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Quotes by Huxley, Aldous

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Aldous Leonard Huxley (July 26, 1894 - November 22, 1963) was a British writer who emigrated to the United States. He was a member of the famous Huxley family who produced a number of brilliant scientific minds. Best known for his novels and wide-ranging output of essays, he also published short stories, poetry, travel writing, and film stories and scripts. Through his novels and essays Huxley functioned as an examiner and sometimes critic of social mores, societal norms and ideals, and possible misapplications of science in human life. While his earlier concerns might be called "humanist," ultimately, he became quite interested in "spiritual" subjects like parapsychology and mystically based philosophy, which he also wrote about. By the end of his life, Huxley was considered, in certain circles, a 'leader of modern thought'.

I have discovered the most exciting, the most arduous literary form of all, the most difficult to master, the most pregnant in curious possibilities. I mean the advertisement. It is far easier to write ten passably effective Sonnets, good enough to take in the not too inquiring critic, than one effective advertisement that will take in a few thousand of the uncritical buying public.

- Huxley, Aldous

There are confessable agonies, sufferings of which one can positively be proud. Of bereavement, of parting, of the sense of sin and the fear of death the poets have eloquently spoken. They command the world's sympathy. But there are also discreditable

anguishes, no less excruciating than the others, but of which the sufferer dare not, cannot speak. The anguish of thwarted desire, for example.

- Huxley, Aldous

Which is better: to have fun with fungi or to have Idiocy with ideology, to have wars because of words, to have tomorrow's misdeeds out of yesterday's miscreeds?

- Huxley, Aldous

If we could sniff or swallow something that would, for five or six hours each day, abolish our solitude as individuals, atone us with our fellows in a glowing exaltation of affection and make life in all its aspects seem not only worth living, but divinely beautiful and significant, and if this heavenly, world-transfiguring drug were of such a kind that we could wake up next morning with a clear head and an undamaged constitution -- then, it seems to me, all our problems (and not merely the one small problem of discovering a novel pleasure) would be wholly solved and earth would become paradise.

- Huxley, Aldous

The most valuable of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it has to be done, whether you like it or not.

- Huxley, Aldous

Every man who knows how to read has it in his power to magnify himself, to multiply the ways in which he exists, to make his life full, significant and interesting.

- Huxley, Aldous

That all men are equal is a proposition to which, at ordinary times, no sane human being has ever given his assent.

- Huxley, Aldous

Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him.

- Huxley, Aldous

Experience teaches only the teachable.

- Huxley, Aldous

From their experience or from the recorded experience of others (history), men learn only what their passions and their metaphysical prejudices allow them to learn.

- Huxley, Aldous

Specialized meaninglessness has come to be regarded, in certain circles, as a kind of hall-mark of true science.

- Huxley, Aldous

Facts are ventriloquists dummies. Sitting on a wise man's knee they may be made to utter words of wisdom; elsewhere, they say nothing, or talk nonsense, or indulge in sheer diabolism.

- Huxley, Aldous

Facts don't cease to exist because they are ignored.

- Huxley, Aldous

I'm afraid of losing my obscurity. Genuineness only thrives in the dark. Like celery.

- Huxley, Aldous

Defined in psychological terms, a fanatic is a man who consciously over-compensates a secret doubt.

- Huxley, Aldous

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- Huxley, Aldous

Sons have always a rebellious wish to be disillusioned by that which charmed their fathers.

- Huxley, Aldous

It's with bad sentiments that one makes good novels.

- Huxley, Aldous

The condition of being forgiven is self-abandonment. The proud man prefers

self-reproach, however painful --because the reproached self isn't abandoned; it remains intact.

- Huxley, Aldous

A man may be a pessimistic determinist before lunch and an optimistic believer in the will's freedom after it.

- Huxley, Aldous

We are all geniuses up to the age of ten.

- Huxley, Aldous

Good is a product of the ethical and spiritual artistry of individuals; it cannot be mass-produced.

- Huxley, Aldous

I can sympathize with people's pains, but not with their pleasures. There is something curiously boring about somebody else's happiness.

- Huxley, Aldous

What with making their way and enjoying what they have won, heroes have no time to think. But the sons of heroes --ah, they have all the necessary leisure.

- Huxley, Aldous

Most ignorance is evincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know.

- Huxley, Aldous

A child-like man is not a man whose development has been arrested; on the contrary, he is a man who has given himself a chance of continuing to develop long after most adults have muffled themselves in the cocoon of middle-aged habit and convention.

- Huxley, Aldous

Writers write to influence their readers, their preachers, their auditors, but always, at bottom, to be more themselves.

- Huxley, Aldous

Man is an intelligence, not served by, but in servitude to his organs.

- Huxley, Aldous

Science and art are only too often a superior kind of dope, possessing this advantage over booze and morphia: that they can be indulged in with a good conscience and with the conviction that, in the process of indulging, one is leading the higher life.

- Huxley, Aldous

Most human beings have an infinite capacity for taking things for granted.

- Huxley, Aldous

A life-worshipper's philosophy is comprehensive. He is at one moment a positivist and at another a mystic: now haunted by the thought of death and now a Dionysian child of nature; now a pessimist and now, with a change of lover or liver or even the weather, an exuberant believer that God's in his heaven and all's right with the world.

- Huxley, Aldous

People will insist on treating the mons Veneris as though it were Mount Everest. Too silly!

- Huxley, Aldous

Every man's memory is his private literature.

- Huxley, Aldous

Man approaches the unattainable truth through a succession of errors.

- Huxley, Aldous

The quality of moral behavior varies in inverse ratio to the number of human beings involved.

- Huxley, Aldous

Morality is always the product of terror; its chains and strait-waistcoats are fashioned by those who dare not trust others, because they dare not trust themselves, to walk in liberty.

- Huxley, Aldous

It takes two to make a murder. There are born victims, born to have their throats cut, as the cut-throats are born to be hanged.

- Huxley, Aldous

After silence that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music.

- Huxley, Aldous

Uncontrolled, the hunger and thirst after God may become an obstacle, cutting off the soul from what it desires. If a man would travel far along the mystic road, he must learn to desire God intensely but in stillness, passively and yet with all his heart and mind and strength.

- Huxley, Aldous

The history of any nation follows an undulatory course. In the trough of the wave we find more or less complete anarchy; but the crest is not more or less complete Utopia, but only, at best, a tolerably humane, partially free and fairly just society that invariably carries within itself the seeds of its own decadence.

- Huxley, Aldous

Single-mindedness is all very well in cows or baboons; in an animal claiming to belong to the same species as Shakespeare it is simply disgraceful.

- Huxley, Aldous

One of the many reasons for the bewildering and tragic character of human existence is

the fact that social organization is at once necessary and fatal. Men are forever creating such organizations for their own convenience and forever finding themselves the victims of their home-made monsters.

- Huxley, Aldous

If it were not for the intellectual snobs who pay -- in solid cash -- the tribute which philistinism owes to culture, the arts would perish with their starving practitioners. Let us thank heaven for hypocrisy.

- Huxley, Aldous

Speed provides the one genuinely modern pleasure.

- Huxley, Aldous

Abused as we abuse it at present, dramatic art is in no sense cathartic; it is merely a form of emotional masturbation. It is the rarest thing to find a player who has not had his character affected for the worse by the practice of his profession. Nobody can make a habit of self-exhibition, nobody can exploit his personality for the sake of exercising a kind of hypnotic power over others, and remain untouched by the process.

- Huxley, Aldous

The finest works of art are precious, among other reasons, because they make it possible for us to know, if only imperfectly and for a little while, what it actually feels like to think subtly and feel nobly.

- Huxley, Aldous

An atheist is a person who has no invisible means of support

- Huxley, Aldous

Idealism is the noble toga that political gentlemen drape over their will to power.

- Huxley, Aldous

Cant is always rather nauseating; but before we condemn political hypocrisy, let us remember that it is the tribute paid by men of leather to men of God, and that the acting of the part of someone better than oneself may actually commit one to a course of behavior perceptibly less evil than what would be normal and natural in an avowed cynic.

- Huxley, Aldous

To his dog, every man is Napoleon; hence the constant popularity of dogs.

- Huxley, Aldous

Orthodoxy is the diehard of the world of thought. It learns not, neither can it forget.

- Huxley, Aldous

Proverbs are always platitudes until you have personally experienced the truth of them.

- Huxley, Aldous

The amelioration of the world cannot be achieved by sacrifices in moments of crisis; it

depends on the efforts made and constantly repeated during the humdrum, uninspiring periods, which separate one crisis from another, and of which normal lives mainly consist.

- Huxley, Aldous

You never see animals going through the absurd and often horrible fooleries of magic and religion. Dogs do not ritually urinate in the hope of persuading heaven to do the same and send down rain. Asses do not bray a liturgy to cloudless skies. Nor do cats attempt, by abstinence from cat's meat, to wheedle the feline spirits into benevolence. Only man behaves with such gratuitous folly. It is the price he has to pay for being intelligent but not, as yet, quite intelligent enough.

- Huxley, Aldous

Classic remorse, as all the moralists are agreed, is a most undesirable sentiment. If you have behaved badly, repent, make what amends you can and address yourself to the task of behaving better next time. On no account brood over your wrongdoing. **ROLLING IN THE MUCK IS NOT THE BEST WAY OF GETTING CLEAN.**

- Huxley, Aldous

There's only one effectively redemptive sacrifice, the sacrifice of self-will to make room for the knowledge of God.

- Huxley, Aldous

Science has explained nothing; the more we know the more fantastic the world becomes and the profounder the surrounding darkness.

- Huxley, Aldous

We are living now, not in the delicious intoxication induced by the early successes of science, but in a rather grisly morning-after, when it has become apparent that what triumphant science has done hitherto is to improve the means for achieving unimproved or actually deteriorated ends.

- Huxley, Aldous

Those who believe that they are exclusively in the right are generally those who achieve something.

- Huxley, Aldous

There's only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self.

- Huxley, Aldous

Silence is as full of potential wisdom and wit as the unshown marble of great sculpture.

The silent bear no witness against themselves.

- Huxley, Aldous

The more powerful and original a mind, the more it will incline towards the religion of solitude.

- Huxley, Aldous

Speed, it seems to me, provides the one genuinely modern pleasure.

- Huxley, Aldous

Pure Spirit, one hundred degrees proof -- that's a drink that only the most hardened contemplation-guzzlers indulge in. Bodhisattvas dilute their Nirvana with equal parts of love and work.

- Huxley, Aldous

Where beauty is worshipped for beauty's sake as a goddess, independent of and superior to morality and philosophy, the most horrible putrefaction is apt to set in. The lives of the aesthetes are the far from edifying commentary on the religion of beauty.

- Huxley, Aldous

Beauty for some provides escape, who gain a happiness in eyeing the gorgeous buttocks of the ape or Autumn sunsets exquisitely dying.

- Huxley, Aldous

What we feel and think and are is to a great extent determined by the state of our ductless glands and viscera.

- Huxley, Aldous

A bad book is as much of a labor to write as a good one; it comes as sincerely from the

author's soul.

- Huxley, Aldous

The brotherhood of men does not imply their equality. Families have their fools and their men of genius, their black sheep and their saints, their worldly successes and their worldly failures. A man should treat his brothers lovingly and with justice, according to the deserts of each. But the deserts of every brother are not the same.

- Huxley, Aldous

Official dignity tends to increase in inverse ratio to the importance of the country in which the office is held.

- Huxley, Aldous

The charm of history and its enigmatic lesson consist in the fact that, from age to age, nothing changes and yet everything is completely different.

- Huxley, Aldous

There is no substitute for talent. Industry and all the virtues are of no avail.

- Huxley, Aldous

Most of one's life is one prolonged effort to prevent oneself thinking.

- Huxley, Aldous

Thought must be divided against itself before it can come to any knowledge of itself.

- Huxley, Aldous

We participate in tragedy. At comedy we only look.

- Huxley, Aldous

To travel is to discover that everyone is wrong about other countries.

- Huxley, Aldous

Your true traveler finds boredom rather agreeable than painful. It is the symbol of his liberty -- his excessive freedom. He accepts his boredom, when it comes, not merely philosophically, but almost with pleasure.

- Huxley, Aldous

Great is truth, but still greater, from a practical point of view, is silence about truth. By simply not mentioning certain subjects... totalitarian propagandists have influenced opinion much more effectively than they could have by the most eloquent denunciations.

- Huxley, Aldous

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you mad.

- Huxley, Aldous

So long as men worship the Caesars and Napoleons, the Caesars and Napoleons will

arise to make them miserable.

- Huxley, Aldous

Most vices demand considerable self-sacrifices. There is no greater mistake than to suppose that a vicious life is a life of uninterrupted pleasure. It is a life almost as wearisome and painful -- if strenuously led -- as Christian's in *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

- Huxley, Aldous

The business of a seer is to see; and if he involves himself in the kind of God-eclipsing activities which make seeing impossible, he betrays the trust which his fellows have tacitly placed in him.

- Huxley, Aldous

A democracy which makes or even effectively prepares for modern, scientific war must necessarily cease to be democratic. No country can be really well prepared for modern war unless it is governed by a tyrant, at the head of a highly trained and perfectly obedient bureaucracy.

- Huxley, Aldous

Words from the thread on which we string our experiences.

- Huxley, Aldous

Industrial man --a sentient reciprocating engine having a fluctuating output, coupled to an iron wheel revolving with uniform velocity. And then we wonder why this should be the

golden age of revolution and mental derangement.

- Huxley, Aldous

Like every man of sense and good feeling, I abominate work.

- Huxley, Aldous

But a priest's life is not supposed to be well-rounded; it is supposed to be one-pointed -- a compass, not a weathercock.

- Huxley, Aldous

A large city cannot be experientially known; its life is too manifold for any individual to be able to participate in it.

- Huxley, Aldous

Consistency is contrary to nature, contrary to life. The only completely consistent people are the dead.

- Huxley, Aldous

The only completely consistent people are the dead.

- Huxley, Aldous

Now, a corpse, poor thing, is an untouchable and the process of decay is, of all pieces of bad manners, the vilest imaginable. For a corpse is, by definition, a person absolutely

devoid of savoir vivre.

- Huxley, Aldous

Ignore death up to the last moment; then, when it can't be ignored any longer, have yourself squirted full of morphia and shuffle off in a coma. Thoroughly sensible, humane and scientific, eh?

- Huxley, Aldous

A belief in hell and the knowledge that every ambition is doomed to frustration at the hands of a skeleton have never prevented the majority of human beings from behaving as though death were no more than an unfounded rumor.

- Huxley, Aldous

Most ignorance is invincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know.

- Huxley, Aldous



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