



Quips, Squibs
and Some Curiosities

Leon Zeldis

*Quips, Squibs and
Some Curiosities*

A Cornerstone Book
Published by Cornerstone Book Publishers
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Cornerstone Book Publishers
New Orleans, LA

First Cornerstone Edition - 2008

www.cornerstonepublishers.com

ISBN: 1-934935-03-4
ISBN 13: 978-1-934935-04-0

MADE IN THE USA

Foreword, Warning and Disclaimer

This is not an ordinary dictionary of quotations. It is not comprehensive. I cannot vouch for the accuracy or origin of the thoughts I have collected here. I make no claim for scholarship. My guiding principle in making my choices has been: *Se non e Vero, e bene trovato*, which freely translated means: even if not true, it's well said.

I classified the quotations by subject. Some may be pigeonholed under two or more subjects. If you find the same quotation repeated, that's the reason, not a desire to fatten this little book. I enjoyed each of these observations so much, I don't want you to miss any.

The selections have been collected in the course of many years. I tried to copy them as accurately as I could but, as I said, attributions may be wrong. In many cases, I didn't find the author, so I just put them down without mentioning any name. I don't bother to write "anonymous", because the author may be known, but not by me.

Some observations are mine. I put them at the end of each subject, to make it easier to skip them over if you are not interested in my thoughts.

I have included some items that just tickled my fancy, not really quotations. Excuse me. Author's privilege.

I believe these aphorisms and thoughts to be amusing, or thought-provoking, or both. I hope you agree with my judgment. Enjoy!

Leon Zeldis

*A fine quotation is a diamond in the hand of a
man of wit and a pebble in the hand of a fool.*
Joseph Roux (1725-1793)

*A collection of anecdotes and maxims is the
greatest treasure for a man of the world.*
Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

I quote others only the better to express myself.
Michel E. de Montaigne (1533-1592)

*Some for renown, on scraps of learning dote,
And think they grow immortal as they quote.*
Edward Young (1683-1765)

*Quips, Squibs
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ABSENCE

Absence extinguishes small passions and increases great ones, as the wind will blow out a candle, and blow in a fire.

La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680)

ACTION

We become just by performing just actions, temperate by performing temperate actions, brave by performing brave actions.

Aristotle (384-322 BCE)

No man does anything for a single motive.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

We would often be ashamed of our finest actions if the world understood all the motives which produced them.

La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680)

Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.

Edmund Burke (1729-1797)

Eyesight is of no avail if the heart is blind.

Hebrew saying

I do not believe in a fate that falls on men however they act, but I do believe in a fate that falls on men unless they act.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936)

Trust no future, however pleasant!

Let the dead past bury its dead!

Act, act in the living Present!

Heart within and God overhead.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

Action and faith enslave thought, both of them in order not to be troubled or inconvenienced by reflection, criticism and doubt.

Henri Frédéric Amiel (1821-1881)

Without passion man is a mere latent force and possibility, like the flint which awaits the shock of the iron before it can give forth its spark.

Henri F. Amiel (1821-1881)

For purposes of action nothing is more powerful than narrowness of thought combined with the energy of will.

Henri Frédéric Amiel (1821-1881)
[cf. the hammer and chisel of Masonic symbolism]

It is easier to stay out than to get out.

Mark Twain (1835-1910)

A man would do nothing if he waited until he could do it so well that no one could find fault.

John Henry, Cardinal Newman (1801-1890)

Chemists at least can use analysis; patients suffering from an illness whose cause is unknown to them can call in a doctor; criminal cases are more or less cleared up by the examining magistrate. But for the disconcerting actions of our fellow men, we rarely discover the motive.

Marcel Proust (1871-1922)

The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong will and the other from a strong won't.

Henry W. Beecher (1813-1887)

There is nothing more frightening than ignorance in action.

Johann von Goethe (1749-1832)

A lot of men are like wheelbarrows - no good unless pushed.

However: Men are like spaghetti, you can pull them, but not push them.

Think globally; act locally.

ACTORS

An actor is a sculptor who carves in snow.

Ascribed to both Lawrence Barret (1838-1891) and Edwin Booth (1833-1893)

No pen or pencil can the Actor save.

The art, and artist, share one common grave.

David Garrick (1717-1779)

Acting consists in the ability to keep an audience from coughing.

Jean-Louis Barrault (1910-1994)

Quips, Squibs and Some Curiosities

She runs the gamut of emotions from A to B.

Dorothy Parker (1893-1967), on Katherine Hepburn

A walking X-ray.

Oscar Levant (1906-1972) on Audrey Hepburn

I never said all actors are cattle. What I said was all actors should be treated like cattle.

Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980)

Rex Harrison was notoriously rude. Once he refused an old lady his autograph outside the stage door, at which she hit him with her program, prompting Stanley Holloway to remark that, "For once, the fan hit the shit".

ADVERSITY

Sweet are the uses of adversity
which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

ADVICE

Be wary of the man who urges an action in which himself incurs no risk.

Joaquin Setanti

It is easier to stay out than to get out.

Mark Twain (1835-1910)

Sound advice is 99 percent sound and 1 percent advice.

Bessie and Beulah

If God had consulted me before embarking on the Creation, I would have suggested something simpler.

King Alfonso X the Wise of Castille (1221-1284)

If the stock market experts were so expert, they would be buying stock, not selling advice.

Norman R. Augustine (1935-)

How is it possible to expect that mankind will take advice, when they will not so much as take warning?

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

Nature has given us two ears but only one mouth.

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881)

Severities should be dealt out all at once, that by their suddenness they may give less offence; benefits should be handed out drop by drop, that they may be relished the more.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)

Do pleasant things yourself, but unpleasant ones through others.

Baltasar Gracián (1601-1658)

In dealing with cunning persons, we must ever consider their ends to interpret their speeches; and it is good to say little to them, and that which they least look for.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity.

John Wesley (1703-1791)

Do nothing that is not useful.

Keiko Yamanaka (1970-)

Every single day one should listen to a little song, read a good poem, look at a fine painting and, if possible, say a few sensible words.

Johann W. von Goethe (1749-1832)

When you are faced with two alternatives

Choose both.

Robert Crawford (1959 -)

Let him that would move the world first move himself.

Socrates (469-399 BCE)

I have found the best way to give advice to your children is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it.

Harry S. Truman (1884-1972)

We can give advice, but we cannot give the wisdom to profit by it.

La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680)

When you want to test the depth of a stream, don't use both feet.

Chinese proverb

Quips, Squibs and Some Curiosities

You are alive so celebrate every moment.
Cherish good people, including yourself.
Get negative people out of your life.
Like a bird, soar the updrafts.
Leave a heritage so that when you die, you will be missed.

Dr. Sami Sunchild

Always drink upstream from the herd.

Will Rogers (1879-1935)

Never play poker with a man called Doc; never eat at a restaurant called Mom's, and never sleep with a woman whose problems are worse than your own.

Nelson Algren (1909-1981)

Three things cannot be brought back:

A stone, after being thrown.

A word, after being pronounced.

Time, after it has passed.

Advice is what we ask for when we already know the answer but wish we didn't.

The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.

When you starve with a tiger, the tiger starves last.

If things appear easy, it's because we didn't hear all the instructions.

Be the judge in a duel, the trainer in the army, the commentator in politics, the umpire in a game, the art critic, and the professor in everything else.

Leon Zeldis

AFTER-DINNER SPEECH

There are two things that are more difficult than making an after-dinner speech: climbing a wall which is leaning toward you and kissing a girl who is leaning away from you.

Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

It usually takes more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.

Mark Twain (1835-1910)

To talk well and eloquently is a very great art, but an equally great one is to know the right moment to stop.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

During the French Revolution, a Doctor, a Lawyer and an Engineer were arrested together and sentenced to the guillotine. The Doctor walked up, put his head on the block, the blade fell down – and stuck! The executioner said, “That’s an act of God; you are free to go!”, and the Doctor said “Praise God!” and left. The Lawyer walked up, put his head on the block – and the same thing happened. He said, “Praise God!” and left. The Engineer walked up to the block, looked at the guillotine – turned to the executioner, and said “You know, if you’d just put a drop of oil up there...”.

AGING see also **OLD AGE**

Old age is the rarest of things in a palace.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BCE – 65 CE)

[He should know. Had to commit suicide at the behest of Nero. LZ]

Man dies too soon to be able to know immortal things.

Seneca (4 BCE – 65 CE)

The hardest years in life are those between ten and seventy.

Helen Hayes (1900-1993), at 73

At my age, flowers scare me.

George Burns (1896-1996)

Intellectual blemishes, like facial ones, grow more prominent with age.

La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680)

When people tell you how young you look, they are also telling you how old you are.

Cary Grant (1904-1986)

Whoever coined the “Golden Years” slogan was a man in his twenties.

Dr. Israel Drapkin

A man is not old until regrets take the place of dreams.

John Barrymore (1882-1942)

The flower in the vase still smiles, but no longer laughs.

Malcolm de Chazal (1902-1981)

Quips, Squibs and Some Curiosities

Maturity is the age when you are still young, but with much more effort.
Jean Louis Barrault (1910-1994)

Years steal the fire from the mind as vigour from the limb,
And life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim.
Lord Byron (1788-1824)

Youth is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret.
Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881)

Age imprints more wrinkles in the mind than it does on the face.
Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)

Aging is the only way not to die.

Old age is full of surprises, most of them unpleasant.

Like paper, the soul withers, and turns dry, crackly and wrinkled.
Leon Zeldis

ALUMINUM

Aluminum is the fourth most common element on Earth, yet its existence wasn't even suspected until 1808, when it was discovered by Humphrey Davy.

AMBASSADOR

An ambassador is an honest man sent abroad to lie for his country.
Sir Henry Wotton (1568-1639)

AMBER

In the early 18th century amber was more than ten times more valuable than gold. When, in 1681, the Great Elector Frederick Wilhelm sent a throne made of amber to the Tsar Theodor III, he called it "the greatest curiosity in the world". But the most extraordinary use of the precious resin was the "Amber Room", an entire chamber made up of finely worked amber panels that would glow in candlelight, built for the first King of Prussia, Frederick I, after his coronation in Königsberg in 1701. It disappeared after the Second World War.

Catherine Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy

AMBITION

Ambition is the last refuge of failure.

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

The slave has but one master; the ambitious man has as many as can help in making his fortune.

La Bruyère (1645-1696)

Ambition, like scratching, can never be satisfied.

Leon Zeldis

AMERICA

Some 80 percent of Americans say they believe in angels.

T. M. Luhrmann (1959 -)

The English are polite by telling lies. The Americans are polite by telling the truth.

Malcolm Bradbury (1932-2000)

The American people never carry an umbrella. They prepare to walk in eternal sunshine.

Alfred E. Smith (1873-1944)

The worst country to be poor in is America,

Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975)

One should never visit America for the first time.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964)

In California everyone goes to a therapist, is a therapist or is a therapist going to a therapist.

Truman Capote (1924-1984)

Thought is barred in this city of Deadful Joy, and conversation is unknown.

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) on Los Angeles

War is God's way of teaching Americans geography.

Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914)

America: toilet paper too thin, newspapers too fat.

Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

Quips, Squibs and Some Curiosities

Sir, they are a race of convicts and ought to be grateful for anything we allow them short of hanging.

Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), on Americans

America is a land where a citizen will cross the ocean to fight for democracy - and won't cross the street to vote in a national election.

Bill Vaughan (1872-1958)

The big cities of America are becoming Third World countries.

Nora Ephron (1941-)

In San Francisco, Halloween is redundant.

Will Durant (1885-1981)

Oh to be in L.A. when the polyethyl-vinyl trees are in bloom!

Herb Gold (1924-)

All of our political institutions and cultural institutions have been unusually geared toward commercial activity, and you can see that part of the success of hucksters comes from this idea, whether it is patent medicine or a new religion, that you are selling the possibility of transformation.

Bruce J. Shulman

Americans: People who laugh at African witch doctors and spend 100 million dollars on fake reducing systems.

Leonard Louis Levinson

The discovery of America was the occasion of the greatest outburst of cruelty and reckless greed known in history.

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)

Americans are always eager to entertain conspiracy theories. They flourish in the artificially nourishing soil of academe, immune to scientific reasoning and logical discourse.

Mary Lefkowitz (1935-)

Los Angeles: many suburbs in search of a city.

The English like to hunt foxes; Americans hunt witches. Since there are none to be found, they invent them, giving them different names each time.

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Americans are hated because they are so successful and so generous.
Success provokes envy, and generosity breeds greed.

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ANALOGY

Analogy is the highest function of imagination, combining analysis and synthesis, translation and creation.

Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867)

Most reasoning, or metaphysical, religious, esthetic, scientific, historical postulates, are made analogically. Analogical thought is transcendent, extrapolating, compared to analytical thought, which is syllogistic. It is selective, and capable of 'foreseeing'. The syllogistic technique, on the contrary, is composed of tautologies, or better, 'truisms', obtained by substitutions and eliminations.

Dorothy Emmet (1904-2000), quoted by Matila Ghyka (1881-1965)

Analogies are misleading, like linking ants with elephants because they share some of the DNA.

Leon Zeldis

ANARCHIST

The anarchist... is disappointed with the future as well as the past.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936)

The anarchist thinks that demolishing a house he'll be able to build a better one with the rubble.

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ANGELS

The human species would never produce a race of angels; genes for wings and for moral character are not present in human populations.

J.B.S. Haldane (1892-1964)

In heaven an angel is nobody in particular.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

Some 80 percent of Americans say they believe in angels.

T. M. Luhrmann (1959-)

ANGER see **BAD TEMPER**

ANTS

Ants have lived for more than 80 million years, while man's civilization is scarcely more than 7000 years old. They are the oldest cosmopolites; they have sheltered longest, grown food, escaped many of the violences of the mammalian world. Have they changed? It would seem they have changed very little if at all. They are one of the small "immortals". They attained their present relatively high biological specialization very long ago and have since been marking time or evolving so slowly that the modifications are extremely small.

Loren C. Eiseley (1907-1977)

ANXIETY

Anxiety is the interest paid on trouble before it is due.

William R. Inge (1860-1954)

Hire paranoids. Even though they have a high false alarm rate, they discover all plots.

Herman Kahn (1922-1983)

We cannot control events in our external world, but we have the ability to control how we view these events and the emotional response we choose to have to them.

Patty Wooten

We suffer primarily not from our vices or our weaknesses, but from our illusions. We are haunted, not by reality, but by those images we have put in place of reality.

Daniel J. Boorstin (1914-2004)

Anxiety is excitement without oxygen.

Whistling in the dark may not be advisable; it attracts predators.

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APATHY

The tyranny of a prince in an oligarchy is not so dangerous to the public welfare as the apathy of a citizen in a democracy.

Montesquieu (1689-1755)

In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

Martin Niemoeller (1892-1984)

APPEARANCES

In all things, circumstance is required as well as substance. The first thing we meet is not the essence of things but their appearance; from the exterior we arrive to the knowledge of the interior.

Baltasar Gracián y Morales (1601-1658)

If you look good and dress well, you don't need a purpose in life.

Robert Pante

Our greatest pretenses are built up not to hide the evil and ugly in us, but our emptiness. The hardest thing to hide is something that is not there.

Eric Hoffer (1902-1983)

Only God helps the badly dressed.

Spanish proverb

Though it may dress in silk, the monkey is still a monkey.

Spanish proverb

Every man has his secret sorrows which the world knows not - and often times we call a man cold, when he is only sad.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

The great majority of mankind are satisfied with appearances, as though they were realities, and are often even more influenced by the things that seem than by those that are.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)

Sometimes when you look in his eyes you get the feeling that someone else is driving.

David Letterman (1947-)

It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances.

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

Quips, Squibs and Some Curiosities

Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.

Sincerity is the key to life; once you can fake that, you've got it made.

There is sin in sincerity.
Leon Zeldis

APPEASEMENT

Appeasement is feeding your friends to a crocodile in the hope the you will be the last to be eaten.

Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

ARCHITECTURE

A doctor can bury his mistakes but an architect can only advise his client to plant vines.

Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959)

ARGENTINE

If I had not been born Perón, I would have liked to be Perón.

Juan Perón (1895-1974)

Argentineans are Spanish-speaking Italians.

ARGUMENTS

Arguments are to be avoided; they are always vulgar and often convincing.

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

I never make the mistake of arguing with people for whose opinions I have no respect.

Edward Gibbon (1737-1794)

A liberal is a man too broadminded to take his own side in a quarrel.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

One must destroy the seriousness of an opponent with laughter, and his laughter with seriousness.

Gorgias (483-378 BCE)

If you cannot convince them, confuse them.

Harry S. Truman (1884-1972)

When you have no basis for an argument, abuse the plaintiff.

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BCE)

It is not necessary to understand things in order to argue about them.

Caron de Beaumarchais (1732-1799)

Arguments only confirm people in their own opinions.

Booth Tarkington (1869-1946)

The first human who hurled an insult instead of a stone was the founder of civilization.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

Don't argue with a fool. The spectators can't tell the difference.

Charles Nalin

Positive: being mistaken at the top of one's voice.

Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914)

We are not satisfied to be right, unless we can prove others to be quite wrong.

William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

There are two theories to arguing with women. Neither one works.

Children's games end in a fight; grown-up's fights end in a game.

Leon Zeldis

ARROGANCE

Arrogance is truly tantamount to idolatry.

The Talmud

Academic and aristocratic people live in such uncommon atmosphere that common sense can rarely reach them.

Samuel Butler (1835-1902)

If other people are going to talk, conversation becomes impossible.

James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903)

Quips, Squibs and Some Curiosities

We are the first race of the world, and the more of the world we inherit
the better it is for the human race.

Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902)

ART and ARTISTS

A great work of art is like a dream; for all its apparent obviousness it does
not explain itself and is always ambiguous.

Carl Jung (1875-1961)

Art for art's sake makes no more sense than gin for gin's sake.

Somerset Maugham (1874-1965)

Skill without imagination is craftsmanship and gives us many useful
things such as wickerwork picnic baskets. Imagination without skill gives
us modern art.

Tom Stoppard (1937-)

I have finished the chapel I have been painting. The Pope is very well
satisfied.

*Michelangelo (1475-1564), writing to his father after finishing the
Sistine Chapel frescos.*

Quality is art's equivalent for the truth.

Robert Aron (1898-1975)

Art is the perfection of nature.

Thomas Browne (1605-1682)

If it were not for the intellectual snobs who pay, the arts would perish
with their starving practitioners - let us thank heaven for hypocrisy.

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963)

Creative activity could be described as a type of learning process where
teacher and pupil are located in the same individual.

Arthur Koestler (1905-1983)

Mirrors serve to see one's face; art, to see one's soul.

George Bernard Shaw (1856 - 1950)

Art is the expression of man's pleasure in labor.

William Morris (1834-1896)

A work of art is not execution. A work of art is revelation.

Louis Calaferte (1928-1994)