

CLOINED GENIUSES SPEAK

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INTRODUCTION

This book is top secret. It describes a secret CIA program to clone historical geniuses. It is not known when the cloning program began, but all the cloned geniuses in the book are 20 years old. This book details only a hundred and two of the many geniuses cloned. And all of the geniuses here are copies of dead people. Of course the CIA has cloned people who are alive today as well, but that program is even more top secret than this book.

The geniuses have been given a different face from the original and none know who they are. However they do know their country of origin. They also know that they are an experiment and that they live in isolation. They all have private tutors and are allowed to mingle with each other. However they don't see anyone else and spend most of their time reading, or in the lab if they are scientists.

The reader will be surprised to see many geniuses who died long ago and whose graves are in what most assume were unknown locations. The CIA will not divulge how they got hold of the remains of many of the geniuses. They just mention that there were a lot of museums, cults, churches, scientific institutions and the CIA themselves which preserved bones or hair etc. of great people in history and that they have a number of brilliant archaeologists who have conducted secret excavations to extract the DNA of many great geniuses of the past.

Some of the few who have read this highly classified book have remarked that it would be impossible to get the DNA of some of the geniuses described in this book. Some of the readers of this book have also suggested that the geniuses are not who they are said to be but rather are other people who the CIA has brainwashed to think as they do. I, as the writer of this book have no idea what the truth is about that.

In addition some readers have pointed out that the geniuses in this book say many of the same kinds of things. They say this is clear evidence of brainwashing, but I think it could also be that great minds think alike. However the geniuses do share many of the same tutors.

Also some say that not all the people in this book are geniuses, but I have reserved judgment on this.

Furthermore, one should not assume that this book a comprehensive representation of past genius. Many geniuses' DNA could not be acquired (according to the CIA) and some of them were not made available for interviews with me (I am Tom Ball, a "journalist").

Each genius was interviewed briefly by me and the highlights of each interview have been given in the book.

Most of the interviews in the book focused on the modern world and its problems rather than the past. Although many scientists are in this book, no details of their secret work for the CIA will be divulged in these pages. In any case all the geniuses in this book are only 20 years old, so one must not expect too much from them.

Anyways most of the world's problems need to be solved by political, economic, social and educational changes, and so the interviews concentrated on these.

BEN FRANKLIN

(Editor's note: "I" stands for the interviewer and the other initials for the interviewee)

I: Ben Franklin was a great thinker and inventor, perhaps best known for his experiments with electricity. If he were here today, what would he be saying?

F: Ben Franklin was a very ethical man. I think he would say that in many ways our world is morally bankrupt. Our society teaches people to be greedy and not how to be good. The government tells us to go to school and there we learn that one should obey the government by paying taxes, marching to war, obeying the laws and so on. And society itself has not been planned, but rather has sort of happened haphazardly; and therefore people are not as good as they could be.

I think what should be done is firstly to regulate people's behavior through taxation. Therefore people should get big tax breaks for studying part time or full time. Or if they can prove they are becoming more knowledgeable from their own reading, they would also be eligible. In addition, if they can prove (through digital cameras and the like) that they have helped others, then they would also receive tax breaks. Or if they can simply show what other good things they have done they could be rewarded relative to how good it is. If they can show that they've traveled, gone to the gym, fallen in love, followed important news and so on, they should get tax breaks also. And monitors could be put into people's TVs to determine what kinds of shows they've been watching. If they watch approved shows which can help make them more knowledgeable and a better person, then they should also receive tax breaks. You get the idea.

Secondly education needs to be changed to emphasize creativity and thinking more and memorization less. Most people forget most of the knowledge they acquire in school anyway. School should be made more fun,

and help to show people how to live good, creative, just lives; you know like teach them the art of conversation, the art of romance, how to run good businesses and so on. And they should learn to think about everything they do, and not just do what others are doing.

I: But don't you think telling people what to do and what to think is anathema to most people?

F: But government is always telling people what to do. My plan is no different, and besides they have the option not to do as they should. For example they could still watch some mindless show on TV, but they'd have to pay for it...

And I have another good idea; I think all bosses should be judged by their employees; if the boss gets a good rating, the company would also get tax breaks.

I: Don't you think though that by making people good, you will be making the world a dull place?

F: Nonsense. By emphasizing creativity and goodness we will make people more interesting. By good I don't mean go to church and act like an angel, I mean use the mind that you have to be interesting.

Some people think that a lot of creativity comes from the so-called dark side of humanity, but this is rubbish. All that evil ever accomplishes is destruction and woe, whereas good creativity stimulates everyone.

I: How do you feel about the USA today?

F: Unfortunately the US had slavery and racism years ago and this has caused modern day slums, crime and other problems. Even today many illegal and legal immigrants live in slums. Democracy has failed to produce leaders who care about the people, and make sure they all receive shelter, good food, health care and an education. Instead the government incurs huge debts for building up the military and waging pointless wars, like in Iraq. If the debt continues to grow the Nation's standard of living will

plummet. Already a huge amount of money, almost one-third of tax dollars I think, goes to interest on the debt. Revolution, war, chaos and the like will be the result of long-term economic depression. Of course many other nations are also building their debts, so there will be great depressions and chaos everywhere.

There are many other problems with the US government as well. Clearly great people have to try to get involved in politics, by forming new parties or joining existing ones to keep the USA prosperous and free.

I: How do you feel about the future of science?

F: I think science is coming along nicely, but I am worried about it too, particularly about genetic engineering. I think many people suspect that secret research is being done on things like Einstein's brain for example in order to improve human intelligence.

However the world is not ready for such "super humans" and I worry that science is moving too quickly.

Also many governments are devising deadly new weapons which ultimately will one day be used. In 50 years time there may be many ways to destroy the world: nuclear weapons, biological weapons, nanobots and who knows what else?

Simply building up the US military is not going to help. Look at how much trouble the US army has had in tiny Iraq.

The only solution to the problem is the whole world getting together as one. Since the US is the world superpower they need to take the lead in convincing other countries to join together. Just one UN military should be allowed.

Perhaps we could also have a much more powerful UN government that would have the power to address all issues of world concern.

ALEXANDER BELL

I: Bell was the inventor of the telephone. What do you think about him and the marvelous communications devices that we see in the world today?

B: It seems like magic to me that such things are possible. However I think it's just the beginning. For example I think that brain waves in people can one day be interpreted and hence people will be able to read each other's minds. After all a brain wave is just a wave, like a radio wave is. This would be a great thing for a number of reasons.

For one people would not be able to tell lies. For example if they were contemplating being the President or a police officer they could be screened to make sure they were good. Ex cons could also be screened to make sure they haven't committed any other crimes, and hence crime would be drastically reduced overnight. Lovers would not be able to tell lies and so everyone would have to be honest in love. Parents could know what their child is thinking and so could guide them better. So many things could be done; it just boggles the mind.

I: But, assuming it's possible, wouldn't that drive a lot of people crazy?

B: I think people could get used to it if they took it step by step. Anyway no one would force ordinary people to use it anyhow, provided they weren't a policeman or a criminal.

I: What other ideas then do you have about the future of communications?

B: I think we can also use our minds to control computers. One day everyone could have a tiny computer implanted in their head with a screen

on glasses or something. Robots could be given human brains and hence would become androids. Such androids could do a lot of our work for us.

I: But wouldn't that be like slavery?

B: Perhaps the androids would only be of low intelligence and we could give them many things to satisfy them.

I: But if androids did most of the work, what would people do?

B: I think nearly everyone could get used to the idea of not working. The androids would produce every kind of material good that one could want, so everyone could live like a king. Even the androids might live like kings...

I: But surely such indolence would not be good for people?

B: Well there are a lot of people today who do very little work, and it doesn't seem to be a problem. Everyone dreams of retiring at as young an age as possible; and they'd retire now if they won the lottery or something.

Humans could spend their time dabbling in the arts or learning how to really have an enjoyable life instead of worrying about a meaningless career.

I: OK. What about the modern world then? Do you feel that it is progressing?

B: The world is changing so fast I think many people are beleaguered. I think we need more thinkers to consider where the world is headed and plan what happens in the future. No one today seems to think about what kind of society we should construct, yet science goes forward at a furious pace. One of the problems is that governments are elected for the short term and so are short-sighted. Another problem is it is extremely difficult to make it as a writer or political leader who really has some ideas, and so many people with good ideas go unnoticed.

CASANOVA

I: Casanova was one of the most famous lovers in history. If he was here today would he say that there more to life than love?

C: I think many people are unaware of just how good love can be. But they are tired from their jobs etc. and have had a few bad experiences so they decide there's nothing in it.

Men and women today are also too picky. Any loving is good, but they set their standards so high. They talk about a soul mate, and really what they mean is they want a perfect lover. But even if they feel they find their soul mate, they will still try to think of reasons why they are not happy.

Also many men and women today live alone and if it were not for sex many would have no use for the opposite sex. Maybe one day they'll invent sex machines and then many women and especially men will have nothing to do with romance.

But romance is beautiful. Each girl is like a poem for you to savor and gain inspiration from...

There's no doubt in my mind, that love is the best thing in life. When you are in love, it's the best feeling... I feel sorry for people who have never known love.

I: So you believe love has a future?

C: There will always be many who believe in love, but I am afraid that in the future our society will be largely loveless. People are becoming so selfish and greedy for money, and not only is romance being neglected but

even so-called brotherly love. Look at government leaders; do they love the people? Or do they just love power? And intellectuals; do they love the people or do they just love success? And people don't want to have children because they don't love people; they just love themselves.

I: What role will dating services play in the future?

C: Many people think they know what kind of lover is best for them, but you really never know until you've been with someone for a while. I think to coldly say what kind of lover you want on the internet is not very romantic, but I suppose it works sometimes. But people are not a statistic and classifying what type of person you want seems to me to be heartless.

Really people should get active and be in a situation where they meet many people; it's the natural way to meet potential lovers.

I: But isn't there anything we can do about all the lonely people in this world?

C: Someone told me one time that prostitutes and gigolos should be provided by the state to make sure everyone has a lover. And although I don't agree with it, there are many lonely people out there who have no love and part of the problem is the way society is designed; that is to say that it is not designed to make meeting people very easy. It takes a lot of work to meet people and some people feel they don't have the time. Our society has convinced them that watching TV is better than looking for love. I don't understand it, quite frankly.

I: But why are you so successful in love? What's your strategy?

C: Like many Italians I am passionate and I really care about girls. Girls can tell I care about them from the way I speak. Many people wish they could be great lovers like the Italians, and who knows, maybe one day they'll invent a drug that will make everyone passionate. To be passionate is to love life, and that is attractive evolutionarily speaking!

PLATO

I: Plato was an ancient Greek philosopher who theorized we need “Philosopher Kings” to rule us. How do you feel about that?

P: In order to make government better we certainly do need better leaders and therefore a better system. Plato neglected to say exactly how we should pick better leaders and this has led to a lot of confusion.

However I think the answer is simple. What is needed is for a wise leader of any country to start an experiment. What should be done is the leader simply picks the wisest businesspeople, writers, scientists etc. and these people would then form a “College of Geniuses”. This group would then pick a President, say every 5 years, to lead the nation.

If the people in the College of Geniuses were truly wise and the leader they pick a good one, then that country would prosper more than others, and then other countries might follow suit.

Of course the position of President would also have to be made desirable to clever people. So a huge salary would be in order, say USD\$2 million per year. And the President would just make decisions, he wouldn’t need to sit in the legislature or visit foreign leaders or talk to the media. Just make decisions. And if this would not be enough to attract clever people then other inducements could be offered. In fact you could simply ask such a potential leader what they want, and give it to them if the College of Geniuses approved it.

I: But do you really think the people would go for such an elitist system?

P: People will love it, if it works.

People say that one should keep the democratic system for better or worse. But it simply doesn't make sense to not have your best people as leaders. You wouldn't want a CEO to be mediocre would you? If the CEO is mediocre then the company would not thrive. It's the same with government. Why isn't it obvious to everyone?

I: What other improvements to society could be made?

P: I think that education is another important area where we can make real improvements. I think there should be a worldwide drive to make sure everyone in the world has at least a university or technical school diploma. And we don't want to train people just in business and science. Every student should take a lot of liberal arts courses so that they can improve their thinking. If the developing world's people were better educated in particular, many of their problems would soon disappear.

Also the College of Geniuses could appoint great thinkers to come up with new texts and new ways to educate people. Experimentation is what has led to such great progress in science, why not apply it to learning?

We should also have experiments in other aspects of life; indeed every person should be taught to try new ways of living all the time. People's lives today are too routine and boring. Like watching about 4 hours of TV a day, as most people around the world do.

I: Are you optimistic about the future?

P: Well this is hard to predict. But I feel if humanity uses its best people to try to solve the world's problems, then at least we would have nothing to be ashamed of. But it is obvious today that many world leaders are very mediocre; and with things like nuclear weapons proliferating so quickly, we really need visionaries.

If we have great leaders everything will improve in our society, yet in history we have so seldom seen great leaders. It's time we all smartened up, I think.

GENGHIS KHAN

I: Genghis Khan was perhaps the greatest conqueror ever and he set up his grandson Kublai to rule over the largest empire ever. How do you feel about this great leader?

GK: In this day and age we lack strong leaders. What is needed is to unite the world as one and then devise a system whereby only very strong rulers could rule. Such leaders must be physically in top condition and have undergone tough training and education. Deprivation, adversity and such would be part of the training. On the other hand such a leader must be a genius and be very knowledgeable about people and the world.

In essence therefore we need a sort of “New Barbarian” combining vigor and genius to lead us.

I: Do you think such a vigorous education would benefit everyone?

GK: Certainly. Today’s schools emphasize pointless memorization when they should be trying to mold people’s character. As a result many people only want a luxury life. They only want things that come easy. Such luxury living has resulted in nothing but downfall in history.

I: So you think modern culture is weak?

GK: Today many men live like women. They are obsequious to everyone. They have been emasculated.

Our culture should be based on being brave, not being afraid to go it alone; to do what one thinks is right and change our world for the better. Art and

culture should glorify this kind of thinking and those who make our world stronger should be in the highest positions.

I: How do you feel about war?

GK: If your cause is noble, then war is good, but if you fight for no good reason then it is idiotic.

One of the problems with modern society is people don't stand for anything; they are so wishy-washy and concerned about being safe. Being safe is boring. It is not life. Real people take bold risks and live life to the fullest. They don't lead a vicarious life in front of the TV. Ancient people knew this well, and we can learn a lot from the ancients.

I: How do you feel about love?

GK: Love is silly nonsense. Sex is good and having a tough woman as your mate can give you and your offspring inspiration. However I feel modern women are too spoiled. Men spoil them.

But there's more to life than mating. Men need to do noble deeds and fight for what they believe in. The current political and economic system is against great men. Many great men are denounced as radicals and mad men, when in fact these great men know what is best for society.

The mainstream view these days is always insipid and foolish. People need to be taught to be more independent, to run their own businesses and control their own lives and not be someone else's slave.

I: But how can we set up a system that will put great men in power?

GK: Perhaps it would be best to improve people by education first, and then they might elect great leaders. People have to be taught to be strong and love strength.

HELEN KELLER

I: (using brail) Helen Keller though blind and deaf learned to speak and was a great inspiration for millions. How do you feel about her?

HK: I think it's a great advantage to be different from others. Many people in history such as the gays or Jews or indeed anyone who felt they didn't fit in, did well because they were outsiders; they were different.

However every child is born unique and education therefore should help them to find that uniqueness and teach them to think for themselves, rather than fit in with the crowd. People should not act like sheep.

I: How do you feel about modern women?

HK: I think today is a transition period for women. In the past their role was clear, but now there are no footsteps in the sand for them to follow. I think therefore many women and men too are a bit confused about what kind of person they should be. After all women are different than men, and we shouldn't expect modern women to simply emulate men.

I think women are more kind, peaceful and more sympathetic to the less fortunate than men and our world really needs leaders who have such qualities. After all men created a world in which there are wars, mass poverty and not much love from our leaders. Women as leaders might make a much kinder world.

I: Do you feel that men and to a lesser extent women are too dependent on physical appearances?

HK: Of course. I can't see, but I can tell that beautiful appearances are largely worthless. However, people, especially men, have an instinct to go for what appears beautiful though and it's difficult to see how this instinct could be altered. It's just the way it is. So I think all women should try to look beautiful. Maybe one day they'll have a make-up machine that can make every woman look beautiful instantaneously.

I: But do you feel it's a beautiful world?

HK: Yes, but it could be more beautiful. Almost every time I communicate with someone I think how that person could be better. Most people don't think enough and just accept things the way they are and do what everyone else seems to be doing.

One of my friends once told me that "You shouldn't try to understand people, just love them", and I feel this is a tragedy that people would think this way. Most people don't even know themselves because they haven't spent enough time thinking about things and experimenting with life.

It's easy to live a life of illusion, but people need to be more honest with themselves and face the reality if they want to be wise. Education needs to teach them this and get them to open their minds and see the truth that is all around them.

I: But don't you think people need illusions?

HK: I think deep down people don't want to hide from reality and they know what their illusions are. If they get rid of them they will be more happy I'm sure. But again everybody seems to be doing it so they think it's OK.

I: But to be honest, don't you think everyone has illusions?

HK: Well perhaps. But I think as society progresses people will gradually lose them. We are no longer lambs of God, that's for sure.

GANDHI

I: Gandhi was a great leader of India and helped bring about their independence. How do you feel about him?

G: I feel he was a great man who really understood Indians. However now a half-century after his death I feel that modern India is without strong leadership and now Indians just want to get rich like the Americans. In the process India is losing its unique culture and becoming just like everywhere else. Indians don't need TVs, motorcars, computers etc., but that's what they want nowadays.

I: Many Indians are vegetarians. How do you feel about that?

G: It's all about respect for animals. Some people say that if Western people didn't eat meat there would be very few animals. But look at India – most people are vegetarian, but there are plenty of animals. In any case Western people will soon be eating synthetic foods. So I guess this will be an improvement.

I: But don't you think that the Indian Hindu religion with its anthropomorphic Gods is backwards?

G: Indians like it just fine. It keeps them happy and humble. I don't think Westerners have proved anything by saying God does not exist. How can they be so sure? Anyway Einstein was perhaps the man Westerners think was the smartest of all time, and he believed in God.

I think Western people are foolish to abandon their traditions so quickly. It will all lead to chaos and tragedy one day I'm sure.

I: So you don't feel upbeat regarding this modern world?

G: People these days are becoming selfish, greedy, cold-hearted, proud and so on. It's not a pretty sight. I think people are simply not designed to live in such a crazy world. It's certainly not making people happy. I'm sure people all over the world used to be happier.

Wise people have always said that a simple, humble life is best, but modern youths laugh at such wisdom. They just want more and more of everything material.

I: What then could be done about the modern world?

G: I don't think it can be stopped until they finally blow up the world. Then finally people might learn their lesson.

Scientists today are even trying to play God. Surely doom can be the only result of this.

However wise people like Gandhi could attract many followers in every country; this would help. But I'm afraid most wise people feel the situation is hopeless, so they seldom get involved.

I: But do you think wise people can still lead a happy life today?

G: Sure. A simple job, a kind spouse. Simple pleasures. Many people still live this way, but their numbers are dwindling.

I: But I'm sure many people who live in cities would say that a simple life is boring, and few city dwellers want to live a simple life. What's right for some wise people is not necessarily right for others.

G: Well everyone is falling under the spell of greed. What can I say? Evil is showing its face everywhere. People are becoming evil without even thinking about it. It's a disaster.

GALILEO

I: Galileo was a scientist who lived half a millennium ago, but his ideas were far ahead of his time. He helped prove Copernicus' theories which held that the church was wrong about many things (and the church thought it had a virtual monopoly on wisdom). How could it be that Galileo and a handful of others were right and everyone else was wrong?

G: Western society is to blame. Even today people are taught to obey and consume, but not to think. People are all too accepting of a world which is hardly perfect, especially for the more than half of the people worldwide who live in abject poverty.

When Galileo asked leading church representatives to look into his telescope, they refused! And many people today refuse to believe what should be obvious to everyone: the world needs to be improved.

Unlike in Galileo's time we don't need more scientists. What we need is leaders who care and think and a populace who are not mere followers. And we need people who have guts. Galileo was clever, but his best quality was that he was not afraid to stand alone and assert his beliefs.

I: What would happen if a great genius like Galileo or Einstein was to appear today?

G: Great geniuses always prove many intelligent people to be wrong, and such intelligent people often can't accept such things. Of course geniuses are tolerated much more in the sciences than they are in other fields.

There are many people who have solutions to the world's problems, but more often than not they are regarded as radicals and idiots. They are not part of the mainstream so nobody cares to listen.

I: What philosophy do you subscribe to?

G: I think the idea of just having one narrow philosophy is no longer tenable. It's too narrow-minded and the world is large. What people need to be is open-minded. Education should emphasize this point, and make people to be open-minded so they can tolerate others, and experience new things. When people close their minds they become boring and stupid; we need to make people more interesting.

I: What do you think about genetic engineering?

G: I think that we could improve the species by getting the sperm and eggs of super intelligent people and put them together to make super babies. When injected with hormones a woman might produce 20 eggs in a month and a man can produce millions of sperm every time he comes.

So I propose that such babies be raised in large numbers. I'm sure many childless couples would be happy to adopt such a baby, so we might be able to produce tens of millions of them in a very short time. And perhaps millions more could be raised at state expense. When they are grown they could pay back the government.

Such babies could make up for the falling birth rates and keep society vigorous.

I: What other futuristic ideas do you have?

G: I think nuclear power should be controlled by the UN. Power plants should be built everywhere, especially in poor countries and the UN will run them and make sure no nuclear weapons are produced. One of the obvious uses for virtually unlimited power is desalinating sea water and then pumping into deserts like the Sahara. This would make huge tracts of land available to farmers and residents and would result in economic prosperity in these areas.

SOCRATES

I: Socrates was a great ancient Greek philosopher who helped mold Western thought, especially philosophy. What can we learn from him and the ancient Greeks?

S: Well one thing I think that is obvious today to us is that the ancient Greeks achieved so much because they lived in city states; there was no single Greek nation in classical Greek times.

In a small city state, like the Greeks had, people know everyone else and can live on a human scale. Such people are free and creative.

Today there are not really any such small city states with a few exceptions like in Monaco. The residents of Monaco are fairly rich due to gambling and the large number of rich people who are attracted to the city.

But there are also a few larger ones, like Singapore. Singapore is a beautiful happy city where people are so happy with their government it looks like they'll never vote the ruling party out.

However what I have in mind is a new type of city state which would be based on a philosophy or theme. In a philosophical city, people of like minds could gather at such cities and there would be a resultant flowering of thought. On the other hand, with a thematic city, tourists would flock to it and the economy would prosper.

I: What sorts of philosophies or themes did you have in mind?

S: The sky is the limit. For philosophical cities you might have a city of optimists or a large musician's colony or a city of people who think that life

is a joke. For thematic cities you might have a city based on sports or video games to name just a couple.

I: What would be the ideal size of such cities?

S: Experimentation would be in order. Some of these cities might work best with 10 000 people, other cities might be considerably larger.

I: But how would such cities be founded? How could they get freedom from the large countries that control all the land everywhere?

S: I think they could simply buy the land at an expensive price and get the country in question to give them independence. I don't think this would be hard in a small country such as Fiji or Tonga.

However if they couldn't get full independence they could probably at least get a lot of autonomy from some nations.

If the idea catches on maybe the whole world will follow. In my view this would lead to a worldwide cultural extravaganza. Perhaps then a world government could oversee the military and ensure peace.

I: What about government for such cities?

S: I think they should simply elect their wisest, most clever person to head the government. Maybe they could have a tough screening process whereby potential candidates would be tested for their vision and their understanding of the city's people.

I: Socrates was once quoted as saying he was the wisest man in Greece because he at least could admit that he knew nothing. What do you think?

S: We humans often assume we know a lot, but in the cosmic scheme of things we are totally ignorant. Socrates just wanted people to be humble I think.

JOAN OF ARC

I: Why didn't Joan of Arc back down before her inquisitors and admit her guilt?

J: So many people these days have no guts to stand alone when they think they are right. People will go to war and make incredible sacrifices for their family, but they won't stand up for what they believe in most of the time.

I: How might Joan have fitted into modern society?

J: I would think she would have to be an artist. But even in the arts, if you are really different you are often cast out. In Joan's time you did your farm work and worked hard and that was that. But a lot of men like a tough woman, a woman who can inspire them...

I: So few women are known to history, why is that?

J: I think the thing many women, just like men, follow their culture. Most great men had a great woman backing them up anyway. But women simply didn't have the education...now in many developed countries young women are educated better than men.

Almost everyone gets only a partial education. If we could use the best tutors and have them write easy to understand lessons, the education system might change overnight.

But there is no doubt that are society is becoming more sophisticated and graceful due to women playing important roles, even just at home in the family. We need to stop vicious competition that some males want us to live in. We need a more caring society...

My personal opinion is the global economy is a little too much for many people. Companies are so large, only other large companies can compete with them.

I think that people don't think enough about the future and where we are headed. People write about space wars or novels that have little bearing on the future...

I: But in the life of Joan of Arc, Joan was the leader of armies and behaved much like a tough guy. She believed in violence...

J: Well some wars are just. Anyway back in those days the most exciting thing was war. People on the farms were so bored.

Life was not worth so much back then, when almost everyone was a poor farmer. There were no brilliant academics then.

Joan of Arc was not very good looking, but she had charisma. Men always look for beauties, but a great personality is far more rare.

Ultimately she was betrayed. I guess she was not Machiavellian enough to remain powerful.

But anyway in the future I think women will make our society far more balanced than it is today.

In fact some have gone so far as to suggest that in the future women will be tougher than men. Although what that would lead to I have no idea,

COLUMBUS

I: In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue. Do you think that Columbus was great?

C: Columbus was mostly the right man in the right spot at the right time. In his day exploration had already begun such as the circumnavigation of Africa by the Portuguese. Ships had been recently improved and cities were again beginning to thrive due to the revival of trade. It was inevitable that sooner or later expeditions would be launched westwards. However Columbus was a virtual genius in getting his crew to follow him and remain loyal throughout his first voyage. But due to bad luck and his lack of skill as a governor they didn't even name the New World after him. He died in poverty and disgrace I understand.

I: How do you feel about the modern global village that is developing?

C: I think its just beginning. In a world global village I think development will come to all regions, as people are our number one resource.

I: What about the exploration of space?

C: I think putting colonies in space will be expensive but it will have a lot of benefits for science. Since many planets and moons are different from earth, scientists will be challenged to understand these bodies and will make new scientific discoveries in the process.

I: What about the exploration of the ocean bottoms?

C: We might be surprised by what we find there. Obviously the oceans have a big effect on climate and so we need far more research in this important area.

I: Do you think our era is lacking in adventure? After all exploration of space and the oceans is a lonely business.

C: Well the nature of adventure has changed, but there is still plenty of adventure to be found. I think going to exotic countries and being able to speak English in most cases offers a lot of adventurous opportunities, not the least of which is romantic opportunity. Of course knowing other languages would enhance the experience.

In Columbus' time for example you couldn't communicate at all with many peoples throughout the globe, but now you can. There are still a lot of cultural differences despite the advent of the global village.

In fact I would say there has never been more opportunity for adventure. But maybe in 50 years time there will be much less cultural diversity and chances for real adventures.

I: Should everyone try to have adventures in their life?

C: Yes, but most people are too conservative and too closed-minded to really try and have an adventure. If they go to a foreign country they often just see the sights which they could have read about in a book. Often they don't really meet any local people at all. It seems a shame.

Many people think that experiencing life vicariously on TV makes for a satisfying life, but they have never known true adventure. People are simply not educated well and no one really tells them about how to truly have exciting holidays.

ADOLF HITLER

I: How do you feel about Adolf Hitler?

H: Had Hitler not killed all those Jews he would have gone down in history as a great military genius, just like Napoleon or Alexander the Great for instance.

Anyway WW II was really interesting whereas modern life is dull and insipid. What could be more interesting than a world war?

Today men are not men, but rather are weak shadows of men, and they live ridiculously long and empty lives. What they need is war. In ancient times when men were all hunters, they had to be ready to fight at all times. Men are designed for war.

I: Well how do you feel about the Jews?

H: They are not a kind people. Look at how they treat the Palestinians, keeping them in fear and poverty while all the Jews prosper. It's no wonder they are hated by many. The whole Middle East dislikes them.

I: What about gays?

H: The thing these days is so many men refuse to act strong and tough as men should. I think it's a crisis for many men as modern society reduces them to being effeminate.

I: Do you feel whites are superior to others?

H: I'm not saying that all whites are superior. But white people are trying to make this world progress whilst in some countries people just sit around idly doing nothing. Maybe one day we can convince the rest of the world to get going and join us, but I doubt it.

I: How do you feel about modern day politics?

H: The US has shown that they are the strongest so they enforce their will on others. However I don't see why Europeans have to lick their boots. Europe as a whole is at least as strong as the US; they just have to get their act together.

I: What are your feelings about love?

H: I think this idea of love is a joke. How many people in the world can say that they have truly known lasting true love? A few would, but they are lying.

What is needed is more high class prostitutes who have been given AIDS tests (i.e. legalize prostitution), to serve men so that they don't waste all their time and money chasing something that doesn't exist.

I: Hitler was an artist in his youth. What do you think of art?

H: Art doesn't change the world, politics does. There's no point spending your life making pretty pictures when our world is changing so fast.

I: But don't you think many modern day leaders are evil?

H: Different people have different ideas about evil. For instance humans live off animals and rich people live off poor people. Isn't that evil?

I think weakness is evil and our modern world is full of weak people leading luxury lives. It won't last, just like Rome and its luxury civilization didn't last.

I: So you don't think democracy is the way of the future?

H: Great men, such as Hitler have been elected in democracies. I think great men of power can find a way to rule regardless of the system.

Modern democracies are living on borrowed time with their crazy levels of debt, and as the economies start to fail as they are doing now, you'll see great men seize power all over the world.

I: What would you do if you were in power?

H: If I was in power of say a united Europe, I would seek to conquer as many places as possible. With European leadership many countries would be better off. For example, look at Africa. It was more prosperous when it was colonized, now it's in shambles.

Europeans, especially Germans know how to work and know how to live and they could use this knowledge to better the world.

If other countries didn't like this idea we could make war on them and have a real exciting war.

JESUS CHRIST

I: Plato described a concept which he called the “royal lie” whereby some lies have to be told to the people for their own benefit. Do you think Jesus was the same?

JC: Of course Jesus lived after Plato and he probably appreciated the reasoning. Back in those days people needed to believe in God and believe that God wanted them to behave justly. Also many people like the idea of brotherly love that was advocated by Jesus.

I: Jesus did the miracles, using magic such as hypnoitism and disappearing acts. but it was necessary to tell the people that he was divine. Obviously if a real God had sent someone to earth this God would visit everyone, not just a few, and would be so awesome that everyone would believe immediately.

So Jesus didn't believe in God, but he really cared about people and wanted the best for them.

JC: All the same many people believe and there must be a creator.

I: So how do you feel about modern religions then?

JC: You can see that at least, in the developed world, people are abandoning religion en masse. Many people don't need it any more... But I predict a new prophet will come to save us all.

But I don't think this has made people any more evil or bad. In fact people are becoming more liberal and open-minded which is an improvement.

But the message of Jesus lives on. Love everyone. In the 1960s they almost changed the world and one day reformers will probably succeed. If only we could get rid of AIDS the whole love revolution will come back and it'll be a great day for humanity.

In the future automation will allow people to have much more free time, and they will not be so stressed out and will have time to love everyone they know.

I: But in the 60s it was a relatively small group who wanted change. How can the masses be convinced?

JC: Perhaps we need to change our governmental system. We need a system that will produce leaders who are not only intelligent but also kind and caring. Perhaps a group of caring people could be elected and they could determine which candidates are kind enough by studying their pasts. Or some other such system. It could all start with someone like one of the saints running for office and then changing the political system.

I: Do you think that a Jesus type person is what is needed?

JC: I think in a world of over 6 billion people there must be a lot of Jesuses. It's just a matter of getting them involved in politics. Like I say a saintly or Jesus type person could win power and then search the world over for other good people to join the government.

Many people have big hearts and have great potential to do good work. We need to find such kind people at an early age and send them to elite schools which will train them for taking political power. I think many good people would be willing to donate money towards establishing such a school. The school need not be Christian, as this would turn a lot of people off, but rather should be open to any kind person.

Many people think that kind people are stupid, but I think there are people out there who have many brilliantly kind and caring ideas. They are veritable geniuses. And we need to use them.

JOHN LOCKE

I: John Locke was a great British philosopher who argued, among other things, that the power of the state, especially that of kings, should be limited. His ideas were to influence the development of the British parliament, the first modern democracy. How do you feel about him?

JL: Well I feel that our modern times are changing fast and that our governmental system should change too, to suit the times. Here's what I propose:

1. Direct democracy: all major issues should be voted on in referendums by the public, say 3 times per year. These days we no longer need representatives as we have computers and other communication technology.
2. No absolute leader or president. Instead some clever people could be elected and they would put forth ideas to the public to vote on.
3. No political parties. Political parties just serve special interests and don't allow people of real vision to join.
4. A much stronger UN with one world army. Plenty of checks and balances should be established to ensure the army is not used for nefarious purposes. Thus there would be nuclear disarmament worldwide. Henceforth all nuclear power would be controlled by the UN. If the US and its allies agreed to this, most other countries would soon follow suit.
5. Put strong checks and balances on world intelligence organizations so that they will not harass individuals who have unpopular views, as long as those individuals are peaceful.

6. Aim for universal health care, education, shelter and food.

I: Are you sure this is realistic?

JL: In this world of super science anything is possible. I think even in countries that do not have democracies today, they will be able to see the benefits of improving the system.

I: But why change a system that seems to be doing fine?

JL: A little experimentation wouldn't hurt. In fact there are many possible types of government that could be tried also. The key is to follow the scientific method (i.e. trial and error) to see if we can improve government.

I: You mentioned universal education. How much education do people need?

JL: I think everyone these days needs at least a college or university degree to survive. So we need to educate millions of teachers and professors of poor countries in rich countries (their education would be conditional upon returning home to help their nation) and perhaps send millions more to these areas. Perhaps all teachers and profs from rich nations could spend a couple of years in poor countries educating the poor.

I: But won't the cost of providing food, shelter, education and health care be prohibitive?

JL: Again I think we could do it with volunteers from wealthy nations helping to build houses and providing volunteer doctors from rich nations to provide health care. And there's plenty of food in the world; it's just a matter of getting it to the poor. Anyway once the people are educated they could look after themselves. It is also important that rich countries get together and make sure the highly educated people of these countries stay in the poor countries where they are needed. Don't allow them to emigrate.

CLEOPATRA

I: What do you think of Queen Cleopatra who had romances with both Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony?

C: Well of course statues of the Queen show she was not great looking, partly due to incest in the royal line....but she had brains. Even in those days a clever man of power could appreciate a clever woman. In those days there was often a number of great women behind a great man.

I: When faced with defeat by the Romans she committed suicide. Do you think this was noble?

C: In ancient times people had a different kind of honor than today. These days the captain wouldn't go down with the ship, and men would jump into lifeboats and take the place of women...

But anyway she would have been captured and humiliated by the Romans...

I: But a man like Caesar could have any woman he wanted.

C: A lot of men and women don't realize that there's more to romance than a pretty face. People go with their simple instincts not their brains. Love is never considered to be a smart thing, but rather a foolish thing.

If I was going to have a baby I would go to the sperm bank and get the sperm of some man who was really smart.

People who are intelligent and rich and famous love to meet others who are rich and famous. So often with the cameras watching them they are expected to date other celebrities.

Power is addictive, like everything else.

Anyway these days women can wear great make up everyday. If they know how to put it on, any woman can be good looking. Also they can get some plastic surgery done. Every woman should appear good looking. So women don't need to worry about looks and can spend their type building a career.

I: If Cleopatra was alive today what would she be?

C: Well she would have no doubt been born rich and perhaps tried to be a politician. I think royalty is in some people's veins. Or at least if your parents or parent is successful you will be too.

But who knows what people will decide to do? A lot of it is also cultural I think.

People used to say women couldn't do things. But now it looks as if they can do anything. Perhaps one day we will get rid of our instincts completely and so men and women will be intellectual equals.

Maybe women will become more like men and men will become more like women? Do you think that's possible?

Personally I think life is too easy for some women...they can just sit back and men will come to them...I think women should know what they want and go for it.

PHIL FARNSWORTH

I: How do you feel about Phil Farnsworth and the TV he invented?

PF: If I recall correctly he regretted his invention, believing TV programs to be largely a waste of time.

However in our day TV has more and more variety and I think soon people will be able to pay for any program at any time. This would be good.

But like Farnsworth said, TV is largely a waste of time. There are so many programs which do not make people better in any way and are just mindless ways to kill time. So I think government should censor TV by not allowing foolish action movies, soap operas and such and instead only allow programs which stimulate the mind and improve people.

I: But do you really think the government should tell people what they can or cannot watch?

PF: Why not. The government is always telling people what to do. After all the government educates us, and they have so many rules for us to follow. And censorship is nothing new. Even today most governments ban dirty movies for example.

I: TV though was meant to be entertainment. Do you really think people will accept TV as educational only?

PF: Our society is progressing. People all over the world are seeking more education if they can get it. Educational TV is simply the next step in the evolution of entertainment.

I: But do you believe that people in the future will watch even more TV than they do today?

PF: I think they will as people have more free time. However I think people will spend a great deal of time on the net chatting and I think that this would be better.

I: What inventions do you foresee in the future?

PF: Well it seems clear that one day virtually everything will be automated and so people will not have much to do. I think this will make most people feel that they are useless and that together with the fact that the world doesn't appear to have any meaning might make life a bitter pill for many.

But who knows? Maybe people will take drugs to make them happy and they will enjoy having nothing to do.

I: Well what is your opinion of modern people? Are they happy?

PF: Well I think that the common man is underestimated. I think we could educate people better and get them to think more for themselves.

But there is no doubt that people in modern, developed nations are better off in many ways than the past, even though they still complain a lot. I think the world is truly progressing in every way.

Modern day people are turning their backs on tradition which shows to me that they are thinking more for themselves which is great.

I: But surely progress is going too fast for some. Many people today are under a lot of pressure. A lot of people have mental problems.

PF: Humans have always been under a lot of pressure. In primitive times the pressure was greater, now it's less. But as the experience with communism proves, when there is no pressure, people won't do anything. And life has always been crazy; there will always be many with mental problems. Only now doctors can prescribe medicine for it.

GEORGE ORWELL

I: George Orwell wrote the famous book “1984”. What do you think about Orwell and modern science fiction?

GO: Stalin and Mao gave us a taste of tyranny as depicted in “1984”. Now would-be tyrants can use technology that will allow them to totally control the populace.

Everyone is largely apathetic to the dangers of tyranny but it could easily come again. No one stopped Hitler, no one stopped Mao. It is likely no one will be able to stop the next big tyrant either. Especially if world economies experience difficulty, the atmosphere will be ripe for tyranny to return.

Some people say that back in primitive times there was no privacy, no secrets. The whole tribe knew everything about everyone. And they say that loss of privacy is only natural.

However the thing about tyrants is they kill people who oppose them and if they are watching millions and dislike millions, then they will kill all of them. Look what happened in Cambodia. They killed ALL the intelligent people and now the country is a virtual basket case. Kings of the past killed opponents too, but at least then you could keep your mouth shut in public. Now they could watch you and find out that you hated the government and therefore orchestrate your disappearance.

But back on the subject of sci-fi, I think that it had a golden age in the 50s and 60s. Then in the late 60s, everyone was disappointed in the moon which was shown to be empty and dull. I think they should have sent artists and poets to the moon instead of scientists and made the moon look more promising and interesting.

Anyway there are very few sci-fi books dealing with genetic engineering (i.e. cloning, creating super humans, changing human form etc.) and other important subjects like love in the future, the economy in the future, jobs in the future and so on. In fact most sci-fi uses tired old action plots in which one guy plays the hero, saves the girl etc. For the most part its little better than those ubiquitous mindless action movies that we see on TV.

I: There are rumors that Western intelligence agencies can shoot a tiny device into people's heads and read their minds. How do you feel about this?

GO: Well one day I'm sure they'll be able to do just that. But it could be a good thing if it's used to watch scientists who appear to be dangerous or criminals who could strike again or potential terrorists. On the other hand it could be used by tyrants to destroy all intelligent opposition and basically destroy the human race.

I: What about secret CIA experiments to develop super humans and other secret programs?

GO: Well knowing the CIA, it would not be surprising. However the CIA is serving a democracy so one would hope that at least it would not endanger humanity. If they create super humans they must create super humans who are kind and good, and not killing machines or conquerors.

Personally I think if you tried numerous experiments altering the brain of sperm or eggs or embryos or whatever, you would eventually find out how to make people smarter. It would be very scary though if this was all done in secret by the CIA or other secret governmental organizations. After all we all want to see what the future will be and wish to be able to vote on this kind of thing, rather than to have super humans suddenly foisted on us.

I: How do you feel about education and its role in the future?

GO: Education needs to make people more active. Active in politics, active in volunteer work etc. People today are too apathetic. We need to train people to resist tyranny and fight for democracy. To fight for the future.

EDWARD JENNER

I: Jenner and his smallpox vaccine in the late 18th century was a discovery of stupendous proportions paving the way for the numerous inoculations of today. How do you feel about the man and his work?

EJ: His discovery is an example of how great people can change the world overnight. Obviously many scientists followed in his footsteps effectively doubling our life expectancy.

However despite great achievements in science most of the world is still living in poverty and we have many other troubles such as the threat of nuclear annihilation and huge governmental debts. Clearly our politicians aren't dealing with many of the real important issues, as they don't appear to have any vision.

So we need to put geniuses in politics. There are many ways we could do this, perhaps simple testing of candidates by well-known geniuses would help to screen out those who are mediocre or unworthy. However the current system mainly produces mediocrities, so it has to go.

I: But you feel that science at least is going in the right direction?

EJ: Yes but genius scientists are creating things that could be really dangerous, we need to use our best people to keep things under control.

But on the whole science is great, and I think that one day we'll all live like kings, just as some people already do.

I: Will that be a good thing necessarily, if everyone lives like a king or queen?

EJ: Yes and remember science will develop new drugs to make people happier still. Life will never be perfect, but having virtually everything you desire should make people on the whole happy I think.

I: So you feel happiness is the meaning of life?

EJ: Yes and people today are getting greedier and greedier for happiness. For lack of a better word, we're becoming insatiable. No matter how happy we are, we always want more happiness. And let's be honest; happiness has no limit.

I: But it seems that some people prefer a life that is chaotic, troubled and painful if you look at how they live.

EJ: Having troubles is part of life. People say they have troubles, and what they mean is their life is not perfect and they want it to be more perfect. If there was no pain in life, then we wouldn't appreciate pleasure. It's all relative. But in fact some people are just plain too greedy for happiness.

I: But do you really feel that it's good to be insatiable. Isn't our civilization insane?

EJ: Existence itself is crazy. But madness can be fun and bring happiness. Why not? There's no point trying to be sad.

If you told someone a few hundred years ago about how far our civilization would go, that person wouldn't have believed it. He/she would have called you crazy. Maybe one day in the future we'll genetically engineer people to be virtual Gods. It may be crazy, but it's a lot better than living in a cave not knowing if you'll live another day or not.

LAO TSE

I: Lao Tse was a Chinese philosopher whose ideas gave rise to Taoism. What would he say if he were here today?

LT: Most people today live in worlds of illusion. They use these illusions to survive in the modern world, but they don't bring people happiness.

What people should be doing is striving for happiness, not another car or a bigger house. Usually happiness comes from the simple things in life. Things like love and friendship and simplicity. Humans weren't designed for a complex life and in any case modern complexities are not intelligent; instead these are unnecessary complexities.

I: How do you feel about education? Do you think we are making progress?

LT: People should learn in school how to be happy not how to be consumers or to be a "success". Happiness like everything else takes work and practice. People need to know themselves and know others in order to be happy and to do this they need to spend a lot of time studying others, listening to others and thinking about themselves.

I: How do you feel about modern day virtue? Do you think people are as virtuous as in the past?

LT: In the past most people were simple farmers. They worked with their hands and had simple, honest lives. Now people don't even know who they are or what they want and many are selfish, greedy, dishonest and immoral in other ways.

Selfishness, greed etc. seldom lead to happiness. Instead they only make people crazy and confused. These days everyone is confused about life. But in old times simple farmers were clear in their mind and knew who they were. I think the same was true of ancient hunter-gatherers.

I: So you don't see any virtue in modern living?

LT: Of course many people attempt to be virtuous even though all around them is madness. Such people have a simple job, a spouse and kids and they live simply and quietly.

But such a lifestyle is becoming increasingly uncool. Young people nowadays don't want to ever settle down, they don't want a single partner and they don't want to have kids. They take jobs that are stressful and devoid of meaning. Many jobs quite simply don't need to be done any more as people become increasingly "useless". Governments lie about their unemployment rate, and without a job how can someone live?

I: So what are you saying? Are you saying that people should live like the Amish or Mennonites?

LT: It would be nice if this were possible. But nearly everyone is convinced that the crazy modern world is better, even if it makes them less happy. They would be better off having never known of the modern world, but once they know about it, it is like a disease which they cannot stop.

All through history there were few people who were genuinely wise; and people seldom listen to such wise people. There's really nothing that can be done about it.

I: But don't you think people today are more wise in the way of the world?

LT: Everyone today thinks they are so clever compared to the next man, but actually they know very little. Ask them the meaning of life and they will say they don't know. What do they know? All they know is how to consume.

THOMAS EDISON

I: Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, phonograph, talking movies etc. And he once said that “Genius is 99% perspiration, 1% inspiration”; what do you think of that?

TE: Well just like in the story of, “The Tortoise and the Hare”, skill and talent must be honed and practiced. But many would-be geniuses find it difficult to really know what they can do best. There are over 6 billion people on the planet today and there must be thousands like Edison, but many will not achieve anything notable. Indeed in science luck plays a part for many geniuses; many simply do not get lucky.

I: But how could a genius like Edison not succeed eventually?

TE: Most great historical geniuses only had one famous idea or invention. Not 20 or 50. So it stands to reason that many great minds fail to have even one great breakthrough. Science, you know, depends on using good hypotheses and then testing them out, but you need luck to have a breakthrough. You never know what you will find until you find it. Edison was fortunate to have success with some of his earlier inventions and once successful was able to hire many scientists to help him test his theories.

I: OK. Well what will geniuses of the future invent?

TE: I think science is impossible to predict. For example who in the 19th century accurately envisioned computers? I think though that there will be many medical breakthroughs for sure, so that we will all one day live forever etc.

I also think we could copy human brains onto silicon and thereby create androids. If they did this it would allow many things such as cyborgs and super humans.

Many laws of physics will be proved wrong and so eventually things like faster than light travel will be possible. I think to be able to send humans or our super human descendants to other stars would be the greatest accomplishment we could ever hope for. It is our only hope for one day finding the meaning of the universe and new meaning for our existence.

I: So you think we need more astrophysicists?

TE: Yes, I think so. We need to use everyone, including those with radical ideas and those who don't get along with others, if science is to really reach breakthroughs. The problem is if you are a radical thinker it is difficult to kiss ass and reach the position of professor which is necessary for such research. There are too many mainstream thinkers in physics and astrophysics today in my opinion.

I: So you are optimistic about the world's future, generally speaking?

TE: I think we live in exciting times and with every new discovery in science the world gets more interesting. And the interesting thing about science is the vast majority of discoveries benefit everyone, like in medicine for example. Even discoveries in astronomy and astrophysics inspire people everywhere, and many people are in awe of the world space programs. I think even the average Joe is looking forward to seeing new discoveries in every field in the future.

I: So what advice do you have for would-be successful geniuses?

TE: I think the key is to try and look at things in your own way, don't let other people limit your thoughts. And if your thoughts are radical and different than others, keep trying, don't give up. As Einstein once said "Great spirits will always encounter violent opposition".

MARY LEAKY

I: Mary Leaky was an influential archaeologist/anthropologist who studied early humans in Africa. Do you feel that such studies are truly shedding light on our past?

ML: Despite a lot of work by scientists, our early beginnings are still largely hidden. To simply say things like: “over time our brains got bigger” doesn’t really tell us anything for sure (some geniuses have been shown to have rather small brains and some people can function normally even after most of their brain was destroyed, for example by a gun shot). Perhaps indeed we have evolved mentally over millions of years with the most clever surviving and so on, but we need more information.

It’s a very important topic where we come from and I think we will need both a lot more archaeology and a lot of breakthroughs in the understanding of human and animal brains before we can truly be certain of our origins.

I: But how do you feel about modern archaeology in general? Are they formulating the right theories?

ML: I think archaeology, like many sciences and arts, needs more people with open minds. I think they are too conservative in their theories. For example in the new world there are no diagnostic artifacts found on the surface that date before 12 000 BC. So they simply assume that there were no people in the New World before that time; they don’t even look! Now a few older sites are coming to light, but most archaeologists insist it’s impossible!

Another problem is they don’t use enough science in their work. Subsurface radar has been around for some time, but many don’t use it.

Also most archaeologists are not trained in soil science and environmental reconstruction, so they don't dig in areas likely to yield well-preserved artifacts, such as in ancient swamps for example.

I: But do you think that people are really learning lessons from the study of the past?

ML: Most people will never be wise. And that's just the way it is. However our leaders should all be well-versed in the past if they are to lead us wisely. We have enough wise people that we can produce wise leaders everywhere.

The problem is that wise people feel to lead is too big a burden and too troublesome. So we need to convince them to help us. Somehow.

I: So you feel that we live in a foolish world, full of fools?

ML: Actually it's a world constructed by rare geniuses, but nearly everyone is foolish. Most people still follow their primitive instincts and act little better than animals.

Who knows maybe one day they'll genetically engineer our race to be kind, loving and brilliant. But I suppose such a society would have even more problems than our relatively simple world of today.

Still science marches on.

I: Do you feel that women have an important role to play in the future of science?

ML: I think women will surprise everyone with unique perspectives on things. After all women and men are not the same as men; they look at things differently. I don't believe that women can't be great scientists and I think in the Western world women now take almost as many science degrees as men.

JOHN LENNON

I: John Lennon played in the Beatles before launching a solo career. Many people feel the Beatles were the best rock band ever. If John Lennon were here today what would he be saying?

JL: One of the things he'd be saying is that you've got to believe in love. Many people have never known true love, but they shouldn't give up trying. Also, in the 1960s, the spirit of brotherly love was strong, but the hippie movement lacked political power and so it fizzled out. There's no reason it can't come again in a much stronger way; we just need leaders.

I: But if those hippies really believed in love why did they all end up as ordinary bankers and such?

JL: I think they just lacked great leaders was all. Today people are largely lost and don't stand for anything. It's a shame. I'm sure that many people would like to support good causes if only those causes were to be made attractive to them.

I: But where are these leaders?

JL: I think there's a lot of great people out there, but it's human instinct to just worry about yourself and your family and it's a hard habit to break. In any case the world seems to be improving in many regards so maybe we should just relax and wait for things to gradually fall into place. After all people are getting better and better educations and many poor countries are registering impressive economic growth. It's just a matter of time before the world becomes a much nicer place.

I: So you think a better educated populace will really make the world better?

JL: Basically most of the world's problems are caused by people not thinking enough about them. By making people aware, problems disappear.

For example now we have a global village and nearly everyone in it wants a peaceful society. The more educated people are, the more they want peace. And I think brotherly love will come to. At one time in history nearly everyone in the West believed in it, and I think they could again.

But I think there are many reasons to feel inspired today; yet I can't understand why most people are so apathetic. I guess mediocre modern lifestyles have made them this way. Nobody ever really planned the way we live today, and most people spend most of their time being passively entertained by TV. TV is boring. We need to create a society in which people are active not passive. People need to socialize regularly, meet lots of new people and get involved in charities, politics and such. They need to think about how they can make a difference.

I: Do you think bands like the Beatles exert a positive influence on society?

JL: Anything can be positive if used in the right way. Clearly musicians are greatly respected these days and many people are ready to follow them like they would the Pied Piper. They need to use this power to do good. It's a shame if they don't.

I: What kind of good do you want musicians to do?

JL: It's really up to them. Perhaps they could join with other artists and form political parties. Or perhaps they could help inspire people to go to the developing countries and help educate the uneducated. Or they might influence public opinion to eliminate nuclear weapons worldwide. There are many things they might do. There are many just causes worth fighting for.

KING TUT

I: How do you feel about the legacy of ancient Egypt? You know the pyramids, King Tut's tomb etc.

KT: Of course modern critics claim Egyptian grandeur was built by men who were virtual slaves. And they say Egypt's monuments were monuments to human vanity. But to build something great like the pyramids was really a testament to human ingenuity and people today flock to Egypt to marvel at these great edifices and the art associated with them.

I: What great things do you think people should build today?

KT: Well to look at a modern city and its skyscrapers is surely wondrous. And there has never been so much brilliant and inspired art.

But I think that the key for us today is science and I feel we should train more people in it. Many poor nations have massive populations which are largely uneducated and so they don't have many scientists. But scientists make a country strong these days; electrical engineers for example.

I: But how should we remember great scientists and other great people when they die?

KT: I think cloning them would be a great idea. Imagine what it would be like to clone thousands of Einsteins!

Also I think students in school should read detailed biographies of great people and hopefully then they will be inspired to emulate these great thinkers. When we read history we should read about great thinkers mostly

and not waste time remembering the names of countless kings and dictators who seldom did any good for anyone. After all great thinkers are our natural leaders. They are the wise people who can give us all good advice.

I: But don't you feel cloning could be dangerous?

KT: If you cloned a thousand Einsteins and gave each one a radically different background and education, you'd probably get quite a variety of thinkers. I think they should clone every genius who ever lived, many times.

Human genius is our greatest resource. It is human genius that has built the world around us. Every invention great or small was done by geniuses. So we need more of them. I think genetic engineering of intelligence is the way of the future.

I: How do you feel about the future of the Middle East?

KT: I think slowly but surely change is coming to the Middle East. Currently the region is backwards, but let us not forget it was the birthplace of civilization. There's a lot of genius to be found there I think, and one day great cities will rise again in the region.

I: Do you feel the Muslim religion is holding people back?

KT: I don't think so. The Koran doesn't insist that people remain largely uneducated; it is the conservative leaders that are really holding things back at present. For example women are often discouraged from getting anything more than a little education.

I: But where will they find the money to educate people properly?

KT: People could go to school part time while they work in the day. It doesn't cost much for local teachers and books.

KARL MARX

I: More than anyone else, it was Marx who formulated the basic ideas of communism. What do you think of communism today?

KM: In all traditional societies, people were basically communist. One guy might have a few more cows than another, but food was shared and everyone had a nice home to live in. It's the natural state of mankind.

The world has plenty of resources yet over half the world is desperately poor; this is the result of capitalism.

I think the problem with communism was that not enough of the intelligentsia believed in it. Too many intelligent people feel that they are better than everyone else and they want to prove it by having far more material possessions than the less fortunate.

The situation is kind of like spoiling a child. If you give your child too many toys and luxuries in their youth, they will be spoiled for life. That's how I'd describe the intelligentsia: spoiled.

It was really the intelligentsia who criticized communism and brought about its downfall. I don't think much of such selfish, greedy people.

I: Do you think that communism can make a come back?

KM: No, I'm afraid it's been discredited. Unfortunately.

I: What do you think of Karl Marx then? Was he a man of his time?

KM: If you think the world cannot be changed, just look at Karl Marx. He almost single-handedly totally changed the world. So even though communism failed, there is hope for other future change.

People today have to realize that there's more to life than simply material goods. What are we a bunch of animals? Surely such things as respect for your fellow man, helping your fellow man, romantic love and engaging in thoughtful discussions are more important than just being a zombie-like consumer.

I think if Marx was alive today he'd point out that modern education systems do not train people how to live and how to think, but rather teach nothing but how to memorize things that don't matter much.

I: How do you feel about the future then?

KM: I am afraid that there will always be a lot of injustice in the world. And there will always be a majority of people living miserable, impoverished lives.

However there's always hope. Maybe if we had a few more Karl Marxes we could shake this world up and make it better. Many people criticize Marx but the essence of what he was saying was correct: we need to care for our fellow man. Jesus and many other wise men of the past said the same thing.

I: But surely the legacy of Marx is our socialistic modern nations?

KM: People don't need handouts. And anyway the state can't afford it. What is necessary is to give people education and jobs so that they can hold their heads high and be proud to be human.

But governments don't create enough jobs. They could if they wanted. They could use the so-called intelligentsia to think of new kinds of jobs and prevent so many jobs from being replaced by automation. Personally I'd rather have a human serve me rather than a machine. But I'm afraid in the future there'll be few jobs for the common man while the rich will prosper as always.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

I: Churchill was the man who helped preserve Britain in WW II as wartime prime minister.

WC: The war was certainly a turning point for the world. Hitler was evil and had to be stopped. If he had managed to take over the world he would have eliminated perhaps billions of people whose race he didn't like, and he would have also killed any decent man who opposed him.

Just imagine what would have happened had Hitler won. There would have been few intellectuals left, as most were not from his race, and perhaps the world would never have recovered.

Hitler would have turned the remaining people into virtual slaves and they would have mostly lived only to glorify him.

And the most amazing thing of all was he was elected in a democracy. What were those Germans thinking? Why didn't German intelligence stop him when they had the chance? Why didn't anybody stop him?

Personally I'd be embarrassed to be a German if I had lived in Germany at that time and allowed Hitler to do as he wished.

And what if the same thing happens again? What if it happens in America?

I: At the end of the war, Churchill wanted to fight the communists. How do you feel about that?

WC: The communist threat was also allowed to develop. People should have listened to Churchill, rather than voting him out, at the end of the war.

Basically the communists wanted every country to be communist, and were imperialists on an unprecedented scale. They nearly forced a third world war in which the entire planet would have been destroyed.

Amazingly most people were apathetic about the idea of a catastrophic war, and went about their daily business as if they didn't care.

I: But finally in the late 80s the whole thing turned out OK didn't it?

WC: Yes by sure dumb luck. But maybe next time it will be different. What will we do when dozens of countries have nuclear weapons? It's not inconceivable that a country like North Korea could build enough weapons to destroy the whole world single-handedly. What then?

Basically we live in dangerous times, and no one gives a shit. That's what the problem is.

I: But assuming the US can prevent great powers from developing nuclear weapons, won't that solve the problem?

WC: Well I don't think they can do it. And anyways there are numerous other problems. Did you hear that they recreated the 1918 flu that killed tens of millions? What will we do when scientists of any country can change viruses around and then allow perhaps most of the planet to die?

And you can bet there will be new weapons of incredible destructive force that will be developed and eventually these will become available to every nation.

I: What's the solution then?

WC: Personally, I think it looks so bad, I haven't much hope for humanity in the long term.

People will dream away while the world burns. But you can be sure we'll go out with a bang alright.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

I: Nietzsche was a philosopher who put forth the idea of creating super men among other things. If he were here today what would he be saying?

N: Nietzsche was an elitist. So my feeling is he would say that democracy, or rule of the masses, was against human nature. What is needed therefore is some kind of society in which the best people rule and the best people are in all the highest positions.

People therefore should be subjected to a barrage of tests to determine their intelligence. Things to be tested would be imagination, knowledge, IQ, EQ, wisdom and so on. I think by far the most important test would be the test of imagination. It might be hard to make such a test totally objective, but by taking the most imaginative people to design the test it would be as good as possible.

After taking the test people would receive a ranking from 1-100, with 100 being the highest. However those in the top or 100 level, should be ranked 1 in 1000, 1 in 10 000 and so on.

As people age they could retake the test and try to improve on their score, but there would be an age “penalty” so that they would have to improve more than most in order to improve their ranking. Hence people would try hard to be more creative, gain more knowledge and experience and such.

Those who rank the highest would be given the top government jobs and of course would be much in demand for other types of jobs too. Therefore government jobs would be made more lucrative in order to attract the best people.

Probably the best federal government would be an oligarchy of say 9 top people (maybe all are at least 1 in 100 000), who would act by majority vote on all issues. There would be no need for a legislature and local issues decided by local governments modeled on the federal government. Local governments therefore, would also be ruled by top people.

I: Would society be elitist in other ways too?

N: Certainly. For example babies born to high ranking people would result in large tax breaks, but ordinary people's babies would be taxed. This may be cruel to some but the strong survive in this world and this is only the next step in evolution.

Also people would get education based on rank. As the bible says, "Don't throw your pearls at swine", so people of low rank would be given an average education whereas people of very high rank would receive a lot of attention from a lot of good teachers. It would be useful to have many high ranking people to oversee the education system for elite students.

Also new cities should be built for the ultra elite and they should only mix with their equals. This mixing would inspire many to do great work. Middle ranks would mingle in cities with middle ranks and so on. It might take a while to set up such cities, but you get the drift.

I: But how would such a society be established in say a modern democracy?

N: Well in a non-democracy like China it would be easy to set up. A democracy would be harder and would probably require someone to seize power in a coup and then set it up. In any case once elite government was set up in would have good results for the economy and culture. And low ranking people wouldn't mind. They could mingle with others just like them.

I: What about genetic engineering? Should we create super humans or should we rely on the geniuses we have?

N: It will improve the intelligence of the human race and, let's face it, most of our troubles are caused by stupidity.

I: But what kind of super humans should we build? Will they be elitist and look down on the human race?

N: The human race is a big joke. Our civilization is without meaning. If we made super people maybe they could see the meaning of life and live more happily than we do.

I: But do you hate the human race?

N: I think deep down inside everyone feels their life is futile. It would be a relief for everyone to know that the descendants of mankind in the future will be better people than us.

God is dead and all humans now are lost. We need to make Gods again only this time the Gods will be real and descended from us.

CHIN, FIRST EMPEROR OF CHINA

I: Chin, the first emperor of China was the first to unify China, but his methods were cruel and ruthless. He killed many scholars and others who opposed him. How do you feel about him?

C: Chin made China a great power and for most of human history since then China has been the world's greatest power. But he needed to be ruthless. It was the only way back then. Even recently great powers like the US were formed by violence. Wiping out the Indians and fighting first a revolutionary war with Britain and then a Civil War is the reason the US is the great power that it is today.

I: But surely there's more to life than power?

C: No, not really. Great military power leads to great prosperity for the people of your nation. Look at today's China, they are becoming more powerful and more wealthy and so almost all Chinese are satisfied. Of course some intellectuals think they should be in power, but they are weak and isolated and will not get power. They do not know how to get power. They should join the government and toe the line and work their way up, but instead they just whine and complain that the system is wrong.

In capitalist systems of today everyone wants power. That is to say they want promotions or they want to run a business so that they can control people and enrich themselves.

I: But what about the arts? What about science?

C: The arts have never achieved anything notable. They are only useful for helping people kill time and glorifying the regime. Science is useful to the military and gives people a luxury life (which keeps them happy), but it too doesn't fundamentally change the basic reality of existence.

I: So you don't feel China has anything to offer the world other than tyranny and military power?

C: Humans are just animals. Like in a pack of wolves, the strongest lead and the weak follow. Of course most people like to pretend otherwise, but we are still just animals.

I: So what should China do with its growing power?

C: I think they should take economic control over the whole world, just like America did in the 20th century. Then they should try to control the governments of other countries and make them do China's bidding.

I: But what will power over other countries give China?

C: To control the world is the meaning of life. The country that controls the world, controls the future. Exactly what that control would entail is up to the Chinese leaders. They can make any kind of world they like.

I: But surely there are many important government officials in China and elsewhere who would like a happier, nicer world. Such people would believe in a global village of good people.

C: You are very naïve. You should maybe read a little more history and study the basic modern realities a little closer. The people who seek power are all the same.

ADAM SMITH

I: Adam Smith was one of the greatest economic thinkers of all time, advocating among other things international free trade. What would he think about the modern economic milieu?

AS: One of the great problems of our modern era is the unequal distribution of wealth. However this problem seems to be slowly correcting itself in many areas. The UN needs to be stronger so that they can go into unstable countries and support a stable government and also keep unstable countries today stable by force of arms. African nations for example could attract a lot of foreign investment if investors were more confident that these countries would remain stable.

Also more government work should be put in private hands. Ideally you would have many private companies involved in each kind of business and they would compete strongly with one another for the business. Things like taxation, transportation, banking and many other types of business should not be owned and controlled by the government. In fact everything the government does could be done more efficiently by private companies.

And there should be laws preventing big companies from buying up their competitors. Buyouts only lead to less competition and virtual monopolies for big companies. And really big companies should be broken up into many smaller ones in the interests of competition.

Rich countries also have to spend a lot of money to help establish good education systems in poor countries. In the end such investment will benefit everyone.

And I think the biggest thing that needs to be done is that governments need to stop running large deficits. Instead they should run large surpluses

and pay off their debts. Otherwise the whole world economic system will soon collapse.

I: Do you feel though that otherwise governments are doing a good job?

AS: Well actually I'm sure if you asked people, most would say that the economy is the most important thing controlled by government today. But governmental leaders of today are seldom from a business background and they don't know how to run the finances of a nation.

Government should therefore be a plutocracy. And as I said before, nearly all government work should be privatized leaving a much more manageable political system.

Maybe businesspeople all over the world could get together and set up a political party that will appeal to all people.

I: What are your feelings about the future of commerce?

AS: I think quite clearly it will all be done on the internet in the near future. However before that can happen, governments need to change the laws to make internet fraud a very serious crime in order to deter this fraud and give people confidence in the system.

Of course shops of all kinds will disappear and thus downtowns will shrink greatly, malls will disappear etc. as everything will be delivered to your home after you buy it on the net.

And factories will be totally automated which will bring down the price of everything giving us virtually unlimited material goods.

I think then that the one world economy must end in one world government, a government that will not be too powerful, but one that will enrich everyone.

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

I: Rimbaud wrote the “Illuminations” one of the best works of poetry while still in his youth before giving up poetry at a young age. How do you feel about Rimbaud?

R: Even in translation, “The Illuminations” is still is very good. But I think ultimately Rimbaud gave it up as he was very cynical about the world. I think he thought of the world as an ugly place.

I also think the world is ugly and cruel. There’s no getting away from it. Life’s a bitch and then you die.

I: Some people say Rimbaud sold his soul as he went to Africa and traded in slaves, guns etc. instead of writing great poetry.

R: Ultimately writing poetry doesn’t make you rich or comfortable. It’s a real struggle. The only successful poets these days are poets who write lyrics for a musical band.

I suppose Rimbaud thought of poetry as useless. Poetry never changes people’s minds about anything; it’s just pretty writing. Why pretend the world is beautiful when you are a realist?

I: So you feel modern poetry has no future?

R: I think poetry should be written with more ideas in it. If it read as concise philosophy, then I think it might have a future.

I: But do you feel there's a lot of good in the world, even though, as you say, it is on the whole ugly?

R: Of course there is a small minority who really are good people. But to me most people are little better than animals who can't appreciate high culture.

I'm tired of boring people saying they are good. They work like a slave at some meaningless job and then watch mindless TV all night, and they call it good. Such people loved the Christian religion for it encouraged them to be boring.

To say that some people are good and others bad is a judgment call anyway. I think the world as a whole is fed up with goody goodies.

The key is to be interesting, not to be good or bad. You need to be able to tell people about your life and ideas in a way that is not dull.

Anyone can have an interesting life if they set their mind to it. But to do so you have to travel, read and think, which is anathema to most people. Most people these days are lazy and apathetic. Little better than beasts.

I: But many poets speak about love. Love of humanity, as well as romantic love.

R: I think love is boring too. Every person you like becomes boring after a while. There are more important things in life than love. Things like science and progress.

Of course we all need sex but we shouldn't make such a big deal about it. Sex should be easy to get, just like food. People don't make a big deal about food, why should they make a big deal about sex? Look at the animals; they don't.

The only kind of love I know is loving people for what they stand for. People who are not afraid to stand up and make their unique voice heard.

HENRY FORD

I: Ford was the man who revolutionized industry by inventing the assembly line and making cars cheap for the first time. What would Ford be saying about modern times?

HF: Ford once said that, "History is bunk." I think he was one of the few to realize that we are really in a completely new era, and that the lessons of the past are no longer so persuasive.

I think it's a great era in which we live and the whole world is now trying to take part in the world economy. Our world civilization features prosperity to the degree that was never dreamed of by even people in the 19th century.

I: What are your feelings about the future of automation?

HF: I think just like Huxley said one day it will be unnecessary for people to work but work will still exist to keep people busy. Most jobs even in our own time are largely meaningless, but people need work.

But automation will mean that even people in poor countries will be able to afford many modern luxuries and conveniences. So I think it's a great thing.

I: How do you feel about mass production of products that are identical?

HF: Well I think computers will allow nearly every product to be made according to the wishes of consumers. For example you could put computer screens on the outside of everyday products such as washing machines and the screens could display anything you wish, like art for example.

I: What about the future of the automobile?

HF: I think cities worldwide have too many cars. They need to build better subway systems now to avoid huge problems in the future.

Also fuel is not a problem. Battery cars are already good enough for inter-city travel, I don't know why some mayors don't insist that their citizens switch to such cars. And there could be unlimited numbers of atomic power plants built to generate hydrogen fuel...

But if businessmen are bold enough, technology already exists for building air cars. The air cars could be guided through the sky by computers and could land on the top of downtown buildings in sky garages.

Also airports for long distance travel could be located downtown and the planes could make vertical landings. Again the technology exists, but bold entrepreneurs with vision are required to make it a reality.

I: So you think our society lacks visionaries?

HF: The vast majority of businessmen are too conservative in my view. There are many things which should be done, but are not. For example they should have private companies give space tours. And they should invest more in poor countries which really need the investment; I think recently a lot of countries have become stable. Why does everyone have to invest only in China? Why not South America or Africa?

Also businessmen need to pressure government to clean up its act. Get them to stop wasting taxpayer's money and pay off their debts. If they could do this and then reduce taxes, this would be a huge stimulus to business both large and small.

I think business education is partly to blame for making businessmen too small-minded. They educate people with MBAs and such to train them for an easy 9-5 job. But actually what we need to do is train them to be bold entrepreneurs and small businesspeople.

WU ZETIAN, TANG DYNASTY EMPRESS OF CHINA

I: What is your opinion of China's history?

W: Chinese traditions were basically set up to control the people. Most people received little or no education. They just worked diligently and quietly on their farms.

But even the elite, the scholars got there by memorizing many useless things and they had to do this dull stressful work for many years. Then were put into government with a virtual guarantee they wouldn't think of anything except their job and family.

In contemporary medieval Europe, the church had a virtual monopoly on reading and writing and so the people were also ignorant. Some think ignorance is bliss, but I disagree.

It was easier to control so many people by keeping them illiterate...

But there have been some great inventions in the past and now the Chinese are catching up fast. Have a space program and everything.

I: What is your opinion of the Tang dynasty Empress Zetian?

W: In fact in the Tang dynasty, Chinese art and culture reached its height. There were many great Emperors and of course, one Empress, Wu Zetain...

An ambitious woman she hung on to power for some years and tried to make men and women more equal.

Women are just as tough as men when they want to be.

I: So how about the future of China?

W: With so many people, it already has the world's largest army. .

In another 30 years I think they will be the dominant world power. Then no doubt they will be very interfering in other countries. Also they won't want to sacrifice any power to join a world government.

It's a strange world we live in. So much power, so many people...

I: Do you think China needs a democracy?

W: There's more than one way to climb a mountain. Basically the Chinese system allows for highly intelligent people to accede to be president, and the country is developing at a maximum pace.

However they need to educate the poor. So many people in China are illiterate. It is almost impossible for people to succeed and hence the economy to succeed with so many people being unable to read or write.

They could have 200 students in the class if they have to (lacking teachers). But all must be educated. After all in 20 years most manufacturing will be automated. So people will need to work in the service industry and be educated to do the job.

I: If the whole world economy grows including poor nations, what will be the next step?

W: No one can predict it since technology is changing the world so fast. We just have to hang on and see if we can be a success.

AUGUSTUS CAESAR

I: The reign of Augustus marked basically the beginning of the great Roman Empire. Augustus' reign featured unprecedented peace and prosperity for the Empire and he set up an imperial system that was to last hundreds of years. How do you feel about his reign?

A: Until quite recently Western scholars looked at the rule of Augustus as the apogee of Western civilization. If only the Romans hadn't used so many slaves, they would have reached an industrial revolution 2000 years before it actually happened.

I: While many praise the Roman Empire for its politics, social welfare, military, engineering etc. it didn't achieve much in the way of lasting art, literature, philosophy or science. They mostly borrowed from the Greeks.

A: You've got to understand that to rule a great Empire in those days the Emperors had to silence opposition. Writers, philosophers and such typically criticize authoritarianism, so the Emperors had to silence them in some way.

Italians can be very creative as they showed in the Renaissance, and so too could other peoples of the Empire, but that was not what the great Emperors of Rome wanted.

And with regard to science, as I said, slaves made science unnecessary.

I: But do you feel the Emperors were right?

A: Yes I do. Writing and philosophy does nothing for me. I have my own views as indeed does everyone. Writers just cause trouble and disturbances if indeed they do anything at all.

Few people actually will admit that writers, philosophers, artists etc. ever really had an effect on their lives. We simply don't need them.

Today nearly all the clever people are doing science and it is useful to everyone. In addition science keeps clever people out of trouble for the most part.

I: How do you feel about democracy then?

A: It's no different than rule by kings to me. Just like always the rich and powerful control things and pacify the masses with "bread and circuses" (i.e. social welfare and TV), just as the great Romans did.

In most democracies, many people, often a majority, don't even vote because they know politics will never really change.

I: Do you feel our world civilization will decline one day, just like the Roman Empire did?

A: It's quite possible. Revolutions, chaos and war are always possibilities. But that's life. For people today though, it's a great time to be alive and enjoy our prosperous world civilization.

I: So you don't think the nature of humanity will change in the future?

A: The more that things change, the more they stay the same. There's nothing new under the sun.

People like to think we live in a totally new era, but even despite high levels of education, I don't think humans are fundamentally different than people of the past.

FRANK L. WRIGHT

I: Frank Wright was one of the greatest architects of all time, believing among other things that buildings should harmonize with nature. What do you think Wright would think about modern architecture?

FW: One of the problems is there simply are not enough good architects. I think that one way to solve this problem is use the best architects only for exteriors and let lesser architects do the interiors.

Also every city's architects should vote for a "master architect" who would have to approve all buildings constructed in the city. Hence if someone wanted to build an ugly building they would not be allowed. In addition having a master architect would make the buildings harmonize with each other.

Of course you might say that some cities already have an architect or planner to approve all buildings, but what we need is the city's BEST architect to oversee construction. The post of master architect need only require a few hours a week; either the building is approved or it isn't, judging solely how the buildings look. If necessary the master architect could take the unacceptable plan and change it in a rough sketch for them to follow and win approval.

I: Some people think architecture is high art. But will there ever be true meaning to architecture?

FW: I suppose the exterior and interior of the buildings could be covered with giant video screens. You could put all kinds of things on the screens, perhaps moving pictures. People might therefore stop on the street just to view the pictures or words on the screens.

I: How can we make people more creative?

FW: Of course we can make people more creative. We just need to emphasize it more in education. As Buckminster Fuller once said, “Every child is born a genius”. Everyone is unique.

I: What will cities be like in the future?

FW: A lot of buildings in a lot of cities should be torn down and rebuilt in a more attractive way. But I think in any case great changes will come to cities. For example soon shops and malls will start disappearing as people do their shopping on the internet. And offices will be unnecessary as people do their work at home.

So there won't be such a necessity for having a large downtown. Hence cities will be more spread out. I think deep down most people don't like to live in a crowded, dirty city, especially once they settle down. They prefer a nice quiet suburb. Also by spreading out cities the traffic problem will be reduced.

Of course as cities spread out they will encroach on farmland, but new technology to genetically modify crops will reduce the amount of farmland needed.

I: Do you think that we live in a beautiful world?

FW: No, but if everything was beautiful we wouldn't value it. We'd just take it for granted. But all the same I think we are striving to build a more beautiful world. Perhaps one day everyone will be good-looking due to genetic engineering and the quality of architecture, art etc. will be far higher.

But deep down in our souls we are ugly, I think, as well as beautiful, and so we will never stop doing ugly deeds and thinking ugly thoughts.

HUMPHREY BOGART

I: Bogart was one of the greatest Hollywood actors of all time. How do you feel about his movies and Hollywood back then?

HB: Bogart was a great actor but most of his roles were very similar. For example he was nearly always the good guy. A tough, good guy. A man's man if you will.

But I think most Hollywood films back in Bogart's day were lousy and most Hollywood films today are lousy too. But you know that's life. You find a gem once in a while, but most of life is dull and boring.

However Hollywood has had a huge impact on the world as a whole. Now many people in poor countries want to have a life like the Americans do, and this is making the world economy boom.

I: Do you feel that, "All the world is a stage"?

HB: Yes everyone has great acting skill as far as I can tell. It's boring to always play the same role and say the same things; we all need variety.

Of course some people are better actors than others; if you are really good at playing what others want you to be, you might easily find success.

I: But do you feel we should all try to be what others want us to be?

HB: No, of course not. Just being your unique self may make you interesting and attractive to others as well. Or indeed there are many kinds of personalities you can adopt that will find favor. You can make yourself

into the kind of person you want to be. Most people by the time they reach middle age have chosen to be who they are.

Some people find it hard to change their personality into ways that don't suit them, and I think to do this is not a good thing. Just being yourself is easier.

I: How do you feel about the future of film?

HB: Actually I think today there is too much emphasis on who the actors are and not enough emphasis on writing good scripts. I think most people can appreciate a good script, just as they do a great actor.

But I think in the near future people are going to start downloading films for free on the net and this is going to eventually kill the big studios. Hence in the future films will have to be made using a small budget and virtually unknown actors. I don't think this is necessarily a bad thing though, as it might well make for better movies.

I: Do you think it's possible that one day films will disappear altogether to be replaced by internet role playing games, virtual reality and such?

HB: I think in a hundred years our world will have changed so much that it would be totally unrecognizable to someone of our time.

I: How do you feel about our time then?

HB: I feel the more people complain, the happier they really are. People these days really are spoiled, and deep down they love it.

People in rich countries have an incredibly luxurious life. The world is full of entertainment and life is good.

I think we have created "the best of all possible worlds"; this world is what we wanted.

ARISTOPHANES

I: Aristophanes was an ancient Greek comedy playwright; perhaps the greatest playwright of all time. How do you feel about him? Do you feel, as he no doubt did, that life is a joke?

A: Of course life is a joke. Any clown can see that life has no meaning, and that all human endeavors are vain and ridiculous.

Unfortunately evolution has favored the survival of very serious people and so life is dull.

With regard to Aristophanes there are very few people as funny as him today, and I think it's a shame. Maybe we need to start a comedy major in universities and train more people to be funny. You know they could study humorous philosophy, the great comedians, how to make everything more funny etc.

I: What would happen if a great comedian was made President of a country in modern times?

A: Well most world leaders are ridiculous people, but they are so boring. At least in medieval times the kings had jesters...

It all starts from the top; if there were funny, amusing leaders the world as a whole would be much more amusing. Most people are really bored by politics.

I heard there was once a joke party in Canada called the Rhinoceros party, and they nearly won a seat once. And also, in Medieval times, they say that the jokers and the clowns ruled cities on April Fool's day...

The problem is that most funny people regard life as a joke and feel there's no reason for them to do anything. It's sad. I think if you are a funny person you've got to make the world a better place.

I: Do you really think we could make everyone funnier?

A: You can make people into anything you want through education and culture; it's been proven.

I: But if we convince people the world is a joke, won't people refuse to work at their meaningless jobs? Won't society break down?

A: Most people already know that life's a joke, only they are afraid to face it. Basically facing reality has never hurt anyone. People will still do their work because they need to survive and they feel they need a lot of material goods. But most people today realize that there's much more to life than work; today people live for the weekend when they can enjoy themselves and have fun.

Laughter is the best medicine for a troubled world in which so many problems are caused by people just being too uptight and not easygoing and relaxed as they should be.

I: But do you think we can joke about things like the specter of nuclear war?

A: Comedians and easygoing people are not the sort to start nuclear war. Wars are caused by crazy, violent and mediocre men who shouldn't be in power in the first place.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

A: I think numerous cash awards should be given to bosses who have a sense of humor and whose employees like them. Also people could nominate funny friends for such awards.

ALAN TURING

I: What is your opinion about Alan Turing, who more than anyone else helped create the modern day computer?

AT: If I remember correctly he was punished for being openly homosexual. The court forced him to take women's hormones to control his desire, and then he grew breasts. Finally the ordeal drove him to suicide.

He was not the first great genius to be persecuted though, that's for sure. Anyone who is different in fact usually has a hard time in society. And geniuses are very different.

I: But how do you feel about computers?

AT: Well at present computers seem to be a wonderful thing. However in the future if computers are made really intelligent it could be a highly dangerous situation, just like in Arthur C. Clarke's "2001: A Space Odyssey".

And people say in the future wars will be fought entirely with computerized robots and such; that might be a bad thing too. Also computers are replacing many human jobs, and that's not a good thing either. But computers allow things like internet chatting with anyone in the world and they generally make our life more luxurious, which pleases everyone. Also computers greatly aid scientists in many ways, and therefore allow humans to do many things we couldn't possibly have done otherwise.

In the 19th century no one really had any idea what computers might one day be able to do, and I wonder if there won't be numerous surprising discoveries in the near future.

I: But of course all surprising discoveries are done by great geniuses, like Turing. How can we make the most of our world geniuses?

AT: I think geniuses are very sensitive and it's hard for them to survive in this world. Therefore I think we should get the world's geniuses to design tests for young people to determine if they are really geniuses and then send them to special schools where they will be with our geniuses and have clever teachers who they can relate to.

I don't think the present IQ test really tests for genius; it only tests how fast people can use logic. Obviously geniuses use their own unusual logic and the key to being a genius is being imaginative, not jumping to conclusions quickly.

In addition, I think scientists worldwide should form a type of union in which all members must be ethical or lose their right to practice science. Such a union should pressure government not to develop more dangerous weapons and things like that.

I: But do you think geniuses belong in politics?

AT: I think genius is useful in every aspect of human thought. The problem is if a genius ran for political office, most people probably wouldn't vote for this person anyway.

Most people are distrustful of genius because they are not properly educated. We need to therefore change the education system.

I: What about changing democracy?

AT: I don't think we necessarily need to change the system, but we have to change people. Including geniuses. If geniuses were sent to the genius school which I mentioned previously, then maybe we could convince them to seek political office.

MARIE CURIE

I: How do you feel about the life and discoveries of Marie Curie?

MC: Well she achieved many things. She was one of the first really successful female scientists and so has helped inspire many women.

Her discovery with her husband of radioactivity was a stupendous discovery. Of course it formed the foundation for nuclear bombs, but also formed the foundation for nuclear power. I think in the future they will build thousands of new nuclear power plants and so the future of energy for us is no problem.

Indeed many scientific discoveries are like a double-edged sword; they often have negative potential uses. If you play with fire you might build a civilization, but you might also destroy a civilization too. What can we do?

Another notable thing about Marie Curie is she married another genius. This is rare I think, but very inspirational.

I: How do you feel about women's role in the future?

MC: I think there are just as many female geniuses as there are male. So as females study science more and more, it will effectively double the number of great scientists. The same is true of other fields.

Personally I think females make better political leaders than men also. After all women are more peaceful and kind than men. What the world needs today is kind, peaceful leaders, not ultra-tough warmongers.

I: How do you feel about the future of science?

MC: I think they will discover many new elements that exist only at high temperatures and pressures. Also I'm sure they will discover many new super materials that will have many uses.

It would be nice if they could build super materials that could resist heat and pressure and so investigate our earth's core as well as planets like Jupiter, and even our sun.

I envision a world in which everything is super intelligent. No more unintelligent plants, animals or rocks. Everything can think.

Genetic engineering will create a new race of humans, new physics will make impossible things possible and basically science will be able one day to fulfill all our dreams. The only limit on science will be our imaginations. Maybe they should rename science "scidreams".

I: But how do you feel about our modern world?

MC: I think we live in times when we can make a difference. In fact I think anyone can make a difference, it's simply a matter of knowing yourself and knowing what you can do. There's much to be done. You can volunteer to help the less fortunate, you can get politically active, you can try to love everyone around you and so on. The whole world's future is still undecided, but if we all try to make it better, the future is rosy indeed. It's the meaning of life to make our world a better place.

I: So you believe in humanity?

MC: Of course. I think if you want to be happy you have to love others, you've got to be optimistic about humanity. Being selfish or cynical never makes anyone happy.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

I: Russell was a modern philosopher notable for his down-to-earth approach to philosophy. What do you think he would say about the state of philosophy today?

BR: I think he'd say that philosophy is failing us. Most philosophers read in university today are boring and hard to read. Few people are really interested.

At any rate the days of having just one rigid philosophy are over. Modern people are more open-minded than those of the past. People today want to explore ideas but ultimately they want to do as they please. If anything could be said to be their philosophy it would be to hope for a better world, have interesting experiences and enjoy life.

I: But don't you feel that philosophy, literature, art etc. inspire people and make them happy?

BR: There is too much entertainment and not enough action. People with talent need to get involved politically and stop daydreaming. Intelligence is only good if you try to put it into practice and see the use of it. You'd call it pragmatism, I suppose.

I: So then pragmatism is your philosophy?

BR: If you want to pin me to a particular philosophy, I'd say I believe in people who have vision seeking positions of power and leading the people with their vision. Maybe we could call this philosophy "Futuropower".

I: But people who have the vision usually do nothing with it. For whatever reason.

BR: Maybe the times we live in are too easy. Nearly everyone in developed nations has a nice, easy life. We try not to spoil our children, but we end up spoiling ourselves.

Perhaps if times were not so good, better leaders would appear. The democratic system is open to all.

But I'm afraid I'm cynical. I don't really see anyone trying to do anything special in politics, philosophy or whatever. I just don't think people care about humanity enough. After all it is obvious the future is very uncertain, but everyone seems oblivious to this fact. People don't even want children anymore; they don't seem to care about future generations. They only care about buying things and enjoying themselves.

I: So you think we are doomed then?

BR: What will save us? Even if we get a few geniuses to take action as has happened in the past, it all ends up the same after a short period.

Of course you could try and rearrange people's thinking through education, by getting the best of the world's geniuses together to try to mold better programs. But you have to ask why hasn't this happened already? The answer is nobody really cares. If deep down people don't care, how can you expect to improve things? You can't change our basic instincts.

I: But isn't it possible for one person to change things? Look at Karl Marx or Adolf Hitler; they both changed the world dramatically. The only problem was both men were not good and the changes they wanted to make were not in humanity's best interests. But couldn't one or two really great people really change things for the better?

BR: Well like I said "Futuropower". There is always hope, of course.

EDGAR ALLEN POE

I: Poe was a writer who wrote imaginative stories often about horror and madness. How do you feel about Poe? Do you feel we live in a world of madness and horror?

EP: Well with regard to the second question, yes, I do feel the world is crazy. There is no meaning to this world and in any case we are all doomed to die, so yes it is horrifying. Yes, it is crazy.

As far as Poe is concerned I feel he was a highly imaginative man who didn't know what to do with his talents. He should have been a politician, I think.

I: But if we live in a crazy, horrifying world, how should we live?

EP: Well I think hiding from the facts of life doesn't make one happy. You might as well do crazy things and put some action in your life. There's no point living in a dull routine. Some crazy people I've met seemed to live interesting lives...

And some people seem to enjoy a miserable life full of horrors and pain. If life is a nightmare you might as well try to enjoy the nightmare. After all other people's nightmares are always entertaining...

I: How do you feel about modern entertainment?

EP: Well I think the vast majority of clever people go into science and not enough clever people go into the arts. We need brilliant entertainers to help us get through life.

Personally I think most entertainment is boring. Yet the highlight of every movie, every drama is some crazy action. Why don't they just fill the whole show with crazy characters who do crazy things? It would give us all inspiration, as well as entertainment.

I: But do you really do crazy things?

EP: I'd like to get involved in politics one day and try out a few theories. For example if I was in power I would insist that everyone do a few crazy things every week. Every month they would go see one of our agents and explain what they had done. If it was good they'd be rewarded, if bad they'd be punished. The craziest people would be given the highest posts in the land. What fun it would be.

Of course there are many kinds of craziness and we would hope to do things that would be funny and interesting to others. It would be an inspirational environment. We could have a crazy TV channel, make crazy movies etc.

I: But surely you don't expect people to accept such madness?

EP: There have been lots of crazy rulers in the past and people accepted it. Maybe one could pretend to be normal until you reach power, and then start acting crazy.

But the idea of a crazy entertainment would go over for sure.

I: But of course crazy rulers will bring about the downfall of our civilization, won't they?

EP: We already have crazy rulers. You think they won't end the world one day? I think at the very least we could put a little drama and excitement into the equation. After all the sanest men are the ones who can at least admit they are nuts!

MARTIN LUTHER KING

I: Martin Luther King was a great civil rights activist who championed the rights of American blacks prior to his untimely death. If he were here today, what would he be saying?

MK: I think he would see that blacks all over the world are finally turning things around. In Africa a lot of nations are finally stable and democratic after years of wars and instability. A lot of the wars were the result of Cold War conflict and before that European colonialism kept blacks down. I think many African countries have recently been registering good economic growth.

In America meanwhile hundreds of years of mistreatment of blacks are coming to an end. All that is needed is to make sure blacks get a good education, and then the problem will be solved.

Some people say that black people are lazy, but I think everywhere these days blacks are showing a willingness to work hard.

I: But do you really feel that racism and inequality will ever disappear entirely?

MK: Well it will take some time, but I feel we are on the right road now. I think in the future everyone will be well off, though of course some will be more well off than others.

I: Do you think that blacks have special talents to give the world?

MK: I think many groups around the world: women, aboriginals, blacks and others all will surprise people by showing that they are good at many things. People are not as different from one another as many people think. Also I think there are even a lot of white men who are underachievers.

I: How do you feel about black role models?

MK: Of course we need more of those. But actually in America today many young people are influenced by black American culture. These days everyone is dressing like a rapper, listening to hip hop music and so on.

I: So if in the future everyone is more or less considered equal, or everyone is respected at least, do you feel that we will then live in a perfect world?

MK: By no means. History shows that as one problem is solved, another appears. Science for example is becoming dangerous to our very survival, and it will become more dangerous in the future.

So we have to use good people, wherever we can find them, to help keep this world afloat and ensure humanity lives on into the future.

I: If you were President of the US, what would you do?

MK: I think it's important not to aggravate other nations or bully them. The US should keep a strong military but they should not provoke other nations. Instead America should be seen to be substantially helping other countries to develop their economies. US businesses should be given tax incentives to go to the poorest countries and invest.

America should also see that every American be given food, shelter and a job. I think the greatest problem facing all countries today is job creation. If we can't find a use for people then we are truly a selfish, uncaring, sadistic society. Personally I don't know myself how to create jobs, but I'm sure there are lots of people out there who have ideas. Government needs to use as many people with ideas as possible.

Indeed we could offer good jobs to anyone who has ideas to help us.

JOSEPH CONRAD

I: Conrad was a 19th century novelist who wrote deep stories, mostly about Asia. Most of the stories could be considered adventure tales. How would Conrad feel about adventure in this day and age?

JC: I think he'd still say Asia is a place where one can have many adventures. People in Asia are so different from Westerners, not only culturally but genetically as well. In many regions of Asia people are very tolerant for example, and in this respect are more advanced than Westerners.

I: What do you feel is the role of a modern day writer?

JC: I kind of always thought that books provide solace and inspiration to intellectually minded people. It's good to read clever people's opinions about this world. After all there are a lot of clever people in this world; they are humanity's greatest asset.

Some people say that books are old-fashioned, but they still stimulate the imagination in ways that movies cannot.

I: But what kind of books do you feel should be written?

JC: I feel books should contain as many ideas and interesting stories as possible. It is human nature to tell unusual, crazy stories and we all like to hear different ideas. But the writing style should be simple and accessible to all.

I think our world is changing fast, so to have ideas about what should be done today or what should be done make for food for thought.

I: But don't you think that nearly all books cover the same old ground?

JC: Yes, but every generation has a number of good writers even though they may not be famous in their lifetime.

So the problem is making sure that great writers get noticed in their lifetime when their ideas are pertinent to our world. If I was a famous writer I would form a publishing company and only publish writers who were excellent, and who the publishing industry rejected because they were too different and too experimental. Of course there are some publishers like that already, but I feel we need more.

I: So you think the great writers are important?

JC: Some people say that books don't influence them at all, but I feel that books have a strong influence on intelligent people, if only to inspire them. If people feel inspired they can do good work.

I: But don't you think that in fact intelligent people use books as an escape? Instead of doing good actions, they escape into the dream world of books.

JC: Yes, but perhaps without that escape they couldn't get through their life as a lawyer, architect, politician or whatever.

I: But what about books for ordinary people?

JC: I think TV and silly chats with strangers on the internet are not in people's best interests. However school doesn't teach people to love books, but rather to hate them, as they associate books with tests and over-attention to details in the books.

Students are not tested on the latest music, fashion or movies and so they associate these things with pleasure.

CHARLES DARWIN

I: Charles Darwin was the man who finally convinced most thinkers that the race of mankind, as well as animal species had evolved over time, rather than having been created by God. His research contributed to the slow disappearance of religion in developed nations. What do you think about evolution?

CD: Well our society is evolving fast now that's for sure. And it seems that we will soon create our own descendants using genetic engineering.

Some people say it's just change for change's sake; others say that nothing ever changes. However what it means to be human really is changing and when we create super humans, the race of homo sapiens will be at an end.

I think the changes are happening faster than anyone is prepared to admit. After all we are certainly not prepared for super humans. But maybe they will be reality in 20 years time. In our own lifetimes.

I: Do you think capitalism is really the struggle of the fittest?

CD: Capitalism is really just a struggle to get a better house and a better material life. But capitalism is working side by side with science, and science is making humanity more and more fit to survive. Our control over the world increases, and we are learning more about the universe. One day our descendants will go to distant stars... Finally we'll alter the whole universe and then go beyond to other universes. It's all ours for the taking.

I: But surely if we are to create super humans, they will be based, or should be based, on the best people?

CD: I suppose. You know in the past our smartest people were often killed by evil kings, but in the future intelligence will be valued more and more. It's the best human quality, and one which differentiates us from animals.

However if they really do model super humans on the best people, then I think everyone will be satisfied that we are putting our best foot forward.

I think we would all like super humans to be not only super clever, but also brave, honest, kind, generous, creative etc.

I: But getting back to our modern times, don't you think that our society is too competitive and too stressful?

CD: Well they tried communism and few people liked it. It's human nature to compete and to try to outdo one another. It's like a game, and we all want to play.

However in the future perhaps we can get all the material goods we want virtually for free due to automation. Then perhaps we could make a society that is less stressful. But to be honest I think generations of people have thought about how to make our society better and nearly all agree the current system is best. But who knows?

I: But surely for people in poor regions such as Africa and South America, the current system is most unfair? Most people in these regions are on the edge of starvation.

CD: Rome wasn't built in a day. I think the whole world is starting to change its priorities now that the Cold War is over. I think many people are starting to think more about the world on a global basis. More and more help is being given to poor regions. If the regions have stable government as many now have for the first time, then investment and aid can pour in.

Our era is largely one of peace, and I think we will soon see great dividends from this everywhere around the world.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

I: Rousseau was a philosopher who among other things said that savage man was noble, but modern man is not. He also wrote that the arts and sciences have really not changed things much. If he was alive today would he still say the arts and science and indeed progress do not amount to much?

JR: In fact we are worse off today than ever. Science has basically proved there is no God and so life is meaningless. Art meanwhile has nothing to reflect on except that there is no meaning to life.

We were meant to live as savages, not as fat, pampered sycophants.

I: Do you think we should then try to get back to nature and live a simple life?

JR: It's too late. Everyone now is convinced they need a luxurious, boring life. Before we were innocent, now we are ruined.

I: How then should we live?

JR: I think cocaine or heroin is the answer. Personally I'd like to disappear from civilization to say the forests of Columbia where I could indulge in drugs to make me oblivious.

I: But don't you believe in anything? What about love?

JR: Everybody deep down realizes that love is bullshit. But they keep changing partners to convince themselves they are on a noble quest for true

love... But as the novelty of the new partner wears off, they decide they must look harder for love etc.

I: But don't you feel we could somehow improve this world through education?

JR: Some idealists say we can do so, but we are still animals despite our fancy talk and fancy clothes.

Anyway less education would probably be better for us; ignorance is bliss.

I: What about government?

JR: The role of government should be just like in "Brave New World" in which the government keeps people happy with drugs. They need to legalize all drugs and thus bring the price down. They are afraid to do so however, as then no one would want to participate in this silly society.

I: But surely most people don't share your views?

JR: Most people are miserable. They'd be happy to live a life of drug-induced bliss.

I: I think you are wrong. Most people believe our world is progressing. And they feel that one day we'll build a beautiful world.

JR: People have lots of dreams like this. But the fact is we'll never build a beautiful world because we aren't beautiful creatures. We're animals who follow our meaningless instincts like automatons.

The world we have now is no better than previous ones. Just look at surveys of the world which indicate people in many poor, undeveloped countries are just as happy as those in rich nations.

We're going nowhere. It'll never be any different. Life is a joke.

NAPOLEON

I: Napoleon seized power in France after the French Revolution and went on to conquer much of Europe. How do you feel about him?

N: Well I think his plan to unify Europe was a grand design, ahead of its time. Most people were happy though that he shook up the establishment and allowed ordinary people to become successful.

I: But surely uniting Europe through violence was not the way?

N: That's the way Empires have always been built. Napoleon believed that French culture was superior and he wanted to bring it to others.

I: But how do you feel about France today?

N: France weakened its world position significantly by having a very low birthrate for a long time. Now France is no longer a great power, sadly.

But people love France. It is the number one country in the world in terms of tourism. People worldwide think the French know how to live and think they are very passionate and romantic, and have an interesting culture.

I: What about the future of the world then?

N: People are under the impression that they don't need strong leaders, but our world has many troubles and only strong leaders can solve them. An enlightened dictator is the best form of government. However I'm afraid that it is difficult to set up such leaders in the modern day milieu.

As it is I fear the world will go into slow decline, much like Rome did. Virtually every so-called rich nation is now almost bankrupt (typically one-third of all taxes pay interest on developed countries' debts) and people only care about luxury and ease. And these weak leaders cannot seem to stop nuclear proliferation. The way we are going now there will be nuclear war eventually.

I: But what do you mean by strong leaders?

N: I mean leaders who know what's right for their country and the world and stand up for their beliefs, not just give money to everyone to shut them up. We need fiscal responsibility above all. Fiscal responsibility will keep nations growing. Otherwise there will be revolution and anarchy.

If economies grow well, then we can start investing more in the developing world and end world poverty. If every nation is becoming rich, there will be a lesser chance of another world war.

I: But how do you feel about war?

N: If there is another world war or even a limited nuclear war, civilization might cease to exist. So there can be no more great wars.

I: Do you think there is hope for one all-powerful UN?

N: We have to denuclearize the world's militaries. It would be best to disband the army of every country and just have one UN army.

Of course there would need to be many checks and balances to prevent power from falling into the wrong hands.

It could happen if the great powers of today: the US, Europe and China, all agree to one UN military. Then the others would follow suit or risk being cut off from world trade.

I think it is inevitable that this must occur if the world is to continue to progress.

ISAAC NEWTON

I: Newton was one of the greatest scientists who ever lived. Among his discoveries was his theory of gravity. If Newton were alive today, what would he be saying?

N: We live in a world of science in which nearly all our progress is directly attributable to scientific discoveries. All other endeavors have been largely a waste of time.

So I think Newton would say that we should be governed by scientists, not by people who know nothing of science.

If we were governed by scientists, we could apply the scientific method (i.e. have an idea and then test it out) to all facets of modern day life. Quite simply there are many experiments that we could do in education, in politics, in how to live and so on that would eventually make big improvements in our lives.

We need to train people to think scientifically and logically and to stop allowing instincts and “passions” and other illogical behavior to guide them.

I: But surely most people don't want to live a “logical life”?

N: People will live according to their culture. We just need to change the culture, that's all.

Government is always telling people what to do. Rule by scientists would be nothing really different.

I: But what kind of scientists will we choose to lead us? How would the system be instituted?

N: Most people deep down love a life that has goals, and they also like trying out new ways of living. Above all everyone has great respect for scientists.

So I think if there was a Science party running in elections, they would usually win. All scientists, including clever social scientists and economists would have input in the policy if they wished. It would be so good that eventually all parties would need to become scientific to have any hope of competing with the Science party.

I: But many scientists of the past did not have good political ideas.

N: Yes but the idea is to draw on the entire scientific community for ideas, not just the rule of one person. Hence the government would be essentially a congress of wise, retired scientists (young scientists have scientific work to do) who would form policy according to what ideas were proven to be the best.

I: What do you see then as the future of science?

N: Well if we had scientists rule the nations, they could decide which science is good and which is bad. If anyone tried to practice science that was deemed dangerous, they would lose their right to experiment.

I think that many issues such as artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, new weapons research and such need to be carefully controlled by the scientific community.

Basically science will make everything more intelligently designed and make living a science. There will be many new discoveries, but I think it is somewhat difficult to predict when these things will be discovered and how they will be used. Only by experimentation will we know what is the right path.

J.S. BACH

I: Bach was one of the greatest and earliest classical music composers. How do you feel about his music?

JB: I think even today his music seems strangely futuristic. You know with the harpsichord, the pipe organ and such. It's truly timeless.

I: Bach was said to be a god-fearing man who was dedicated to the church.

JB: Yes, but if he was alive today he'd no doubt be an atheist and probably play music like Pink Floyd or Mike Oldfield.

In Bach's day you had to work for the church if you wanted to make a living as a musician. What great musicians of our day are religious? Musicians are by nature people who enjoy a free, easygoing lifestyle. They want to celebrate life and its pleasures.

I: How do you feel about modern music?

JB: I think today nearly everyone enjoys music very much. Much more than in the past. And I think great musicians inspire people and make their lives more full.

I often think that all the arts are underestimated by many. We live today in a world of entertainment and for many people entertainment is the meaning of life. In the future there will be more entertainment still, and I think it's great.

I: What do you think about the future of music?

JB: I think in the future a lot of music will defy characterization in any genre. It's already happening today with the eclectic music we hear these days.

I: But do you think music should have a message in the lyrics or should it just be pleasing to the ears?

JB: Why not? Many musicians view the world in ways that others don't. So they should use their vision to influence and inspire others.

I: How do you feel about super bands with 3, 4 or more musicians and singers who can all write music?

JB: Well of course many of the best bands were like that; the progressive rock bands for example. I think one should try to get as many good musicians as possible in a band and one should take them not just from one's home city, but from the whole world if possible.

Today many bands really only have one songwriter and most of their CDs contain only one or two good songs. It would be better if they joined forces with others.

I: What do you think about the internet and the future of music?

JB: Well, like I say many CDs have only one good song on them, but now people will only listen to that one good song.

Some people say that illegal downloading will ruin record companies and that may be, but I think musicians will still make lots of money from touring and the internet will allow bands that are not mainstream to get more attention. There's too much mainstream music today, I think. It's the legacy of the big record companies.

JAMES WATT

I: Some say Watt's perfection of a workable steam engine was the greatest invention of all time making possible the industrial revolution and the modern society we have today. What do you think?

JW: Well it was a big invention, but I think it was inevitable. One must remember that the scientific revolution had already begun by Watt's day.

The steam engine might have been perfected, say 30 years later, had it not been for Watt. But it would have been done eventually.

I: What do you think about the future of energy?

JW: I don't see why no government wants to require either battery-powered cars or hydrogen powered cars. Both of course need energy to create the power, but atomic power plants could be built to produce hydrogen fuel or power for the batteries. The technology to run such cars already exists, but governments have done nothing about it.

They already have nuclear power plants throughout the developed world. Why don't they simply build more? If they are worried poor nations will develop nuclear weapons, then why not build the plants for these countries for free and then use the UN to monitor all power plants worldwide?

I: How do you feel about science in general?

JW: I don't think people realize where science is taking us. In the future there will be tens of millions of scientists who will be able to create freaks and genius monsters, super viruses, new dangerous weapons, computers

with a mind of their own, cyborgs and so on. The result will be worldwide lunacy. Then dictators will seize control, then there will be wars of an unimaginable viciousness, and then finally civilization will be no more.

At least that's the way I see it.

I: What about trying to slow science down?

JW: It's impossible to stop. No one wants to stop it. We're all fascinated with the means of our own destruction.

I: So how should we live in these "last days of the species"?

JW: I think we should all live for the day. We should forget about having children; we don't want them to suffer. We should forget about trying to do science; there's too much already.

The only hope is for a savior to come and lead us away from the coming Armageddon. There are people who could save us, but they won't. Instead they'll do science and make a lot of money etc.

In my view the best intellectuals are the ones destroying us. They build their weapons of destruction and then walk away from the responsibility.

And the thing that gets me is no one is worried about the end of the world. They all act as if nothing is going on. They worry instead about how much money they'll make in 5 years time...

I: But surely disaster is not inevitable. There are a lot of good people in the world...

JW: People these days don't read much history. If they did they'd realize that all civilizations come to an end. In the case of Rome's fall, it took over 1 000 years to recover. The last days of Rome were much like our present day, everyone living luxuriously and selfishly. Getting their cheap thrills before it all comes to an end.

I don't think there are many good people; there are just a handful of good people, and most of them can't succeed in modern times anyway. Look at politics; if someone stands up and says the world sucks, and explains why and gives solutions, no one will listen.

I: So you think people are stupid as well as lazy?

JW: No one who we consider clever wants to do anything about the world, so I think we're all stupid. We put on airs and imagine that we're clever even though we know nothing and have no guts to do anything. Why did Rome fall? Were many geniuses trying to save it? No one who was so-called clever did anything at all.

SIGMUND FREUD

I: Freud was the founder of psychology. What would he be saying if he was alive today?

SF: One of the other individuals being interviewed (Editor's note: see Alexander Bell) mentioned that one day we will be able to read people's minds. If that is so, there are many implications for psychology.

For one, we could create a society in which everyone went to a psychologist or psychiatrist every month. Such doctors could learn all about the patients and help them with their life.

In fact, if everyone was honest with everyone else, we'd have a much better world. Perhaps we'd give up talking altogether, and just mind read.

In our current world so many people are afraid to tell the truth. They are afraid of reality. It's a bullshit world. But all that might change with mind reading.

I: How do you feel about (Ben Franklin's) idea of tax breaks for good behavior?

SF: It's most excellent. People would be under pressure from their psychologist to be more honest, kind etc. because they want the tax breaks.

I: What are your thoughts on dreams?

SF: I think we should work more on dream stimuli today. Perhaps a machine could ask you as you wake to relate your dreams. Also our dreams could be stimulated by a recorded machine which used brain waves.

Who knows where this would lead?

I: What do you think about mankind's so-called "dark side"?

SF: If everyone had to reveal their mind to everyone else, I think they would improve a lot. But still people would need to be more open-minded than they are at present in order to accept people as they are.

I: But do you think humans are becoming more and more unstable as time goes by? Don't you think mind reading would drive many insane?

SF: I think mind reading will solve ALL the world's problems. Think about politics for example: politicians would not be able to lie, and so we would only elect people who were genuinely good.

Regarding the second part of your question, some people might have trouble getting used to it at first, but I think it would soon become second nature.

I: But we live in a meaningless world and most people can't handle that.

SF: It's always been a meaningless world, regardless of whether one believes in God or progress or what. If you can keep an open mind in this world, then you can have fun and be happy. That's meaning enough for most, I think. We all have an instinct to survive.

MOTHER TERESA

I: Mother Teresa was considered to be one of the kindest, most useful people who ever lived. Do you think her goal of eliminating poverty and suffering will ever be realized?

MT: Through nearly all of the time humanity has spent on earth, everyone in the tribe or group was looked after. I can't understand why that's not the case today. Maybe we need to bring back some kind of tribalism, with the rich in the group taking care of the poor.

Even in the US, the world's richest country, there is plenty of poverty. I think it's just unacceptable. And there are many people with no jobs. Without a job, people can't live with dignity. Also everyone in the whole world needs to above all be given an education, or there will be no hope of eradicating poverty.

I: How do you feel about someone like Mother Teresa running for political office?

MT: It might do a lot of good, if only to put pressure on other parties to be more charitable to the world's poor. But sadly, politics is a dirty, corrupt business. There are a lot of good people in the UN, yet poverty is even more widespread than ever.

I think it would be easier to change the world by changing the culture itself, without relying on politicians. People like Mother Teresa could recruit millions to help the poor for example, if they tried hard enough. People could also be convinced to donate more money if they really believed progress was being made. Start with one country and then move to others;

that would be a good plan. If they could totally fix one country, then a lot of people might be persuaded to join in the building up of other nations.

I: What will it take to satisfy poor people?

MT: It's not necessary to make them rich. Just give them the ability to provide for their own needs through education and that would be enough in the long term.

I: Why, in your view, are people so uncaring?

MT: In the past everyone was religious and claimed to care about their fellow human. But there was poverty. And now, people are educated in our modern world to be selfish. In school they are told basically that greed is good. But there is no school subject called "kindness". We need to send all educated people for a year or two to poor countries to work with the poor (i.e. educate them) and understand their plight. A lot of people aren't by nature cruel or selfish, but they feel so distant from say, Africa.

It's the same with people who've never owned a pet; they often dislike animals. We can't help others if we don't understand them or know them.

I: So basically people are ignorant of the travails of the poor?

MT: Yes, but if they went to the poor countries to help, then they would feel much happier about the world. They would feel they've made a difference and they could see progress happening. There's no better feeling than to help someone and become a better person in the process. Kind of like a wonderful romance.

I: But how would we pay for sending millions of educated people to poor countries?

MT: Actually in most poor countries, it is very, very cheap to live. And anyone can afford the airfare. So government need not budget a lot for it.

LEONARDO DA VINCI

I: Da Vinci was one of the greatest minds of all time. His genius spread to engineering, painting, anatomy and many other disciplines. His most famous work was the Mona Lisa and I read that some guy recently got a sex change and then had numerous plastic surgery operations so that he would look like the Mona Lisa. How do you feel about that?

LDV: Well to me his paintings were very realistic and ahead of their time, but today they are nothing special. All great geniuses are people of their time.

I: How do you feel about modern painting?

LDV: To be honest, I don't think it is any longer a useful art. Photography has replaced it for the most part. Attempts by artists to do abstract art these days is largely ineffectual and boring.

So I'd say artistically minded people should make movies or write books.

Of course there aren't many good movies or books these days. We need more good ones.

I: Returning to the subject of Da Vinci, he had his dark side. You know this business of cutting up corpses, rumors he was gay, building siege weapons...

LDV: Da Vinci did a lot of things that others were afraid to do or too closed-minded to think about. Few men in history have been so open-minded and willing to experiment.

I: Some people call Da Vinci a Renaissance man, since he was skilled in so many disciplines.

LDV: Well most great geniuses only make a discovery or two in their chosen fields. Maybe they should stay in one field for only 5 years or so and do what they can, and then go on to other fields. Or perhaps we should train scientists in two or three fields, not just one major.

Getting the most out of our geniuses is one of the world's dilemmas. We often assume that geniuses know what is best for themselves, but they need help sometimes. Perhaps we could set up a test for genius, and then all these people could meet each other on the internet and inspire one another. At present most great scientists, for example, have few friends they can correspond with.

I: How do you feel about great scientists designing dangerous weapons?

LDV: Some people imagine that we should live in a world of peace. In fact most people hope for peace. But there will always be many clever people who are violent, seeking power. There will always be war.

For example those Vietnam war era protestors were all vehemently against the war, but sometimes wars have to be fought. Few in the West wanted communists to take over the world, after all.

Also great scientists know that if they don't help invent weapons, someone else will. Scientists are only human after all; they have to make a living.

I: But surely designing weapons for an evil regime is unacceptable?

LDV: Yes, in theory. But different scientists have different beliefs. Sakarov, in the Soviet Union, for example. When he helped develop nuclear bombs for the USSR, he thought he was doing the right thing. As Albert Speer once said, "It's hard to recognize the devil when he's patting you on the back".

EPICURUS

I: Epicurus was an ancient Greek philosopher who believed that one should live a life of pleasure. Many people interpreted his teachings as hedonistic, but really what he meant was to live a balanced life of moderation. How do you feel about Epicurus?

E: Pleasure is different for different people. But to live your life for something other than pleasure is crazy.

World civilization is slowly coming around to the idea that we should live for the weekend, live for holidays, rather than worrying so much about our meaningless careers.

Most sci-fi writers think that the world of the future will be one of pleasure, and I think this is good.

I: But don't you think it's empty to live simply for pleasure?

E: It's what most people want. Life has no meaning, but our instinct is to survive, so one might as well try to be happy.

I: But what about clever people? What about science?

E: I think science exists to give us pleasure. Some scientists say they enjoy boring experiments, but if they discover something that is useful then we are all glad.

With regard to clever people, they want pleasure, just like anybody else.

I: But how much pleasure should one seek?

E: Well one should try to maximize pleasure. For example if you feel that 9 beers on a weekend night is best for you, then it is best. If 12 beers makes you unhappy then don't drink 12.

One should go about life experimenting as much as possible to determine what is best for you. For example you might find that you want to live in Africa after visiting the continent, and so you should do that. But you'll never know where is best for you to live unless you travel the world.

Similarly you should read and learn about everything so that you can know what you like best. You have to have an open mind though, and really try to experiment with everything.

What I've just said is virtually common knowledge, but most people I've met close their minds about many things. They cannot tolerate or accept many things they decide, and so they miss out.

The world is big and we should love it all.

I: But surely most people don't want to open their minds to this degree?

E: I think in the near future people will be much more open-minded than today. You can see it happening now. Young people want pleasure, they want to experience as much as they can.

I: But if everyone is so open-minded, won't it be difficult to stand for anything important? Won't they be even more apathetic about world events than they already are?

E: We don't need to stand for anything. It only leads to war and discord. We need a civilization that features respect for others and perhaps even love of others.

MONTEZUMA, LAST KING OF THE AZTECS

I: Montezuma was the last king of the Aztecs. His Empire was overthrown by a handful of Spaniards in what was probably the biggest upset of all time. What do you think Montezuma would say about this conquest?

M: Back in those days military superiority decided everything. But in addition to their scary cannons and everything, the Spaniards came from a culture which shocked the world view of the Aztecs.

However the Spaniards were inordinately destructive, basically utterly destroying that great Mexican civilization.

I: But weren't the Aztecs themselves very cruel?

M: Yes, but there were many good aspects to their civilization as well.

The Spanish and their nasty church made the people of Mexico into second class citizens in their own land, and to this day the native peoples are mistreated and impoverished.

The same is true all over the world. The white Europeans destroyed the civilizations of native peoples worldwide, and to this day keep them down. The white man's religion says love your brother, but they hate everyone who is not like them.

And we have to ask ourselves, is Mexico a great civilization today? Certainly not.

I: So you feel modern Latin America is pathetic today?

I: No, but many of the people of Latin America are not greedy for money like Western people, and they are happy with a simple life. But Western people look down on Latin Americans because they are relatively poor. Actually many of the poor people of Latin America are white, but they are not considered to be white since they are poor.

The only thing that Westerners understand is money. I think THEY are pathetic.

And these Westerners want to force everyone to be like them, and they call this the “global village”.

Recently they did a world survey of happiness, and the happiest people in the world were the people of Ecuador. But Western people are blind to what makes for happiness. They’d rather be masochists and work their ass off so they can buy more things they don’t need.

I: But surely there are many good aspects to Western civilization?

M: Well the best thing about it is it will end soon. They are on the road to nuclear war and when this happens maybe people throughout the world (those who survive) will get a chance to start again; their way.

I: But don’t many Mexicans and other Latin Americans want to go and live in the West?

M: The West has brainwashed them with its false glitter. The movie stars, the fast cars, the opulent homes...

Any civilization that is based on greed is not a good civilization. But you can’t tell Western people that. They think the only other option is communism. But there are many other ways to live, such as in the myriad types of civilizations which they’ve destroyed.

Western people are stupid assholes, that’s what I say.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

I: Huxley was the writer of “Brave New World” written many years ago about the future. The book details a future that is in some ways good, in other ways horrible. What would Huxley be saying if he were here today?

AH: One of the things I really remember about the book is that in the future people will not need to work, but the government will force them to work at jobs that could be done by machines.

It’s an interesting idea, but I think it will not happen. In the future most people will have no work, only professionals will be needed, but I don’t see why we can’t create a society of leisure.

Another of Huxley’s ideas is that the government of the future will keep people happy with drugs that are free. This I think will certainly happen. Virtually every government in history has kept people happy with alcohol, cigarettes etc. and has tolerated things like prostitution. So the future may well be much like today.

But I think Huxley would say that our modern world features government which is too powerful, and many people’s lives are too regimented. Many people meanwhile are very cynical about this world which seems to be based on selfishness and nothing more.

I: But in “Brave New World” most people are happy as indeed is the case with most civilizations, however for a thinking person the society is a nightmare.

AH: Yes but those who see their society for what it really is, are unhappy in every generation. Many of these people try to change their world in every generation also, but in the end the society usually ends up the same.

Some people say you can change society through education. But we have advanced education for many people in developed countries and still most people refuse to think. If you tried to change the curriculum and get people to think more, I don't think it would be very successful.

As it is most intelligent people read history and they read the best books, but that doesn't cause them to want to think much or change their society.

I think we are destined to always have, what John Ralston Saul called "an unconscious civilization". We are dreamers who love to live in a world of illusion. If we read a book that stimulates us, we just dream, we don't take action. We don't change ourselves.

I: So what do you think thinkers should do?

AH: Many great thinkers are great dreamers. They should share their dreams with us. For example they could write a book that entertains us in a dreamy way, or they could run for politics and give the mass of people what they want. If most people dream to have better and more material goods, then that is what they should aim for. You got to take the world as it is. No man is an island.

Of course science changes the world in that it helps us all attain our dreams, but no one has ever really changed how people think. Try sometime to convince a friend or lover to change and you will find they never really change, no matter how good your rhetoric. If they do change it's because they want to, or they feel they have no other choice, not because you are so persuasive.

I think those who try to change the world are egotists who selfishly want the world to be as they wish. They don't really care about people. What people want is to be free to do as they wish. They don't want to be told how to be a thinker. Most people hate to think a lot. Leave the people alone, that's what I say.

MARILYN MONROE

I: Marilyn Monroe was no doubt the sexiest woman ever. Of course there are millions of women who are probably prettier, more charming etc. But she was a genius who convinced everyone that she was best. Even long after her death, she is still very famous.

MM: Some smart women believe mainly in love, and they know how to attract men. I too believe in love, but like many others these days I think you should have many sexual partners and love everyone like a brother or sister.

Unfortunately, our civilization is not built on love, but rather on greed, which is basically the opposite. I think if some strong woman could take charge of a government, she could make the world a more loving place. Start with a kind, nice government and then change education to make people nicer would be a start.

I think if you go to the countryside in any country, you will find the people to be good. But in a city, no way. So maybe when people start doing all their work on the net in the near future, they can all live in the country or a nice, quiet suburb and be nice, friendly and loving. This is how people were meant to be. Cities are evil, I think.

I: But why did Monroe die at such a young age?

MM: I think perhaps she succeeded too well in making everyone adore her. If everyone loves you so much it's hard to live. There's a lot of pressure from it and she no doubt worried that she wasn't good enough to be in such a position. Many people crack under high pressure.

I: So getting back to what you said earlier, you think modern love is nonsense? You think that the traditional way was better?

MM: You can't invent a new kind of love. People are what they are and naturally know what love should be. However I can never understand why people in cities allow their hearts to grow so cold.

I: But surely some people in cities are kind and loving?

MM: Well they may say so, but I don't really believe them. The reason they go to the city in the first place is to make money. They put up with pollution, over-crowdedness, noise and most buildings are eyesores. And they put up with so much stress and competition and kiss everyone's ass so that they can get money. And then when they get money, what do they do with it? Just try to buy a bigger house in the city. In the countryside houses are big and cheap.

I: But if they didn't live in the city many people would be poor, wouldn't they?

MM: If no one wanted to live in cities, then people wouldn't want to work there. Maybe we should create new urban plans that are based on small towns, with people working on the net and meeting people in the town. Deurbanization I believe you could call it.

I: But many people in cities claim they are happy. They enjoy shopping, big city nightlife and the higher level of education of city dwellers.

MM: Shopping will soon be done only on the net and you can meet great lovers and friends on the net too. And the only reason city dwellers have higher educations is so that they can make more money. They wouldn't need so much money in a small town.

JOSEF STALIN

I: Stalin was a great leader who defeated the Nazis, and who believed strongly in communism and the power of Russia. Yet he was cruel and murderous. What do you think about him?

JS: Only Stalin could have saved Russia in the war I think. He was a genius.

Of course these days communism has been discredited, but no one tried harder than Stalin to make communism a reality. You can't blame him given the nasty mistreatment of nearly all Russians in the days of the Czars.

In actuality the Soviet Union was almost as strong as the US and served as an alternative to the greedy Westerners. I think it's a shame that Gorbachev ended it all.

I: But what about the 10 million plus people Stalin killed in his own country in his ethnic cleansing?

JS: Stalin believed in Russia. In this world everyone looks after their own. In history thousands of ethnic groups were eliminated by their conquerors. It was simply a case of survival of the fittest. Every culture that exists today does so only because they were able to defeat and destroy other cultures. History is bloody. Prehistory was even more so.

I: Well how do you feel about modern Russia?

JS: Russia was foolish to give up its empire. As a result it is considerably weakened on the world stage. Apparently Russians have decided that having a nice car like the Americans is preferable to communism.

Of course Russia will succeed in getting rich like the Americans one day, but the only reason they want this is they don't have strong leaders to tell them otherwise.

I: But what would strong leaders tell Russians?

JS: I think Russia should opt out of this so-called "international economy". Russia has plenty of everything it needs to create a just society in which no one starves, no one goes without a job and a home. The current economy is making a small minority rich, but most Russians are poorer than ever.

Why should Russians have to be like Americans? Why don't they go their own way, make a nice socialist country and recreate Russian culture?

I: But what do you think about the future of the world?

JS: I think as jobs disappear as they are doing now, and Western governments collapse into bankruptcy, as they are about to do, there will eventually be revolution in the West. People will demand jobs and respect as human beings. A much more socialist economy will be developed.

But anyway who cares about the crazy West? I care about Russians and the future of Russia. If good leaders step forth in Russia, then the future is bright.

I: What about the future of science and progress?

JS: I'm sure there will be new issues, such as genetic engineering and the advent of numerous nuclear powers which will be something to fight about in the future. Russia needs to keep its military strong and be prepared for future conflicts.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

I: Einstein was a great physicist, perhaps the greatest ever. But when I think of him, I always think of how nearly everyone in the world thought of him as the world's smartest man. To be thought of as the smartest man in the world gives one a lot of power, but Einstein didn't use it. He even helped develop the atomic bomb and then washed his hands of it and refused to take any responsibility.

AE: Einstein made a great contribution to the world. But one man can't do everything. There are many other clever people out there who do nothing significant to help the world, but Einstein tried hard.

The atomic bomb would have been developed anyway without him. You can't blame him for that. And regarding his status as the world's smartest man, he was smart in physics, but he was not so smart in other fields as you can discern from his writings. Indeed in history few people can be a genius in more than one field; it's just the way it is.

I: What do you think about the future of physics?

AE: I think that it depends on when in the future? In the far future I think many things that seem to us impossible will be possible, but some scientific laws will remain laws. I don't think we'll ever be able to go anywhere near the speed of light with our spaceships, so the colonization of space will be slow, and not at all like sci-fi writers assume.

And I think we will discover that space is much stranger than we thought. For example Einstein's theory of relativity indicated that time depends on your speed and that matter and energy are basically equal. So I think there will be more strange discoveries. One must remember that to ancient

humans the world was a strange place where things seemed to be caused by chaotic Gods. Now we've explained many things and we think of the world as normal...

But there are many mysteries to be explained right here on earth such as the nature of our earth's magnetic field and what is happening at the nanotechnology level, or what is making magma in the core of the earth, and how the weather is formed and what can be done with genetic engineering. To me it's still a world of wonder. I feel just as I felt as a child, full of excitement about everything.

I: So you feel that other people would also like to be full of wonder?

AE: Everyone is full of wonder as a kid. But the problem is education fails to keep this wonder in them; rather education teaches that science is difficult and not fun at all. And then they graduate and find it's not a world of dreams but a boring world of dull routine. Many people look back on their childhood as their happy days.

I: In fact many people today feel our world has gone mad. How do you feel about that?

AE: I'm sure when they built the first ever cities thousands of years ago, everyone thought it was mad. But who wants to go back and live as a virtual animal today?

Every good idea appears mad at first. But in time everyone can accept good ideas as logical. Science has therefore made our world much more explainable, and therefore less mad. Thus the animals and primitive humans were the mad ones.

I: How do you feel about democracy?

AE: I feel it's a good form of government. However we need people with good political ideas to seek office, and sometimes this doesn't happen. But, then again, maybe it's better to have ordinary, mediocre leaders; it's safer that way.

H.G. WELLS

I: Wells was a sci-fi writer around the turn of the century. Today, many of his stories are still widely read. One story that impressed me was “The Country of the Blind”. This story describes a world in which everyone had no eyes to see. There was however one man who could see. He told the blind people many things but they wouldn’t listen and considered him mad. Finally they gouged out his eyes.

HGW: Yes that story runs deep. All too often people don’t listen to a person with good ideas. Indeed our democratic governments never seem to do much of anything good, even though some people have ideas that will improve things. In our society everyone likes scientific geniuses but no one likes a genius who tells them they should change their life or government or education or whatever.

I: How do you feel about education, then?

HGW: Basically I think education can make people into anything the government wants. At present big business controls most governments and they want to produce mindless consumers who will only care about buying products.

But you can force peaceful people to go to war, you can force people to believe in a non-existent God (and therefore be humble), you can force clever people with good ideas to toe the line, you can make people believe their government is the best one possible and so on.

So therefore why not make people into something good instead? We can do anything we want.

I: Another of Wells' tales was called "The Island of Dr. Moreau", and it described a scientist who made monsters. Do you think there will be monsters created in the near future by genetic engineers?

HGW: Eventually there will be tens of millions of scientists who will be able to genetically engineer things. There will be no way that the government or the police will be able to stop them from doing what they want, even if laws prohibit such actions.

I can imagine scientists creating mermaids and putting them in the sea, or hiding a dragon on their farm or creating numerous half human, half animal creatures with new sexes etc, and hiding them away as well.

Also they will be able to make creatures smarter than humans, and where will this lead one must ask? Will our descendants be super freaks?

I: So you think the future will be chaos?

HGW: Certainly. There will be so many things scientists can do, like make dangerous nanobots or viruses or other deadly pathogens. New discoveries will all have dangerous uses, and no one will be able to stop it.

Eventually there will be wars and then finally the few survivors will be back to being primitive hunter-gatherers again. We deserve no better.

I: So you think our experiment with civilization has taught us nothing?

HGW: Well, I wouldn't say that exactly. But there are a few people who have learned a lot, however when push comes to shove, they refuse to take action. Some of these people are the same geniuses who created this world, but ultimately they don't care about the world much. Animals don't much care either.

I: So you blame geniuses for our imminent doom?

HGW: We are all animals at heart. And we all have to die anyway. What does it matter to us what happens in the future?

MOHAMMED

I: Mohammed was the prophet who formed the religion of Islam. If he were here today what would he be saying?

M: Well Mohammed was a good man who wanted people to be good. However times change and so does the interpretation of the Koran. Many Muslim societies are too conservative due to a traditional interpretation of the Koran and governments that are too conservative.

I've heard that some Muslims believe that a new prophet will come some day. Perhaps this would be a good thing.

I: Do you think religion today still serves a purpose?

M: Well if some people don't need it, fine. The important thing is to be good to your fellow man and being humble.

However for many people, religion helps them to get on with their lives. Some say they are fools to believe in God, but I think God must have made this universe, and the perhaps zillions of other universes beyond it. We can't fathom why the universe was made because we are only stupid humans. We need to be humble since we are so foolish.

I: What then are the solutions to the world's problems?

M: People don't listen to the teachings of their religious leaders and so want to make war, keep people poor and look down on them and so on.

Today's Western societies encourage people to be proud and egotistical and the result is the whole world is going mad. People in the West think they are God and this can only result in destruction just like in the story of the "Tower of Babel" in the Bible.

I: But aren't there many good aspects to modern Western civilization?

M: Well when they invent good things like medicine, they usually don't share with poor countries, but instead charge them an arm and a leg which they cannot afford. But maybe this Western medicine is not such a good thing either as it makes people live too long. We were not meant to live so long. If God wanted us to live long he would have done so.

Other Western inventions like dirty, polluting motor cars and electric lights which cause people to stay up all night against their nature as well as mind-numbing TV, have no real use for anyone. But Westerners have tried to brainwash the whole world to be like them.

So I think only a new prophet can save Islam from disappearing just like the religion of the Christians.

I: But why would God create people?

M: To pretend to know this question is to play God. Like I say we don't know why we've been created, but we do know we have been created by some entity.

I: But surely God would not create us only so we could be humble?

M: Humble people are the happiest people. The wisest people are all humble.

We need to show respect to God and the universe he has created. We of course are only a small part of creation.

OSCAR WILDE

I: Oscar Wilde was an author of a number of good books and was known for his colorful character. If he were here today, what would he have to say?

OW: At present literature seems to be neglected. These days nearly all clever people become scientists. The liberal arts in general have fallen into disfavor. But society is not run by scientists, its run by people with a liberal arts education. They are the ones who are in charge of politics, education, the media etc. But if no one is interested in the liberal arts, society suffers.

I: So you don't think literature is good these days?

OW: There is some good literature of course. But in these days of rapid change and confusion, we need a lot more literature that deals with our new reality. People today say they don't like to think, but if no one is thinking about our world, then the future does not look bright.

I: Oscar Wilde was called a pervert in his time. Do you think perversity is the way of the future?

OW: Some things people call perverse are actually quite interesting. Indeed anything that is unusual is interesting to me. I'm so sick of people these days who all feel they must live as clones of one another.

But I think in the future there will be sex machines, virtual reality sex, multiple sex changes, pills which increase people's sex drive dramatically and so on. Maybe they'll even invent new sexes... It will be very perverted especially since people will have a lot of free time and money for fun.

I think if you go to NYC you can get a taste of future perversity. New York is a little ahead of the world in this regard. It's true that the city attracts a lot of perverts, but in the future everyone will be weird. Humans are born unique and we want to be unique. And that means weird.

I: How do you feel about love? Should love be weird too?

OW: All this business of chocolates, flowers and dancing the night away to some moronic beat are not original. But I think meeting people on-line and having weird discussions is original.

Maybe the internet will bring poetry and literature back into the spotlight, only this time everyone is trying to make poetry, not just writers.

I: But do you believe in love?

OW: Of course. But one must make time for love. One has to work at it. You can't toil everyday until you are exhausted and expect love to find you, as some people do. And then when love doesn't "find them" they say they don't believe in it, or they say it's not important.

Most people today don't seem to have their priorities straight. Love is one of the most beautiful things in life. Yet many ignore it.

I: Should we then teach about how to love in school?

OW: Probably it's a good thing that they don't teach anything about love in school, because everything they teach causes students to hate it. But as I say there isn't enough good literature to really make clear to people what is important. People need to start with good books and then think through themselves about how to live. Especially young people.

I: What would the other priorities be?

OW: People can judge that for themselves. I'm just begging them to think more about life and not go through life as somebody else's slave.

WERNHER VON BRAUN

I: Von Braun was a rocket scientist who developed the V-2 rocket for Hitler and then went on to head most of NASA's successful programs after the war. How do you feel about him?

WVB: Many people criticize him for his help to Hitler, but everyone else in Germany was helping Hitler too. Yet no one criticizes British or American scientists in all the wars they waged. What about the US scientists who developed Agent Orange, for example?

Let's face it all wars are ugly; why should we blame the scientists? They are not the ones who make wars. The American people ELECT their war leaders, and then the whole country gets behind the war. Ugly as it is.

I: So you think Von Braun was a great man?

WVB: Well he achieved so much. It was his genius that put a man on the moon. Wasn't that great?

I: But how do you feel about putting a man on the moon? Wasn't it very anti-climactic?

WVB: Well maybe they could have put some entertainers on the space missions to liven it up a bit. But in all seriousness what did people expect? The moon appears to be a dull orb, but there is much about it that is unexplained to scientists, and the whole universe is so vast, there must be all kinds of stunning discoveries waiting to be made. If they put a small colony on the moon, I think it would be very interesting what they might discover. They could film soap operas there, if that's what people want.

I: So you feel the space program is going too slow?

WVB: Yes, the budget is too low and private investors think it's too risky. The US government, for example, would rather spend the money on killing people in Iraq.

But I think if the world's space agencies pooled their resources, they could start a nice space tourism service complete with hotels on places like Mars and the Moon which would pay for the colonization of space. There are literally millions of very rich people who would love such an adventure. How many people can say they've had sex at zero gravity, for example?

I: What are your other thoughts about our modern world?

WVB: Well the more science we do, the better our world gets. Therefore we should increase budgets for science of all kinds and train more people to be scientists.

We don't need our politicians to be geniuses. We don't need genius movie makers or lawyers. We need all our best people in science to move this world forward. All the great advances in this world are due to science.

I: But surely if all our best minds are in science, it will be a dull world?

WVB: I think most scientists are absorbed in their work, as indeed every clever person should be. A challenging job, with a chance to make the world better; what else could one ask for?

I: But isn't science moving too fast? Isn't it creating almost as many problems as it solves?

WVB: There should be a governing body of scientists who monitor science all around the world. If someone is doing something to society's detriment then they should be removed from that research. It shouldn't be a problem.

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

I: Dostoevsky was one of the greatest writers of all time. What would he be saying if he were alive today?

FD: One of his best books was “The Gambler”. I think he would say that people today are too afraid to take risks. Without risks we have little adrenalin. Without risks life is dull and insipid. Ancient man had dangers and risks all the time; we are meant to have an exciting life.

Therefore our society should not be designed in such a boring way. Living in a house like everyone else and going to a boring job like everyone else just doesn't cut it.

Of course to redesign society would take the input of many thinkers. Now is the time to start.

I: Dostoevsky also wrote a lot about the dark side of human nature.

FD: It seems to me that no one really knows themselves. All humanity is chaotic and unpredictable. Yet people these days have been brainwashed by the media and education to think that safety is the most important thing. Rather than try to experience new things and think in different ways and get to know yourself, everyone just wants to play it safe.

The dark side can mean a lot of things, but to me it means the mysterious, unknown part of mankind. Each person could be fascinating if only they'd try a little harder to know themselves.

I: But don't you think the reality of our existence is difficult for many people to face?

FD: All the more reason to face it. You only live once. No one ever achieves anything by hiding.

We humans used to be brave, and that's how we conquered the earth. But now we are sniveling wimps who only care about having enough money for our useless old age.

I: Do you feel this weakness will lead to our downfall?

FD: All this science has brought us nothing but luxury and easy living. We need more geniuses to inspire us to be strong. To lead by example. One shouldn't worry about one's career so much, but rather worry about how to make a difference. To be somebody, not to be a cretin who reviles one's own life.

I: So you mean great people should be politically active?

FD: It's not necessary. You can change people's minds by doing inspirational things in every field.

However I do feel that we should radically change our education system. We need to get back to basics and teach people how to be virtuous and how to think. How to be skilled in rhetoric, like people used to be taught. And so on.

Sometimes I wonder if people learn anything at all in school. It's all just empty memorization. Sure some geniuses can do it all on their own and become a great scientist or whatever. But most people need to practice long and hard how to be a great person.

If anything, school teaches most people that they are just ordinary, and not of much value.

ALEXANDER FLEMING

I: Of course you are familiar with Fleming's discovery of penicillin, which was perhaps the greatest discovery of all time, allowing for the cure of dozens of diseases.

AF: Yes, but there are still many diseases to cure. I think in particular it would be nice to cure AIDS as that would bring a sexual revolution.

Most diseases now such as heart disease and cancer, are diseases which we get in old age, so now nearly everyone in developed countries can expect a full life. But I don't understand why they don't just give the developing world these medicines at cost. Surely poor people's lives are just as valuable as anyone else's. There's no excuse for not sending them doctors and educating their people to be doctors and giving them the medicine.

But anyway, they call the 21st century the "Medical Century" and I think in the next 50 years they'll learn how to cure everything. Then of course they'll make us live forever and such. It's hard to imagine such a future, I mean what's the hard part?

I: How do you feel about the world's geniuses? Do you feel that we are utilizing them in the best way?

AF: Well, I already mentioned that we need more doctors. But to improve the world we need people who are both clever and CARING. Obviously the world's number one problem is poverty, and it seems that no one cares about it. Impoverished people live in misery and die before their time. Why?

I think the problem therefore is not that we don't have enough clever people but rather clever people are not kind enough.

I: But how do we make clever people more kind?

AF: In developed countries people they say are well-educated. But actually I don't think so. I think in old times virtue was part of the curriculum. But no longer. One of the reasons for this is the decline of religion in rich countries; another is that our society has changed so fast, we haven't been able to keep it balanced.

It is my belief that we can mold people into anything we want. History shows that this is true. What we need then is to radically change our education system to make people better. I can think of thousands of ways to do this, but why not just some old-fashioned virtue as part of the curriculum. Students should be rewarded for helping in the community, not for memorizing things that don't matter to most. Students should also talk a lot more about the world's problems, to the point where the whole world is in everyone's mind.

If we can at least solve the problems of poverty and bad education in our own countries, then maybe we'll be qualified to help other nations.

I: What about marriage and family life? Can we make it more ecstatic?

AF: Many things have changed in this world, but some people still spend most of their time in front of a TV watching programs that do nothing for them. If you work all day and then come home to watch mindless TV, you will become a boring person. After a few years you and your wife will be so bored with each other that you get a divorce. Then you do the same thing with someone else, and you blame that person for your boredom.

So the problem is people are too boring. Therefore in school we have to find a way to make students enjoy learning, travel, deep entertainment and such. Currently school just makes everyone bored. If you study a good book for 2 months in English class, you will surely hate it. Teachers teach the curriculum, but the curriculum is at fault.

Basically the school curriculum assumes that you can't really teach people anything much. So we need our best people: writers, scientists, brilliant entrepreneurs and so on to write the curriculums. It would be worth it to pay any price they would ask. And we shouldn't lump all the students together

in the same curriculum either. Rather we should have a number of curriculums and the student chooses what is best.

Of course most education could be done entirely through books and computers. Especially computers as they can be interactive. Teachers therefore could be used mainly as advisors.

I: How can you be sure a curriculum written by virtual geniuses will really change things?

AF: Look at the Beatles. George Harrison couldn't write good songs when he started and later he learned from the other two how to be a genius songwriter. Lennon and McCartney meanwhile inspired each other. What are the chances of three of the world's top musicians all coming from Liverpool and all roughly the same age? The answer is genius inspires genius and genius inspires even ordinary people.

Let's face it we've never used our most imaginative people to write school curriculums. It's high time we gave it a try. And we should every year change the curriculums based on experiments with students. So every year improve the education system.

PABLO PICASSO

I: Pablo Picasso was one of the world's greatest painters. When I look at one of his paintings, especially his cubist paintings, I feel confused. But then when I read the title it all makes sense. The paintings really are deep.

PP: Some people say Picasso beat cubism to death, but it is very difficult to be a painter these days. To compete with photographs, the painting must somehow communicate deeper meanings to the viewer. To speak frankly, few people are as deep as Picasso.

I: Do you feel then that painting has a future?

PP: Sure. I think it would be good to combine a poem with a painting for maximum effect. Also paintings would make good accompaniment for a music CD. Why spend millions on special effects when you can pay a poor painter much less and make a far deeper video. Hence the music lyrics and the paintings would be developed with each other in mind.

The whole world is getting so eclectic, I think painting should too.

I: Do you think that there's a fine line between madness and genius?

PP: Many people assume the world's greatest artists must have been mad. There's a lot of truth in that because if you want to think outside the box, you will be all alone. Like a fish out of water. But of course our distant ancestors climbed out of the sea, and look at us today.

I: How does an artist gain inspiration?

PP: I think history has shown that to love and be loved is the greatest inspiration of all. Some like many loves, others just one or two, but one needs to be in love at any rate.

I: How do you feel about love then?

PP: Love is an art, but most people don't spend much time honing their craft. To be a good artist one has to spend years and years to become good at it. But for love most people don't experiment, and don't try really hard to find someone that suits them.

Of course to make others love you, you have to make yourself interesting. So by developing your personality, you make yourself more attractive. People should ask themselves the question: "How can I be more interesting"?

I think everyone should consider living their life as an art. Everyone should therefore be an artist.

Yet today most clever people study science in school and never take the time to make themselves more artistic, more interesting.

Basically our society tells us to work hard even though most people's job is of little use. We are told: work as hard as you can and buy lots of things and save a million dollars for your old age. But you don't need to buy lots of things. What you need is love. And if you are worried about retirement go live in a developing country where you can live for virtually nothing.

It's better to be poor if that's the only way you can have time to find yourself and have time for love.

I: Are you optimistic about the future?

PP: The future can be anything we want it to be. But if we don't think about what ought to be, and don't make a plan, then it probably won't be that great.

MARK TWAIN

I: Mark Twain was one of the most popular writers of all time. What would he tell us if he were alive today?

MT: Many people considered him to be a great humorist. He could always see the humor in a situation even if it was most dire.

Too many writers (and politicians and educators etc.) are too serious. You know, really the human experience is in many ways a joke, and so why don't we laugh and joke about it?

After all life has no real meaning and yet we humans are programmed to try our best to do all kinds of things that are really quite pointless.

I think school is too serious. School is what makes us the way we are. And the reason school is so serious is the people that have wealth and power are so serious about making more and more money so they need people to serve their wishes.

I think the system sucks. And the worst thing of all is that if someone tries to do anything about it, that person will be ridiculed and ignored.

And everywhere I see people who are intelligent who refuse to use their brains and instead end up tormenting themselves and everyone around them.

I: But what should we use our brains for, if life is after all a joke?

MT: Yes, but there are good jokes, and then there are bad jokes. Why can't we use our intelligence to make this world a little happier instead of sitting in our houses watching TV and counting our money?

I: Are you a communist then?

MT: People have been brainwashed to think that everyone who says the system sucks is a communist. I'm not a communist, I just want people to think. What is it about capitalism that says people can't think about anything except money?

I know my allegations point out that our life is sinister, but in school they say they teach people to think, but actually do the opposite.

Ordinary people don't like thinking because school tortures them into thinking they are an idiot because they can't remember what year the civil war was or they find memorizing how to solve math problems boring.

School bores students to death. And they hate it. The politicians also bore us to death to the point where we lose interest in politics. The philosophers are so boring no one wants to read them. And so it goes.

Frankly this world is so boring that no one even cares if our race survives or not. They leave the whole thing to the boring politicians. It's a sure recipe for disaster.

What a disgrace it would be if our whole civilization destroys itself because people could not be interesting!

I: But surely most people could not be interesting enough to satisfy one such as yourself?

MT: Well why don't they at least try? I think everyone has a few interesting tales to tell. Why don't they try to make more? Why don't they try to live their life instead of watching TV all day?

If I was president of the US, I would ban TV outright. If I did that I'm sure people would immediately start socializing and having more experiences. For instance, they'd spend more time on the net having conversations with people from all over the world. Wouldn't that be better? And they could join clubs and meet people. They might even meet their neighbors. The key is to live your life, not to live your life vicariously.

JULES VERNE

I: Jules Verne was one of the first ever sci-fi writers and many of his books are still read today. What would Verne say about sci-fi today?

JV: Well of course Verne loved adventure and science so I think he'd be happy to live today. After all science is galloping ever forward and now that many people speak English it's possible to communicate with virtually anyone in any culture.

I think though that science fiction these days is mostly unoriginal and improbable. I don't think the human race will remain unchanged for long; for example due to genetic engineering people's minds will be improved, and so all these far future plots won't come to pass.

So I think if you write sci-fi you should concentrate on the near future, since not only is it very practical, but also needs to be done. Few people consider what will happen in the next 30-40 years, yet there will be great changes in that period. We should think about how we will handle all these scientific advances which we know will come soon.

A lot of future history, of course, will depend on when exactly each discovery is made. For example if they found a way to travel faster than light in the next 30 years this would have a big impact. If it takes us 200 years, then obviously the future will be quite different. So too with genetic engineering, the exact timing of new super humans will be very important.

I: But will life be better in the future?

JV: Despite the fact that many people claim to be unhappy with our modern world, I am sure that people in rich countries are much happier than in eras

gone by. Of course the future will be more interesting. We humans love the idea that our civilization is making real progress in many fields. Progress is what we believe in.

I: But many people say that this so-called “progress” is an illusion.

JV: Well most people’s lives are full of illusions. Great scientific discoveries leave most people cold. But for intellectuals it’s very exciting, and for ordinary people their lives are becoming luxurious.

In the past there wasn’t that much a clever person could do; now such a person can use their mind to try and better our society.

Virtually no one is saying we should stop science or even slow it down. We all want progress.

I: But what about politics?

JV: History shows that all political leaders are bad. So the only solution is to put mediocre people in power who do as little as possible. Such a person is a lot less dangerous than a clever tyrant.

And all the democratic leaders let science progress. None of these leaders wants to stop it. It’s a perfect situation.

I: But if you were running a business you wouldn’t want mediocre managers, and if you were running a school surely you wouldn’t want mediocre teachers?

JV: But the big boss always hires people to do as he says, and schools have many mediocre teachers because most people are mediocre. There are not a lot of clever people around. Things exist as they do for a reason. And the reason is people want things to be this way. Not many people are crying out for political change in democratic countries. And people are happy with the education system and the economic system. If it ain’t broke, don’t rock the boat.

AN AFRICAN QUEEN FROM ANCIENT GHANA

I: Ancient Ghana was once a prosperous African kingdom due to the gold deposits there. If ancient Africans could see what Africa is like today, what would they say about it?

AC: I think they would say that the continent has had a troubled past, like most areas of the world, but that change has finally come to Africa. In the last couple of years some of the countries have been registering rapid growth and now that the political situation is finally becoming stable, the future looks bright.

I'm only kidding. I was just talking about Africa as Western people see it. Now I'd like to speak from the African point of view.

Traditionally, Africans by nature are friendly, nice people. And they are not greedy. Many people in Africa realize that their simple cultures are just as good, if not better than modern capitalistic countries.

In fact when Western countries inoculated most Africans to prevent disease, they upset the balance of nature. They gave part of their culture to Africans, but not all. And this has resulted in many deaths due to famine and such. But people were not meant to live so long anyway. It would have been better for Africans if their time honored traditions had not been interfered with. Africans lived the way they lived because that is how they wanted it. It made them happy.

Look at Western people. Are they happy? They typically settle down at age 30 and say things like "my life is over". Many of them don't enjoy life much, yet live on to ridiculous ages. They work inordinately hard for no reason and don't have much time to enjoy life's simple pleasures. Before

they know it they are old and find that life has passed them by. Yet, they even keep living when they've lost their minds due to senility.

Life is not as complex as Western people make out. They make their life complex and then hate it because it's not right. They say a simple life is boring, but their lives are just as boring. It's just the way things are.

I: Well how do you feel about the global village?

AC: Well I'm telling you people will still be bored no matter what we do. Making all sorts of changes for changes sake won't change that equation.

No matter what the culture people still have to work. They will spend most of their free time with their lover or spouse and family and friends and that's life. Having a fancy car or fancy house doesn't change the basic reality of life.

They say one day they'll make people smarter through their god Science. But smart people are the most bored of all people on this earth. If there were super humans they'd probably all kill themselves due to boredom.

I: But doesn't everyone like movies? Don't people want more sophisticated entertainment to lessen their boredom?

AC: For ordinary people movies are fine. But so is a game of chess or cards. For more clever people chess is good too and so is a good conversation. To me conversation is more interesting than passive entertainment.

I: So you think one must simply kill time in one's life?

AC: The human race has always been killing time. They like to pretend what they are doing is important, but it's not. Humans are just animals and nothing that we will ever do will have any cosmic significance.

But still life's simple pleasures are enjoyable. Like food, sex, conversation and so on.

CAI LUN, INVENTOR OF PAPER

I: Cai Lun is credited in Chinese records with having invented paper in the 2nd century AD, though some archaeologists claim to have found older evidence of paper in China. At any rate the introduction of paper to the Chinese court resulted in numerous other inventions like paper money, toilet paper, wall paper, paintings on paper and of course eventually printing.

CL: Well at any rate Cai Lun made paper famous. Indeed ancient China made a lot of great inventions despite the fact that every Chinese government in history has been repressive and authoritarian.

Still there are many clever people still in China, and hopefully one day soon they will be given the freedom they deserve. The result will be a big boost to world science, world art and world business.

I: What can China offer the world?

CL: Well for one thing Chinese people are very tolerant and indeed are very open to new ideas and different ways of living in general. Many Westerners who travel to China find that they like it better than the West. They often say that life in China is more peaceful and tranquil than in the West. They also say Chinese people are not as egotistical as Westerners and are often easier to get along with.

Not only are Chinese different culturally, but I think they are genetically different as well. People are not exactly the same everywhere.

Also, Westerners often assume that their culture is superior, but this is not entirely true. There are and were thousands of cultures which have a different way of life, and these have been tested by time.

I: Do you think China's rapid growth is inspiring?

CL: Yes. I think now that China is growing, many other countries such as India want to grow too. Together, China and India alone make up one-third of the entire world.

It's always good to have a booming economy and I think soon millions of foreigners will pour into China in order to be part of it. Booming economies stimulate the arts and science as well.

It kind of looks like the whole world now wants to follow the same system, and I hope it turns out right. It appears that one day the whole world will be prosperous and perhaps peaceful too. After all if there is just one, giant world economy, there will probably be just one world government also.

I: You don't worry about China's authoritarian regime? What about China as the world's greatest power?

CL: Well China's government is a bit repressive, but most people are happy just to have a chance to make a living. And you know the Chinese leadership is carefully selected by the ruling party; their government is probably better than many democracies. Maybe in the future great people will join the party and then China might have great leaders.

Most of China's dissidents want democratic government, but who can argue with an economy that is growing at 9% per year. It's almost unprecedented in world history. They must be doing something right.

And I think they will gradually give people more and more freedom. After all most people are happy with the way things are going, so there isn't that much reason for the government to worry about dissent.

With regard to China becoming a world power, I don't see as a problem. As long as the leaders are good, it's a good situation. In any case I foresee a world government one day, as I said.

ALFRED WEGENER

I: Wegener was one of the greatest geologists of all time. His great discovery was the theory of continental drift. How do you feel about modern geology?

AW: In reality we understand little of our planet. For example we don't know what's inside and we don't know what generates heat. Also the magnetic field and the weather are poorly understood. So we need more geologists.

I think the thing we should concentrate on the most however, is the oceans. It is clear that heat from under the sea has a strong effect on the weather, and the weather is very important to us today. We need to know and predict our planet's weather patterns if we are to avoid drastic increases in temperature or drastic reductions in temperature.

I think that such issues as what causes the extinction of species would also be resolved by understanding weather change.

I: How do you feel about the eternal quest for things such as gold, diamonds and oil?

AW: I don't understand the quest for gold. To me gold is a virtually useless metal. After all we can make gold-colored jewelry that looks just as good as gold but is stronger and more durable.

With regard to diamonds we can now make them synthetically and cheaply. Yet De Boers' company has brainwashed everyone into thinking they need to give a girl a diamond. It's typical of our modern world; so many people work so hard for no good reason.

And regarding oil, we should use battery or hydrogen cars instead. The power to produce the batteries could come from atomic power. We should save the oil for plastics, roads etc.

If we did not use oil, pollution would virtually be wiped out, and atomic power would be cheap to produce. Cheap energy benefits everyone except oil exporters.

I think geologists should be used to study the earth, not find empty treasures.

I: So you think we need more scientists?

AW: Yes, I do. And I think soon we will have millions of new scientists from developing countries such as India and China. Also many more women have been studying science in recent years in the developed world.

The best thing in our world is science, so we should maximize our world's number of scientists.

I: Do you feel there is life on other planets?

AW: Yes of course. But such life forms will not be at the same stage of evolution as us. Either they would be god-like or they would be simple organisms, and so in neither case would they be interested in us.

Anyway perhaps we'll never find a way to travel even at the speed of light, so our colonization of space will be painfully slow. Therefore we shouldn't worry about aliens and other worlds, we should instead concentrate on the future of our planet and our solar system.

I: Do you feel we should put colonies on all the planets or near the planets?

AW: Sure. I think if we did we would make new scientific discoveries that might be useful here on earth.

SHAKESPEARE

I: Many people think Shakespeare was the greatest writer ever.

S: Well he was a man of his time. Many of his stories reflect the violence and ignorance of his time. I think if he were writing today he would be the best, bar none. After all great writers inspire other writers to write well, but in Shakespeare's time, there were precious few of those.

I: What would Shakespeare say about our time?

S: Most of his stories were tragedies, and I think he realized that the human condition is basically tragic. However I think he'd be interested in our times in which so many things are improving for the better.

But many things in our time remain the same as they were 400 years ago. We still have bad leaders, we still have wars, we still spend much of our time looking for love and we still must work hard.

Great stories are great in any era, and so I think Shakespeare would write of universal themes that we face in every generation.

I: But are people better today than in his time?

S: In rich countries people are much richer and healthier, which is what most people want. But the tragedy of it all is our lives are still lived in vain, everything we do is foolish and misguided.

We all want meaning in life, but there isn't any meaning.

I: What about comedy?

S: Shakespeare also wrote excellent comedies. Today most writers limit themselves to either being serious or being comedians, but Shakespeare embraced it all.

A truly great person is someone who can see life from everyone's perspective. In other words being open-minded and accepting of other's point of view is most excellent.

Some say that we should be only one kind of person and stubbornly keep to it for one's whole life. But as Shakespeare said, "All the world's a stage", and we can make ourselves into anything we want. Why play only one role?

I: But surely playing many roles is insanity?

S: I think most people do play many roles without really realizing it. For example you give one personality to your boss, another to your wife and a different one again to your mistress. People tell others what they want to hear. People act the way others want them to. It's not a bad thing, I think, but rather is very creative.

All people want to be more creative in the way they live their life, but it is not easy. I think education needs to make people more creative.

I: You don't think people today are lost? You don't think everyone is going mad?

S: Well, as I say, there is no real meaning to life. But many great artists and scientists of all kinds are considered mad, yet we adore them. Madness is just another word for being free to live and do as you like, rather than just following the herd.

What most people consider to be sane, is actually to do nothing on your own, and just always play it safe. But this is not the road to happiness.

To think crazy thoughts is glorious.

VINCENT VAN GOGH

I: How do you feel about the life and career of Van Gogh?

VVG: I think, even today, most people don't get what Van Gogh was really trying to say. I think he was saying that you don't have to accept the world as it is; you can see it any way you like.

Most of Van Gogh's paintings are landscapes, but he chose to make the pictures more colorful than reality. In our lives too, we shouldn't just take the world as it is, but try to look at it in our own, unique way.

I: Do you think Van Gogh was a madman?

VVG: These days if you see reality different from what you are taught by school, the media and the government, you are considered insane. But surely it is more sane to see things as they are or as they ought to be, than to accept this nonsense society tries to foist upon us.

I: How do you feel about modern art?

VVG: I think the essence of modern art is to understand human psychology. Humans are very complicated, and difficult to understand. But we should try.

A girl once told me, you should not try to understand women, just love them. But I disagree, I think trying to understand people is most interesting.

Of course it is hard to indicate people's thoughts through the medium of painting, but it can be done. Sometimes brilliantly.

After all, most of our judgments about people are based on appearances.

I: But how can you understand people when so many people don't understand themselves?

VVG: Many people don't want to understand themselves, because society and education teach them that they are nothing special. But I think everyone is special.

But if they don't understand themselves, I think it's fun to have conversations with them to try to find out what really makes them tick.

And since our society is changing so fast, it makes humans even more interesting, as everyone is trying to change to keep up with the society.

I: So you feel society doesn't give many people enough confidence?

VVG: Sure, if you are not really attractive or not really good at school, you often feel inept and useless. Especially if you can't find a job, which is happening more and more these days.

If you feel confident about yourself you will be happy. If you are not confident then you will likely be miserable. It's that simple.

I: But surely many people these days are overconfident?

VVG: It's better to be overconfident than under-confident. But most people soon find out when they are too confident. If they don't realize this however, then they are probably hopeless anyway.

I: Are you optimistic about the future?

VVG: Human culture is like a donkey. It is difficult to really get it to move (i.e. change). The enlightenment started some 300 years ago, but it might take another 300 before our society finally becomes enlightened.

LADY MURASAKI

I: Some say the first modern novel was the Japanese “Tale of Genji” by Murasaki. How do you feel about it?

LM: Well it was a great book. But you know nowadays novels have become too formulaic; you know they have a standard plot and characters and one of the characters does something crazy, but then it’s a happy ending. I would like to see more experimentation with novels.

But anyway novels are superior to movies in that they are usually deeper, and stimulate the imagination more. So I think it’s sad that novels seem to be going out of fashion.

I: But why do novels seem to be going out of fashion?

LM: People these days don’t want to exercise their minds. They’d rather watch foolish shows on TV or have light chats with friends. Basically they want everything to be easy.

Indeed our civilization is based on convenience and ease, rather than on thinking. I suppose our natural instincts want things to be easy. But you don’t get something for nothing. If you don’t spend time developing your mind you will not be very happy or balanced in your mind. To use one’s mind is a delight. As Socrates said, “the unthought life is not worth living”.

I: What do you think modern novels should be about?

LM: I think that to read a clever person’s ideas about modern society is something priceless. You can’t get the same thing from conversations since

a book requires years of thought and most people don't feel they have enough time to do that, so they can read instead. If you only read one deep book a month, it will give you plenty of food for thought.

I: But Murasaki's book was mainly about romance. How do you feel about that?

LM: Well women especially like books that deal with the subtleties of different feelings, and for us, if we read it today, it gives us a good insight into what life was like in Japan all those years ago.

I: Well how do you feel about modern love?

LM: I think people all over the world are spending more and more time looking for romance and having more and more partners. It's a great thing to fall in love, there's no better thing in life.

I: How do you feel about modern Japan then?

LM: Many Japanese work really hard, but also party very hard. I think it's a good way to live. Many foreigners who come to Japan love the different culture and the feeling of prosperity which emanates from this country.

Japan managed to get rich like America, yet the culture is still very different from America, and I think that's the best way to develop.

Japan is really a big success, and I think its success inspired many other countries in Asia to try to be like Japan.

I: But do you think that one day all countries will be quite similar?

LM: Well maybe things will be similar. But I think culture will cease to exist on a national basis; rather each individual will choose what they like from the whole world. For example you might like surrealist painting from every country and you might like to read mysteries from all over the world.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

I: Lincoln was the US president who waged war on the American south in what is known as the US civil war.

AL: Well in hindsight it was a good war as it set the stage for the US to be the world's #1 superpower as it is today.

I: But the war was supposed to be about slavery, yet after the war blacks were not much better off. And the war killed a massive number of men. How can you justify killing so many people just so the US could be powerful?

AL: Yes but I think America has done a lot of good for the world since it has been a great power. For example the US defeated the evil Nazi attempt to take over the world and then eventually triumphed over communism as well. Had America not been strong we would probably live in a country that would not be unlike that described in "1984".

I: But doesn't America do most things in their own self-interest? Do you really think they care about the people in other nations?

AL: Why should America be blamed for other nation's problems? Most of these poor countries have bad leaders and the people don't do anything about it. If America tries to intervene, like they did in Iraq, it's a disaster.

It's every person's duty to take an interest in his own country's welfare. But in most countries people do nothing. Remember that America had to fight with all-powerful Great Britain for its freedom; freedom does not come to any country, unless that country's people are willing to fight for it.

I: But don't you think America is on the wrong road today with its massive debt, increasing rich and poor gap and unemployment which is much higher than the government says it is.

AL: Well I think the democratic system is well-suited to solving problems. Once something becomes a problem, the leaders will be pressured to fix it.

I: I don't think so. Most people have no idea what a problem the national debt is becoming, and if it continues much longer America's economy will go into free fall, and all the other countries will go down along with it.

Such an unstable scenario leads to revolution and anarchy, and the end result could be the end of Western civilization.

AL: The debt problem, like any other problem, will be solved. The reason no one is worried about it, is they can start to solve it any time they want. You'll see; America will be a great nation for many years to come.

I: What about the problem of poverty in America?

AL: If people don't have skills to offer, how can they expect to live like kings? In this world no one gives away anything for free. If you want to have a good life in America, then you need to educate yourself. Education is widely available everywhere and there are programs which anyone can afford.

You can't expect to contribute nothing and get rich.

I: What about the unemployment problem then?

AL: Again if people educate themselves, they should easily get a job. Also they can try and start a small business. But they have to try to DO something.

It's a fact that many people don't want to work.

BRUNO

I: The scientist Bruno was burned at the stake by the church for insisting that there may be other worlds other than earth. How do you feel about that?

B: I don't see how anyone can say that the church was a positive influence on Middle Ages' societies. People say some churchmen were great scholars, but they achieved no works of any value, and if they did not write then the kings would've found someone else to do so.

The church said money was evil and kept Europe ignorant and poor. They said everyone should be humble and live humbly. They sold tickets to heaven. They tortured intellectuals and anybody else who said they were wrong, with their inquisition. Above all they bored everybody to death with their religion.

In my view the only evil in Medieval Europe was the church. If they had power today, they'd be evil again. They think everyone should pretend to believe in their non-existent God. People pray but God doesn't listen, because there is no God. Why would God care about us stupid humans anyway?

I: But surely we live in an enlightened age today?

B: Yes, and so our society flourishes. But the world has many problems and the darkness could come again.

I: How do you feel about modern science then?

B: Well I feel science is going along nicely. But we need better leaders to solve the world's numerous problems.

I think that people who want to vote should have to pass an intelligence test. That way, I don't think we would elect such foolish leaders as we do today.

The test should be compiled by leading businessmen, artists and scientists, and should make sure that people really understand the issues.

I: But surely to do that will make many people feel stupid and useless?

B: Well we live in an elitist society. If you are bright you make as much money as you want and do important work. If you are not bright then you will just be a grunt or something similar.

The early American democracy was something like this, as only wealthy people could vote. They shouldn't have changed it.

I: But do you really think people care about good government and the world's problems? Don't most people just care about their own family?

B: People have a lot of stupid instincts. It's high time everyone started thinking like a scientist and start behaving in a thoughtful manner.

I: But do you think it's easy for people to get rid of their instincts?

B: Yes, but they have to be trained in school. They need the government and the media to further ingrain good qualities into them. Many of our primitive instincts have already disappeared, now we should get rid of all the rest that don't help us be a better person in this modern world. Even instincts like food and sex should be made more sophisticated.

For example we shouldn't have sex like an animal, but instead try to charm each other with good conversation. And we shouldn't eat food that isn't good for us, or tastes lousy.

FRANZ KAFKA

I: Kafka was a great writer, most famous for “The Trial” and “The Castle”. How do you feel about these two books?

FK: In “The Castle”, Kafka describes a world in which no one appears to be in charge and all is confusion. I think that’s just how the world is; we are on the road to nowhere.

In “The Trial”, mysterious agents pursue people for no apparent reason. I think this is the way of the future, everyone is being watched, just like in “1984”.

The thing about Kafka is he had his own style; he perceived the world in a different way from us. He saw the world kind of like a living nightmare while you are hung over. He didn’t conform to the way of thinking of the mainstream society.

Too many people these days conform to the reality the government wants to create. The government creates this reality in order to have a stable society. However our reality is boring, and we would like to think about life in a different way. To do so though requires a lot of thought and a lot of guts. It takes guts to view the world different from others.

I: But do you really feel the average person could look at reality very different than others?

FK: Yes, we are all unique. But society forces everyone to conform. Everyone needs to “be cool” these days.

We need to teach people how to be creative in elementary school and high school. It's the most important thing, so it should be the most important thing that teachers try to teach.

I: But if no one wanted to conform what would society be like?

FK: Of course no one knows. But we could try teaching people that they should never conform, and they should try to think about everything in their own way. And see what happens.

In fact, some experiments of this kind have already been tried, but we need to bring these experiments to the public's consciousness, and make everyone aware of how great such an education can be. Then politicians might be willing to experiment a little more.

I: But aren't most people happy the way things are?

FK: Well in this world, the more creative you are, the happier you are. Being imaginative and having your own ideas makes you a strong, stable person.

Some people say that most people are just mindless followers, but that's only because no one cares to try to improve their lot. For example all over the world, even in America, many poor people are given terrible educations, and we wonder why they do so poorly in life. We need to care about everyone, not just the rich.

But even rich people could benefit more from a better education. Many rich people are bored with themselves because they have not been taught how to live life creatively.

Most people, no matter rich or poor, just accept our society the way it is and never think about it.

Thinking is just like learning any skill. You don't become a lawyer or doctor overnight. It takes a lot of practice. You need to spend many YEARS thinking in order to truly be good at it. So how about a mandatory university degree in "thinking" for everyone in the world?

MAO TSE TUNG

I: What do you think of Mao, the great leader who brought communism to China?

MTT: I think the so-called “intelligent” people of China who were all rich and controlled the country before Mao were greedy and selfish. Mao believed everyone in China should have a simple, nice life.

And Mao kept China together, and made the country into a great power. Unfortunately, after his death his successor, Deng Shiao Ping, erased Mao’s impressive legacy.

I: But what about the millions who died due to Mao’s inept economic policies? What about the massive numbers of intelligent people who were killed and mocked in the cultural revolution? Surely you can’t kill so many intelligent people and call that a “legacy”?

MTT: All those “intelligent” people just cared about having more than everyone else. They were mad because they couldn’t live in a big house and have many people to serve them. Who did they think they were? What right did they have to live like kings while others lived in misery?

Regarding the economic policies, changing the country to a communist society couldn’t have been accomplished without growing pains.

I: But you can’t kill the intelligent people just because they want a better life. Any society that is not run by its clever people will not prosper.

When Mao died, China was destitute. The communist system was a failure, and even those in the communist party mostly agreed that they had to get rid of communism.

MTT: I disagree. They all sold China out. If you look at China today. 25 years after the capitalist reforms, you see that the vast majority of Chinese live on less than a few dollars a day. They are poorer than they were during communist times. Millions have no job and feel useless.

It's just like the whole of Chinese history, they keep the peasants poor. And now the people toil in stinking factories to make luxury goods for Westerners. It's demeaning to China.

At least under Mao, everyone was equal, and ordinary people could hold their heads up high. Now they are looked down on as if they were dogs.

I don't know what the Chinese people are thinking of. Do they think if they get rich, they'll be happy? Money doesn't buy happiness.

I: Well assuming China does continue on the "capitalist road", what should the government do?

MTT: China is large and not easy to hold together, especially since some regions are much richer than others and in their greed, don't want to share their wealth with other regions. So the people must not be given too many freedoms or there will be revolution and the whole country will break up. China now is a great power; they cannot allow that to slip away.

So I think everyone should wear on their chest a tiny computerized camera which records all their actions and sends it to a central computer. Then the authorities can keep track of people's actions and keep them afraid to plot against the government.

If China can do something like this, then they will keep their power and one day perhaps they will at least build a socialist state where every citizen is looked after. But if they lose their power, they can expect to be dominated and abused by foreign powers again.

JACK LONDON

I: London was a great author, known especially for his tales of northern North America. What would he be saying if he were alive today?

JL: I think Jack London perceived of life as a great adventure. He'd probably tell people that you need to get yourself a useful skill and then go traveling and have many adventures.

I: So you think he would say that people today are not truly free?

JL: Everybody limits their own freedom these days. People get a mortgage and have kids and then they feel they must settle down in one place and stay there for the rest of their lives doing the same old thing.

But why buy a house? Why not rent one and then go traveling around the world. Experience new cultures and be free? Some people do it, but most are afraid. Yet there are many developing countries with interesting cultures that have abundant opportunities.

Human beings are by nature hunter-gatherers. And so by nature we are all travelers. Why stay in one place?

I: But can't people be free even if they stay in one place?

JL: Yes, but if you do, you will fall into many dull routines. You will hang out with the same people, do the same things... and slowly you will find your freedoms to be disappearing.

The world is so large, it seems a pity to limit oneself.

I think young people these days are more adventurous than their parents. They are more open-minded and tolerant. They love the idea of the global village. They love the idea of chatting with people all over the world...

I think that eventually everyone in the world will feel and act in a global manner. However I fear that most world cultures will disappear, and that will make travel much less interesting. So now is the time to go.

I: So you think the internet is a good thing?

JL: I think it will lead to everyone having far more friends than previously. And really conversation is the highest art we possess. Learning from others, being entertained by others and trying to understand others is the best thing in life I think.

I: Are you optimistic about the future?

JL: Thinking about the future is great. However people should concentrate more on today. They should try and live life to the full, especially while they are young.

But I think it's great to read science fiction, as the future is really anything we want it to be. Anything we can imagine. The more people we have writing and reading science fiction, the better the world will be. And if a writer has a great vision, then we can perhaps make it a reality.

However I must say that most sci-fi coming out today is too full of archetypes. My idea of the future is that everyone would have wild ideas and do wild things. To us it would seem crazy, but that's what imaginative ideas look like when you first hear them.

If writers traveled more and met more crazy people, it would make for much better literature, not only better science fiction. I think Hemingway once said that you have to live an exciting life to be an exciting writer. Not that I really like Hemingway, though.

A QUEEN OF UR, FROM CIRCA 3500 B.C.

I: The Mesopotamian civilization is thought to have been mankind's earliest. How do you feel about it?

QU: Well the strangest thing about it was that it didn't come sooner. People were living as hunter-gatherers for millions of years, I think.

But basically most aspects of modern civilization were invented over 5000 years ago. It's quite impressive. Arts, sciences and business were well established by the Mesopotamian people for instance.

I: But do you feel civilization might have turned out differently?

QU: Not really. The ancients needed strong leaders so they had kings. And of course queens. And all nations already believed in religion, so it was important. People needed to learn how to write so that the king could collect taxes and run the government. The kings wanted beautiful palaces filled with art and music and so it was. People wanted more luxuries so they carried on trade and business, and so on.

I: But why did no ancient king try to get rid of religion?

QU: Well I guess that at that time everyone felt the world was strange and mysterious. You know stars in the sky, the sun and moon. They must have felt that they didn't understand the universe at all.

Anyway religion helped the king control the people. Maybe that's why religion was so widespread in all cultures, whether or not they were civilized.

I: Why were ancient cultures so militaristic?

QU: Well I think ruthless people are traditionally the ones that always try to take power. But anyway, if you don't have a strong military, then other countries will dominate you. It's the same today. It has always been that way. The strong dominate or destroy the weak. Some women tried to stop such things, but no one listened to them

I: Why is Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia/Babylon) so backwards today? How could they be the same people that started civilization?

QU: Well today they have a relatively small population so they are no longer a great power. In ancient times their land was more fertile and they had a large population relative to their neighbors. But as Iraq dried up due to world climate change, the region became less affluent.

Also they've had some bad leaders recently and before that they were dominated by foreign powers. Basically, almost all countries that were dominated by Western colonial powers (especially France, Britain and Spain), are today a mess economically. However in countries such as the US where the white people wiped out the local culture and sent their own people to colonize the country, they are mostly prosperous. But in other countries where the native peoples remained intact, it was simply too big a shock for them to be controlled by Western cultures.

But Iraq is especially messed up now that the US has interfered with its development. I guess the country will break up now.

I: In fact there are many problems in the whole Middle East. Where once great civilizations existed, now there is a lot of poverty and troubles, women in particular are suffering, and can't even get an education...

QU: Well I think eventually the Middle East will recover and regain prosperity, especially if oil prices stay high. But they need better leadership. Today most advanced countries have a lot of freedom and they select leaders who will more or less do what they want. If the Middle East becomes free, then the arts, science and business will flourish again. It might be a good start to have more women in power. Give women the freedom they need.

THOMAS MORE

I: Thomas More was the author of “Utopia” written half a millennium ago. It was perhaps the first book to imagine a different world from the one that existed at the time.

TM: Well of course today we read many utopias and their opposite, dystopias. I think it’s great to ponder what we can do with this world, which obviously is not the “best of all possible worlds”.

Personally, I think there is no problem in this world which we cannot solve. But some things take time to sort out. Also science is changing things so quickly and creating just as many problems as it solves.

I: But what is your idea of utopia now?

TM: I think in many ways our world today is a utopia. Today many people are poor, but most are able to find happiness in their own way.

We don’t live in the future. We live today. So I say the pursuit of happiness is the best life to lead.

But you might say that people today are insatiable or they do not know what will make them happy. Maybe these things are true. But we have more freedom than we have ever had to determine our own fate.

We should not blame government for our problems, since if you don’t like your lot in life, you can usually educate yourself and move elsewhere. There are about 200 different countries to live in. We should not blame the education system either for our troubles since if you don’t like it, you can educate yourself.

Similarly if you allow yourself to become a dull person and no one likes you as a result (including your potential lovers and employers), then it's your fault.

People today are too quick to point the blame for their unhappiness on others, when in fact most people have the freedom to do anything they want. Maybe people today have too much freedom, and they can't handle it. But what can one do? Everyone says they want to be free.

I: So you think most people these days are spoiled?

TM: Yes, but it is unprecedented in history. Every year people get more spoiled and no one knows what to do about it.

I think that happiness is not to be spoiled, but to have a nice balanced life. Getting richer will not help most people. What people need is challenges.

It would be a nice utopia if the world was built on challenges. The education system would challenge students to think and rethink again. Rather than produce servile individuals, education should teach people to constantly improve themselves. Government jobs should have exams which challenge the intellect in order to get the job. Businesses should be convinced to offer similar exams to employees. And the elite of the society would be those who work the hardest to make things better. We should not be afraid to change everything in our world and make it better.

If you try to constantly improve yourself, you can face challenges better, and you will be more happy.

I: But do most people want a challenge?

TM: I think prior to civilization, every day was a challenge for everyone. We are meant to have challenges. We are meant to have adversity. But people are naturally lazy; if adversity is not foisted upon them, they will try to have a comfortable, easy existence. But doing nothing or doing very little in one's life is not conducive to happiness. People need to feel they are doing important work. And there is a lot of important work to be done.

BUDDHA

I: Buddha of course was the founder of Buddhism, one of the world's great religions. What do you think of Buddha and the religion he created?

B: Basically most thoughts Buddha is remembered for, were formulated when he was an old man. It seems that when he was a young prince, he lived life to the full, quite unlike his later years.

But anyway he said that desires give us suffering. I don't agree. I think our desires are what keep life interesting, they make life worth living. If you simply isolate yourself as a monk and forget about living life, you are doing yourself no favor. We were meant to enjoy this life, not hate it.

Also Buddha believed in reincarnation, which is a concept few if any scientists would endorse today. He also said that if you do and think good things you might reach "enlightenment". But I'm sure, in this world, no one really knows what they are doing. You especially won't know what you are doing if you spend the whole day thinking of nothing as he advised.

It's not a creative religion, but rather a religion that is uncreative. But at least many Buddhists do good work such as help the poor.

I: But do you then feel that religion no longer serves much purpose?

B: Most world religions (Islam and Hinduism are exceptions) are in decline. And I think soon all religion will be in decline. People today don't need to be told how to live their life; they'd rather go out and do it.

Science has shown us that the world's religions were wrong about many things, if not everything, and people today simply don't believe in these

faiths. Karl Marx said “Religion is the opiate of the masses”, but now there are other “opiates” like entertainment and love for example, which are preferable to most people.

I: Do you really think people are happier today without religion?

B: I think so. Religion served its purpose to ancient people who needed it, but now science is our god.

I at any rate believe in science. Science is helping us to understand the truth about things, and the more truths it gives us, the more we want.

I: But don't you think that modern people's lives are empty?

B: Life has always been so. But there's nothing we can do about it. There's no point making up a pack of lies about the whole thing. Life is for the living, so that's what we must do.

I: Is that all there is to life then?

B: Well I think we all hope for a good future as well. Maybe our distant descendants will be very different from us, but we hope it will work out well for them. I think having children certainly adds meaning to life.

I: But do you think the future will be bright?

B: Yes, I am optimistic. In any case, we were going nowhere before, and now science looks like it may one day be able to show us all true enlightenment about the universe.

The enlightenment began a few hundred years ago, and in 1000 years the human race will be truly enlightened I think.

COPERNICUS

I: Copernicus was the man who proved that the earth revolves around the sun. It was the first time the church was proved wrong and it set the stage for the scientific revolution. How do you feel about this great man?

C: The thing that strikes me about Copernicus is if he were alive today, he'd probably also have ideas that go totally against the accepted norm. Probably he'd upset a lot of people and be denounced by many just like Copernicus was all those years ago.

In fact anyone who has a plan to radically change science or society will probably not be listened to even today.

I: Well how do you think the world should be improved?

C: One of the problems is humanity is not perfect, and trying to improve things often destabilizes society. For example the communist experiment almost blew the whole world up.

So I think gradual changes are best for improving society. Small, controlled experiments are what are best.

With regard to science, it too could be better. However every year science gets stronger, so maybe it is best to just let it be. If there are to be momentous discoveries, I think the scientific community will be able to get used to them.

I: Well what "small experiments" did you have in mind?

C: Well I think we should try to improve in two specific areas. Namely in the media and education. Both should be used to improve people in any way we can. At present the media is mostly trash; it's not very educational. And education doesn't really seek to mold people into better people.

I think there should be thousands of experiments with education to determine how to maximize human development. I can't say what the results would be, but if many experiments are conducted there would be a lot of good results.

The same is true with the media; we need to give people in depth information about the world and how it is changing. We need statistics for everything and we need polls for everything.

Sociology can be a powerful tool to understand our world's people, but I feel it is dramatically underused. We need to take surveys about all aspects of life from people and then experiment how we can improve those people. Many good minds are not attracted to sociology as they think it seldom achieves anything, but the reason it doesn't achieve anything is that few clever people are interested in it.

I: So you think sociology is the key to improving our world?

C: Yes, but it has to be treated scientifically. And we need great minds to impress us with their research, and make sociology respectable. We've got the computers, why not give people a big percentage tax break for answering surveys; if you offer them this, they will almost all answer.

Knowledge is power, but there are many things we do not know about people. For example, what percentage of people are cynical about the future, and what are their reasons for their opinion? And what is the ideal type of lifestyle according to everyone, and how do they rate their current lifestyle? How do they describe life today? And so on.

We live in the information age so it's high time we get more of it, since it is so easy to acquire. And everyone would benefit. For example government would know better what people want and so could give it to them.

IVAN TURGENEV

I: Turgenev was a little known writer who wrote some great books. His most famous book, “Fathers and Sons” was about nihilism. How do you feel about nihilism?

T: Well let’s face it, a lot of people subscribe to that philosophy. However I think most people today are pragmatists, and so society carries on.

Basically to believe in nothing is to say quite rightly that we humans really don’t know anything, so how can we believe in anything? Yet it is our instinct to believe in things, and we must believe in things in order to survive. People who are nihilists believe in survival or they would kill themselves. So really no one is a true nihilist.

I: But there are many people today who really don’t believe in anything but their own selfish desires. Don’t you think we are headed for anarchy one day?

T: Well maybe as society advances and crime drops it will be possible to live in a much freer society. But I think most anarchists are violent and crazy, and nothing will ever come of anarchy. But who knows? Maybe in the future some small groups of anarchists will live together in perfect happiness.

I: But what about people and their selfish desires?

T: Well I think having many desires gives one something to do. We all need to pretend our desires are important and that it is good to pursue them. It makes us happy.

I: Another of Turgenev's books was the little known, "Diary of a Superfluous Man". How do you feel about that one?

T: Well it's a fact that there are numerous talented, clever people in the world that don't know what to do with themselves. Some of them wander around the world aimlessly looking for meaning or something that is interesting, but ultimately they don't find anything to satisfy them. Others just take any old job and try to fit in somehow.

Basically we are all superfluous, but most of us are so busy that we have no time to think about it.

I: What ideas do you have to improve the world?

T: It's a tough question. I think it's a great thing to try to improve things, but ultimately things will go back to the way they were before afterwards. The destiny of our civilization was determined a long time ago, in ancient times. Things like capitalism, mediocre leaders, people who all want a more comfortable life...It's all been done. Our society is as it is, because that's the way people are.

I: You don't think we live in a new era?

T: Almost every period in history featured people who imagined it was a new era. But people are always the same.

But in every generation there are many superfluous people who are dissatisfied. Their struggles are really a tragedy, and would make for excellent novels. But I just have to laugh at them. They are clowns like the rest of us.

Rather than trying to change the world, one should try to have a happy life. What's wrong with a happy life? Why do you always need to be fighting the system? Some people like arguing and fighting for things, it's just the way they are. Sometimes they appear to succeed. But as I told you people are always fundamentally the same.

HERO OF ALEXANDRIA

I: Hero was the scientist who invented steam power 2000 years ago, but his invention was neglected, and the world remained the same. How do you feel about Hero and his invention?

H: Of course they say that the Romans had lots of slaves back then, and they didn't need steam power, but this is not true. Of course they could have used it. But people weren't used to machines back then. They didn't realize what they could do.

Basically though, everyone has many things they could do in their life that would be good for them, but they can't see them. For example how many people have numerous regrets when they are older? Everyone does.

Human civilization was the best idea humans ever had, but it took millions of years to come up with the idea.

Now of course millions of scientists are at work looking for discoveries. Are there discoveries which they are overlooking? Of course. It will be obvious to future generations, but not to us.

I: Do you think there are many geniuses who live in our world who are overlooked and die without fame?

H: Yes, there are. Most geniuses don't fit in with society, and often have many problems just staying alive. We need to comb the world looking for such geniuses and send them to special schools where they will be appreciated.

I: What are your opinions about the future?

H: I think there will be lots of wars. People love to fight and argue; it gives them something to live for. And I think most future wars will be ideological. Just like capitalism vs. communism and fascism vs. moderates.

Maybe a lot of these wars will be civil wars as well. But all war is good; there are too many people on the earth, and too many people who believe that their philosophy is best.

I think we need to invent new weapons that will not destroy the whole earth, but rather just the enemy. Like destroy the enemy's communication systems or stun the enemy so they can't fight back. We don't want to destroy the world, we just want to have interesting wars.

I: But surely you are a man of peace?

H: Personally, I think the world is boring. Too many people always want to be safe, despite their predilection for violence. I say let the violence happen, we are all violent. Look at our history. And mental violence is good too.

Without something to fight about, people are bored and boring.

I: But, although we were violent in the past, aren't most people today peace lovers. Don't they want a boring life?

H: Bah. People will do whatever their government says. Lead the lambs to the slaughter, that's what I say.

People have become weak and pathetic. How could they enjoy a boring life? We are animals who like to fight, like all the other animals.

There was a scene from the movie "Conan: The Barbarian" in which Conan was asked "What is the meaning of life"? He replied something along the lines of "To crush your enemies and hear the lamentations of the women". I thought that was good.

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

I: Hans Andersen was the greatest writer of fairy tales ever. How do you feel about him?

HCA: Well I would say we all live a fairy tale existence. In this world we are free to dream, and often we can realize our dreams.

Today Hollywood is a dream factory. And school teaches us that if we persevere we can achieve almost anything. The media follows famous people who lead a dream-like existence, and so on.

I: How do you feel about modern kids' literature?

HCA: I think it's great to be a child. However when children grow up they often become very serious and forget the dream-like existence they had as a child.

I think the modern day world is too serious.

I: Well if adults are too serious, how can we change that?

HCA: I think we could make high school and university more fun and interesting. For example in chemistry class you could read a book written by interesting people who present the material in interesting ways rather than boring ones.

Also the media is too serious. I think there is no need to have murders and other crimes on the show, but rather interesting news. Things that will brighten our day.

And the government is too serious. Always it is serious, boring people who run for office in a democracy. We need to get more interesting people involved somehow.

I: But do you really think it would be a good government if people like Andersen become leaders?

HCA: Most governments don't do anything positive anyway. They just spend money foolishly and incur large debts which lead to higher taxes etc.

We need to devise a system that will attract people like Andersen to want to run. I wonder why they didn't do that in the first place?

I: What do you see as the role of modern writers then, besides getting involved in politics?

HCA: Well the problem is it takes a long time to perfect one's craft; many people who try it give up too easily. And some people with potential never even try, thinking that it would be too difficult to succeed.

What I think we should do is have a writer's union for beginning writers. This union would then attract rich sponsors who would financially back writers who seem to have potential. They could pay for the writer to develop him/herself and maybe even help to get their work published when it was ready. The sponsor's might even make money on the books. Certainly there are many people with so much money they don't know what to do with it; I think many of them would like to be a patron of the arts.

But getting back to the role of a writer, I think it has always been to entertain. Some writers entertain ordinary people, others entertain the intelligentsia. But it is all entertainment.

Writers should not take themselves too seriously. They should try to have comedy and fun in their books.

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

I: Machiavelli was the man who posited that political leaders should ruthlessly seek means to ends. The end justifies the means, that's what he said. In essence he was saying, "be evil".

NM: These days almost anyone can get power if they really want it. Of course they'll need an education, and they'll need to kiss a lot of ass, toe the line and so forth. But they can get there.

Once in power they then need to do whatever is necessary to stay in power.

I: But once in power what should one do with it?

NM: Whatever one fancies. If I had power, I'd try to take over the world if I could and force everyone to do my bidding. I'd set up a personality cult with musicians to sing songs about me, and architects to build beautiful buildings in my honor. Poets could write poems about me. And I've have thousands of women in my harem...

I: Well that sounds familiar. So the power would only be to glorify you?

NM: It would be a fun game to play. The whole world's people would be pieces in my game. Life is short. Why wouldn't I live my dreams?

Anyway I feel I'm the best, so I have a right to rule.

I: So you have a low opinion of other people?

NM: Most people are like cattle. They'll follow the one who leads. Jesus knew this, and told people to follow him as if they were sheep. But I think it would be better for people to follow me.

I: What is it about you that makes you so superior?

NM: I have the strength of will. In this dog eat dog world, the one with the strongest will triumphs. I have the will to power, whereas most people just want enough food and drink to get them through life. They are all sheep, and should be treated as such.

I: Most people are kind and nice whilst you are evil.

NM: Well what's wrong with being evil? The sheep are stupid and weak of will and so anything they call bad, must be good. I am good and the sheep are evil.

I: Do you really think someone such as yourself can gain power in this world?

NM: We still have many kings and dictators in this world and nearly all of them just care about themselves. If such a leader kisses the USA's ass, then he can be confident he will hold on to power. He will be free to build his harems and palaces, while the people all toil for him.

I: But do you really think such power leads to happiness?

NM: That's a silly question. The reason almost all absolute leaders do all the same things, is because that's what all good people want. Granted, there are few such good people. But as I said most men are too gutless and wimpy to even think about getting real power. They don't even have power over their wives anymore.

If I was king I'd wage wars to kill as many of these pathetic people as possible. Also I'd arrest and execute all those who failed to obey me. If I controlled the world all would have to kneel before me.

AN ANCIENT AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL WOMAN

Some people know of the dreamtime and song lines etc. of Australian aboriginal culture. Do you think this culture is worth keeping?

AA: Personally I think to take the best of another culture is good, but if you take too much and lose all your own traditions and religion, you are lost.

It is hard to hold on to traditions, and in the future there will only be one culture.

People of this new world say they are free and they have free speech and such, but they are wrong. They are just doing what their culture says is good. For example if it is fashionable to travel, they will travel. If it is fashionable to be open-minded they will say they are open-minded, but actually they are not open-minded.

People call it multi-cultural, but when it comes down to it, people don't believe in anything. They just believe in gratifying their instincts.

The new modern world has no religion, no philosophy. It is empty.

You have to believe in something. If you don't how can you live?

They say they believe in happiness, but few of them are happy.

They say they believe in progress, but the future looks bleak. Maybe humans will even become totally useless as robots take over.

How can they justify trying to make people redundant?

Personally I think everyone is going crazy, but they try to hide it. They take medicine and say they are depressed, but actually they are going crazy.

I: So what then would you suggest?

AA: Everyone needs a job with low stress. If the employer wants them to work too hard they should be able to appeal it to a neutral watchdog agency. Also they should by law get at least 8 weeks vacation every year.

And not only does everyone need a job, but they need to feel important. Even if the job is not really important....after all somebody has to do the job.

And everyone needs to be educated better about culture and history and stop living in the void that they live in today.

Everyone should volunteer for good works and there should be no one neglected.

People need to think about things more, and think about doing good works.

Be more tolerant and truly open-minded as well.

I: What will be the future of the Outback in Australia?

AA: I'm afraid it will be deserted one day. Too many glittering lights in the big cities. Of course it is fashionable to live in a city and not "think too much".

JIMI HENDRIX

I: What do you think of the wild rock music of Jimi Hendrix?

JH: He lived in a psychedelic, crazy world and he was very imaginative in both his music and his lyrics.

It was too bad he died in his twenties. He could've gone on to inspire a lot of people.

I: Why do you think modern rock musicians are so popular?

JH: Basically most people these days love music above all other entertainment, I think. Therefore great musicians are the best people in our world today. In my opinion musicians should form political parties and try to take over the world.

Virtually all musicians want the same thing for the world: peace, love, parties, happiness...They are visionaries.

I: But don't you think musicians take too many drugs?

JH: Drugs make people happy and creative. The reason they are illegal is because the authorities want everyone to obey them implicitly. They don't want people to stop working like slaves and instead try to enjoy life. They want people to work and enrich the government and the rich people who control government.

I: How do you feel about the youth culture in the world today?

JH: Young people are wise. They are turning their backs on stultifying tradition all over the world these days. It looks like the future will be more fun than today.

Old people imagine that they are wise, but they don't do anything. They just sit around watching TV. They are not wise, but rather are conservative and boring. Just because our culture emphasizes youth, doesn't mean you have to be boring when you are old.

I: What do you think about the future of rock and roll?

JH: Well it seems to be on the decline now. Today's musicians often like a more dance-friendly music... But really I think all it will take is the advent of a few super rock groups to get rock going again.

Not only has rock music declined, but also it has lost its vision that it had in the late 60s and early 70s. Back then many rock musicians spoke of world change. I don't know why we don't try that again.

I: But most people back in the 60s and 70s didn't want to change the world. They were happy the way things were.

JH: We humans believe in progress. We all do. So it's just a matter of time before we make government and hence the world, better.

I: Do you believe in love?

JH: People these days have lots of sex, but their hearts have grown cold. Most people today look down on others, and only care about money. Frankly it's boring.

Almost everyone says they believe in love, but actually they don't love anyone or anything but themselves. They don't even love children anymore. This is one reason we need better leaders. Our society is a mess.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

I: How do you feel about Thomas Jefferson?

TJ: Well there were a number of great men who helped win the American Revolution and set up a new state. The state they set up was to be the greatest the world had ever seen, so they were certainly great.

I: But although America is great, the country still has a lot of problems. How do you feel about the crime rate for example?

TJ: Well over the last ten years the crime rate has been falling. I think it will continue to fall, but there are some things that need to be done.

For example the government must take away all guns. Most murders are done by guns, and in countries such as Canada there are few guns and few murders.

Also I think some drugs, such as marijuana, should be legalized. Marijuana is legal in some places such as Holland, and they don't have any trouble with it. But in the US many are in jail for it.

Computer crimes such as fraud and hacking into private systems should be punished very seriously so that people will have confidence in buying things and doing business on the net.

Ex cons meanwhile should have a tiny implant in their bodies which they cannot remove in order to keep track of them, and find them if they are a suspect. All convicts should also have to give a DNA sample, which could be used to identify them if a crime has been committed.

All these things I have mentioned will reduce crime. Crime could be reduced much further still by eliminating poverty in America. The US is a rich country; they can afford to take care of the poor. At least give them a small home and food and medical care.

Another change that should be made is to allow euthanasia. There are many people who want to die, and they should be killed as they wish. Also there are so many vegetables and totally senile people, and many of these should be put out of their misery. It's the humane thing to do.

Also the death penalty should be only used in cases where the judge or jury is 100% certain, not just reasonably certain. But people who are mass murderers and such don't deserve the right to live in America.

In addition violent movies, violent shows and violent video games should be heavily censored. If they show only gratuitous violence, then they should be banned. Obviously many murderers are inspired by what they see on TV or in video games. Similarly all news channels should not cover murders and other violence. Instead they should show educational and interesting news. Both censoring entertainment and eliminating violent news, I think crime would drop appreciably.

I: What do you see as America's role in the future?

TJ: Well I think America is in an unprecedented position. Being the world's superpower, and also being a nation which believes in progress, I think America could use its power to help other nations in many ways. If the US wants to do something that is good and reasonable, I think most countries will join them. Many nations today look for leadership from the US.

I: But do you really think America has been electing great leaders in recent years?

TJ: No, I don't (though Clinton was OK). But I think we've designed the government so that most power is with the people. So American people have made the nation great, and they will sooner or later realize that bad leadership is hurting the nation, and so they will start electing better leaders.

J.R.R. TOLKEIN

I: Tolkein was perhaps the greatest fantasy writer ever. If he were alive today what do you think he would say about our modern world?

JRRT: I think he would say that now, more than ever, we live in a world of dreams. All of our progress is due to people who had dreams and made them reality. And now there's a lot of great entertainment to amuse us and inspire us.

I: What's the future of fantasy?

JRRT: Well I think too many people copied Tolkein. There are many other ways to write fantasy like for instance: Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" or the science-fantasy novels of Jack Vance.

I think in the future people will enjoy more and more creative fantasy and it will be experienced in new mediums such as virtual reality. It would be fun to adventure in virtual reality in which all the characters are played by a real human.

Another possibility sounds interesting as well. Early in this book (see Alexander Bell) it was suggested that one day we will be able to read minds. I think if this comes to pass, then we could have really interesting psychological adventures on internet chats and internet games. One could even program one's nightly dreams...

It may also come to pass that people in the future will have little work to do and so have more time to enjoy fantasy entertainment. Life, as they say, is but "a dream within a dream".

I: But don't you fear that in the future people will use fantasy to totally escape from reality?

JRRT: I see no problem with that. Let's face it, the modern world we've created is boring and difficult. It would be nice to spend one's time imagining and adventuring in a more interesting world.

I don't think that, in the near future, we would be able to drastically change the world into a much more interesting place. It would take a lot of ideas from a lot of great thinkers...but who knows perhaps it could be at least experimented with.

I: Are you saying that the reality that we have toiled so hard to create, is in fact of little value?

JRRT: Well most of our toil has been to just survive. But really nowadays most people live only for leisure time, and I think in the future people will live less and less for their careers.

Maybe one could look at it this way: all our toil is to make an automated society in which we are free from reality, and we can live and do anything we want.

I: But if we cut ourselves off from reality, won't our civilization go into decline?

JRRT: Why would it. If everyone had enough money (produced by automation) to do whatever they want, without hurting others, what would be the problem? It would be paradise for everyone.

Basically an automated world would endlessly produce wealth and goods for everyone, so there would no longer be any reason for war or conflict. The economy would grow every year.

And of course some diligent, dedicated people would still work away at science for peaceful purposes, so progress could continue. Entertainment could continue to improve based on new discoveries also.

JAMES HARVEY

I: Harvey was one of the greatest scientists of all time as he was the one that basically discovered the circulation of blood. It was a momentous discovery in its time.

JH: Yes, and many people are calling the 21st century, the medical century. I think there will be many great discoveries soon, such as: automatic diagnosis of diseases such as cancer and automatic surgery which would be 100% effective.

Also antivirus drugs that can cure diseases such as AIDS. When they cure that the whole world is going to become one big party.

And they will grow replacement organs and body parts in the lab using stem cells.

Pills will take away our need for sleep and our need for exercise. Other pills will give us energy and make us happy.

They will also discover how to make us immortal and perhaps eternally youthful. Maybe many people alive today will end up living forever.

All genetic diseases will also be cured this century. And so on.

I: But if robots diagnose us and surgery is done by robots, will we still need doctors and nurses?

JH: I think as time goes by we will need less and less of both. Doctors will be replaced by technicians and nurses won't be needed much as nearly everyone will be healthy and youthful.

However I think we will have a lot more psychiatrists even though pills will make people happy. This is because our world is getting very complicated.

I: Will it be a perfect world then, if everyone is happy and youthful? Or will everyone be insane and talking to psychiatrists?

JH: All through human history there have been many scientific breakthroughs, but with every breakthrough there are new problems. We humans always have problems, and there will never be a perfect world.

In fact the more we have, the more we want. So really people in the future might be less happy than we are. Just as people 200 years ago were probably happier than we are today.

Happiness is not our destiny. Probably being immortal will drive people crazy.

I: So you feel that ultimately our society is not really going anywhere?

JH: Well who knows what we'll discover or encounter in the future? But for now nearly everyone is lost, in my opinion.

I: Is there anything we can do about the fact that many "lost" people don't know what to do with themselves?

JH: Well just because you are lost doesn't mean you can't be happy. I just mean that our world is devoid of meaning, and the end of religion is a new thing. It will take some time for us to find a replacement.

I: So you think we need social breakthroughs, rather than scientific ones?

JH: Yes, I think we need to experiment more with how to live on this earth. If people really feel that they are living a stimulating life, then perhaps that is the best world possible.

A FEMALE WITCH FROM ANCIENT EUROPE

I: Do you believe in magic?

W: Yes I believe I can read people's minds, levitate and make people happy. Love can be magical too, as can science. If I was to describe these times I would call them "days of magic".

I: But you keep your powers to yourself?

W: These days everything has to appear to be scientific. Doing hypnosis or magic spells is not something people can fathom.

I: So what role can you play in this world?

W: Well we do magic shows to show people that there is more to life than appears. It may cause some people to open their minds for instance. Also we live in a world of illusions, and we don't want people to forget that.

We want people to believe the world can be beautiful even if it is all illusory.

Everyone cloaks themselves in layer after layer of illusions, often without realizing it. But we magicians believe this is all to the good.

Sometimes however someone breaks down his/her illusions and then it is trouble. But in such cases we just give such people other illusions that they can believe in.

I: But is it really a world of illusion? Most people would not say so.

W: There's no meaning to this world. But people insist on having one so that they will have something to work for.

Now religion is disappearing and people aren't having kids. It is such a selfish existence here on earth. Meanwhile half the world is starving...

Many sci-fi writers have laid out possible futures, but I think it is impossible to know where science is taking us. For example no one really predicted the telegraph or the computer.

But to create a thing like a computer is a work of magic.

Some people say anything that can be imagined has been done or is being done, but in the next 100 years there will be dozens of huge breakthroughs in every kind of science that no one foretold.

It is good however to write sci-fi though so as to avoid the future realities they predict.

I: But don't you think it is interesting to see all such unimaginable things?

W: In the future our imagination will be unlimited. So it is hard to say if it will be good or not. There must be millions of possibilities at least.

In fact I feel some scientists are too limited in their research. We need to give them some courses in how to let your imagination run wild.

Developing imagination is like flying faster and faster. You need to keep practicing...

I: What kind of reaction do imaginative women, like yourself get from imaginative men?

W: The sky is the limit, but such men are hard to find. Geniuses are often low profile individuals.

CERVANTES

I: Cervantes was famous for his book “Don Quixote” about a deluded, but noble, old man. How do you feel about the book?

C: Well I think we are all deluded in many ways. But our illusions sometimes make us noble. Sometimes it’s best to see what you want to see, rather than always see the reality.

I: Cervantes was imprisoned by the inquisition at one point.

C: Yes, great spirits always come up against the authorities. But he survived it.

There are always people protecting the power, and if you have different opinions than them, you can expect trouble. No one gets anything easily in this world. You have to fight for what you believe.

I: Why are there not more good books from Spain and the numerous Spanish speaking countries?

C: I think the Spanish are great at living life, and enjoying life. To them books are not real, they can’t really feel them.

I: What kind of book do you think should be written today?

C: I like books in which the protagonist battles illusion, lies, stupidity and such and just tries to enjoy life. To enjoy life is no easy thing. You got to

work at it. You've got to try many things, you've got to always meet new people...

I: But how do you feel about modern nightlife?

C: Well it's great to dance, and have fun doing that. But I think people should concentrate more on conversations with new people and old friends.

I like bars where everyone is standing up and it's easy to mingle with each other. If there are tables, they act like a barrier to others. People are too cliquy, always talking to the same people...

I also like the internet for parties. I think it's great to drink cheap, listen to your own music and chat with people all around the world.

I: If you could do anything in this world, what would you do?

C: I'd like to set up a famous conversation web site. The site would rank people according to how good their conversation is. People would therefore try to become more interesting to move up a level, and everyone could have a conversation appropriate to their level.

It would be nice if all web sites were similarly ranked, and you would have to apply to get in. You would have to answer questions to be accepted. Different websites would have different themes...I think just talking to people at random is a waste of time mostly.

I: What else would you like to do?

C: I'd like to set up a huge writer's colony with thousands of writers living there and visiting there. I think it would give writers a lot of inspiration and be a lot of fun too.

We would keep everything cheap so any writer could afford it, and maybe the young writers could be assigned writing projects which the famous writers tell them too. Kind of like Edison and his host of assistant scientists; he had the ideas and his assistants explored them.

HERMANN HESSE

I: Hesse was one of the best writers of the 20th century. How do you feel about his famous book “Steppenwolf”?

HH: Well it was an amazing book. It was a little ahead of its time in talking about how the life of the middle class is comfortable, yet dull. I think many people today are starting to realize that. Today, people don't want to settle down and have kids nearly as much as before, for example. However I think it's still difficult to escape from a middle class life as it spoils and ruins you.

Some people say if no one wanted to be middle class, but rather just wanted to roam around the world and have adventures, then society would break down. But I think living in the same place, doing the same routine work is downright boring. People say that is what they want, but of course most people don't know what they want anyway; they just follow everyone else.

I: Another thing about the “Steppenwolf” was Hesse said it was “for madmen only”. How do you feel about that?

HH: Most people are afraid to be different and do what they want because they have not been properly educated. Also society has not been well-planned, and as a result, people who follow it will not be happy.

Everyone likes crazy things. They like dramas, for example, in which people do crazy things. It seems to me that what most people call crazy is just doing as you please.

I: What about another book by Hesse, “The Glass Bead Game”?

HH: That was really a sci-fi book, and I thought that was good also. Basically the thing that I remember about the book, was how, in the future, intellectuals won't know what to do with themselves.

I think it's quite possible that will happen. After science cures all the diseases and makes everyone comfortable in their life, what else will there be to do? At present many great minds are busy working in science, but in a century or so this may not be the case.

Some people say that we will genetically engineer people to be smarter and better, but I think it would be better if we make such research illegal, and just keep the world for humans. We are humans, why would we want to put an end to ourselves?

I: Another thing about Hesse was he had a great affinity for Eastern culture.

HH: Personally I think all cultures are interesting. But I think we need to create new cultures now that the old ones are disappearing. For example if you are a nudist, who likes rock and roll and philosophy, then you should be in touch on the internet with thousands of others just like you. Then you should find a place to get together, and live together. And you should have some of your number make movies about the fun you have. And you should let tourists come and live like you for a while.

Maybe if we thought about it enough, we could make neo-cultures that do really interesting things.

I: How do you feel about the modern world?

HH: One of the things that always strikes me about the modern world is how numerous great minds go into science, and sometimes do good science, but they never try to do anything else.

I think more scientists should become writers and talk about our modern world and what needs to be done with it. We clearly need more writers. And we also have to encourage people to read more.

SALVADOR DALI

I: Dali was the artist who basically turned surrealism into a popular art form. How do you feel about his work?

SD: Surrealism is pure imagination and very stimulating I think. What I can't understand is why so few other artists have become famous doing surrealistic pieces. Surrealism is the best kind of painting and there will never be a better one. Painters should try their best at it, after all photographs take much better pictures of things, and so painting things as they exist, is a waste of time. For the modern painter, he or she must use his or her imagination.

We all know that reality is just what we imagine it to be.

I: Do you really feel all artists could do surrealism as great as Dali?

SD: Well at least they should try. I say modern painting IS surrealism.

Personally, I think people's nightly dreams are interesting, but their everyday life is too humdrum. They lose the imagination they had in their youth, and become absorbed with boring modern life.

So I think we need to encourage young people with artistic talent more. Maybe send the best to elite schools. Dali should have set up a massive international school for surrealism, I don't know why he didn't.

I: But if there was more surrealistic art, would it really make a difference?

SD: Well if you can make the world a more creative place with your painting, you will inspire others to do other kinds of creative things.

I think surreal-fantasy literature, surreal-sci-fi literature, and surreal literature in general can be very interesting for example.

I often think that the powers that be have no interest in making this world more imaginative since all they care about is money.

Why should all our leaders only care about money? I certainly don't want to follow such leaders.

I: So you think, in the future, we should all live a surrealistic existence?

SD: Life is deep. Life can be interesting if we use and develop our imaginations.

Some people don't know what I mean if I say "live in a surreal way". But basically the way to do it is to not accept the world the way it is. Instead you should seek to understand it in your own, creative way. Just like a child does.

You need to spend many years developing your creativity and your perspective.

I: But surely we need to work to survive and hence life is mundane?

SD: Yes, but use your free time wisely. Study, read, travel and meet many people on the net. That's the way to start. Just because other people are doing nothing creative, doesn't mean you should. Always try to improve yourself.

I bet at least 10% of people could become good surreal painters and live a happy, imaginative life today. But maybe one day everyone will paint their dreams on canvas, and what a wonderful world it would be. First you paint, then you live surrealistically.

ALFRED NOBEL

I: Nobel was the man that found a way to make dynamite stable so that it could be used. Of course dynamite was used for peaceful purposes such as building roads, but it was also used to make dynamite. Nobel perhaps felt guilty about his invention and so he set up the Nobel prizes.

AN: Well you can't blame Nobel for inventing dynamite; when he invented it, many other people were trying to do the same thing, so it would have been discovered sooner or later.

Regarding the Nobel prize, I think it is most excellent as it gives fame and fortune to great people. I don't like most of the prize winners for literature however; many of these writers are boring.

I: In the future there will be more and more weapons of devastating power, do you think scientists also cannot be blamed for them?

AN: Some people say that you can't stop science. There are millions of scientists in numerous countries all competing against each other to discover things before anyone else. There's no way to stop it, they say.

And they say that for every attack weapon there are defensive measures being developed. For example they point out that there will soon be effective missile defense shields which will protect many countries from nuclear attack.

But I say they could just put a nuclear bomb on a ship and detonate it in say LA's harbor with catastrophic consequences...so really the only true defense is to make the world virtually weapons free. Get rid of the really

dangerous weapons and put the UN in charge. And stop scientific research on new weapons.

If there were no superpowers but the UN, I think the world would be much more peaceful. But if we do not stop this crazy weapons development, the world is going to be destroyed one day for sure.

I: So you don't think other kinds of science should also be stopped?

AN: Well actually I think many kinds of research should be closely monitored. For example genetic engineering. Most people say we should cross that bridge when we come to it, but I think we should decide now what we are going to allow.

But modern governments are very powerful, and they can do anything they wish. So if they want to control science, they can do it. But, again, we would need all countries to obey UN judgments.

If the UN is the only military power, then all countries would be forced to abide by its decisions.

I: How do you feel about the modern world?

AN: I think there are too many Indians and not enough chiefs. Our world is like a ship with a broken rudder. No one seems to know what we should do or where we are going.

Personally I think we should have long term goals for the future. We need lots of planners, such as sci-fi writers, to give the world plans which we can work towards. I don't know why everything has to be so haphazard.

Some people say they fear anarchy, but our world is sort of in an anarchic state right now.

MARY SHELLY

I: Mary Shelly was the author of “Frankenstein”, about a clever human-like creature created in the lab which goes out of control.

MS: It was one of the first sci-fi books ever, and its theme is only now becoming very important in the world. Soon scientists will find ways to change people and make them smarter and different than humans. I think when this happens all hell will break loose and the world will become extremely chaotic. Maybe such a discovery will even result in the extinction of homo sapiens.

I: Yes but humanity has survived every challenge in the past, and probably we’ll survive that one too. Anyway we have a lot of problems today, there’s no need to be worrying about the future. Let future generations worry about it.

MS: Well I think it is irresponsible to not think about our society’s effects on the future. If they inherit a world that’s out of control perhaps they won’t be able to keep the species alive.

I: How do you feel about modern women?

MS: Well the way trends are going, women will soon outdo men in every field. Women these days perhaps value their careers more than men. They are curious to see just what women can do.

I: But won’t men feel emasculated if women do better than them?

MS: Women have learned much from men and the world they have created. Now it's time for men to learn from women. Men need to improve their EQ, and they have to stop being manly in such a primitive way. We are not cavemen anymore. There should be no more violence (eg owning guns, violence on TV, violence in the media, violence in sports, wars etc.). Instead men have to become sophisticated, calm and peaceful. If they want to show they are manly, they should show it in a classy way.

Basically what we need men to do is to go to the next step in evolution. Our world is progressing and we have no need for cavemen.

I: How do you feel about modern leaders?

MS: Well modern leaders don't do much, and that's the way we want it. But we need to encourage people more to get more education, and read more books, so they can know how to live their own lives and not have to rely on leaders to tell them what to do.

I: So if everyone has a very high education, you think that would be a perfect world?

MS: I think people underestimate the common person. I think they are improved by education more than smart people. After all smart people can see things easily for themselves, but ordinary people have to study hard to come to the right conclusions about life.

So I think everyone should have at least a BA AND a BS degree. And if they study more then they should get big tax breaks after they graduate.

No society has ever tried to give common people an advanced education, and I think it is at least worth trying.

I think we should try many methods to educate people and see which methods work the best. The present system is similar all over the world, but it does not help ordinary people much. If anything, they only learn that they hate school, and are anxious to get out of it.

RASPUTIN

I: Rasputin was a brute, but he cured the last Czar of Russia's son's hemophilia and then became very powerful at the Russian court. He seduced many women of higher station and so was hated by many nobles. Finally the nobles killed this outrageous man.

R: The Russian Czars treated most of the people like dogs, and it is no wonder the people supported the communist uprising. Quite simply they had nothing left to lose.

Rasputin knew the country was a joke and he took what he wanted. Sex with beautiful women, money; he had it all. He was an animal, but at least he knew it, and didn't pretend that he was so high class like the people at the Russian court.

Whereas Rasputin was a colorful character, the Czars were all just boring people who kept the people miserable.

I: If Rasputin was the leader of Russia today, how do you think he would act?

R: Rasputin had charm unlike most modern leaders. People in Russia today need a leader who will inspire them to rebuild their country and make it great.

I think Rasputin would tell people not to be conservative, but to really try to enjoy life. Maybe he would give the people free vodka to keep them happy and maybe make sure that the poor were looked after.

I: But throughout history the life of ordinary Russians has always been rather tragic.

R: Russia is a cold place with many tough people. But I think the world today features many tragedies. Life for most people is tragic. If the Russian economy booms and people get rich, maybe their lives will still be filled with tragedy.

But to lead a tragic life makes for good drama. It's exciting to live such a life.

I: You mean many people enjoy tragedy?

R: Of course. All over the world many people mess up their lives completely. They enjoy having problems. It's a challenge for them.

Traditionally in Western literature (eg. The Greeks, Shakespeare etc.) there were only two ways to look at things: either life was a tragedy or life was a joke.

We humans have no reason to go on and yet we do, so this is both tragedy and comedy.

I: But surely some people lead happy lives?

R: Happiness is a strange concept, just like love. I don't believe in either.

People are always lying to themselves. They tell themselves they are happier than others because they drive a more expensive car and things like that. Or they say their lover is better than other people's lovers so they therefore are more happy.

I don't think anyone is truly happy, just some people are more realistic than others.

AN ANCIENT INCA CHIEFTAN

I: How do you feel about the legacy of the Inca?

IC: Well it was a great civilization. Everyone had enough to eat, and felt that they belonged. Some people say today that the civilization was too regimented, but I think modern people's life is very regimented too. It's what people want.

I: You mean people don't want to think or worry about life?

IC: Yes. People should keep busy with their work and family, and not spend time worrying about things they have no control over.

I: Well how do you feel about Latin America today?

IC: Well the Spanish destroyed a number of fine civilizations and replaced them with regimes which enrich whites, and keep the Indians down. They've never cared about the Indians.

I: How do you feel about the high crime rate in Latin America?

IC: Crime is high in the US because of the legacy of slavery, which is poverty. Same thing in Latin America. Too much poverty.

But if you talk to an American they tell stories about guns and criminals as if they are excited about the whole thing. I think all over North and South America, people love to look down on the poor, and feel glad they aren't poor also. They need someone to be their enemy.

I: Why would they need an enemy?

IC: Most people are bored and they need something to fight against. But instead of fighting poverty, the rich people enjoy keeping most people in Latin America poor.

People today don't have any strong philosophy to stand for because their education teaches them only that it is glorious to be rich. Of course poor people aren't really given any education; instead they are allowed to believe that they are scum.

It would be nice if the poor people were at least educated. It wouldn't cost much to educate them, I think. All they need is books and some educated people to teach them. It would be OK to have large classes and hence fewer teachers. The teacher's don't need high pay, and their salaries can come from taxing rich people more. It's good for the rich people to educate the poor and get them involved in economic activity. If the economy booms rich people will stand to make the most money.

I: Do you really feel that giving everyone a good education would make a difference?

IC: You can make people into anything you want through education. But the problem is everyone is so apathetic about it.

Western nations give a lot of money for food and some for education, but if we could really educate people all over the world, most problems would disappear, and the world economy would boom.

But as I say everyone is apathetic. So I'm afraid all Latin Americans can do is try to get into the US legally or illegally. The Latin American governments do very little to help them. Maybe some day that will change; maybe good people will start to run for office now that democracy has become widespread. But if it happens, it will take a long time.

F.G. BANTING AND C. BEST

I: Banting and Best were the ones who discovered insulin, saving millions of lives. How do you two gentleman feel about diabetes?

Banting: Well of course people today lead somewhat unhealthy lives, and insulin helps them to live on even when they get diabetes. In fact most great medical discoveries allow people to live the way they want, not the way they should. Really that seems to be the goal of civilization: to let us do what we want.

I: Banting and Best were Canadians. How do you feel about that country?

Best: The main reason people immigrated to and immigrate to Canada is to have a better life. I think, for the most part, they find it (though there are still many jobless). However I feel it's a shame that the only thing the country stands for is a good quality life.

I: Well what would be the ideal situation then?

Best: I just think the country is too materialistic. I mean I'm not a communist, but people in Canada need to be taught to think more and not be so selfish, greedy and conservative.

Banting: I feel the same way. Canadians are too comfortable, and too apathetic. We don't need such big houses, we don't need two houses.

Also our taxes are ridiculously high as the government wastes all the money, as governments do. They should pay off the debt, and greatly reduce government. Lower taxes is what we need, and then we might be in

position to help the poor in our own nation, of which there are many. And then help the poor worldwide. We don't need to be so selfish and short-sighted.

Our country has a good reputation only because we are not a big power and so we can never tell other countries what to do. But maybe it's time we led by example, and try to get this world in shape.

I: The large number of poor is the result of unemployment, right?

Best: I think joblessness is reaching crisis proportions. The unemployment figures the government gives are highly misleading.

But if taxes came down a lot, then the economy would boom and jobs would be created. The only problem is the debt is so large. But maybe we could deal with it imaginatively, and give future considerations and government assets away in order to get rid of this debt.

I: What would happen if world poverty was ended and science were to cure all diseases and make us live forever etc.?

Banting: Well that would be wonderful. It would be a true golden age. Maybe we could pull some of the great minds out of science, and get them into government to try and make our world even better.

I think that it will reach a point where science will need to be limited, as once we've reached the perfect world we just stay there and not be worried about space or super men.

Best: I don't agree. I think science should be taken as far as we can go. We need to discover what makes this universe tick.

Personally I think it's great that most of the best minds are in science. Science is our destiny.

HENRY THOREAU

I: Thoreau was a great writer who is particularly famous for his treatise entitled “Civil Disobedience”. How do you feel about that book?

HT: Well the book influenced Gandhi and M.L. King and the successful peaceful protests that they led. In recent years many peaceful protests have overthrown corrupt leaders and influenced other governments to change.

It’s not foolproof though. In some countries, it failed. Such as the Tiannamen Square incident in China.

I: Thoreau also argued that people should be very independent. How do you feel about that?

HT: Well I think people are becoming more independent all over the world. Every year they become more so.

I think old-fashioned culture has outlived its usefulness, and now people want to be free to do what they want.

However, like everything, freedom is a double-edged sword. It can make you happy, but it can also confuse you and make you full of regret when things don’t turn out like you hoped.

I: But most old people say what they regret is the things they’ve never done, such as the romances which never happened, the places which they haven’t seen etc.

HT: Well that's true. But I think most people are still not as free as they'd like to be. For instance our education system does not really build any confidence in most people, and our society is still conservative. People are hesitant to really try new things or think about things in a different way. In other words people have a hard time opening their minds.

I: But aren't some people's minds too open?

HT: They can never be too open. But anyway I think we are on the right track with these young people all over the world, as their minds are more open than the previous generation. These young people know that open-mindedness leads to happiness.

I: But are their minds really open? Or does it just seem that way?

HT: Of course it is fashionable to be open-minded these days. And to truly make all people really open-minded might take several generations. But as I say I think we are on the right track.

Young people are much less racist and sexist than before. And they are much more eager to travel and talk on the net with people in exotic, far away countries. And they are more willing to move to new cities, and meet more people. Also they want more love partners, and they want great experiences with these love partners. And more and more of them want to live in peace, and don't want wars. And so on.

I: So you are optimistic about the future?

HT: Humanity still has a long way to go. Especially in developing countries. But it seems now that the vast majority of countries are moving forward economically and socially.

The future outlook is so rosy, I can't believe it's so. It really does look that eventually we will create the best of all possible worlds.

MICHELANGELO

I: Michelangelo was an artist, who some people say was the best artist of all time. He is especially famous for his paintings and sculpture.

M: Well of course back in those days an artist couldn't make money by painting what he wanted, but rather had to do as the church instructed or paint portraits for rich people.

So I think it's largely a waste of time to study really old paintings. I'd rather concentrate on new artists.

However I think that many new artists who are good live an obscure life of poverty because no gallery owner likes their paintings. I think artists therefore should form an international union and build their own galleries. Great artists would then stand a much better chance of becoming famous, especially at a young age. Artists are the best judge of art. Many gallery owners just want to make a profit and don't want to take risks with young artists who paint in an unusual fashion.

I: Some people say Michelangelo was gay.

M: Well so what if he was. Gay people achieve a lot in the arts I think partly because they do not really fit in with society and therefore they think more about life.

If everyone was made to think more about life, we'd have a lot more artists, I think.

I: How do you feel about modern painting?

M: Well I feel there are millions of artists who are technically good, but most seem not to want to be really imaginative.

I think they could be imaginative if imaginative art was more acceptable (i.e. through the artists union I spoke of earlier).

I: Do you think drugs can make people more creative?

M: Well drugs can help you view things from a different perspective. Ultimately though, I think most great works of creativity were done while the artist was sober and drug-free. I mean they may have been taking a lot of drugs at night for instance, but in the day they might write while calm and sane.

I: How should the artist develop him/herself?

M: I think it's great to read great books, travel to far out places and such. But in the end the artist has to practice developing his/her imagination. It takes a long time to become technically good. And it takes a long time to develop one's creativity.

I: How do you feel about the modern world?

M: Sometimes I think it's wonderful, other times I think it's a nightmare. I suppose really it is both.

But really I think one should try not to look at reality from only one perspective. One should try to see the same things in many different ways. Life can be complex and interesting if you want it to be.

People who say the simple life is best are quite simply boring. They ought to try to color their life with the arts, romance, travel and such. They ought to become sophisticated in all of life's better things. These things will lead to happiness.

F. CRICK AND J. WATSON

I: What do you think of Crick and Watson, the discoverers of DNA?

JW: It was a big discovery for sure. It marked the beginning of a new age. I think soon we will be able to make designer babies who are better in every way than people today.

Also I think every criminal should have their DNA stored in crime labs, so if they commit another crime, it will be easy to nab them. Maybe people could vote on whether or not everyone should have their DNA on file. There might be a danger from corrupt cops, but having everyone's DNA would solve most crime cases immediately. All one would need is a hair sample of the criminal in order to identify him or her.

Also I foresee genetic diseases being eliminated in the near future.

And genetically modified food which might taste much better than food today.

And there are many other things besides, such as cloning geniuses, stem cells and so on.

FC: Yes and another useful thing would be to discover more about human evolution. At present this is mostly shrouded in secrecy, as I don't think studies so far have proved anything definitely.

I: Do you think we will also be able to change adult's DNA?

JW: Of course this will one day be possible. But it will be the end of humanity as we know it.

FC: Maybe people will one day be able to change who they are, whenever they want. A simple operation, perhaps, to change their DNA.

I: You don't think it's crazy to alter ourselves?

JW: I think it would be most challenging to decide what kind of mind you should have. It would put one in a god-like position.

FC: Yes our destiny is to turn ourselves into Gods.

I: But surely to play God will have disastrous consequences?

JW: I'm sure the CIA already has secret programs trying to learn how to do this using the best scientists they can find.

FC: Yes, but I don't think our evolutionary future should be decided in secrecy by the CIA.

I: So you mean a handful of scientists could one day determine the future of the whole human race, in secret?

JW: Well there's no point in keeping homo sapiens as we are. It's simply too boring for everyone.

We have to escape this vicious circle that is life, and direct our civilization toward some goal. Life is pointless at the moment.

FC: Things never are what they appear. There are a lot of things happening in the world today that people know nothing about.

And I ask you do people really want to know about the future of our world? I think some do, but the vast majority could care less.

I: How do you feel about the recent reconstruction of the 1918 flu which killed tens of millions worldwide?

JW: Well on one hand it's a great thing as it will help scientists cure future dangerous flues and other viruses like the common cold. On the other hand in another 20 years say, millions of scientists will have the ability to mutate viruses and this could kill hundreds of millions, if not all of us. I am very concerned.

FC: Yes, it's obvious that there is trouble ahead. I think we are going to have some incredibly devastating wars and terrorist acts in the near future. And there's no way we can stop it. It's bizarre how science has done so much for us, and now it looks like it will be the means of our downfall.

J.P. SARTRE

I: Sartre was a famous writer, famous especially for his philosophy of existentialism. However his philosophy is very difficult to read even for scholars and is not really accessible to the common man.

JPS: Well I think it does one a world of good to think about why we exist. The more we think about it, the better a person we can be. Most people think far too little about how to live their life in a meaningful way.

I: So you think that thinking about it will lead somewhere? Isn't it obvious that life has no meaning?

JPS: Well we humans can make anything meaningful if we want to, and people are always doing just that. Some decide children give their lives meaning, others decide having a good time is what life is all about. Still others say the meaning of life is to avoid our own destruction in nuclear war or some such catastrophe. And so on.

I'm just saying if you think about it more, your life will be more logical and fulfilling to you as you are doing what you think is best. You won't be happy if you decide on a career which you don't think is important, and you won't be happy if you just watch TV all night.

I: I'm still not convinced. I think most people realize that there is nothing to discover about the meaning of life. So they just keep it simple.

JPS: I'm trying to say that virtually everything we do has meaning to us or we wouldn't do it. And as with everything there are different ways to

understand meaning. There is a simple way and ways that are more deep as well.

I: Yes but most people can't be deep anyway. And those who think deeply are probably all suicidal and depressed. It's not a pretty world out there.

JPS: Well another of Sartre's works was "Nausea" a book about how ultimately this world is a nightmare for some people. They want to throw up when they think of their own life in this world.

But this is how they WANT to look at the world. As I said earlier you can view the world any way that you wish. There's no need to dwell on the dark side.

I: But if some people like to dwell on the dark side, is that wrong?

JPS: To tell you the truth, I enjoy different perspectives. It is interesting to meet people who've built their character around odd philosophies.

However, as I said, regardless of what your philosophy is, it should be based on experience and long thought.

I: So what you are really saying is that the right kind of culture or upbringing could conceivably make everyone a philosopher?

JPS: Forget about culture; it is for herd animals. But if everyone was given an education that was specially suited to them, they could be a great person. I have no doubt about that.

Maybe in the future, when science has done all it can, maybe then all the clever people in the world could become writers of curriculums and teachers.

A great teacher, one who is a veritable genius, is the most priceless thing on this earth. With great teachers one can do anything.

CALIGULA

I: Caligula was a mad Emperor of Rome who did things such as make his horse a senator. How do you feel about a madman being king?

C: I think the maddest man should be king. It's a mad world after all.

Mad people are so much more interesting than the boring individuals who call themselves sane.

I: But surely madmen are out of control?

C: What's wrong with being out of control?

Shakespeare once said, "Although it is madness, yet there is method in it". I think letting yourself go and doing what you want are the way of the future.

I: So you think our civilization will become crazier and crazier?

C: I think we should set up a "Mad Party" in politics. We should have popular policies such as free alcohol and food for everyone, and then when we get in power do any mad thing we fancy.

I: What sort of mad things do you fancy?

C: I think that orgies are good for the soul. So test everyone for disease and then force them all to participate in massive orgies. Those with diseases could participate in their own special orgies.

People should also be forced to get drunk at least four times a week. We have to devise a system of supervisors (and so create jobs!) who make sure everyone drinks their quota.

Also I think people should be crucified for being conservative. All people must act with a total open-mind at all times. If they do not someone will report them and get a reward. After all in the past conservative people were always killing the clever liberals. So now it's time the shoe was on the other foot.

I: What about horses?

C: Horses are passé. I only care about cars. The new religion will be based on cars. Everyone has to buy one for a ridiculously high price and then worship their car six times daily. If a car hits a pedestrian that pedestrian's family must pay to fix the car and so on.

I: What work should people do?

C: People should not work in the conventional sense since they all get free food and drink. Instead they should rack their brains thinking of ways to please their king or emperor.

Most people love ass-kissing. It's their favorite thing to do since it will earn them favors. And they like to be masochists so they can hurt themselves for the king's sake.

I: But surely a good king grows weary of having his ass kissed?

C: If it is done well, then it is the best gift you can give a king. And it would give people meaning in life. They would have a clear goal.

We need to all stop pretending this stupid civilization is worth something, and start to act like animals. Animals are wise.

VOLTAIRE

I: Voltaire was a great intellectual who was one of the first to speak out for free speech.

V: Free speech has made modern democracy both possible and accountable. A large amount of our economic, social and scientific progress has resulted from free speech.

However I think many great thinkers refuse to take part in the modern milieu and so when injustices occur, they do nothing. And often words are not enough. They have to be backed up with action. You don't get things like freedom for nothing.

I: But do you feel that we live in the best of all possible worlds?

V: No of course not. Many people say our world is improving slowly, but with every new scientific discovery or social trend, things get even more messed up.

I think people like a messed up world, to be frank. For some time now we've had a civilization which could be made great, but no one seems to want it.

And if you look at people's lives, most of them are a mess too. They say they want to have a perfect life, but that's not what they want. A perfect life would bore them, they think in their subconscious.

Let's face it people love the dark side. People don't want a lover who is good, they don't want a boss who is good and they don't want to be good themselves.

Personally I think being good and leading a creative, meaningful life is very rewarding. But people won't even give it a chance.

I think the only reason our world has progressed at all is because many scientists lead good lives and are dedicated to improving things. Everyone else just wants chaos and luxury.

I: Would you say that most people are evil?

V: Of course they will all deny it. But living only for your greedy instincts like an animal is certainly not good.

I guess you could say most people are amoral. They are like wild wolves.

I: But if people are happy doing what they are doing, what's it to you?

V: Most people would be happy running around without clothes or culture like an animal. They just follow the trends. This is why it took us so long to set up civilization. This is why there were 1000 years of darkness in Europe after Rome fell.

Some people say there are millions of great people in this world. But only a handful of those really make a difference or want to make a difference. Almost everyone doesn't care.

I: But what's there to care about?

V: If you don't care about humanity, why are you alive? This should be the question.

I think we need to redesign society. Beginning with the education system we have to teach everyone to really care about others, not themselves. But we also need to teach them to be creative, not humble lambs like the bible told people. Then we need to set up political parties that only accept caring people. Caring people should rule us, and insist that our society is kind.

PIERRE BOULLE

I: Pierre Boule was the author of “Monkey Planet” (filmed as “Planet of the Apes”), a disturbing book about a future earth ruled by talking apes who enslave humans who lost the ability to talk after a massive nuclear war.

PB: Well the book was an excellent satire of human civilization.

Basically animals don't talk so we enslave them. And we've built our civilization on violence and hatred. In the movie the apes behave badly, but they are still superior to humans of our time.

We humans think we are so great, and so many of us have a massive ego, but really we are just animals all dressed up in fancy clothes and surrounded by fancy things.

I: But surely our world is making great progress these days?

PB: The government always says things like that. But in fact people remain the same.

And I think if they one day create super humans, they will have even greater faults than we do. They would not be happy, and they'd destroy the world, that's for sure.

I: So what should one do about this world?

PB: I think they should do what they did in Cambodia, and kill all the intellectuals. After all, such intellectuals only disturb us, and ruin our animal fun.

I: You are joking, right?

PB: This world makes me sick. I dislike people. I'd rather be an animal.

I: But what if everyone in the world was clever and good, like Pierre Boule?

PB: Well it would never happen. The powers that be would rather clone someone like Ronald Reagan rather than anybody good.

I: But how do you feel when I tell you that you are Boule, and you have been cloned by the powers that be?

PB: Well if they did a thing like that, it would only be so they could brainwash that individual and make him do what they want him to do.

I: But what about the intelligence agencies, aren't they clever? Wouldn't they want the world to be better?

PB: Are you kidding? Intelligence serves evil and corrupt leaders, or at best leaders who have no ideas. They themselves are therefore clones of their leaders.

I: So you feel there's no hope at all for this world?

PB: Well the universe goes on regardless of whether we pathetic humans are still around or not. Maybe there is reason somewhere in the universe, but I can't see it. All I see is madness.

It's a mad, senseless world. But almost all people are afraid to admit it. Their survival instincts keep them alive. Just like the sun burns for no reason and the moon comes out every night also for no reason. What reason can you see in the sun? It's a boring, dull orb if you ask me.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

I: Kennedy was the American president who battled communism and helped to give blacks more freedom in America.

JFK: Well someone had to stand up to those dirty communists. People have no idea how miserable we'd all be if communism had prevailed. The commies claimed that they treated people well, but actually few people liked the system once they saw that they wouldn't have much freedom to do as they wish. The communists made good people disappear in large numbers and called it a fair society.

Basically all the communist leaders were tyrants who wanted to totally control the people and these communists could not tolerate any opposition to their evil rule.

None of them really wanted what was best for the people. All the communist leaders just wanted power. They wanted to tell people just be humble and adore their great communist leaders.

No communist party ever allowed elections because they knew that they were deeply unpopular.

I: But many people supported these leaders in the beginning.

JFK: The people were given rosy pictures of a wonderful world; that is why they followed such leaders. Many of them looked at rich Western countries and thought communism would make them all prosperous.

Instead all communism did was make everybody poor and take away everybody's freedom. Take that asshole Castro for example. Why doesn't

he call an election and ask the common people to vote for him. He doesn't because even the common, ordinary people don't support him, generally speaking.

When you take away people's freedom and kill or incarcerate the smart people, then you are evil. Castro is evil, Mao was evil, Ho Chi Minh was evil and Stalin was evil.

And their evil empires have more or less crumbled. Now no powerful nation espouses their doctrine.

Western societies have become successful in so many fields because of freedom. Freedom to do as you wish, and freedom to say what you wish. Democratic governments listen to their free people and try to do as the people wish, or they won't be re-elected.

I: But in many parts of the world people have democracy, but they are still poor.

JFK: Many of these are very new democracies which were only possible because the cold war had ended. The cold war almost resulted in the end of the human race since those evil communist tyrants wanted to take over the whole world.

In the past there were many evil tyrants. Hopefully now, we've seen the last of them.

I: But what if tyranny comes again?

JFK: We need to be vigilant and keep our countries strong. Intelligence agencies must lead the way in making sure evil cannot reappear.

I think the US should work together with other intelligence agencies in all the world's countries, even more than they already do, and make sure no potential tyrant can seize power.

OVID OF ANCIENT ROME

I: No one has ever written a more interesting story of the Gods or God, than Ovid. What do you think of him?

O: Well ancient Rome was not known for its art. Ironically in the Renaissance Italians were the world leaders in art.

Quite clearly the Roman government did not tolerate much in the way of literature or philosophy. They only put up with Ovid because he made people like stories of the Gods.

Of course he was finally exiled far away from Rome. He was just too clever for his own good.

I: But what about these Gods, why did anyone believe?

O: People on the whole just follow their culture. In ancient times, they didn't think about it. They weren't taught to think, and will believe anything. Their leaders, just like today could even get them to sacrifice their lives on the battlefield for no good reason.

I: So you mean people we generally consider to be stupid, actually have just had an inappropriate education?

O: Well the powerful people didn't want to be challenged. So they just gave the people free bread and circuses and games to amuse them...

I: But was it in fact the Emperor and his minions wanted the people to believe in order to control them better and amuse them...if a Roman did a bad thing against the Gods they would be punished.

O: Yes well they have always had Gods and they always will. Successful countries have many people working behind the scenes, who are very intelligent and who can metamorphose things just like magic. But they watch other clever people. Clever, rich and successful people are all watched by the kings, presidents or whatever.

I: But now they don't use the idea of the Gods or God like they used to.

O: Well humans can make almost anything we want, so we are on the way to creating Gods out of ourselves.

So now our God, is the God of money. With billions of dollars we could do anything we desired.

They build temples to the money: big tall skyscrapers...

The Gods like those who strive hard to get money, so the government can get money to build war machines and increase their power.

I: How will these things wind up in the end?

O: Well people are convinced they live better than those in times long past. But in fact it is questionable if things really are better, I would say.

I: But how can you say that?

O: Well in ancient times people died younger. But living to 60 is long enough I think. I don't know what else might be better. People are always the same in every era. Change is illusory.

A MEDICINE WOMAN FROM THE NEAR EAST, CIRCA 50 000 B.C.

I: How do you feel about the modern world compared with ages long ago?

S: I think that both eras were good. Most people today are adapting just fine to the changes that are everywhere, and ancient mankind had to do the same. Life has always been full of changing circumstances. There are always problems and there are always sweet ecstasies.

I: So you think then that mankind has always been optimistic?

S: We shouldn't put ourselves down. Our species has risen to great heights today and tomorrow we'll go still higher. We made something out of nothing. It took us a long time but we have triumphed over nature.

I: How do you feel about ancient shamans?

S: There were always people in every tribe who saw things differently from others, and the shamans were these people, both men and women. They were essentially the intellectuals of the past.

And I think the best of these types of people lead us still today in many fields of endeavor. Some people think our world is without leadership as many politicians are not visionaries. But in the past it was the same. The true medicine men and women did not lead politically, but rather in other fields.

Today we have many great writers, artists, musicians, doctors, charity workers, teachers, scientists and so on who lead our nations by example and who inspire us in oh so many ways.

The shamans are alive and well.

I: So you don't think highly of politicians or chiefs as they used to be known?

S: Anyone who grabs for power and glory is not typically clever. However we need these people to protect our country from being conquered by other power-crazed country's leaders.

Having power does not lead to happiness, and all wise people can see that. You won't achieve anything good by force or being powerful.

I: But surely some politicians are good and mean well?

S: Where are they? In which country? I don't see them.

But it could well be time, in this new era, to get rid of the violent, power-crazed chiefs and basically let society be run by intellectuals.

What I mean is we are at a stage where much of government could be taken out of the hands of politicians and given to others. For example instead of having a minister of science, we could let scientists arrange things by choosing their own leaders. The same could be true of the finance minister. Basically businessmen would choose a leader, and this person would run business and so on. Of course such people chosen will not want the job at first, so you have to make the job more appealing to them. You have to find a way.

I: So you think that if society was run by the best people it would be better?

S: Well it's never really been tried. As I say the problem is finding a way to attract the best people to power, you'd have to ask them what it would take for them to get involved I suppose.

In the end what matters is that we try our best. Put our best foot forward, and then we will have no regrets.

CONCLUSION

Well I think in summary we could say that most of the geniuses interviewed in this book were optimistic and had many ideas for improving the world. But of course that's what geniuses do; they try to make our world more interesting and better.

Yet there are many geniuses in our modern era who are ignored and alone. Obviously we need to use them, as well as the many cloned geniuses, if we are to make our world all it can be. After all, virtually all good changes in our world come from geniuses. We have to nurture them and make sure they can have a chance at success.

And of course some geniuses work at making terrible new weapons for various militaries. But they defend themselves saying there needs to be a balance of power.

Geniuses on the whole are good I would say. Most creativity is wonderful whereas bad deeds are seldom creative.

Indeed our world is good, but it could be better.

Perhaps the future will be brilliant. As Churchill once remarked, "The empires of the future are the empires of the mind".

THE END