Quotes from Karel Frielink, PhD

Below are some quotes from me. There are already so many websites with quotes from important people, that I choose to put my quotes on my own weblog. Those who are interested in my slightly philosophical thoughts are referred to my personal website.

- Artificial intelligence is inherently ideological. It is neither objective nor neutral.*
- The opposition to and popularity of Friedrich Nietzsche can both be explained in part because of his fundamental opposition to ideas and values of the ruling classes in the centuries before him and in his time. On his own, he challenged everything at once. That is genius.
- How many problems have been caused by Plato's allegory of the cave? Many! That allegory created what Friedrich Nietzsche called the "Hinterwelt" (the idea of a beyond-world, e.g., heaven, afterlife, Realm of Forms or Ideas, Kant's 'the thing in itself' or 'the Good in itself', Schopenhauer's 'will', etcetera). A phenomenon that has dominated and polluted Christianity and all Western, philosophical thought to this day.
- In my view, the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* rightly came to the insight that if we are to talk meaningfully (in a scientific sense) about reality (the world around us), the language we use must have the same inner logical coherence as the world we are describing. The fact that all kinds of topics can be talked about meaningfully in addition, as his *Investigations* show, does not take away the value of the insight he gained earlier. In this sense, I see Wittgenstein II as a complement to Wittgenstein I.
- The one who studies a watch knows that a watchmaker exists. A watch cannot exist without its maker. Many apply the same line of thought when it comes to people, the earth and the universe. There must be a maker. But that is merely an argument from ignorance or because there is no "hard" evidence to the contrary. Or perhaps an argument from, say, a deep desire for footing and certainty in life. In that context: the question of the meaning or significance of life or the universe, is a nonsensical question. The idea that some meaning is inherent in the universe may be like wishful thinking, but nothing in the universe points to any basis for this thought.
- The Parmenidean principle that "all is one" goes much deeper than the paradoxical consequence Parmenides himself attached to it, namely that all claims of change or of non-Being are illogical. It also goes deeper than Heidegger's existentialism which goes back to this principle. From a human perspective, this "oneness" refers to the earth and everything on it and in it. Over the centuries, man has slowly broken this unity. The consequences have been disastrous.
- In a next life (if any) I would like to study philosophy. Then I can express much more intelligently than I do now that I don't have any answers to the most essential questions of life.
- From Socrates onward it is said that education is important and 'the' solution to the most important problems. A democracy can only work if the voters have had a good education, it was and is said. So many centuries later, we have to conclude that the problems have become bigger and more serious, that countless people (still) live in poverty and misery, and that the greatest threat to democracy has become the people themselves. And we are

still talking about the importance of education. I think rightly, but I doubt whether we will ever get on the right track.

- Unfortunately, in discussions with society, intellectuals of integrity have to graze on a meager meadow.
- Every day I know a little less, percentage-wise, of all there is to know.
- A parallel can be drawn between the domestication of animals and the domestication of humans. The latter was only partially self-domestication. Once that was completed it became man as tamer of men. Religion played a key role in that process.
- One of the major challenges still remains the foundation of values and norms, as well as their internalization. The intrinsic value and dignity of every human being should be paramount, as well as their recognition by all. It is a difficult subject, but it is one that occupies my mind.
- Scientific pursuit is a continuous activity, focused on achieving knowledge (truth). There is no final stage, only continuous development. Scientific truths do not carry an absolute character. But that does not mean that there would be, as it were, one truth based on scientific research and another truth for average social media participants. The critical monitoring of science is undoubtedly to be welcomed. But there must be consensus, in the sense that criticism of conclusions that are scientifically based may be equally subject to the requirement of scientific substantiation. Otherwise, such criticism is nothing more than hot air.
- One of the tasks of the philosophy of science is to continually question, in short, the basis on which science is done. Scientists need to be continually challenged when it comes to the fundamentals of science and the ground rules used to do research. Since much is based on intuition (even in mathematics and logic, consider the basis of axioms), it is important that critical questions be constantly asked in that context as well. In that critical attitude ultimately lies the progression for science as a whole.
- There have been many contributions in past centuries (and to this day) to exchanges of thought that are philosophical in nature, but go beyond the core, and are more like linguistic games. One reason may be that we do not yet know the approximate answers to essential questions. Another reason may be the perhaps deep-seated desire to mold reality to our thoughts rather than the other way around. And that may well produce tension that can be camouflaged with language.
- In many discussions about sustainability, a cleaner environment and criticism of large polluting companies, little or no attention is paid to the (co-)responsibility of the consumer society itself, in particular of its individual members. In a sense, we as one-dimensional humans all bear part of the responsibility for the existence of large, polluting companies. There is simply no justifiable reason to just point the finger of blame at others. One cannot point the finger of blame at someone or something without simultaneously pointing a finger back at oneself!
- Scientific and social discussions should be conducted on the basis of substantive arguments and not ad hominem or emotional arguments. Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen. A recent example is that in some discussions substantive arguments are not addressed at all because of the fact that those arguments were brought forward by white men aged 50+. They got a response along the line 'do not bother us with your white privilege'. That is just as wrong as excluding someone from a discussion because

he or she is of color or follower of another religion or has no religion at all. If you are able to substantiate your point of view well, you don't need an improper excuse to avoid a discussion.

- The economy is about numbers, society is about people!
- Democracy and human civilization have developed remarkably, particularly from the 7th century B.C.E. onward. 3 April 2019: "They say that the sound of windmills causes cancer," said the American president, after which he mimicked a windmill….
- A "mushroom treatment" of members (keeping members in the dark) by a Managing Board is not okay!
- Everybody wants a change. But not every change is also an improvement. What people want is a perspective on a better future. For instance: A nice job. A good income. Proper education. Good and affordable healthcare. A clean environment. Incorruptible politicians. Good roads. A society in which mutual respect is very normal. In short, what people want is well-being. This means well-being for everybody and not merely for a small group.
- I know that too often we are far from this principle, but justice must be served equally to all. There cannot be one way for those in positions of power, privilege and responsibility and another for those that are not.
- If we want real progress, we must first of all ignore all the comments from negative people on social media, and especially not respond to them! Vinegar suckers are a problem for themselves. Let them not also be our problem. Be and stay positive!
- Be willing to accept that you might be wrong!
- Like Friedrich Nietzsche, I am looking for 'the' human who is able to conquer and overcome himself, and is able to transform the world into a truly beautiful place to live. Where in history have we lost 'the' authentic and decent humans?
- The interesting thing about scientific research is that it takes you to roads that you have never been to before or that you have never seriously researched.
- There is little chance that I will change my tone, but certainly not my principles.
- In response to Søren Kierkegaard's theory on personal despair. I see despair above all as an expression of powerlessness. You want things to be different from what they are or are going to be, but you don't have the power to achieve that (fighting poverty or corruption, wanting to be a different person yourself, you name it). Or you want to understand something (e.g. our 'being', the origin of the universe, the mathematical code), but you have reached your intellectual ceiling. I don't know if the struggle with that can eventually lead to becoming completely one with yourself, because I don't know what that means, but in the end it's all about learning to deal with it and accepting your own limitations, without getting bogged down in frustrations.
- Why does pessimism exist as a structural phenomenon? Because we are born as human beings and die after a while. There is no intrinsic meaning attached to all that. Optimism in the sense intended here can only be derived by man from his own imagination. A fantasy with which he creates a "Hinterwelt" (Nietzsche). But the question remains how strongly man can continue to believe in his own fantasy.
- For years, the social media has shown an increasing number of people writing for the garbage dump of history.

- Social media often resembles a large pasture where several herds are roaring at each other in capital letters. A cacophony of irrational noises in which gullibility, moral self-aggrandizement, an inherent lack of humanity, and the boundless need for attention, converge.
- A not so funny fact is that in particular people in whom this is profoundly lacking, claim that their opinions are based on common sense.
- It seems that education and being raised by adults have not been able to prevent people who are not too knowledgeable from criticizing and even calling names to people they do not know on the social media all day long. I sometimes call them vinegar suckers.
- I think the question of whether people are good or bad by nature is the wrong one. At the time of the Big Bang, 'good' and 'bad' did not exist, and 'values' and 'norms' did not either. In the course of evolution (on earth) these phenomena have arisen. Also, there is no absolute standard for determining who is morally right. Nevertheless, many people do have the deep conviction that certain things (simply killing someone without reason, for example) are wrong, wherever and whenever this (in history) takes place.
- Labor is a cost item to business (part of the overhead). At the same time, it is the most important off-balance asset.
- Heavily, loneliness weighs on you as you try to let the magnificence of the universe sink in.
- A truly free market gives way to greed, selfishness and a lust for power. The result is prosperity for few and poverty (and other misery) for many. The government is there to take corrective action. The government is from, for and by the people. A well-functioning government is the friend of many and the enemy of few.
- If we really want to change the course of history, we must begin to regard the earth as our principal and ourselves as its agents.
- The universe is immense. There are billions of stars and planets. For the time being we only know one planet with human life. That this is special and unique escapes many people. These people are too busy destroying the earth. If only they would be able to recognize the unique character of the earth in the universe. It would make so much difference.
- I am not sure whether time existed back then, but thinking about (the meaning of) life, death, and pretty much everything around it starts for me one second before the Big Bang.
- There is still a huge "gap" between the theories of "big" or classical physics (on the basis of which predictions can be made) and those of "small" physics (quantum mechanics, on the basis of which probabilities can be calculated). However, this "gap" does not exist in the universe itself: in the universe everything fits together perfectly and there is perfect harmony.
- Greed and selfishness cause a lot of misery in the world. Unfortunately, these phenomena seem to be deeply rooted in too many people. And if they also have no scruples, the suffering they cause is immense. It is frustrating not to know what we can effectively do about it.
- If I had known 30 years ago what I know now, I would have known even more by now.
- It's not just how we treat Mother Earth and all creatures great and small that matters, but also with which image of man we look at our fellow human beings. In my view people

are intrinsically equal. Humanity cannot survive if an insufficient number of people behave themselves as fellow human beings, in the sense that they also feel responsible for the well-being of others.

- Every person has the moral duty to be a respectful fellow human being.
- Income and wealth inequality are a growing problem worldwide: economic and social. There is an enormous accumulation of capital in a small group of people. This is not good for any economy. The purchasing power of the masses means more for an economy than the (largely unused) purchasing power of billionaires.
- Liberty means that the people should be able to decide how the money is spent, not that a handful of billionaires decide that for 99% of the money.
- There are so many people who accuse others of herd behavior, that they now form a herd themselves.
- I actually don't care what others think of what I eat and drink. I'm just curious and would like to understand why some people think you should order an ordinary Coke with a hamburger. But maybe I'd better deal with things that really interest me, like questions about the universe and black holes.
- In a conversation with a sparring partner, I generally look for confirmation as far as the intended course of action is concerned, and improvement in respect of the execution.
- The real world is the physical world. Everything else is speculation, even after two thousand years of research and philosophizing.
- Somewhere in man's development, we as a species have taken the wrong turn. The development of civilization in recent centuries has been more than disappointing. That development is not progressive, but fundamentally negative. Man, like no other living being, has the mental capacity to grow into a very beautiful and special being. We could long ago have been the Superhuman envisioned by Friedrich Nietzsche. Instead, man has degenerated into a particularly meager reflection of that Superhuman, and has collectively developed into a being bent on self-destruction. And when self-destruction is accomplished, there will be no tears shed anywhere in the universe for that.
- In the entire history of the universe, subjectivity will be present for only an infinitesimal moment. Is that extremely tiny moment over then there will be no more earthly knowledge in the universe, and there will be no more human feelings and thoughts. The universe will then again be completely a thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*). It will then not be perceived, but will still exist.

Source: https://www.curacao-law.com/quotes-from-karel/

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* I posted my statement about the nature of Artificial Intelligence on LinkedIn on August 8, 2024. The number of AI experts has grown so tremendously in recent years (where do they even come from?) that I assumed there would be responses to this fundamental proposition. There were zero substantive responses. That may be called disappointing and worrisome!