

## On Computer Science

What computer science delivers, has delivered, and is continuing to and will be delivering in the future, are methods of describing complicated processes such that what used to take hundreds of pages of English text to describe will take a few lines in a formal language. *Gerald Sussman, 1991*

Besides a mathematical inclination, an exceptionally good mastery of one's native tongue is the most vital asset of a competent programmer. *Edsger W Dijkstra, 1975*

By relieving the mind of all unnecessary work, a good notation sets it free to concentrate on more advanced problems, and in effect increases the mental power of the race.

*Alfred North Whitehead*

Fortran was a mistake of innocence. The people who designed C should have known better. *1976*

Most of our examples are written in C, mainly because it is so widely used, but also because it is harder to get things right in C than in other languages. *John Viega and Gary McGraw in Building Secure Software, 2002*

Procedural programming is a monumental waste of human energy. *1985*

The only important design or engineering aid offered by the object oriented paradigm is abstract data types, and they have been in use for at least 40 years. *1999*

The "science" in computer science lies in figuring out what rules some other bozo used when he designed the system. *2004*

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"Suboptimal" means "not optimal." *Leonard Kleinrock, c.1990*  
us cs is bs *John Allen, 1999*

## On Human Culture

Let us not dream that reason can ever be popular. Passions, emotions, may be made popular, but reason remains ever the property of the few. *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)*

The preeminent transnational community in our culture is science. *Richard Rhodes, The Making of the Atomic Bomb, 1986*

Men are actually praised as self-sacrificing for leaving their families to fight for what they believe in—no matter how distant or arcane their cause—but women are called selfish if we fail to sacrifice almost everything for our families, or even if we speak up for ourselves. *Gloria Steinem, at Smith College, 1995*

To paraphrase Marlo Thomas: For a male leader to be called ruthless, he has to take over your life or your country. For a female leader to be called ruthless, she has only to put you on hold. *Gloria Steinem at Smith College 1995*

Do not worry, madam, for if business were difficult, those who do it could not. *Samuel Johnson*

Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent.  
Is he is able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent.  
Is he is both able and willing? Then whence commeth evil?  
Is he is neither able nor willing? Then why call him god?  
*Epicurean Paradox, c 300 BC*

All religions are equally sublime to the ignorant, useful to the politician, and ridiculous to the philosopher. *ancient Rome, maybe*  
Arguing with a creationist is like playing chess with a pigeon. No matter how you play, the pigeon knocks over the pieces, shits on the board, and struts around triumphantly.  
*apologies to Pati Hagan of Taos, October 2013*

Little by little, the look of the country changes because of the men we admire. *Homer Bannon, 1963*

## On Knowledge

Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge. *Charles Darwin, 1871*

Ninety-five percent of human knowledge is the names of things and how long they are. *David Wingert, c1963*

Form any singular possessive by adding apostrophe-"s" regardless of the root word. Minsky, Minsky's book. Charles, Charles's book.

*Mary-Claire van Leunen, A Handbook for Scholars, 1986*

$p \approx 3.1415926535 8979323846 2643383279 5028841971$

$6939937510 5820974944 5923078164 0628620899$

*Shanks and Wrench, Mathematics of Computation, 1962*

$p = 3$

*II Chronicles 4,2*

$p = 4/(5/4)$

*House of Representatives, State of Indiana, 1897*

I think that it is much more likely that the reports of flying saucers are the results of the known irrational characteristics of terrestrial intelligence than of the unknown rational efforts of extra-terrestrial intelligence. *Richard Feynman, The Character of Physical Law, 1964*

Science has nothing to do with truth and everything to do with refutability. Science insists that all its claims be susceptible to evidential refutation. "Creation science" is not science. Maybe it's horseshit, maybe not, but it's not science because nobody could prove its claims to be horseshit, even if they were. *2004*

I have an enormous collection of sea shells. I keep them on beaches all over the world. *Stephen Wright*

## On Politics

The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary. *H. L. Menken*

Reagan's great achievement: persuading blue-collar factory workers to embrace his heady brew of jingoism, anticommunism, contempt for government and admiration for the virtues of unfettered capitalism. *Christopher Hayes, The Nation, 16 July 2007*

The South voted against Republicans for a hundred years for freeing their slaves. Now they vote against Democrats for passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964. *2004*

I don't like Republicans, because basically Republicans are not what I like. *Andrew Leon, age 12 (The New Yorker, Sep 13, 2004)*

Republicans are the most vicious animals on the planet. They'll probably outlive humans. *2010*

George W Bush: worst world leader since Caligula *2004*

Have you seen the news clip where George W Bush shakes hands with a Hatian, then wipes his hand on Clinton's shirt? Pretty much sums up the whole Bush family. What a bunch of slimeballs. *2010*

Finally it is apparent. Bush cannot be underestimated. *2007*

Conservatives have carved comfortable niches for themselves and believe small perturbations could pitch them overboard. *2009*

Buying stock from the corporation that issues it is investing. Buying stock from any other source is gambling. Maybe investors deserve a tax break when they cash in. Gamblers don't. *2010*

Republicans are stingy and mean. *2015*

People who oppose progressive taxation are subhuman. *2013*

## On Freedom

Before it is science and career, before it is livelihood, before even it is family or love, freedom is sound sleep and safety to notice the play of the morning sun. *Richard Rhodes, The Making of the Atomic Bomb, 1986*

Ronald Reagan after all did manage to strike a blow for freedom. Most of the beggars you see in cities used to be locked up in hospitals. *1998*

Mississippi didn't abolish slavery until 1995 when they ratified the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. As Nina Simone said, God damn Mississippi. *2011*

## On Life

I would be converted to a religion of grass. Sleep the winter away and rise headlong each spring. Sink deep roots. Conserve water. *Respect and nourish your neighbors and never let trees gain the upper hand.* Such are the tenets and dogmas. As for the practice – *grow lush in order to be devoured or caressed, stiffen in sweet elegance, invent startling seeds* – those also make sense. *Bow beneath the arm of fire. Connect underground. Provide. Provide. Be lovely and do no harm.* Louise Erdrich, *Big Grass*, 1995

The pioneers of public health did not change nature, or men, but adjusted the active relationship of men to certain aspects of nature. ... In doing so they had to contend with and struggle against...those who believed that to interfere with nature was sinful. Gil Elliot, *Twentieth Century Book of the Dead*, 1972

Affirmative action is sometimes described as a form of reverse racism. There is, in fact, no form of discrimination against white people in our society that mirrors the systematic, pervasive, and often unconscious discrimination that persists against black people, despite the considerable progress we have made since the end of slavery. Judith Shapiro, *President, Barnard College*, 31 March 2000

And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus, by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerve in the brain of Jupiter. But may we hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away with this artificial scaffolding ... Thomas Jefferson, *April 1823*

... One hundred eighty-two years, eight months, and no progress yet on this front. *Christmastime 2005*

A powerful entity that requires blood sacrifices of the powerless deserves contempt, not reverence. *Christmastime 2005*

The only fundamental difference between a delusional mind, a cult, and a religion is the number of adherents to its beliefs. 2003

An optimist is a person who knows that 93% of Americans believe in God, yet remains always surprised to meet one of them. 2010

Heaven is the ultimate expression of the arrogance of the human species. Lucy Saarni, 2006

To paraphrase Dawkins: Sunday school is child abuse. 2008

Getting old isn't for sissies. Bette Davis

## On War

Terrorism is the war of the poor, and war is the terrorism of the rich. Peter Ustinov, *The Guardian*, 28 Mar 2003

The last American to die in what might be truthfully called the defense of his country did so in 1945. Those who have perished since have died to promote the agendas of lying politicians.

Edna McAlexander, *The Nation*, 23 June 2003

The difference [between natural and man-made death as a public health issue] is that one area of public death has been tackled and secured by the forces of reason; the other has not.

Gil Elliot, *Twentieth Century Book of the Dead*, 1972

But the death machine had only sampled a vast new source of raw material: the civilians behind the lines. ... That is why, despite its sickening squalor and brutality, the Great War looks so innocent to modern eyes. Richard Rhodes

*The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, 1986

Preventive war was an invention of Hitler. Frankly, I would not even listen to anyone seriously that came and talked about such a thing. Dwight D Eisenhower, 1953

In the long story of civilization, the moments when improving your lot beats annoying your neighbor are vanishingly rare.

Adam Gopnik, *The New Yorker*, Sep 2011

War is God's way of teaching Americans geography.

probably not Ambrose Bierce

## On the United States

Reagan's trickle down turned out to be a capillary gusher. Feb 2014  
America needs a successful politician who speaks truth to stupid.

2012 (with apologies to Aaron Sorkin)

And throughout it all, the United States: Rich, prosperous, myopic, magnificent in aggregate and petty in specifics, unwilling—always, always—to accord respect to the mind. To good fortune, to luck, to rugged individualism, to faith in God, to patriotism, to beauty, to spunk or pluck or grit or git, but never to complex intelligence and complex thought. Nancy Kress, *Beggars in Spain*

In a recent poll, as many Americans chose Sarah Palin as chose Michele Obama when asked to name the woman they most admire. Stronger evidence of the vicious stupidity of the American public can hardly be imagined. *Christmastime, 2010*

Since Americans tend to think of themselves as middle class even when their incomes put them well into the top 5 percent, it's worth bearing in mind that there are more than twice as many families below the poverty line as there are families with incomes of more than \$100,000. Paul Krugman, 1995

The arguments concerning loss of sovereignty used by opponents of the United Nations are the same as those used by citizens of the United States against statehood for territories in the Louisiana Purchase. *Author Not Known*

All of the claims of creationists are unmitigated horseshit. In contrast, no established facts are inconsistent with the theory of evolution. Unfortunately, half of the American electorate and 70% of Republicans prefer wallowing in horseshit to considering the evidence.

for the facts, see "Why Evolution is True", Jerry Coyne 2013

It's demoralizing to live in a place where "liberal" is pejorative.

How about "Baptist" instead? 2004

America's behavior among nations since the fall of the Soviet Union justifies the actions of Klaus Fuchs and other spies trying to ensure a balance of power. 2004

The world is better off with the United States than without it in exactly the same sense that Iraq was better off with Saddam Hussein than without him. March 2005

Caught a bit of Schaffner's movie *Patton* this evening. Happened to turn it on just as the slapping incident occurred. Turns out 90% of the American public thought the son-of-a-bitch was right to slap the soldier. But, Eisenhower removed him from command anyway. Apparently, Eisenhower knew the slapping was wrong and was not inclined to pander to the collective opinion of a bunch of ignorant rednecks. Today, America remains populated by the same brand of ignorant rednecks, but now they have managed to elect leaders who are just as ignorant and crude as they are. So much for progress. 3 April 2005  
PFC Bradley Manning's WikiLeaks epitomizes heroism. His being in jail characterizes the military. Sep 2011

Democracy has always been a problem... The question is, What do we do now, in a world where, in the absence of liberal aristocracies, in the absence of social democratic elites whose authority people accept, you have people who genuinely believe, in the majority, that their interest consists of maximizing self-interest at someone else's expense? Tony Judt, *The Nation*, 17 May 2010

The American electorate cannot be forgiven for choosing as President the man ultimately responsible for Abu Ghraib. 2005

The desperation in the voices of conservatives who dream the demise of Obamacare reveals that even they don't believe it. Dec 2013

The South has been wrong on every issue since the Declaration of Independence. Let's vote them out of the country. Oct 2011

The rich think that money motivates them to work, but that the workers are better motivated when the rich pay them poorly. Oct 2012