



Servus elaphus



Charles Foster
Edges

Workpoints

1. We are Copernican creatures, sitting on the far edge of a fast-expanding universe, hurtling into the dark and cold.
2. We are mortal creatures who refuse to acknowledge our mortality: accelerating (for that is the strange way time works), towards the earth or the municipal crematorium beyond the ring road.
3. We are creatures of habit, easily bored, and amused only by unhabitual things. A great artist is one who—though he might be standing on the shoulders of others—reaches to places previously unvisited. Leonardo da Vinci wrote that he had invented or discovered another kind of perspective, ‘which I call “aerial”’. It gave depth to the air itself. He was great. Michelangelo, it is said, invented a new type of art every time he picked up his brush or his chisel. He was great.
4. The allure of the non-habitual is shown not only by Renaissance Florence and its literary analogues, but also by filth. We can’t pretend that we’re excited only by *The Virgin of the Rocks*. Perverts and pornographers beckon from the shadowlands, and we creep out to them.
5. A great scholar is one who knows that paradigms exist to be smashed, not revered. This is not how most scholarship is perceived. A good scholar, these days, is one who adds footnotes to footnotes, and a great scholar one who adds footnotes to footnotes to footnotes.
6. We are comfort-loving animals for whom comfort is deadly. Sofas, TV dinners, central heating and air-con kill. We need to sweat, shiver and pant. Cold and hot water immersion will save you: wallowing in lukewarm water won’t.
7. Altruism and courage flower most exuberantly at the margins of life and viability: in the hospice and the ghetto. So do cruelty and barbarism. Kurtz lived in the margins.