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Quotes by Artaud, Antonin

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Antonin Artaud (September 4, 1896March 4, 1948) was a playwright, actor, and director.

There are souls that are incurable and lost to the rest of society. Deprive them of one means of folly, they will invent ten thousand others. They will create subtler, wilder methods, methods that are absolutely DESPERATE. Nature herself is fundamentally antisocial, it is only by a usurpation of powers that the organized body of society opposes the natural inclination of humanity.

- Artaud, Antonin

So long as we have failed to eliminate any of the causes of human despair, we do not have the right to try to eliminate those means by which man tries to cleanse himself of despair.

- Artaud, Antonin

It is not opium which makes me work but its absence, and in order for me to feel its absence it must from time to time be present.

- Artaud, Antonin

Hell is of this world and there are men who are unhappy escapees from hell, escapees destined ETERNALLY to reenact their escape.

- Artaud, Antonin

Never tire yourself more than necessary, even if you have to found a culture on the fatigue of your bones.

- Artaud, Antonin

There is in every madman a misunderstood genius whose idea, shining in his head, frightened people, and for whom delirium was the only solution to the strangulation that life had prepared for him.

- Artaud, Antonin

All true language is incomprehensible, like the chatter of a beggar's teeth.

- Artaud, Antonin

When we speak the word life, it must be understood we are not referring to life as we know it from its surface of fact, but to that fragile, fluctuating center which forms never reach.

- Artaud, Antonin

And what is an authentic madman? It is a man who preferred to become mad, in the socially accepted sense of the word, rather than forfeit a certain superior idea of human honor. So society has strangled in its asylums all those it wanted to get rid of or protect itself from, because they refused to become its accomplices in certain great nastinesses. For a madman is also a man whom society did not want to hear and whom it wanted to

prevent from uttering certain intolerable truths.

- Artaud, Antonin

It is thus that the few rare lucid well-disposed people who have had to struggle on the earth find themselves at certain hours of the day or night in the depth of certain authentic and waking nightmare states, surrounded by the formidable suction, the formidable oppression of a kind of civic magic which will soon be seen appearing openly in social behavior.

- Artaud, Antonin

Ah! How neatly tied, in these people, is the umbilical cord of morality! Since they left their mothers they have never sinned, have they? They are apostles, they are the descendants of priests; one can only wonder from what source they draw their indignation, and above all how much they have pocketed to do this, and in any case what it has done for them.

- Artaud, Antonin

However fiercely opposed one may be to the present order, an old respect for the idea of order itself often prevents people from distinguishing between order and those who stand for order, and leads them in practice to respect individuals under the pretext of respecting order itself.

- Artaud, Antonin

Written poetry is worth reading once, and then should be destroyed. Let the dead poets make way for others. Then we might even come to see that it is our veneration for what

has already been created, however beautiful and valid it may be, that petrifies us.

- Artaud, Antonin

It is almost impossible to be a doctor and an honest man, but it is obscenely impossible to be a psychiatrist without at the same time bearing the stamp of the most incontestable madness: that of being unable to resist that old atavistic reflex of the mass of humanity, which makes any man of science who is absorbed by this mass a kind of natural and inborn enemy of all genius.

- Artaud, Antonin

I myself spent nine years in an insane asylum and I never had the obsession of suicide, but I know that each conversation with a psychiatrist, every morning at the time of his visit, made me want to hang myself, realizing that I would not be able to cut his throat.

- Artaud, Antonin

With society and its public, there is no longer any other language than that of bombs, barricades, and all that follows.

- Artaud, Antonin

But how is one to make a scientist understand that there is something unalterably deranged about differential calculus, quantum theory, or the obscene and so inanelly liturgical ordeals of the precession of the equinoxes.

- Artaud, Antonin

You are outside life, you are above life, you have miseries which the ordinary man does not know, you exceed the normal level, and it is for this that men refuse to forgive you, you poison their peace of mind, you undermine their stability. You have irrepressible pains whose essence is to be inadaptable to any known state, indescribable in words. You have repeated and shifting pains, incurable pains, pains beyond imagining, pains which are neither of the body nor of the soul, but which partake of both. And I share your suffering, and I ask you: who dares to ration our relief? We are not going to kill ourselves just yet. In the meantime, leave us the hell alone.

- Artaud, Antonin

If I commit suicide, it will not be to destroy myself but to put myself back together again. Suicide will be for me only one means of violently reconquering myself, of brutally invading my being, of anticipating the unpredictable approaches of God. By suicide, I reintroduce my design in nature, I shall for the first time give things the shape of my will.

- Artaud, Antonin

Theater of cruelty means a theater difficult and cruel for myself first of all. And, on the level of performance, it is not the cruelty we can exercise upon each other by hacking at each other's bodies, carving up our personal anatomies, or, like Assyrian emperors, sending parcels of human ears, noses, or neatly detached nostrils through the mail, but the much more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us. We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theater has been created to teach us that first of all.

- Artaud, Antonin

The theater, which is in no thing, but makes use of everything -- gestures, sounds, words, screams, light, darkness -- rediscovers itself at precisely the point where the mind requires a language to express its manifestations. To break through language in order to touch life is to create or recreate the theatre.

- Artaud, Antonin

Tragedy on the stage is no longer enough for me, I shall bring it into my own life.

- Artaud, Antonin

The race of prophets is extinct. Europe is becoming set in its ways, slowly embalming itself beneath the wrappings of its borders, its factories, its law-courts and its universities. The frozen Mind cracks between the mineral staves which close upon it. The fault lies with your moldy systems, your logic of $2 + 2 = 4$. The fault lies with you, Chancellors, caught in the net of syllogisms. You manufacture engineers, magistrates, doctors, who know nothing of the true mysteries of the body or the cosmic laws of existence. False scholars blind outside this world, philosophers who pretend to reconstruct the mind. The least act of spontaneous creation is a more complex and revealing world than any metaphysics.

- Artaud, Antonin

No one has ever written, painted, sculpted, modeled, built, or invented except literally to get out of hell.

- Artaud, Antonin



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