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An aphorism is "a short pithy statement or maxim," but beneath this definition lies a wealth of wit and insight to which neither the word nor a brief description can do justice. This anthology demonstrates just how rewarding an art form the aphorism can be, and just how brilliantly the aphorist can illuminate the hidden truth, or lay bare the ironies of existence. Specific sections on desires and longings, self-doubt, fame and reputations, happiness and sorrow, cover the whole range of aphoristic literature. This book brings together the most diverse figures-the classic aphorists, like La Rochefoucauld; the philosophers, from the Greeks to Samuel Johnson to Virginia Woolf-as well as statesmen, scientists, boulevardiers, Olympians, and gadflies. John Gross draws on their wisdom and wit to produce an anthology that will be referred to time and time again.

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