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Quotes by Oppenheimer, Julius Robert

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J. Robert Oppenheimer (April 22, 1904 – February 18, 1967) was an American theoretical physicist of German-Jewish origin, best known for his role as the scientific director of the Manhattan Project, the World War II effort to develop the first nuclear weapons, at the secret Los Alamos laboratory in New Mexico. Known colloquially as "the father of the atomic bomb", Oppenheimer lamented the weapon's killing power after it was used to destroy the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After the war, he was a chief advisor to the newly created Atomic Energy Commission and used that position to lobby for international control of atomic energy and to avert the nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union. After invoking the ire of many politicians and scientists with his outspoken political opinions during the Red Scare, he had his security clearance revoked in a much-publicized and politicized hearing in 1954. Though stripped of his direct political influence, Oppenheimer continued to lecture, write, and work in physics. A decade later, President Lyndon B. Johnson awarded him the Enrico Fermi Award as a gesture of rehabilitation. As a scientist, Oppenheimer is remembered most for being a chief founder of the American school of theoretical physics while at the University of California, Berkeley.

The foolish man seeks happiness in the distance; The wise grows it under his feet.

- Oppenheimer, Julius Robert

A man whose errors take ten years to correct is quite a man.

- Oppenheimer, Julius Robert

The optimist thinks that this is the best of all possible worlds; the pessimist knows it.

- Oppenheimer, Julius Robert

In some sort of crude sense, which no vulgarity, no humor, no overstatement can quite extinguish, the physicists have known sin; and this is a knowledge which they cannot lose.

- Oppenheimer, Julius Robert

As long as men are free to ask what they must, free to say what they think, free to think what they will, freedom can never be lost and science can never regress.

- Oppenheimer, Julius Robert

When you see something that is technically sweet, you go ahead and do it and you argue about what to do about it only after you have had your technical success. That is the way it was with the atomic bomb.

- Oppenheimer, Julius Robert



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