may be in relation to an intellect either essentially or accidentally. It is related essentially to an intellect on which it depends as regards its being, but accidentally to an intellect by which it is knowable; even as we may say that a house is related essentially to the intellect of the architect, but accidentally to the intellect upon which it does not depend.

Now we do not judge of a thing by what is in it accidentally, but by what is in it essentially. Hence, everything is said to be true absolutely in so far as it is related to the intellect from which it depends; and thus it is that artificial things are said to be true as being related to our intellect. For a house is said to be true that expresses the likeness of the form in the architect's mind, and words are said to be true so far as they are the signs of truth in the intellect. In the same way natural things are said to be true in so far as they express the likeness of the species that are in the divine mind. For a stone is called true, because it expresses the nature proper to a stone, according

to the preconception in the divine intellect. Thus, then, truth is principally in the intellect, and secondarily in things according as they are related to the intellect as their principle.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 16, 1

- 32 Truth is found in the intellect according as it apprehends a thing as it is, and in things according as they have being conformable to an intellect. This is to the greatest degree found in God. For His being is not only conformed to His intellect, but it is the very act of His intellect, and His act of understanding is the measure and cause of every other being and of every other intellect, and He Himself is His own being and act of understanding. And so it follows not only that truth is in Him, but that He is truth itself, and the supreme and first truth.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 16, 5

- 33 Truth and good include one another; for truth is something good, otherwise it would not be desirable; and good is something true, otherwise it would not be intelligible. Therefore just as the object of the appetite may be something true, as having the aspect of good, for example, when some one desires to know the truth, so the object of the practical intellect is good directed to operation, and under the aspect of truth. For the practical intellect knows truth, just as the speculative, but it directs the known truth to operation.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 79, 11

- 34 No one envies another the knowledge of truth, which can be known entirely by many except perhaps one may envy another his superiority in the knowledge of it.

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 28, 4

- 35 Being and truth in the universal cannot be the object of hatred because disagreement is the cause of hatred, and agreement is the cause of love, while being and truth are common to all things. But nothing hinders some particular being or some particular truth being an object of hatred, in so far as it is considered as something contrary and repugnant. . . .

Now it may happen in three ways that some particular truth is repugnant or contrary to the good we love. First, according as truth is in things as in its cause and origin. And thus man sometimes hates a particular truth when he wishes that what is true were not true. Secondly, according as truth is in man's knowledge, which hinders him from gaining the object loved; such is the case of those who wish not to know the truth of faith, that they may sin freely. . . . Thirdly, a particular truth is hated as something repugnant according as it is in the intellect of another man; as, for instance, when a man wishes to remain indolent in his sin, he hates that anyone should know the

- truth about his sin.
Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 29, 5
- 36 The greatest of all pleasures consists in the contemplation of truth. Now every pleasure assuages pain as stated above. Hence the contemplation of truth assuages pain or sorrow, and the more so the more perfectly one is a lover of wisdom.
Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 38, 4
- 37 A small error in the beginning is a great one in the end.
Aquinas, *Concerning Being and Essence*, Intro.
- 38 *True* expresses the correspondence of being to the knowing power, for all knowing is produced by an assimilation of the knower to the thing known, so that assimilation is said to be the cause of knowledge. Similarly, the sense of sight knows a color by being informed with a species of the color.
The first reference of being to the intellect, therefore, consists in its agreement with the intellect. This agreement is called "the conformity of thing and intellect." In this conformity is fulfilled the formal constituent of the true, and this is what *the true* adds to being, namely, the conformity or equation of thing and intellect. As we said, the knowledge of a thing is a consequence of this conformity; therefore, it is an effect of truth, even though the fact that the thing is a being is prior to its truth.
Aquinas, *On Truth*, I, 1
- 39 And the Friar: "I heard once at Bologna many of the Devil's vices told; amongst which, I heard that he is a liar and the father of lies."
Dante, *Inferno*, XXIII, 143
- 40 But first, I pray you, of your courtesy,
You'll not ascribe it to vulgarity
Though I speak plainly of this matter here,
Retailing you their words and means of cheer;
Nor though I use their very terms, nor lie,
For this thing do you know as well as I:
When one repeats a tale told by a man,
He must report, as nearly as he can,
Every least word, if he remember it,
However rude it be, or how unfit;
Or else he may be telling what's untrue,
Embellishing and fictionizing too.
He may not spare, although it were his brother;
He must as well say one word as another.
Christ spoke right broadly out, in holy writ,
And, you know well, there's nothing low in it.
And Plato says, to those able to read:
"The word should be the cousin to the deed."
Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*: The Prologue
- 41 As thus: You know that each evangelist
Who tells the passion of Lord Jesus Christ
Says not in all things as his fellows do,
But nonetheless, each gospel is all true,
And all of them accord in their essence,
Howbeit there's in telling difference.
For some of them say more and some say less
When they His piteous passion would express;
I mean now Mark and Matthew, Luke and John;
Yet, without doubt, their meaning is all one.
Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*: Prologue to
Melibeus
- 42 Superstition, idolatry, and hypocrisy have ample wages, but truth goes a begging.
Luther, *Table Talk*, H53
- 43 Anyone who does not feel sufficiently strong in memory should not meddle with lying. . . . Now liars either invent everything out of whole cloth, or else disguise and alter something fundamentally true. When they disguise and change a story, if you put them back onto it often enough they find it hard not to get tangled up. For since the thing as it is has become lodged first in the memory and has imprinted itself there by way of consciousness and knowledge, it is difficult for it not to present itself to the imagination, dislodging the falsehood, which cannot have so firm and secure a foothold. Likewise, the circumstances that were learned first, slipping into the mind every moment, tend to weaken the memory of the false or corrupted parts that have been added. In what liars invent completely, inasmuch as there is no contrary impression which clashes with the falsehood, they seem to have the less reason to fear making a mistake. Nevertheless even this, since it is an empty thing without a grip, is prone to escape any but a very strong memory.
Montaigne, *Essays*, I, 9. Of Liars
- 44 If falsehood, like truth, had only one face, we would be in better shape. For we would take as certain the opposite of what the liar said. But the reverse of truth has a hundred thousand shapes and a limitless field.
Montaigne, *Essays*, I, 9. Of Liars
- 45 How many arts there are that profess to consist of conjecture more than of knowledge, that do not decide on the true and the false and merely follow what seems to be! There are, they say, both a true and a false, and there is in us the means to seek it, but not to test it by a touchstone. We are much better if we let ourselves be led without inquisitiveness in the way of the world. A soul guaranteed against prejudice is marvelously advanced toward tranquility. People who judge and check their judges never submit to them as they ought. How much more docile and easily led, both by the laws of religion and by political laws, are the simple and incurious minds, than those minds that survey divine and human causes like pedagogues!
Montaigne, *Essays*, II, 12, Apology for
Raymond Sebond

- 46 If the human grip was capable and firm enough to grasp the truth by our own means; these means being common to all men, this truth would be banded from hand to hand, from one man to another; and at least there would be one thing in the world, out of all there are, that would be believed by all men with universal consent. But this fact, that no proposition can be seen which is not debated and controverted among us, or which may not be, well shows that our natural judgment does not grasp very clearly what it grasps. For my judgment cannot make my companion's judgment accept it; which is a sign that I have grasped it by some other means than by a natural power that is in me and in all men.
Montaigne, *Essays*, II, 12, Apology for Raymond Sebond
- 47 Truth is the first and fundamental part of virtue. We must love it for itself. He who tells the truth because he has some external obligation to do so and because it serves him, and who does not fear to tell a lie when it is not important to anybody, is not sufficiently truthful.
Montaigne, *Essays*, II, 17, Of Presumption
- 48 The way of truth is one and simple; that of private profit and the advantage of one's personal business is double, uneven, and random.
Montaigne, *Essays*, III, 1, The Useful and the Honorable
- 49 Truth itself does not have the privilege to be employed at any time and in any way; its use, noble as it is, has its circumscriptions and limits. It often happens, as the world goes, that people blurt it out into a prince's ear not only fruitlessly, but harmfully, and even unjustly. And no one will make me believe that a righteous remonstrance cannot be applied wrongfully, and that the interest of the substance must not often yield to the interest of the form.
Montaigne, *Essays*, III, 13, Of Experience
- 50 *Launcelot*. Truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long.
Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, II, ii, 82
- 51 *Hotspur*. I can teach thee, coz, to shame the devil
By telling truth: tell truth and shame the devil.
Shakespeare, *I Henry IV*, III, i, 58
- 52 *Polonius*. See you now;
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth:
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlasses and with assays of bias,
By indirections find directions out.
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II, i, 62
- 53 *Fool*. Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be
whipped out, when Lady the brach may stand by
the fire and stink.
Shakespeare, *Lea*, I, iv, 124
- 54 I thank thee for thy Good-will, dear *Sancho*,
reply'd Don *Quixote*: But I assure thee, that all
these seeming Extravagancies that I must run
through, are no Jests: Far from it, they must be all
perform'd seriously and solemnly; for otherwise
we should transgress the Laws of Chivalry, that
forbid us to tell Lyes upon the Pain of Degradation;
now to pretend to do one Thing, and effect
another, is an Evasion, which I esteem to be as
bad as Lying. Therefore the Blows which I must
give my self on the Head, ought to be real, substantial,
sound ones, without any Trick, or mental Reservation;
for which Reason I would have thee leave me some Lint and Salve, since Fortune has
depriv'd us of the Sovereign Balsam which we lost.
Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, I, 25
- 55 With regard to authority, it is the greatest weakness to attribute infinite credit to particular authors, and to refuse his own prerogative to time, the author of all authors, and, therefore, of all authority. For truth is rightly named the daughter of time, not of authority.
Bacon, *Novum Organum*, I, 84
- 56 This same truth is a naked and open day-light, that doth not shew the masques and mummeries and triumphs of the world, half so stately and daintily as candle-lights. Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that sheweth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that sheweth best in varied lights. A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure.
Bacon, *Of Truth*
- 57 Howsoever these things are thus in men's depraved judgments and affections, yet truth, which only doth judge itself, teacheth that the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it, the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature.
Bacon, *Of Truth*
- 58 It were far better never to think of investigating truth at all, than to do so without a method. . . . Moreover by a method I mean certain and simple rules, such that, if a man observe them accurately, he shall never assume what is false as true, and will never spend his mental efforts to no purpose, but will always gradually increase his knowledge and so arrive at a true understanding of all that does not surpass his powers.
Descartes, *Rules for Direction of the Mind*, IV

- 59 Having but one truth to discover in respect to each matter, whoever succeeds in finding it knows in its regard as much as can be known.

Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, II

- 60 Having remarked that there was nothing at all in the statement "*I think, therefore I am*" which assures me of having thereby made a true assertion, excepting that I see very clearly that to think it is necessary to be, I came to the conclusion that I might assume, as a general rule, that the things which we conceive very clearly and distinctly are all true.

Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, IV

- 61 From the very fact that anyone girds himself up for an attack upon the truth, he makes himself less capable of perceiving the truth itself, since he withdraws his mind from the consideration of those reasons that tend to convince him of it, in order to discover others that have the opposite effect.

Descartes, *Objections and Replies*, II

- 62 When two names are joined together into a consequence, or affirmation, as thus, *A man is a living creature*; or thus, *If he be a man, he is a living creature*; if the latter name *living creature* signify all that the former name *man* signifieth, then the affirmation, or consequence, is *true*; otherwise *false*. For true and false are attributes of speech, not of things. And where speech is not, there is neither truth nor falsehood. Error there may be, as when we expect that which shall not be, or suspect what has not been; but in neither case can a man be charged with untruth.

Seeing then that truth consisteth in the right ordering of names in our affirmations, a man that seeketh precise truth had need to remember what every name he uses stands for, and to place it accordingly; or else he will find himself entangled in words, as a bird in lime twigs; the more he struggles, the more belimed.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I, 4

- 63 Every man is not a proper Champion for Truth, nor fit to take up the Gauntlet in the cause of Verity: Many, from the ignorance of these Maxims, and an inconsiderate Zeal unto Truth, have too rashly charged the Troops of Error, and remain as Trophies unto the enemies of Truth: A man may be in as just possession of Truth as of a City, and yet be forced to surrender; 'tis therefore far better to enjoy her with peace, than to hazard her on a battle.

Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, I, 6

- 64 It is a strange and tedious war when violence attempts to vanquish truth. All the efforts of violence cannot weaken truth, and only serve to give it fresh vigour. All the lights of truth cannot arrest

violence, and only serve to exasperate it. When force meets force, the weaker must succumb to the stronger; when argument is opposed to argument, the solid and the convincing triumphs over the empty and the false; but violence and verity can make no impression on each other. Let none suppose, however, that the two are, therefore, equal to each other; for there is this vast difference between them, that violence has only a certain course to run, limited by the appointment of Heaven, which overrules its effects to the glory of the truth which it assails; whereas verity endures forever and eventually triumphs over its enemies, being eternal and almighty as God himself.

Pascal, *Provincial Letters*, XII

- 65 We make an idol of truth itself; for truth apart from charity is not God, but His image and idol, which we must neither love nor worship; and still less must we love or worship its opposite, namely, falsehood.

Pascal, *Pensées*, VIII, 582

- 66 Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it.

Pascal, *Pensées*, XIV, 864

- 67 Whatever the weight of antiquity, truth should always have the advantage, even when newly discovered, since it is always older than every opinion men have held about it, and only ignorance of its nature could imagine it began to be at the time it began to be known.

Pascal, *Preface to the Treatise on the Vacuum*

- 68 It is a disease natural to man to believe that he possesses the truth directly, and this is the reason he is always inclined to deny whatever he cannot understand. Whereas in fact he naturally knows nothing but error and should accept as true only those things whose contradictory appears to him to be false. Consequently, whenever a proposition is inconceivable, we must suspend our judgment and not deny it for that reason, but examine its contradictory; and if we find this manifestly false, we may boldly affirm the original statement, however incomprehensible it is.

Pascal, *Geometrical Demonstration*

- 69 I see indeed that truth is the same at Toulouse and at Paris.

Pascal, *Letter to Fermat (July 29, 1654)*

- 70 Thus while he spake, each passion dimm'd his
[Satan's] face
Thrice chang'd with pale, ire, envie and despair,
Which marr'd his borrow'd visage, and betraid
Him counterfet, if any eye beheld.
For heav'nly mindes from such distempers foule
Are ever cleer. Whereof hee soon aware,

Each perturbation smooth'd with outward calme,
 Artificer of fraud; and was the first
 That practis'd falshood under saintly shew,
 Deep malice to concale, couch't with revenge.
 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV, 114

71 Hard are the ways of truth, and rough to walk.
 Milton, *Paradise Regained*, I, 478

72 And though all the winds of doctrine were let
 loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the
 field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohib-
 iting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and False-
 hood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the
 worse, in a free and open encounter?
 Milton, *Areopagitica*

73 For who knows not that Truth is strong, next to
 the Almighty? She needs no policies, nor strata-
 gems, nor licensings to make her victorious; those
 are the shifts and the defences that error uses
 against her power. Give her but room, and do not
 bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not
 true.
 Milton, *Areopagitica*

74 He who has a true idea knows at the same time
 that he has a true idea, nor can he doubt the truth
 of the thing. . . . For no one who has a true idea
 is ignorant that a true idea involves the highest
 certitude; to have a true idea signifying just this,
 to know a thing perfectly or as well as possible. No
 one, in fact, can doubt this, unless he supposes an
 idea to be something dumb, like a picture on a
 tablet, instead of being a mode of thought, that is
 to say, intelligence itself. Moreover, I ask who can
 know that he understands a thing unless he first of
 all understands that thing? that is to say, who can
 know that he is certain of anything unless he is
 first of all certain of that thing? Then, again, what
 can be clearer or more certain than a true idea as
 the standard of truth? Just as light reveals both
 itself and the darkness, so truth is the standard of
 itself and of the false. I consider what has been
 said to be a sufficient answer to the objection that
 if a true idea is distinguished from a false idea
 only in so far as it is said to agree with that of
 which it is the idea, the true idea therefore has no
 reality nor perfection above the false idea (since
 they are distinguished by an external sign alone),
 and consequently the man who has true ideas will
 have no greater reality or perfection than he who
 has false ideas only. I consider, too, that I have
 already replied to those who inquire why men
 have false ideas, and how a man can certainly
 know that he has ideas which agree with those
 things of which they are the ideas. For with re-
 gard to the difference between a true and a false
 idea, it is evident . . . that the former is related to
 the latter as being is to non-being. . . . With re-
 gard to . . . how a man can know that he has an

idea which agrees with that of which it is the
 idea—I have shown almost more times than
 enough that he knows it simply because he has an
 idea which agrees with that of which it is the idea,
 that is to say, because truth is its own standard.
 We must remember, besides, that our mind, in so
 far as it truly perceives things, is a part of the
 infinite intellect of God, and therefore it must be
 that the clear and distinct ideas of the mind are as
 true as those of God.

Spinoza, *Ethics*, II, Prop. 43; Schol.

75 For Truth has such a face and such a mien,
 As to be lov'd needs only to be seen.
 Dryden, *The Hind and the Panther*, I, 33

76 There are . . . two kinds of truths, those of reasoning
 and those of fact. Truths of reasoning are neces-
 sary and their opposite is impossible: truths of fact
 are contingent and their opposite is possible.
 When a truth is necessary, its reason can be found
 by analysis, resolving it into more simple ideas
 and truths, until we come to those which are pri-
 mary.

Leibniz, *Monadology*, 33

77 The truth certainly would do well enough if she
 were once left to shift for herself. She seldom has
 received and, I fear, never will receive much assis-
 tance from the power of great men, to whom she is
 but rarely known and more rarely welcome. She is
 not taught by laws, nor has she any need of force
 to procure her entrance into the minds of men.
 Errors, indeed, prevail by the assistance of foreign
 and borrowed succours. But if Truth makes not
 her way into the understanding by her own light,
 she will be but the weaker for any borrowed force
 violence can add to her.

Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*

78 The imputation of Novelty is a terrible charge
 amongst those who judge of men's heads, as they
 do of their perukes, by the fashion, and can allow
 none to be right but the received doctrines. Truth
 scarce ever yet carried it by vote anywhere at its
 first appearance: new opinions are always sus-
 pected, and usually opposed, without any other
 reason but because they are not already common.
 But truth, like gold, is not the less so for being
 newly brought out of the mine. It is trial and ex-
 amination must give it price, and not any antique
 fashion; and though it be not yet current by the
 public stamp, yet it may, for all that, be as old as
 nature, and is certainly not the less genuine.

Locke, *Concerning Human Understanding*,
 Dedication

79 Though, in compliance with the ordinary way of
 speaking, I have shown in what sense and upon
 what ground our ideas may be sometimes called
 true or false; yet if we will look a little nearer into

the matter, in all cases where any idea is called true or false, it is from some *judgment* that the mind makes, or is supposed to make, that is true or false. For truth or falsehood, being never without some affirmation or negation, express or tacit, it is not to be found but where signs are joined or separated, according to the agreement or disagreement of the things they stand for. The signs we chiefly use are either ideas or words; wherewith we make either mental or verbal propositions. Truth lies in so joining or separating these representatives, as the things they stand for do in themselves agree or disagree; and falsehood in the contrary.

Locke, *Concerning Human Understanding*,
Bk. II, XXXII, 19

80 He that would seriously set upon the search of truth ought in the first place to prepare his mind with a love of it. For he that loves it not will not take much pains to get it; nor be much concerned when he misses it. There is nobody in the commonwealth of learning who does not profess himself a lover of truth: and there is not a rational creature that would not take it amiss to be thought otherwise of. And yet, for all this, one may truly say, that there are very few lovers of truth, for truth's sake, even amongst those who persuade themselves that they are so. How a man may know whether he be so in earnest, is worth inquiry: and I think there is one unerring mark of it, viz. The not entertaining any proposition with greater assurance than the proofs it is built upon will warrant. Whoever goes beyond this measure of assent, it is plain, receives not the truth in the love of it; loves not truth for truth's sake, but for some other bye-end.

Locke, *Concerning Human Understanding*,
Bk. IV, XIX, 1

81 He must surely be either very weak, or very little acquainted with the sciences, who shall reject a truth that is capable of demonstration, for no other reason but because it is newly known, and contrary to the prejudices of mankind.

Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Pref.

82 My master heard me with great appearances of uneasiness in his countenance; because *doubting* or *not believing*, are so little known in this country, that the inhabitants cannot tell how to behave themselves under such circumstances. And I remember in frequent discourses with my master concerning the nature of manhood, in other parts of the world, having occasion to talk of *lying* and *false representation*, it was with much difficulty that he comprehended what I meant; although he had otherwise a most acute judgment. For he argued thus; that the use of speech was to make us understand one another, and to receive information of facts; now if any one *said the thing which was not*, these ends were defeated; because I cannot prop-

erly be said to understand him; and I am so far from receiving information, that he leaves me worse than in ignorance; for I am led to believe a thing *black*, when it is *white*; and *short*, when it is *long*. And these were all the notions he had concerning that faculty of *lying*, so perfectly well understood, and so universally practised among human creatures.

Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, IV, 4

83 He who tells a lie is not sensible of how great a task he undertakes; for he must be forced to invent twenty more to maintain that one.

Pope, *Thoughts on Various Subjects*

84 There are certain times when most people are in a disposition of being informed, and 'tis incredible what a vast good a little truth might do, spoken in such seasons.

Pope, *Letter to William Wycherley*
(June 23, 1705)

85 'Tis certain we cannot take pleasure in any discourse, where our judgment gives no assent to those images which are presented to our fancy. The conversation of those, who have acquir'd a habit of lying, tho' in affairs of no moment, never gives any satisfaction; and that because those ideas they present to us, not being attended with belief, make no impression upon the mind. Poets themselves, tho' liars by profession, always endeavour to give an air of truth to their fictions; and where that is totally neglected, their performances, however ingenious, will never be able to afford much pleasure. In short, we may observe, that even when ideas have no manner of influence on the will as passions, truth and reality are still requisite, in order to make them entertaining to the imagination.

Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk. I, III, 10

86 Reason is the discovery of truth or falsehood. Truth or falsehood consists in an agreement or disagreement either to the *real* relations of ideas, or to *real* existence and matter of fact. Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement, is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason.

Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk. III, I, 1

87 Mr. Allworthy rightly observed, that there was a great difference between being guilty of a falsehood to excuse yourself, and to excuse another.

Fielding, *Tom Jones*, III, 5

88 The elegant Lord Shaftesbury somewhere objects to telling too much truth: by which it may be fairly inferred, that, in some cases, to lie is not only excusable, but commendable.

And surely there are no persons who may so

properly challenge a right to this commendable deviation from truth, as young women in the affair of love; for which they may plead precept, education, and above all, the sanction, nay, I may say the necessity of custom, by which they are restrained, not from submitting to the honest impulses of nature (for that would be a foolish prohibition), but from owning them.

Fielding, *Tom Jones*, XIII, 12

- 89 Humanly speaking, let us define truth, while waiting for a better definition, as—"a statement of the facts as they are."

Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*: Truth

- 90 There are truths which are not for all men, nor for all occasions.

Voltaire, *Letter to Cardinal de Bernis*
(Apr. 23, 1761)

- 91 Truth is a fruit which should not be plucked until it is quite ripe.

Voltaire, *Letter to Countess de Barcewitz*
(Dec. 24, 1761)

- 92 Between falsehood and useless truth there is little difference. As gold which he cannot spend will make no man rich, so knowledge which he cannot apply will make no man wise.

Johnson, *Idler* No. 84

- 93 "Pilgrimage," said Imlac, "like many other acts of piety, may be reasonable or superstitious, according to the principles upon which it is performed. Long journeys in search of truth are not commanded. Truth, such as is necessary to the regulation of life, is always found where it is honestly sought."

Johnson, *Rasselas*, XI

- 94 Goldsmith. "There are people who tell a hundred political lies every day, and are not hurt by it. Surely, then, one may tell truth with safety." Johnson. "Why, Sir, in the first place, he who tells a hundred lies has disarmed the force of his lies. But besides; a man had rather have a hundred lies told of him, than one truth which he does not wish should be told." Goldsmith. "For my part, I'd tell truth, and shame the devil." Johnson. "Yes, Sir; but the devil will be angry. I wish to shame the devil as much as you do, but I should choose to be out of the reach of his claws." Goldsmith. "His claws can do you no harm, when you have the shield of truth."

Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (Apr. 15, 1773)

- 95 Johnson. Nobody has a right to put another under such a difficulty, that he must either hurt the person by telling the truth, or hurt himself by telling what is not true.

Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (Apr. 25, 1778)

- 96 We talked of the casuistical question, Whether it was allowable at any time to depart from Truth? Johnson. "The general rule is, that Truth should never be violated, because it is of the utmost importance to the comfort of life, that we should have a full security by mutual faith; and occasional inconveniences should be willingly suffered that we may preserve it. There must, however, be some exceptions. If, for instance, a murderer should ask you which way a man is gone, you may tell him what is not true, because you are under a previous obligation not to betray a man to a murderer. . . . But I deny the lawfulness of telling a lie to a sick man for fear of alarming him. You have no business with consequences: you are to tell the truth. Besides, you are not sure what effect your telling him that he is in danger may have. It may bring his distemper to a crisis, and that may cure him. Of all lying, I have the greatest abhorrence of this, because I believe it has been frequently practised on myself."

I cannot help thinking that there is much weight in the opinion of those who have held, that Truth, as an eternal and immutable principle, ought, upon no account whatever, to be violated, from supposed previous or superiour obligations, of which every man being to judge for himself, there is great danger that we too often, from partial motives, persuade ourselves that they exist; and probably whatever extraordinary instances may sometimes occur, where some evil may be prevented by violating this noble principle, it would be found that human happiness would, upon the whole, be more perfect were Truth universally preserved.

Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (June 13, 1784)

- 97 The protestant and philosophic readers of the present age will incline to believe that, in the account of his own conversion, Constantine attested a wilful falsehood by a solemn and deliberate perjury. They may not hesitate to pronounce that, in the choice of a religion, his mind was determined only by a sense of interest: and that . . . he used the altars of the church as a convenient footstool to the throne of the empire. A conclusion so harsh and so absolute is not, however, warranted by our knowledge of human nature, of Constantine, or of Christianity. In an age of religious fervour the most artful statesmen are observed to feel some part of the enthusiasm which they inspire; and the most orthodox saints assume the dangerous privilege of defending the cause of truth by the arms of deceit and falsehood. Personal interest is often the standard of our belief, as well as of our practice; and the same motives of temporal advantage which might influence the public conduct and professions of Constantine would insensibly dispose his mind to embrace a religion so propitious to his fame and fortunes. His vanity was gratified by the flattering assurance that he had

been chosen by Heaven to reign over the earth: success had justified his divine title to the throne, and that title was founded on the truth of the Christian revelation. As real virtue is sometimes excited by undeserved applause, the specious piety of Constantine, if at first it was only specious, might gradually, by the influence of praise, of habit, and of example, be matured into serious faith and fervent devotion.

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

- 98 It is a humiliating consideration for human reason that it is incompetent to discover truth by means of pure speculation, but, on the contrary, stands in need of discipline to check its deviations from the straight path and to expose the illusions which it originates. But, on the other hand, this consideration ought to elevate and to give it confidence, for this discipline is exercised by itself alone, and it is subject to the censure of no other power. The bounds, moreover, which it is forced to set to its speculative exercise, form likewise a check upon the fallacious pretensions of opponents; and thus what remains of its possessions, after these exaggerated claims have been disallowed, is secure from attack or usurpation. The greatest, and perhaps the only, use of all philosophy of pure reason is, accordingly, of a purely negative character. It is not an organon for the extension, but a discipline for the determination, of the limits of its exercise; and without laying claim to the discovery of new truth, it has the modest merit of guarding against error.

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*,
Transcendental Method

- 99 Truth can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believ'd.
Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 10
- 100 Veracity does not consist in saying, but in the intention of communicating, truth.
Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, IX
- 101 And, after all, what is a lie? 'T is but
The truth in masquerade; and I defy
Historians, heroes, lawyers, priests, to put
A fact without some leaven of a lie.
Byron, *Don Juan*, XI, 37
- 102 'Tis strange,—but true; for truth is always
strange;
Stranger than fiction; if it could be told,
How much would novels gain by the exchange!
How differently the world would men behold!
Byron, *Don Juan*, XIV, 101
- 103 Truth is most beautiful undraped; and the impression it makes is deep in proportion as its expression has been simple. This is so partly because

it then takes unobstructed possession of the hearer's whole soul, and leaves him no by-thought to distract him; partly, also, because he feels that here he is not being corrupted or cheated by the arts of rhetoric, but that all the effect of what is said comes from the thing itself.

Schopenhauer, *Some Forms of Literature*

- 104 If you have reason to suspect that a person is telling you a lie, look as though you believed every word he said. This will give him courage to go on; he will become more vehement in his assertions, and in the end betray himself.

Schopenhauer, *Our Relation to Others*

- 105 The true must essentially be regarded as in conflict with this world; the world has never been so good, and will never become so good, that the majority will desire the truth, or have the true conception of it in such a way that its proclamation must consequently immediately gain the support of everyone. No, he who will proclaim some truth in truth, must prepare himself in some other way than by the help of such a foolish expectation; he must be willing essentially to relinquish the immediate.

Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, II, 10

- 106 Truth is such a fly-away, such a sly-boots, so untransportable and unbarrelable a commodity, that it is as bad to catch as light.

Emerson, *Literary Ethics*

- 107 The soul is the perceiver and revealer of truth. We know truth when we see it, let sceptic and scoffer say what they choose. Foolish people ask you, when you have spoken what they do not wish to hear, 'How do you know it is truth, and not an error of your own?' We know truth when we see it, from opinion, as we know when we are awake that we are awake. . . . We are wiser than we know.

Emerson, *The Over-Soul*

- 108 God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please—you can never have both.

Emerson, *Intellect*

- 109 "Jonah did the Almighty's bidding. And what was that, shipmates? To preach the truth to the face of Falsehood! That was it!

"This, shipmates, this is that other lesson; and woe to that pilot of the living God who slights it. Woe to him whom this world charms from Gospel duty! Woe to him who seeks to pour oil upon the waters when God has brewed them into a gale! Woe to him who seeks to please rather than to appal! Woe to him whose good name is more to him than goodness! Woe to him who, in this world, courts not dishonour! Woe to him who

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but

would not be true, even though to be false were salvation! Yea, woe to him who, as the great Pilot Paul has it, while preaching to others is himself a castaway!"

He dropped and fell away from himself for a moment; then lifting his face to them again, showed a deep joy in his eyes, as he cried out with a heavenly enthusiasm,—“but oh! shipmates! on the starboard hand of every woe, there is a sure delight; and higher the top of that delight, than the bottom of the woe is deep. Is not the maintrunk higher than the keelson is low? Delight is to him—a far, far upward, and inward delight—who against the proud gods and commodores of this earth, ever stands forth his own inexorable self. Delight is to him whose strong arms yet support him, when the ship of this base treacherous world has gone down beneath him. Delight is to him, who gives no quarter in the truth, and kill, burns, and destroys all sin though he pluck it out from under the robes of Senators and Judges. Delight,—top-gallant delight is to him, who acknowledges no law or lord, but the Lord his God, and is only a patriot to heaven. Delight is to him, whom all the waves of the billows of the seas of the boisterous mob can never shake from this sure Keel of the Ages. And eternal delight and deliciousness will be his, who coming to lay him down, can say with his final breath—O Father!—chiefly known to me by Thy rod—mortal or immortal, here I die. I have striven to be Thine, more than to be this world's, or mine own. Yet this is nothing; I leave eternity to Thee; for what is man that he should live but the lifetime of his God?"

Melville, *Moby Dick*, IX

- 110 The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction cannot so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges; hence the conclusion of such a narration is apt to be less finished than an architectural finial.

Melville, *Billy Budd*

- 111 The wildest dreams of wild men, even, are not the less true, though they may not recommend themselves to the sense which is most common among Englishmen and Americans to-day. It is not every truth that recommends itself to the common sense. Nature has a place for the wild clematis as well as for the cabbage. Some expressions of truth are reminiscent,—others merely *sensible*, as the phrase is,—others prophetic.

Thoreau, *Walking*

- 112 No face which we can give to a matter will stand us so well at last as the truth. This alone wears well. For the most part, we are not where we are, but in a false position. Through an infirmity of

our natures, we suppose a case, and put ourselves into it, and hence are in two cases at the same time, and it is doubly difficult to get out. In sane moments we regard only the facts, the case that is. Say what you have to say, not what you ought. Any truth is better than make-believe.

Thoreau, *Walden*: Conclusion

- 113 If some great Power would agree to make me always think what is true and do what is right, on condition of being turned into a sort of clock and wound up every morning before I got out of bed, I should instantly close with the offer.

T. H. Huxley, *Descartes' "Discourse on Method"*

- 114 History warns us . . . that it is the customary fate of new truths to begin as heresies and to end as superstitions.

T. H. Huxley, *The Coming of Age of "The Origin of Species"*

- 115 Time, whose tooth gnaws away everything else, is powerless against truth.

T. H. Huxley, *Administrative Nihilism*

- 116 It is a piece of idle sentimentality that truth, merely as truth, has any inherent power denied to error of prevailing against the dungeon and the stake. Men are not more zealous for truth than they often are for error, and a sufficient application of legal or even of social penalties will generally succeed in stopping the propagation of either. The real advantage which truth has consists in this, that when an opinion is true, it may be extinguished once, twice, or many times, but in the course of ages there will generally be found persons to rediscover it, until some one of its reappearances falls on a time when from favourable circumstances it escapes persecution until it has made such head as to withstand all subsequent attempts to suppress it.

Mill, *On Liberty*, II

- 117 No one can be a great thinker who does not recognise, that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think. Not that it is solely, or chiefly, to form great thinkers, that freedom of thinking is required. On the contrary, it is as much and even more indispensable to enable average human beings to attain the mental stature which they are capable of. There have been, and may again be, great individual thinkers in a general atmosphere of mental slavery. But there never has been, nor ever will be, in that atmosphere an intellectually active people. Where any people has made a tem-

- porary approach to such a character, it has been because the dread of heterodox speculation was for a time suspended. Where there is a tacit convention that principles are not to be disputed; where the discussion of the greatest questions which can occupy humanity is considered to be closed, we cannot hope to find that generally high scale of mental activity which has made some periods of history so remarkable.
- Mill, *On Liberty*, II
- 118 On every subject on which difference of opinion is possible, the truth depends on a balance to be struck between two sets of conflicting reasons.
- Mill, *On Liberty*, II
- 119 Truth, in the great practical concerns of life, is so much a question of the reconciling and combining of opposites, that very few have minds sufficiently capacious and impartial to make the adjustment with an approach to correctness, and it has to be made by the rough process of a struggle between combatants fighting under hostile banners.
- Mill, *On Liberty*, II
- 120 The essence of lying is in deception, not in words; a lie may be told by silence, by equivocation, by the accent on a syllable, by a glance of the eye attaching a peculiar significance to a sentence; and all these kinds of lies are worse and baser by many degrees than a lie plainly worded; so that no form of blinded conscience is so far sunk as that which comforts itself for having deceived, because the deception was by gesture or silence, instead of utterance; and, finally, according to Tennyson's deep and trenchant line, "A lie which is half a truth is ever the worst of lies."
- Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Pt. IX, 7
- 121 "I should never dare to say that I know the truth," said the Mason, whose words struck Pierre more and more by their precision and firmness. "No one can attain to truth by himself. Only by laying stone on stone with the cooperation of all, by the millions of generations from our forefather Adam to our own times, is that temple reared which is to be a worthy dwelling place of the Great God," he added, and closed his eyes.
- Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, V, 2
- 122 If we would only stop lying, if we would only testify to the truth as we see it, it would turn out at once that there are hundreds, thousands, even millions of men just as we are, who see the truth as we do, are afraid as we are of seeming to be singular by confessing it, and are only waiting, again as we are, for some one to proclaim it.
- Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*
- 123 The person who confesses that there is such a thing as truth, which is distinguished from falsehood simply by this, that if acted on it should, on full consideration, carry us to the point we aim at and not astray, and then, though convinced of this, dares not know the truth and seeks to avoid it, is in a sorry state of mind indeed.
- C. S. Peirce, *Fixation of Belief*
- 124 Truths, on the average, have a greater tendency to get believed than falsities have. Were it otherwise, considering that there are myriads of false hypotheses to account for any given phenomenon, against one sole true one (or if you will have it so, against every true one), the first step toward genuine knowledge must have been next door to a miracle.
- C. S. Peirce, *What Pragmatism Means*
- 125 You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied one time or another.
- Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*, I
- 126 One of the most striking differences between a cat and a lie is that a cat has only nine lives.
- Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar*, VII
- 127 When in doubt tell the truth.
- Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar*, II
- 128 The most common lie is the lie one tells to oneself; lying to others is relatively the exception.
- Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, LV
- 129 Hands off: neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer, although each observer gains a partial superiority of insight from the peculiar position in which he stands. Even prisons and sickrooms have their special revelations. It is enough to ask of each of us that he should be faithful to his own opportunities and make the most of his own blessings, without presuming to regulate the rest of the vast field.
- William James, *On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings*
- 130 Our belief in truth itself, for instance, that there is a truth, and that our minds and it are made for each other—what is it but a passionate affirmation of desire, in which our social system backs us up? We want to have a truth; we want to believe that our experiments and studies and discussions must put us in a continually better and better position towards it; and on this line we agree to fight out our thinking lives. But if a Pyrrhonic skeptic asks us *how we know* all this, can our logic find

a reply? No! certainly it cannot. It is just one volition against another—we willing to go in for life upon a trust or assumption which he, for his part, does not care to make.

William James, *The Will to Believe*

- 131 *The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons.* Surely you must admit this, that if there were no good for life in true ideas, or if the knowledge of them were positively disadvantageous and false ideas the only useful ones, then the current notion that truth is divine and precious, and its pursuit a duty, could never have grown up or become a dogma. In a world like that, our duty would be to *shun* truth, rather. But in this world, just as certain foods are not only agreeable to our taste, but good for our teeth, our stomach, and our tissues; so certain ideas are not only agreeable to think about, or agreeable as supporting other ideas that we are fond of, but they are also helpful in life's practical struggles. If there be any life that it is really better we should lead, and if there be any idea which, if believed in, would help us to lead that life, then it would be really *better for us* to believe in that idea, *unless, indeed, belief in it incidentally clashed with other greater vital benefits.*

"What would be better for us to believe!" This sounds very like a definition of truth. It comes very near to saying "what we *ought* to believe": and in *that* definition none of you would find any oddity. Ought we ever not to believe what it is *better for us* to believe? And can we then keep the notion of what is better for us, and what is true for us, permanently apart?

Pragmatism says no, and I fully agree with her.

William James, *Pragmatism*, II

- 132 New truths thus are resultants of new experiences and of old truths combined and mutually modifying one another. And since this is the case in the changes of opinion of today, there is no reason to assume that it has not been so at all times. It follows that very ancient modes of thought may have survived through all the later changes in men's opinions. The most primitive ways of thinking may not yet be wholly expunged. Like our five fingers, our ear bones, our rudimentary caudal appendage, or our other 'vestigial' peculiarities, they may remain as indelible tokens of events in our race history. Our ancestors may at certain moments have struck into ways of thinking which they might conceivably not have found. But once they did so, and after the fact, the inheritance continues. When you begin a piece of music in a certain key, you must keep the key to the end. You may alter your house ad libitum, but the ground plan of the first architect persists—you can make great changes, but you cannot change a Gothic church into a Doric temple. You may rinse and rinse the bottle, but you can't get the taste of

the medicine or whiskey that first filled it wholly out.

My thesis now is this, that *our fundamental ways of thinking about things are discoveries of exceedingly remote ancestors, which have been able to preserve themselves throughout the experience of all subsequent time.* They form one great stage of equilibrium in the human mind's development, the stage of *common sense.* Other stages have grafted themselves upon this stage, but have never succeeded in displacing it.

William James, *Pragmatism*, V

- 133 Pragmatism . . . asks its usual question. "Grant an idea or belief to be true," it says, "what concrete difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth's cash value in experiential terms?"

The moment pragmatism asks this question, it sees the answer: *True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot.* That is the practical difference it makes to us to have true ideas; that, therefore, is the meaning of truth, for it is all that truth is known as.

William James, *Pragmatism*, VI

- 134 *'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving.* Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course; for what meets expediently all the experience in sight won't necessarily meet all farther experiences equally satisfactorily. Experience, as we know, has ways of *boiling over*, and making us correct our present formulas.

The 'absolutely' true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing point toward which we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day converge. It runs on all fours with the perfectly wise man, and with the absolutely complete experience; and, if these ideals are ever realized, they will all be realized together. Meanwhile we have to live today by what truth we can get today, and be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood. Ptolemaic astronomy, Euclidean space, Aristotelian logic, scholastic metaphysics, were expedient for centuries, but human experience has boiled over those limits, and we now call these things only relatively true, or true within those borders of experience. 'Absolutely' they are false; for we know that those limits were casual, and might have been transcended by past theorists just as they are by present thinkers.

William James, *Pragmatism*, VI

- 135 *The Truth:* what a perfect idol of the rationalistic mind! I read in an old letter—from a gifted friend who died too young—these words: "In everything,

in science, art, morals, and religion, there *must* be one system that is right and *every* other wrong." How characteristic of the enthusiasm of a certain stage of youth! At twenty-one we rise to such a challenge and expect to find the system. It never occurs to most of us even later that the question "what is *the* truth?" is no real question (being irrelative to all conditions) and that the whole notion of *the* truth is an abstraction from the fact of truths in the plural, a mere useful summarizing phrase like *the* Latin Language or *the* Law.

William James, *Pragmatism*, VII

- 136 The search for truth should be the goal of our activities; it is the sole end worthy of them. Doubtless we should first bend our efforts to assuage human suffering, but why? Not to suffer is a negative ideal more surely attained by the annihilation of the world. If we wish more and more to free man from material cares, it is that he may be able to employ the liberty obtained in the study and contemplation of truth.

But sometimes truth frightens us. And in fact we know that it is sometimes deceptive, that it is a phantom never showing itself for a moment except to ceaselessly flee, that it must be pursued further and ever further without ever being attained. Yet to work one must stop, as some Greek, Aristotle or another, has said. We also know how cruel the truth often is, and we wonder whether illusion is not more consoling, yea, even more bracing, for illusion it is which gives confidence. When it shall have vanished, will hope remain and shall we have the courage to achieve? Thus would not the horse harnessed to his treadmill refuse to go, were his eyes not bandaged? And then to seek truth it is necessary to be independent, wholly independent. If, on the contrary, we wish to act, to be strong, we should be united. This is why many of us fear truth; we consider it a cause of weakness. Yet truth should not be feared, for it alone is beautiful.

When I speak here of truth, assuredly I refer first to scientific truth; but I also mean moral truth, of which what we call justice is only one aspect. It may seem that I am misusing words, that I combine thus under the same name two things having nothing in common; that scientific truth, which is demonstrated, can in no way be likened to moral truth, which is felt. And yet I can not separate them, and whosoever loves the one can not help loving the other. To find the one, as well as to find the other, it is necessary to free the soul completely from prejudice and from passion; it is necessary to attain absolute sincerity. These two sorts of truth when discovered give the same joy; each when perceived beams with the same splendor, so that we must see it or close our eyes. Lastly, both attract us and flee from us; they are never fixed: when we think to have reached them, we find that we have still to advance, and he who

pursues them is condemned never to know repose. It must be added that those who fear the one will also fear the other; for they are the ones who in everything are concerned above all with consequences. In a word, I liken the two truths, because the same reasons make us love them and because the same reasons make us fear them.

Poincaré, *Value of Science*, Intro.

- 137 Truth telling is not compatible with the defence of the realm.

Shaw, *Heartbreak House*, Pref.

- 138 *Keegan*. My way of joking is to tell the truth. It's the funniest joke in the world.

Shaw, *John Bull's Other Island*, II

- 139 Truth is a qualification which applies to Appearance alone. Reality is just itself, and it is nonsense to ask whether it be true or false. Truth is the conformation of Appearance to Reality. This conformation may be more or less, also direct or indirect. Thus Truth is a generic quality with a variety of degrees and modes. In the Law-Courts, the wrong species of Truth may amount to perjury. For example, a portrait may be so faithful as to deceive the eye. Its very truthfulness then amounts to deception. A reflexion in a mirror is at once a truthful appearance and a deceptive appearance. The smile of a hypocrite is deceptive, and that of a philanthropist may be truthful. But both of them were truly smiling.

Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, XVI, 2

- 140 Every belief which is not merely an impulse to action is in the nature of a picture, combined with a yes-feeling or a no-feeling; in the case of a yes-feeling it is "true" if there is a fact having to the picture the kind of similarity that a prototype has to an image; in the case of a no-feeling it is "true" if there is no such fact. A belief which is not true is called "false."

This is a definition of "truth" and "falsehood."
Russell, *Human Knowledge*, II, 11

- 141 The most mordant verities are heard at last, after the interests they injure and the emotions they rouse have exhausted their frenzy.

Freud, *Future of Psycho-Analytic Therapy*

- 142 The simplest explanation is not always the right one, truth is very often not simple.

Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, XXX

- 143 The ordinary man knows only one *truth*—truth in the ordinary sense of the word. What may be meant by a higher, or a highest, truth, he cannot imagine. Truth seems to him as little capable of having degrees as death, and the necessary leap from the beautiful to the true is one that he can-

not make. Perhaps you will agree with me in thinking that he is right in this.

Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, XXXV

- 144 For ordinary purposes, that is for practical purposes, the truth and the realness of things are synonymous. We are all children who say "really and truly." A reality which is taken in organic response so as to lead to subsequent reactions that are off the track and aside from the mark, while it is, existentially speaking, perfectly real, is not *good* reality. It lacks the hallmark of value. Since it is a certain *kind* of object which we want, one which will be as favorable as possible to a consistent and liberal or growing functioning, it is this kind, the *true* kind, which for us monopolizes the title of reality. Pragmatically, teleologically, this identification of truth and "reality" is sound and reasonable: rationalistically, it leads to the notion of the duplicate versions of reality, one absolute and static because exhausted; the other phenomenal and kept continually on the jump because otherwise its own inherent nothingness would lead to its total annihilation. Since it is only genuine or sincere things, things which are good for what they lay claim to in the way of consequences, which we want or are after, *morally* they alone are "real."
Dewey, *Practical Character of Reality*
- 145 To generalize the recognition that the true means the verified and means nothing else places upon men the responsibility for surrendering political and moral dogmas, and subjecting to the test of consequences their most cherished prejudices. Such a change involves a great change in the seat of authority and the methods of decision in society.
Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, VI
- 146 An a priori true thought would be one whose possibility guaranteed its truth.
We could only know a priori that a thought is true if its truth was to be recognized from the thought itself (without an object of comparison).
Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 3.04–3.05
- 147 What is the function of philosophy? To disclose the absolute truth? But is it credible that the absolute truth should descend into the thoughts of a mortal creature, equipped with a few special senses and with a biased intellect, a man lost amidst millions of his fellows and a prey to the epidemic delusions of the race? Possession of the absolute truth is not merely by accident beyond the range of particular minds; it is incompatible with being alive, because it excludes any particular station, organ, interest, or date of survey: the absolute truth is undiscoverable just because it is not a perspective. Perspectives are essential to animal apprehension; an observer, himself a part of the world he observes, must have a particular station in it; he cannot be equally near to everything, nor internal to anything but himself; of the rest he can only take views, abstracted according to his sensibility and foreshortened according to his interests. Those animals which I was supposing endowed with an adequate philosophy surely do not possess the absolute truth. They read nature in their private idioms. Their imagination, like the human, is doubtless incapable of coping with all things at once, or even with the whole of anything natural. Mind was not created for the sake of discovering the absolute truth. The absolute truth has its own intangible reality, and scorns to be known.
Santayana, *Realms of Being*, Pref.
- 148 Not the assertion as a psychological fact is true, but only that which it asserts: and the difference in quality and value between true ideas and false ideas, taken as states of mind, is a moral difference: the true ideas being safer and probably clearer and more humorous than the false, and marking a success on the mind's part in understanding the world, whereas false ideas would mark a failure.
Santayana, *Realm of Truth*, V
- 149 Truth is . . . not discoverable at all without some vital moral impulse prompting to survey it, and some rhetorical or grammatical faculty, synthesizing that survey and holding it up to attention in the form of a recognizable essence. Dramatic myth, however poetical it may be or merely analogous to the facts, in that at least it responds to the facts reflectively, has entered the arena of truth; it is more cognitive, more intelligent, and more useful than a mechanical record of those facts without any moral synthesis. I think it very doubtful whether, if religion and poetry should dry up altogether, mankind would be nearer the truth; or whether science would gain anything by correcting its philosophical pretensions, for instance the pretension to truth, in order to become merely the technology of the mechanical arts. Certainly nothing would be gained intellectually; and if we condemned intelligence, as well as imagination, to ticking like a clock, if not to total silence, we might outrage human nature too deeply, and provoke a violent reaction. It is more prudent for the critic of illusion to consider the truth that myth may possess rather than to attempt to escape from myth altogether.
Santayana, *Realm of Truth*, VII
- 150 The love of truth is often mentioned, the hatred of truth hardly ever, yet the latter is the commoner. People say they love the truth when they pursue it, and they pursue it when unknown: not therefore because of any felt affinity to it in their souls,

but probably because they need information for practical purposes, or to solve some conventional riddle. Where known, on the contrary, truth is almost always dismissed or disguised, because the aspect of it is hateful. And this apart from any devilish perversity in the natural man, or accidental vices that may fear the light. On the contrary, the cause is rather the natural man's innocence and courage in thinking himself the measure of all things. Life imposes selfish interests and subjective views on every inhabitant of earth: and in hugging these interests and these views the man hugs what he initially assumes to be the truth and the right. So that aversion from the real truth, a sort of antecedent hatred of it as contrary to presumption, is interwoven into the very fabric of thought.

Santayana, *Realm of Truth*, XII

151 There is no difficulty in understanding what is meant by the notion of *truth*. What is a true or truthful word? A word which expresses, as it really is, the speaker's thought; a word in conformity with that thought. What, then, is a true thought? A thought which represents, as it really is, the thing to which it refers; a thought in conformity

with that thing. We therefore conclude that *truth in the mind* consists in its *conformity with the thing*.

It is impossible to define truth otherwise without lying to ourselves, without falsifying the notion of truth of which in practice we make use, in the living exercise of our intelligence, each time that we think.

We may further remark that a thought false in all its constituents is an impossibility for, being in conformity with nothing whatsoever, it would be the zero of thought. If, for instance, I affirm that *stones have a soul*, this is undoubtedly a complete error. But it is true that stones exist, true also that certain beings have a soul; that is to say, all the constituents which compose this false thought are not false. Therefore error itself presupposes truth.

Maritain, *Introduction to Philosophy*, II, 4

152 All views are only probable, and a doctrine of probability which is not bound to a truth dissolves into thin air. In order to describe the probable, you must have a firm hold on the true. Therefore, before there can be any truth whatsoever, there must be an absolute truth.

Sartre, *Existentialism*

6.4 | Error, Ignorance, and the Limits of Human Knowledge

The mind that is in error about a certain matter and the mind that is ignorant of it are both in want of knowledge, but they do not stand in the same relation to the knowledge that they lack. To be in error is to claim to know what one does not know. It is, therefore, an unacknowledged ignorance of the matter in question, combined with a false presumption. In contrast, ignorance is simply a privation of knowledge unaccompanied by any pretension to know. Hence, from the point of view of the teacher, as Socrates suggests, ignorance is preferable to error, and especially an acknowledged igno-

rance—an explicit recognition that one does not know.

The passages collected here ring all the changes on these states of mind and point out their implications not only for teaching and learning, but also for the development of knowledge itself. On any point in question, there can be a multiplicity of errors all opposed to a single truth; and the sources or causes of error are also multitudinous. Writers such as Descartes and Bacon, who are concerned with rules for the proper conduct of the mind's efforts in seeking knowledge, therefore undertake to specify the pitfalls