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Quotes by Arendt, Hannah

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Hannah Arendt (October 14, 1906 – December 4, 1975) was a German political theorist. She has often been described as a philosopher, although she always refused that label on the grounds that philosophy is concerned with "man in the singular." She described herself instead as a political theorist because her work centers on the fact that "men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world."

Economic growth may one day turn out to be a curse rather than a good, and under no conditions can it either lead into freedom or constitute a proof for its existence.

- Arendt, Hannah

The human condition is such that pain and effort are not just symptoms which can be removed without changing life itself; they are the modes in which life itself, together with the necessity to which it is bound, makes itself felt. For mortals, the easy life of the gods would be a lifeless life.

- Arendt, Hannah

The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgment, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together.

- Arendt, Hannah

We have almost succeeded in leveling all human activities to the common denominator of securing the necessities of life and providing for their abundance.

- Arendt, Hannah

Love, by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others. As long as its spell lasts, the only in-between which can insert itself between two lovers is the child, love's own product. The child, this in-between to which the lovers now are related and which they hold in common, is representative of the world in that it also separates them; it is an indication that they will insert a new world into the existing world. Through the child, it is as though the lovers return to the world from which their love had expelled them. But this new worldliness, the possible result and the only possibly happy ending of a love affair, is, in a sense, the end of love, which must either overcome the partners anew or be transformed into another mode of belonging together.

- Arendt, Hannah

In contrast to revenge, which is the natural, automatic reaction to transgression and which, because of the irreversibility of the action process can be expected and even calculated, the act of forgiving can never be predicted; it is the only reaction that acts in an unexpected way and thus retains, though being a reaction, something of the original character of action.

- Arendt, Hannah

When we were told that by freedom we understood free enterprise, we did very little to dispel this monstrous falsehood. Wealth and economic well-being, we have asserted, are the fruits of freedom, while we should have been the first to know that this kind of happiness has been an unmixed blessing only in this country, and it is a minor blessing compared with the truly political freedoms, such as freedom of speech and thought, of assembly and association, even under the best conditions.

- Arendt, Hannah

What makes it so plausible to assume that hypocrisy is the vice of vices is that integrity can indeed exist under the cover of all other vices except this one. Only crime and the criminal, it is true, confront us with the perplexity of radical evil; but only the hypocrite is really rotten to the core.

- Arendt, Hannah

Immortality is what nature possesses without effort and without anybody's assistance, and immortality is what the mortals must therefore try to achieve if they want to live up to the world into which they were born, to live up to the things which surround them and to whose company they are admitted for a short while.

- Arendt, Hannah

No civilization would ever have been possible without a framework of stability, to provide the wherein for the flux of change. Foremost among the stabilizing factors, more enduring than customs, manners and traditions, are the legal systems that regulate our life in the world and our daily affairs with each other.

- Arendt, Hannah

Love, by its very nature, is unworldly, and it is for this reason rather than its rarity that it is not only apolitical but anti-political, perhaps the most powerful of all anti-political human forces.

- Arendt, Hannah

Total loyalty is possible only when fidelity is emptied of all concrete content, from which changes of mind might naturally arise.

- Arendt, Hannah

Freedom from labor itself is not new; it once belonged among the most firmly established privileges of the few. In this instance, it seems as though scientific progress and technical developments had been only taken advantage of to achieve something about which all former ages dreamed but which none had been able to realize.

- Arendt, Hannah

What will happen once the authentic mass man takes over, we do not know yet, although it may be a fair guess that he will have more in common with the meticulous, calculated correctness of Himmler than with the hysterical fanaticism of Hitler, will more resemble the stubborn dullness of Molotov than the sensual vindictive cruelty of Stalin.

- Arendt, Hannah

Man cannot be free if he does not know that he is subject to necessity, because his freedom is always won in his never wholly successful attempts to liberate himself from

necessity.

- Arendt, Hannah

It is my contention that civil disobediences are nothing but the latest form of voluntary association, and that they are thus quite in tune with the oldest traditions of the country.

- Arendt, Hannah

The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle.

- Arendt, Hannah

If you ask a member of this generation two simple questions: How do you want the world to be in fifty years? and What do you want your life to be like five years from now? the answers are quite often preceded by Provided there is still a world and Provided I am still alive. To the often-heard question, Who are they, this new generation? one is tempted to answer, Those who hear the ticking. And to the other question, Who are they who utterly deny them? the answer may well be, Those who do not know, or refuse to face, things as they really are.

- Arendt, Hannah

Opinions are formed in a process of open discussion and public debate, and where no opportunity for the forming of opinions exists, there may be moods --moods of the masses and moods of individuals, the latter no less fickle and unreliable than the former --but no

opinion.

- Arendt, Hannah

It is in the very nature of things human that every act that has once made its appearance and has been recorded in the history of mankind stays with mankind as a potentiality long after its actuality has become a thing of the past.

- Arendt, Hannah

Predictions of the future are never anything but projections of present automatic processes and procedures, that is, of occurrences that are likely to come to pass if men do not act and if nothing unexpected happens; every action, for better or worse, and every accident necessarily destroys the whole pattern in whose frame the prediction moves and where it finds its evidence.

- Arendt, Hannah

Promises are the uniquely human way of ordering the future, making it predictable and reliable to the extent that this is humanly possible.

- Arendt, Hannah

There is all the difference in the world between the criminal's avoiding the public eye and the civil disobedience's taking the law into his own hands in open defiance. This distinction between an open violation of the law, performed in public, and a clandestine one is so glaringly obvious that it can be neglected only by prejudice or ill will.

- Arendt, Hannah

The most radical revolutionary will become a conservative the day after the revolution.

- Arendt, Hannah

The ceaseless, senseless demand for original scholarship in a number of fields, where only erudition is now possible, has led either to sheer irrelevancy, the famous knowing of more and more about less and less, or to the development of a pseudo-scholarship which actually destroys its object.

- Arendt, Hannah

Wherever the relevance of speech is at stake, matters become political by definition, for speech is what makes man a political being.

- Arendt, Hannah

What really distinguishes this generation in all countries from earlier generations... is its determination to act, its joy in action, the assurance of being able to change things by one's own efforts.

- Arendt, Hannah

Action without a name, a who attached to it, is meaningless.

- Arendt, Hannah

No cause is left but the most ancient of all, the one, in fact, that from the beginning of our

history has determined the very existence of politics, the cause of freedom versus tyranny.

- Arendt, Hannah

The Third World is not a reality but an ideology.

- Arendt, Hannah

Totalitarianism is never content to rule by external means, namely, through the state and a machinery of violence; thanks to its peculiar ideology and the role assigned to it in this apparatus of coercion, totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within.

- Arendt, Hannah

Only the mob and the elite can be attracted by the momentum of totalitarianism itself. The masses have to be won by propaganda.

- Arendt, Hannah

The trouble with lying and deceiving is that their efficiency depends entirely upon a clear notion of the truth that the liar and deceiver wishes to hide. In this sense, truth, even if it does not prevail in public, possesses an ineradicable primacy over all falsehoods.

- Arendt, Hannah

The defiance of established authority, religious and secular, social and political, as a world-wide phenomenon may well one day be accounted the outstanding event of the last

decade.

- Arendt, Hannah

The more dubious and uncertain an instrument violence has become in international relations, the more it has gained in reputation and appeal in domestic affairs, specifically in the matter of revolution.

- Arendt, Hannah

Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance.

- Arendt, Hannah

The chief reason warfare is still with us is neither a secret death-wish of the human species, nor an irrepressible instinct of aggression, nor, finally and more plausibly, the serious economic and social dangers inherent in disarmament, but the simple fact that no substitute for this final arbiter in international affairs has yet appeared on the political scene.

- Arendt, Hannah

Nothing we use or hear or touch can be expressed in words that equal what we are given by the senses.

- Arendt, Hannah

The earth is the very quintessence of the human condition.

- Arendt, Hannah

To be sure, nothing is more important to the integrity of the universities than a rigorously enforced divorce from war-oriented research and all connected enterprises.

- Arendt, Hannah

No punishment has ever possessed enough power of deterrence to prevent the commission of crimes. On the contrary, whatever the punishment, once a specific crime has appeared for the first time, its reappearance is more likely than its initial emergence could ever have been.

- Arendt, Hannah

Death not merely ends life, it also bestows upon it a silent completeness, snatched from the hazardous flux to which all things human are subject.

- Arendt, Hannah

[There is] a strange interdependence between thoughtlessness and evil.

- Arendt, Hannah



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