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Quotes about Philosophers and Philosophy

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Unintelligible answers to insoluble problems.

- Adams, Henry Brooks

The philosopher is like a man fasting in the midst of universal intoxication. He alone perceives the illusion of which all creatures are the willing playthings; he is less duped than his neighbor by his own nature. He judges more sanely, he sees things as they are. It is in this that his liberty consists -- in the ability to see clearly and soberly, in the power of mental record.

- Amiel, Henri Frederic

Because philosophy arises from awe, a philosopher is bound in his way to be a lover of myths and poetic fables. Poets and philosophers are alike in being big with wonder.

- Aquinas, St. Thomas

The traditional disputes of philosophers are, for the most part, as unwarranted as they are unfruitful.

- Ayer, Sir Alfred Jules

We are much beholden to Machiavel and others, that write what men do, and not what they ought to do.

- Bacon, Francis

In it he proves that all things are true and states how the truths of all contradictions may be reconciled physically, such as for example that white is black and black is white; that one can be and not be at the same time; that there can be hills without valleys; that nothingness is something and that everything, which is, is not. But take note that he proves all these unheard-of paradoxes without any fallacious or sophistical reasoning.

- Bergerac, Savinien Cyrano De

What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind.

- Berkeley, George

A route of many roads leading from nowhere to nothing.

- Bierce, Ambrose

All are lunatics, but he who can analyze his delusion is called a philosopher.

- Bierce, Ambrose

Existentialism is about being a saint without God; being your own hero, without all the sanction and support of religion or society.

- Brookner, Anita

Look, I really don't want to wax philosophic, but I will say that if you're alive, you got to flap

your arms and legs, you got to jump around a lot, you got to make a lot of noise, because life is the very opposite of death. And therefore, as I see it, if you're quiet, you're not living. You've got to be noisy, or at least your thoughts should be noisy and colorful and lively.

- Brooks, Mel

Real philosophy seeks rather to solve than to deny.

- Bulwer-Lytton, Edward G.

One may summon his philosophy when they are beaten in battle, not till then.

- Burroughs, John

All philosophies, if you ride them home, are nonsense, but some are greater nonsense than others.

- Butler, Samuel

Pythagoras, Locke, Socrates -- but pages might be filled up, as vainly as before, with the sad usage of all sorts of sages, who in his life-time, each was deemed a bore! The loftiest minds outrun their tardy ages.

- Byron, Lord

Those who lack the courage will always find a philosophy to justify it.

- Camus, Albert

The profoundest thoughts of the philosophers have something trickle about them. A lot disappears in order for something to suddenly appear in the palm of the hand.

- Canetti, Elias

Tell me what gives a man or woman their greatest pleasure and I'll tell you their philosophy of life.

- Carnegie, Dale

To philosophize is only another way of being afraid and leads hardly anywhere but to cowardly make-believe.

- Celine, Louis-Ferdinand

Philosophy, like medicine, has plenty of drugs, few good remedies, and hardly any specific cures.

- Chamfort, Sebastien-Roch Nicolas De

A new philosophy generally means in practice the praise of some old vice.

- Chesterton, Gilbert K.

The most dangerous criminal now is the entirely lawless modern philosopher. Compared to him, burglars and bigamists are essentially moral men.

- Chesterton, Gilbert K.

There is nothing so absurd that some philosopher has not already said it.

- Cicero, Marcus T.

Rightly defined philosophy is simply the love of wisdom.

- Cicero, Marcus T.

Philosophy is a bully that talks loud when the danger is at a distant; but, the moment she is pressed hard by an enemy, she is nowhere to be found and leaves the brunt of the battle to be fought by her steady, humble comrade, religion.

- Colton, Charles Caleb

There is nothing so strange and so unbelievable that it has not been said by one philosopher or another.

- Descartes, Rene

Philosophers are only men in armor after all.

- Dickens, Charles

The philosopher has never killed any priests, whereas the priest has killed a great many philosophers.

- Diderot, Denis

Of what use is a philosopher who doesn't hurt anybody's feelings?

- Diogenes of Sinope

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt, the element of fire is quite put out; the Sun is lost, and the earth, and no mans wit can well direct him where to look for it.

- Donne, John

I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in.

- Edwards, Oliver

Out of Plato come all things that are still written and debated about among men of thought.

- Emerson, Ralph Waldo

If you set your heart upon philosophy, you must straightway prepare yourself to be laughed at and mocked by many who will say Behold a philosopher arisen among us! or How came you by that brow of scorn? But do you cherish no scorn, but hold to those things which seem to you the best, as one set by God in that place. Remember too, that if you abide in those ways, those who first mocked you, the same shall afterwards reverence you; but if you yield to them, you will be laughed at twice as much as before.

- Epictetus

As an example of just how useless these philosophers are for any practice in life there is Socrates himself, the one and only wise man, according to the Delphic Oracle. Whenever

he tried to do anything in public he had to break off amid general laughter. While he was philosophizing about clouds and ideas, measuring a flea's foot and marveling at a midge's humming, he learned nothing about the affairs of ordinary life.

- Erasmus, Desiderius

I have always taken as the standard of the mode of teaching and writing, not the abstract, particular, professional philosopher, but universal man, that I have regarded man as the criterion of truth, and not this or that founder of a system, and have from the first placed the highest excellence of the philosopher in this, that he abstains, both as a man and as an author, from the ostentation of philosophy, i.e., that he is a philosopher only in reality, not formally, that he is a quiet philosopher, not a loud and still less a brawling one.

- Feuerbach, Ludwig

If I wished to punish a province, I would have it governed by philosophers.

- Frederick The Great, (Frederick II)

Philosophy goes no further than probabilities, and in every assertion keeps a doubt in reserve.

- Froude, James A.

Art requires philosophy, just as philosophy requires art. Otherwise, what would become of beauty?

- Gauguin, Paul

The philosopher must station themselves in the middle.

- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang Von

There is nothing so absurd or ridiculous that has not at some time been said by some philosopher. Fontenelle says he would undertake to persuade the whole public of readers to believe that the sun was neither the cause of light or heat, if he could only get six philosophers on his side.

- Goldsmith, Oliver

The courage of the truth is the first condition of philosophic study.

- Hegel, Georg

Truth in philosophy means that concept and external reality correspond.

- Hegel, Georg

To be a real philosopher all that is necessary is to hate some one else's type of thinking.

- James, William

I know that you, ladies and gentlemen, have a philosophy, each and all of you, and that the most interesting and important thing about you is the way in which it determines the perspective in your several worlds.

- James, William

Philosophy is at once the most sublime and the most trivial of human pursuits.

- James, William

While wading through the whimsies, the puerilities, and unintelligible jargon of this work
[Plato's Republic], I laid it down often to ask myself how it could have been that
the world should have so long consented to give reputation to such nonsense as this?

- Jefferson, Thomas

If he really thinks there is no distinction between vice and virtue, when he leaves our
houses let us count our spoons.

- Johnson, Samuel

All the interests of my reason, speculative as well as practical, combine in the three
following questions: 1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope?

- Kant, Immanuel

Do not all charms fly at the mere touch of cold philosophy? There was an awful rainbow
once in heaven: we know her woof, her texture; she is given in the dull catalogue of
common things. Philosophy will clip an angel's wings, conquer all mysteries by rule and
line, empty the haunted air, and gnome mine unweave a rainbow.

- Keats, John

Philosophy always requires something more, requires the eternal, the true, in contrast to
which even the fullest existence as such is but a happy moment.

- Kierkegaard, Soren

In the information age, you don't teach philosophy as they did after feudalism. You perform it. If Aristotle were alive today he'd have a talk show.

- Leary, Timothy

We often have need of a profound philosophy to restore to our feelings their original state of innocence, to find our way out of the rubble of things alien to us, to begin to feel for ourselves and to speak ourselves, and I might almost say to exist ourselves.

- Lichtenberg, Georg C.

If this is philosophy it is at any rate a philosophy that is not in its right mind.

- Lichtenberg, Georg C.

When philosophers try to be politicians they generally cease to be philosophers.

- Lippmann, Walter

I have a simple philosophy. Fill what's empty. Empty what's full and scratch where it itches.

- Longworth, Alice Roosevelt

In Plato's opinion, man was made for philosophy; in Bacon's opinion, philosophy was made for man.

- Macaulay, Thomas B.

There is no philosophy without the art of ignoring objections.

- Maistre, Joseph De

Philosophy stands in the same relation to the study of the actual world as masturbation to sexual love.

- Marx, Karl

The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.

- Marx, Karl

Why, ever since Adam, who has got to the meaning of this great allegory -- the world?

Then we pygmies must be content to have out paper allegories but ill comprehended.

- Melville, Herman

Philosophy consists very largely of one philosopher arguing that all others are jackasses.

He usually proves it, and I should add that he also usually proves that he is one himself.

- Mencken, H. L.

There is no record in history of a happy philosopher.

- Mencken, H. L.

Any genuine philosophy leads to action and from action back again to wonder, to the enduring fact of mystery.

- Miller, Henry

How charming is divine philosophy! Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose, but musical as is Apollo's lute, and a perpetual feast of nectared sweets, where no crude surfeit reigns.

- Milton, John

Philosophy is doubt.

- Montaigne, Michel Eyquem De

Philosophy! Empty thinking by ignorant conceited men who think they can digest without eating!

- Murdoch, Iris

In philosophy if you aren't moving at a snail's pace you aren't moving at all.

- Murdoch, Iris

The philosopher believes that the value of his philosophy lies in the whole, in the building: posterity discovers it in the bricks with which he built and which are then often used again for better building: in the fact, that is to say, that building can be destroyed and

nonetheless possess value as material.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich

Actual philosophers... are commanders and law-givers: they say thus it shall be!, it is they who determine the Wherefore and Whither of mankind, and they possess for this task the preliminary work of all the philosophical laborers, of all those who have subdued the past -- they reach for the future with creative hand, and everything that is or has been becomes for them a means, an instrument, a hammer. Their knowing is creating, their creating is a law giving, their will to truth is -- will to power. Are there such philosophers today? Have there been such philosophers? Must there not be such philosophers?

- Nietzsche, Friedrich

Plato was a bore.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich

Every philosophy is the philosophy of some stage of life.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich

To have no time for philosophy is to be a true philosopher.

- Pascal, Blaise

The origins of disputes between philosophers is, that one class of them have undertaken to raise man by displaying his greatness, and the other to debase him by showing his miseries.

- Pascal, Blaise

Apart from the known and the unknown, what else is there?

- Pinter, Harold

Philosophy is an elegant thing, if anyone modestly meddles with it; but if they are conversant with it more than is becoming, it corrupts them.

- Plato

Philosophers should consider the fact that the greatest happiness principle can easily be made an excuse for a benevolent dictatorship. We should replace it by a more modest and more realistic principle -- the principle that the fight against avoidable misery should be a recognized aim of public policy, while the increase of happiness should be left, in the main, to private initiative.

- Popper, Karl

Many talk like philosophers yet live like fools.

- Proverb

Philosophy may be dodged, eloquence cannot.

- Quinet, Edgar

The philosophic spirit of inquiry may be traced to brute curiosity, and that to the habit of

examining all things in search of food.

- Reade, W. Winwood

Your philosophy determines whether you will go for the disciplines or continue the errors.

- Rohn, Jim

The usual picture of Socrates is of an ugly little plebeian who inspired a handsome young nobleman to write long dialogues on large topics.

- Rorty, Richard

Take from the philosopher the pleasure of being heard and his desire for knowledge ceases.

- Rousseau, Jean Jacques

Philosophers call God the great unknown The great misknown is more like it!

- Roux, Joseph

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

- Russell, Bertrand

The ultimate triumph of philosophy would be to cast light upon the mysterious ways in which Providence moves to achieve the designs it has for man.

- Sade, Marquis De

There is today-in a time when old beliefs are withering-a kind of philosophical hunger, a need to know who we are and how we got here. It is an on-going search, often unconscious, for a cosmic perspective for humanity.

- Sagan, Carl Edward

How very paltry and limited the normal human intellect is, and how little lucidity there is in the human consciousness, may be judged from the fact that, despite the ephemeral brevity of human life, the uncertainty of our existence and the countless enigmas which press upon us from all sides, everyone does not continually and ceaselessly philosophize, but that only the rarest of exceptions do.

- Schopenhauer, Arthur

Philosophy is nothing but discretion.

- Selden, John

Philosophy does not regard pedigree, she received Plato not as a noble, but she made him one.

- Seneca

For there was never yet philosopher that could endure the toothache patiently.

- Shakespeare, William

There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophies.

- Shakespeare, William

The philosopher is Nature's pilot. And there you have our difference: to be in hell is to drift; to be in heaven is to steer.

- Shaw, George Bernard

Bishop Berkeley destroyed this world in one volume octavo; and nothing remained, after his time, but mind; which experienced a similar fate from the hand of Mr. Hume in 1737.

- Smith, Sydney

Ordinary people seem not to realize that those who really apply themselves in the right way to philosophy are directly and of their own accord preparing themselves for dying and death.

- Socrates

A writer must always try to have a philosophy and he should also have a psychology and a philology and many other things. Without a philosophy and a psychology and all these various other things he is not really worthy of being called a writer. I agree with Kant and Schopenhauer and Plato and Spinoza and that is quite enough to be called a philosophy. But then of course a philosophy is not the same thing as a style.

- Stein, Gertrude

The philosopher proves that the philosopher exists. The poet merely enjoys existence.

- Stevens, Wallace

Perhaps it is of more value to infuriate philosophers than to go along with them.

- Stevens, Wallace

Reason, progress, unselfishness, a wide historical perspective, expansiveness, generosity, enlightened self-interest. I had heard it all my life, and it filled me with despair.

- Tait, Katherine

Then, like an old-time orator impressively he rose; I make the most of all that comes and the least of all that goes.

- Teasdale, Sara

What sort of philosophers are we, who know absolutely nothing about the origin and destiny of cats?

- Thoreau, Henry David

To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically.

- Thoreau, Henry David

If He Tom Sawyer had been a great and wise philosopher, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do and Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do.

- Twain, Mark

Keep quiet and people will think you a philosopher.

- Unknown, Source

The pursuit of what is true and the practice of what is good are the two most important objects of philosophy.

- Voltaire

When he who hears does not know what he who speaks means, and when he who speaks does not know what he himself means, that is philosophy.

- Voltaire

The proper method of philosophy consists in clearly conceiving the insoluble problems in all their insolubility and then in simply contemplating them, fixedly and tirelessly, year after year, without any hope, patiently waiting.

- Weil, Simone

Every philosophy is tinged with the coloring of some secret imaginative background,

which never emerges explicitly into its train of reasoning.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Philosophy is the product of wonder.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

A serious and good philosophical work could be written consisting entirely of jokes.

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig

It is one of the chief skills of the philosopher not to occupy himself with questions which do not concern him.

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig

Philosophy is like trying to open a safe with a combination lock: each little adjustment of the dials seems to achieve nothing, only when everything is in place does the door open.

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig

Philosophy is not a theory but an activity.

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig

The real discovery is the one which enables me to stop doing philosophy when I want to.

-- The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself into question.

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig

Englishmen are babes in philosophy and so prefer faction-fighting to the labor of its unfamiliar thought.

- Yeats, William Butler

Being a philosopher, I have a problem for every solution.

- Zeno, Robert

we try so hard to live free, only to die and be confined to a brass prison

- Onwuka Emeka

on the backdrop of eternity, time is a relatively new concept.

- Onwuka Emeka

There is no school of philosophy that approaches ordinary common sense.

- Lipsey, Michael

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot.

- Sagan, Carl Edward

You are ninety-eight cents' worth of cosmic star dust floating at the obscure edge of an ordinary galaxy, and yet you are the center of your own world; to friends and family, you may be precious beyond all worth. On one day, humanity seems the apex of all things beautiful, generous, mindful; another day, it seems a stupid beast.

- Cole, K.C.

I look down into the bubbling cauldron of clouds, pierced by an occasional unfriendly mountain peak. We seem to be skimming the surface of an angry sea, and I think it unbelievable that delicate life-forms can exist down there..."

- Cole, K

How rich are we that we can look on these worlds with the perspective of modern science ... that we do not have to wonder as did former men whether stars are jewels hanging from celestial drapery or peepholes in the astral skin of creation!

- Murchie, Guy

An inefficient virus kills its host. A clever virus stays with it.

- Lovelock, James



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