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Quotes by Russell, Bertrand

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To fear love is to fear life, and those who fear life are already three parts dead.

- Russell, Bertrand

Most people would rather die than think: many do.

- Russell, Bertrand

All human activity is prompted by desire.

- Russell, Bertrand

Although this may seem a paradox, all exact science is dominated by the idea of approximation. When a man tells you that he knows the exact truth about anything, you are safe in inferring that he is an inexact man.

- Russell, Bertrand

The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, but wiser people so full of doubts.

- Russell, Bertrand

In all affairs it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted.

- Russell, Bertrand

A sense of duty is useful in work but offensive in personal relations. People wish to be liked, not to be endured with patient resignation.

- Russell, Bertrand

To acquire immunity to eloquence is of the utmost importance to the citizens of a democracy.

- Russell, Bertrand

We know too much and feel too little. At least, we feel too little of those creative emotions from which a good life springs.

- Russell, Bertrand

In America everybody is of opinion that he has no social superiors, since all men are equal, but he does not admit that he has no social inferiors.

- Russell, Bertrand

Ethics is in origin the art of recommending to others the sacrifices required for cooperation with oneself.

- Russell, Bertrand

Organic life, we are told, has developed gradually from the protozoon to the philosopher, and this development, we are assured, is indubitably an advance. Unfortunately it is the philosopher, not the protozoon, who gives us this assurance.

- Russell, Bertrand

An extra-terrestrial philosopher, who had watched a single youth up to the age of twenty-one and had never come across any other human being, might conclude that it is the nature of human beings to grow continually taller and wiser in an indefinite progress towards perfection; and this generalization would be just as well founded as the generalization which evolutionists base upon the previous history of this planet.

- Russell, Bertrand

In the revolt against idealism, the ambiguities of the word experience have been perceived, with the result that realists have more and more avoided the word.

- Russell, Bertrand

Even when the experts all agree, they may well be mistaken.

- Russell, Bertrand

Those who forget good and evil and seek only to know the facts are more likely to achieve good than those who view the world through the distorting medium of their own desires.

- Russell, Bertrand

With the introduction of agriculture mankind entered upon a long period of meanness, misery, and madness, from which they are only now being freed by the beneficent operation of the machine.

- Russell, Bertrand

The fundamental defect with fathers is that they want their children to be a credit to them.

- Russell, Bertrand

Fear is the main source of superstition, and one of the main sources of cruelty. To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.

- Russell, Bertrand

Folly is perennial, yet the human race has survived.

- Russell, Bertrand

If fifty million people say a foolish thing, it is still a foolish thing.

- Russell, Bertrand

Freedom of opinion can only exist when the government thinks itself secure.

- Russell, Bertrand

Drunkenness is temporary suicide.

- Russell, Bertrand

No one gossips about other people's secret virtues.

- Russell, Bertrand

There is no nonsense so arrant that it cannot be made the creed of the vast majority by adequate government action.

- Russell, Bertrand

To be happy in this world, especially when youth is past, it is necessary to feel oneself not merely an isolated individual whose day will soon be over, but part of the stream of life slowing on from the first germ to the remote and unknown future.

- Russell, Bertrand

Anything you're good at contributes to happiness.

- Russell, Bertrand

Few people can be happy unless they hate some other person, nation, or creed.

- Russell, Bertrand

Happiness is not best achieved by those who seek it directly.

- Russell, Bertrand

If there were in the world today any large number of people who desired their own happiness more than they desired the unhappiness of others, we could have paradise in a few years.

- Russell, Bertrand

Men who are unhappy, like men who sleep badly, are always proud of the fact.

- Russell, Bertrand

The good life, as I conceive it, is a happy life. I do not mean that if you are good you will be happy; I mean that if you are happy you will be good.

- Russell, Bertrand

The secret of happiness is this: let your interests be as wide as possible, and let your reactions to the things and persons that interest you be as far as possible friendly rather than hostile.

- Russell, Bertrand

To be without some of the things you want is an indispensable part of happiness.

- Russell, Bertrand

Hatred of enemies is easier and more intense than love of friends. But from men who are more anxious to injure opponents than to benefit the world at large no great good is to be expected.

- Russell, Bertrand

One of the signs of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one's work is terribly important.

- Russell, Bertrand

Extreme hopes are born from extreme misery.

- Russell, Bertrand

Men are born ignorant, not stupid; they are made stupid by education.

- Russell, Bertrand

A hallucination is a fact, not an error; what is erroneous is a judgment based upon it.

- Russell, Bertrand

The main things which seem to me important on their own account, and not merely as a means to other account, and not merely as a means to other things, are knowledge, art instinctive happiness, and relations of friendship or affection.

- Russell, Bertrand

If any philosopher had been asked for a definition of infinity, he might have produced some unintelligible rigmarole, but he would certainly not have been able to give a definition that had any meaning at all.

- Russell, Bertrand

The trouble with the world is that the stupid are cocksure and the intelligent full of doubt.

- Russell, Bertrand

The degree of one's emotions varies inversely with one's knowledge of the facts- the less you know the hotter you get.

- Russell, Bertrand

There is much pleasure to be gained from useless knowledge.

- Russell, Bertrand

The essence of the Liberal outlook lies not in what opinions are held, but in how they are held: instead of being held dogmatically, they are held tentatively, and with a consciousness that new evidence may at any moment lead to their abandonment.

- Russell, Bertrand

The good life is one inspired by life and guided by knowledge.

- Russell, Bertrand

The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long.

- Russell, Bertrand

Life is nothing but a competition to be the criminal rather than the victim.

- Russell, Bertrand

Indignation is a submission of our thoughts, but not of our desires.

- Russell, Bertrand

No matter how eloquently a dog may bark, he cannot tell you that his parents were poor, but honest.

- Russell, Bertrand

Many people when they fall in love look for a little haven of refuge from the world, where they can be sure of being admired when they are not admirable, and praised when they are not praiseworthy.

- Russell, Bertrand

The root of the matter the thing I mean is love, Christian love, or compassion. If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide for action, a reason for courage, an imperative necessity for intellectual honesty.

- Russell, Bertrand

Machines are worshipped because they are beautiful and valued because they confer power; they are hated because they are hideous and loathed because they impose

slavery.

- Russell, Bertrand

Marriage is for women the commonest mode of livelihood, and the total amount of undesired sex endured by women is probably greater in marriage than in prostitution.

- Russell, Bertrand

Freedom comes only to those who no longer ask of life that it shall yield them any of those personal goods that are subject to the mutations of time.

- Russell, Bertrand

It is preoccupation with possessions, more than anything else, that prevents men from living freely and nobly.

- Russell, Bertrand

Mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth, but supreme beauty a beauty cold and austere, like that of sculpture.

- Russell, Bertrand

Mathematics may be defined as the subject in which we never know what we are talking about, nor whether what we are saying is true.

- Russell, Bertrand

We have in fact, two kinds of morality, side by side: one that we preach, but do not practice, and another that we practice, but seldom preach.

- Russell, Bertrand

There is no need to worry about mere size. We do not necessarily respect a fat man more than a thin man. Sir Isaac Newton was very much smaller than a hippopotamus, but we do not on that account value him less.

- Russell, Bertrand

Obscenity is whatever happens to shock some elderly and ignorant magistrate.

- Russell, Bertrand

It is clear that thought is not free if the profession of certain opinions makes it impossible to earn a living.

- Russell, Bertrand

Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.

- Russell, Bertrand

Three passions simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life; the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind.

- Russell, Bertrand

Patriotism is the willingness to kill and be killed for trivial reasons.

- Russell, Bertrand

This idea of weapons of mass exterminations utterly horrible and is something which no one with one spark of humanity can tolerate. I will not pretend to obey a government which is organizing a mass massacre of mankind.

- Russell, Bertrand

Bad philosophers may have a certain influence; good philosophers, never.

- Russell, Bertrand

Nine-tenths of the appeal of pornography is due to the indecent feelings concerning sex which moralists inculcate in the young; the other tenth is physiological, and will occur in one way or another whatever the state of the law may be.

- Russell, Bertrand

Real life is, to most men, a long second-best, a perpetual compromise between the ideal and the possible; but the world of pure reason ;knows no compromise, no practical limitations, no barrier to the creative activity.

- Russell, Bertrand

The fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics.

- Russell, Bertrand

A process which led from the amoebae to man appeared to the philosophers to be obviously a progress -- though whether the amoebae would agree with this opinion is not known.

- Russell, Bertrand

Why is propaganda so much more successful when it stirs up hatred than when it tries to stir up friendly feeling?

- Russell, Bertrand

Reason is a harmonizing, controlling force rather than a creative one.

- Russell, Bertrand

Religions, which condemn the pleasures of sense, drive men to seek the pleasures of power. Throughout history power has been the vice of the ascetic.

- Russell, Bertrand

One must care about a world one will not see.

- Russell, Bertrand

Aristotle could have avoided the mistake of thinking that women have fewer teeth than men, by the simple device of asking Mrs. Aristotle to keep her mouth open while he counted.

- Russell, Bertrand

Science is what you know, philosophy what you don't know.

- Russell, Bertrand

In science men have discovered an activity of the very highest value in which they are no longer, as in art, dependent for progress upon the appearance of continually greater genius, for in science the successors stand upon the shoulders of their predecessors; where one man of supreme genius has invented a method, a thousand lesser men can apply it.

- Russell, Bertrand

Can a society in which thought and technique are scientific persist for a long period, as, for example, ancient Egypt persisted, or does it necessarily contain within itself forces which must bring either decay or explosion?

- Russell, Bertrand

Sin is geographical.

- Russell, Bertrand

The slave is doomed to worship time and fate and death, because they are greater than anything he finds in himself, and because all his thoughts are of things which they devour.

- Russell, Bertrand

We are all prone to the malady of the introvert who, with the manifold spectacle of the world spread out before him, turns away and gazes only upon the emptiness within. But let us not imagine there is anything grand about the introvert's unhappiness.

- Russell, Bertrand

To expect a personality to survive the disintegration of the brain is like expecting a cricket club to survive when all of its members are dead.

- Russell, Bertrand

When the intensity of emotional conviction subsides, a man who is in the habit of reasoning will search for logical grounds in favor of the belief which he finds in himself.

- Russell, Bertrand

What we need is not the will to believe, but the wish to find out.

- Russell, Bertrand

Unless one is taught what to do with success after getting it, achievement of it must inevitably leave him prey to boredom.

- Russell, Bertrand

Boredom is a vital problem for the moralist, since at least half the sins of mankind are caused by the fear of it.

- Russell, Bertrand

Advocates of capitalism are very apt to appeal to the sacred principles of liberty, which are embodied in one maxim: The fortunate must not be restrained in the exercise of tyranny over the unfortunate.

- Russell, Bertrand

Of all forms of caution, caution in love is perhaps the most fatal to true happiness.

- Russell, Bertrand

What men want is not knowledge, but certainty.

- Russell, Bertrand

All movements go too far.

- Russell, Bertrand

Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth more than ruin more even than death. Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible, thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habit. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid. Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, and the chief glory of man.

- Russell, Bertrand

Many people would sooner die than think. In fact they do.

- Russell, Bertrand

Thought is great and swift and free, the light of the world, the chief glory of man.

- Russell, Bertrand

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- Russell, Bertrand

The time you enjoy wasting is not wasted time.

- Russell, Bertrand

A truer image of the world, I think, is obtained by picturing things as entering into the stream of time from an eternal world outside, than from a view which regards time as the devouring tyrant of all that is.

- Russell, Bertrand

The theoretical understanding of the world, which is the aim of philosophy, is not a matter of great practical importance to animals, or to savages, or even to most civilized men.

- Russell, Bertrand

I had supposed until that time that it was quite common for parents to love their children,

but the war persuaded me that it is a rare exception. I had supposed that most people liked money better than almost anything else, but I discovered that they liked destruction even better. I had supposed that intellectuals frequently loved truth, but I found here again that not ten per cent of them prefer truth to popularity.

- Russell, Bertrand

To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.

- Russell, Bertrand

For my part I distrust all generalizations about women, favorable and unfavorable, masculine and feminine, ancient and modern; all alike, I should say, result from paucity of experience.

- Russell, Bertrand

Our instinctive emotions are those that we have inherited from a much more dangerous world, and contain, therefore, a larger portion of fear than they should.

- Russell, Bertrand

I am paid by the word, so I always write the shortest words possible.

- Russell, Bertrand

If all our happiness is bound up entirely in our personal circumstances it is difficult not to demand of life more than it has to give.

- Russell, Bertrand

There will still be things that machines cannot do. They will not produce great art or great literature or great philosophy; they will not be able to discover the secret springs of happiness in the human heart; they will know nothing of love and friendship.

- Russell, Bertrand

The most valuable things in life are not measured in monetary terms. The really important things are not houses and lands, stocks and bonds, automobiles and real state, but friendships, trust, confidence, empathy, mercy, love and faith.

- Russell, Bertrand

The most savage controversies are those about matters as to which there is no good evidence either way.

- Russell, Bertrand

Conventional people are roused to fury by departures from convention, largely because they regard such departures as a criticism of themselves.

- Russell, Bertrand

The only thing that will redeem mankind is cooperation.

- Russell, Bertrand

Man is a credulous animal, and must believe something; in the absence of good grounds

for belief, he will be satisfied with bad ones.

- Russell, Bertrand

The opinions that are held with passion are always those for which no good ground exists; indeed the passion is the measure of the holders lack of rational conviction. Opinions in politics and religion are almost always held passionately.

- Russell, Bertrand

Why should I allow that same God to tell me how to raise my kids, who had to drown His own?

- Russell, Bertrand

In the visible world, the Milky Way is a tiny fragment; within this fragment, the solar system is an infinitesimal speck, and of this speck our planet is a microscopic dot. On this dot, tiny lumps of impure carbon and water, of complicated structure, with somewhat unusual physical and chemical properties, crawl about for a few years, until they are dissolved again into the elements of which they are compounded. They divide their time between labour designed to postpone the moment of dissolution for themselves and frantic struggles to hasten it for others of their kind.

- Russell, Bertrand



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