

KARL KRAUS (1874-1936)

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Language is the mother of thought, not its handmaiden.

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Do not learn more than you absolutely need to get through life.

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Morality is a venereal disease. Its primary stage is called virtue; its secondary stage, boredom; its tertiary stage, syphilis.

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News reports stand up as people, and people wither into editorials. Clichés walk around on two legs while men are having theirs shot off.

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This is something that I cannot get over -- that a whole line could be written by half a man, that a work could be built on the quicksand of a character.

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A woman is more than just her exterior. The lingerie is also important.

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A man's eroticism is a woman's sexuality.

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Intercourse with a woman is sometimes a satisfactory substitute for masturbation. But it takes a lot of imagination to make it work.

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The mission of the press is to spread culture while destroying the attention span.

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Art serves to rinse out our eyes.

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The esthete stands in the same relation to beauty as the pornographer stands to love, and the politician stands to life.

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An aphorism can never be the whole truth; it is either a half-truth or a truth-and-a-half.

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Children play soldier. That makes sense. But why do soldiers play children?

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Only he is an artist who can make a riddle out of a solution.

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A child learns to discard his ideals, whereas a grown-up never wears out his short pants.

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My unconscious knows more about the consciousness of the psychologist than his consciousness knows about my unconscious.

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Artists have a right to be modest and a duty to be vain.

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Corruption is worse than prostitution. The latter might endanger the morals of an individual, the former invariably endangers the morals of the entire country.

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Squeeze human nature into the straitjacket of criminal justice and crime will appear.

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Culture is the tacit agreement to let the means of subsistence disappear behind the purpose of existence. Civilization is the subordination of the latter to the former.

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The secret of the demagogue is to appear as dumb as his audience so that these people can believe themselves as smart as he is.

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Curses on the law! Most of my fellow citizens are the sorry consequences of uncommitted abortions.

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To me all men are equal: there are jackasses everywhere, and I have the same contempt for them all.

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The real truths are those that can be invented.

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Satires which the censor can understand are justly forbidden.

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When someone behaves like a beast, he says: "After all, one is only human." But when he is treated like a beast, he says, "After all, one is human."

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Democracy means the opportunity to be everyone's slave.

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The devil is an optimist if he thinks he can make people worse than they are.

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The sound principle of a topsy-turvy lifestyle in the framework of an upside-down world order has stood every test.

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Adults who still derive childlike pleasure from hanging gifts of a ready-made education on the Christmas tree of a child waiting outside the door to life do not realize how unreceptive they are making the children to everything that constitutes the true surprise of life.

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Education is a crutch with which the foolish attack the wise to prove that they are not idiots.

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Hate must make a man productive. Otherwise one might as well love.

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It is the style of idealism to console itself for the loss of something old with the ability to gape at something new.

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My language is the common prostitute that I turn into a virgin.

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Democracy divides people into workers and loafers. It makes no provision for those who have no time to work.

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Sentimental irony is a dog that bays at the moon while pissing on graves.

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Journalist: a person without any ideas but with an ability to express them; a writer whose skill is improved by a deadline: the more time he has, the worse he writes.

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If the reporter has killed our imagination with his truth, he threatens our life with his lies.

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Justice is a whore that won't let herself be stiffed, and collects the wages of shame even from the poor.

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The immorality of men triumphs over the amorality of women.

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It is uplifting to lose one's faith in a reality which looks the way it is described in a newspaper.

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If one reads a newspaper only for information, one does not learn the truth, not even the truth about the paper. The truth is that the newspaper is not a statement of contents but the contents themselves; and more than that, it is an instigator.

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The agitator seizes the word. The artist is seized by it.

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The press, that goiter of the world, swells up with the desire for conquest and bursts with the achievements which every day brings. A week has room for the boldest climax of the human drive for expansion.

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Matrimony is the union of meanness and martyrdom.

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Progress celebrates Pyrrhic victories over nature. Progress makes purses out of human skin. When people were traveling in mail coaches, the world got ahead better than it does now that salesmen fly through the air. What good is speed if the brain has oozed out on the way? How will the heirs of this age be taught the most basic motions that are necessary to activate the most complicated machines? Nature can rely on progress; it will avenge it for the outrage it has perpetrated on it.

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Progress, under whose feet the grass mourns and the forest turns into paper from which newspaper plants grow, has subordinated the purpose of life to the means of subsistence and turned us into the nuts and bolts for our tools.

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The ultimate aim of psychoanalysis is to attribute art to mental weakness, and then to trace the weakness back to the point where, according to analytic dogma, it originated -- namely, the lavatory.

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Science is spectral analysis. Art is light synthesis.

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The world has become uglier since it began to look into a mirror every day; so let us settle for the mirror image and do without an inspection of the original.

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Scandal begins when the police put a stop to it.

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Sexuality poorly repressed unsettles some families; well repressed, it unsettles the whole world.

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He who sleeps half a day has won half a life.

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Stupidity gets up early; that is why events are accustomed to happening in the morning.

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Truth is a clumsy servant that breaks the dishes while washing them.

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War: first, one hopes to win; then one expects the enemy to lose; then, one is satisfied that he too is suffering; in the end, one is surprised that everyone has lost.

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When a culture feels that its end has come, it sends for a priest.

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How is the world ruled and led to war?  
Diplomats lie to journalists and believe these lies when they see them in print.

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The heroes of obtrusiveness, people with whom no soldier would lie down in the trenches, though he has to submit to being interviewed by them, break into recently abandoned royal castles so that they can report, "We got there first!" It would be far less shameful to be paid for committing atrocities than for fabricating them.

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Experiences are savings which a miser puts aside. Wisdom is an inheritance which a wastrel cannot exhaust.

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The closer the look one takes at a word, the greater distance from which it looks back.

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The world is a prison. That's why solitary confinement is the best place in it.

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I am already so popular that anyone who vilifies me becomes more popular than I am.

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I and my public understand each other very well: it does not hear what I say, and I don't say what it wants to hear

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Let my style capture all of my time. This should make it an annoyance to my contemporaries. But later generations should hold it to their ears like a shell in which there is a music of an ocean of mud.

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You don't even live once.

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