

## Collected Epigrams

**"I beseech you in the bowels of Christ- think it possible that you may be mistaken."**

- Oliver Cromwell

**"I would sooner believe that Yankee professors could lie, than rock fall from the sky."**

- Thomas Jefferson

**"Certainty is not a gift to humanity- it is a curse."**

- John Donovan

**Science is a process of separating the demonstrably false, from the probably true.**

- Michael Zimmerman

**"I would never die for my beliefs, because I might be wrong"**

- Bertrand Russell

**"Man is a credulous animal and must believe something. In the absence of good grounds for belief, he will be satisfied with bad ones."**

- Bertrand Russell

**"The biggest cause of trouble in the world today is that the stupid people are so sure about things and the intelligent folks are so full of doubts."**

- Bertrand Russell

**"Scientific knowledge is always tentative and uncertain"**

- Henry Pollack

**"All things are possible- but having said that, some things are less likely than others"**

- Bertrand Russell

**"The displacement of the idea that facts and evidence matter by the idea that everything boils down to subjective interests and perspectives is -- second only to American political campaigns -- the most prominent and pernicious manifestation of anti-intellectualism in our time."**

- Larry Laudan, *Science and Relativism*, 1990

**"Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened."**

- Winston Churchill

**"The empty vessel makes the greatest sound"**

- William Shakespeare

**"Insight, untested and unsupported, is an insufficient guarantee of truth."**

- Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (1929)

**"Not to know is bad, not to wish to know is worse."**

- Nigerian Proverb

**"To realize that you do not understand is a virtue; Not to realize that you do not understand is a defect."**

- Lao Tse

**"Never ignore a gut feeling, but never believe that it's enough."**

- Kermit the Frog

**"Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it."**

- Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1801.

**"Professors complain about students who arrive at college with strong convictions but not enough knowledge to argue persuasively for their beliefs. ... Having opinions without knowledge is not of much value; not knowing the difference between them is a positive indicator of ignorance."**

- Diane Ravitch, *The Schools We Deserve*, p. 8

**"Frequently our students come into the university domain thinking that all opinions are equally valid. This view has threatened the intellectual development of students since the time of Socrates because it allows students to think that incomplete, illogical, and nonsystematic thought is 'good enough.' Unfortunately, it never is."**

- Rev. Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., [\*Educating in the Jesuit Tradition\*](#)

**"It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts."**

- Sherlock Holmes, speaking in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "Scandal in Bohemia"

**"The fact that an opinion has been widely held is no evidence that it is not utterly absurd."**

- Bertrand Russell

**"The young specialist in English Lit ... lectured me severely on the fact that in every century people have thought they understood the Universe at last, and in every century they were proved to be wrong. It follows that the one thing we can say about our modern 'knowledge' is that it is wrong. ... My answer to him was, '... when people thought the Earth was flat, they were wrong. When people thought the Earth was spherical they were wrong. But if you think that thinking the Earth is spherical is just as wrong as thinking the Earth is flat, then your view is wronger than both of them put together.'"**

- Isaac Asimov

**"Unlike in the past, ignorance is no longer tempered with humility. Rather, after years of psychotherapy disguised as pedagogy, ignorance is now buoyed by self-esteem -- which, in turn, makes students more resistant to remediation since they don't believe there's a problem. ... For the last two decades, I've taught freshman courses at CUNY and SUNY colleges in the city; the majority of my students have been products of the city's public schools. I am saddened, therefore, to report that more and more of them are arriving in my classes with the impression that their opinions, regardless of their acquaintance with a particular subject, are instantly valid -- indeed, as valid as anyone's. Pertinent knowledge, to them, is not required to render judgment."**

- Mark Goldstein, State University of New York, ["Other Opiates: What Kids Know"](#)

**"I hear more and more from our faculty members that students simply do not turn in assignments, do not attend class with any regularity, do not respect others in their demeanor or behaviors, and do not see any value in learning as a process. These students, they tell me, are convinced that the final product is the goal, whether that is a grade, a certificate, or a degree. All of this, they say, is in much greater frequency now than in the past. I hear it so often now, from so many disciplines and demographics, that I believe it is the most important barrier to good learning in our classrooms, both for these students and for those who are more responsible."**

- Larry Oveson, faculty co-president, Minnesota State College, The Green Sheet, December 2002

**"Study without reflection is a waste of time; reflection without study is dangerous."**

- Confucius

**"He who has imagination without learning has wings and no feet."**

- Joubert