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# Quotes by Whitehead, Alfred North

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Alfred North Whitehead, OM (February 15, 1861 – December 30, 1947) was a British mathematician who evolved into a philosopher. He was born in Ramsgate, Kent, UK, and died in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. He wrote on algebra, logic, foundations of mathematics, philosophy of science, physics, metaphysics, and education. He is the coauthor, along with Bertrand Russell, of the epochal Principia Mathematica.

But you can catch yourself entertaining habitually certain ideas and setting others aside; and that, I think, is where our personal destinies are largely decided.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

An enormous part of our mature experience cannot not be expressed in words.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Familiar things happen, and mankind does not bother about them. It requires a very unusual mind to undertake the analysis of the obvious.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

In every age of well-marked transition, there is the pattern of habitual dumb practice and emotion which is passing and there is oncoming a new complex of habit.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

The vitality of thought is in adventure. Ideas won't keep. Something must be done about them. When the idea is new, its custodians have fervor, live for it, and if need be, die for it.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Human life is driven forward by its dim apprehension of notions too general for its existing language.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Intelligence is quickness to apprehend as distinct form ability, which is capacity to act wisely on the thing apprehended.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Life is an offensive, directed against the repetitious mechanism of the Universe.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

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

Art is the imposing of a pattern on experience, and our aesthetic enjoyment is recognition of the pattern.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Everything of importance has been said before by somebody who did not discover it.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Seek simplicity but distrust it.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Speech is human nature itself, with none of the artificiality of written language.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Civilization advances by extending the number of important operations which we can perform without thinking.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

We think in generalities, but we live in detail.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

What is morality in any given time or place? It is what the majority then and there happen to like, and immorality is what they dislike.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

The deepest definition of youth is life as yet untouched by tragedy.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Periods of tranquillity are seldom prolific of creative achievement. Mankind has to be stirred up.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Ideas won't keep, something must be done about them.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Without adventure civilization is in full decay.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Common sense is genius in homespun.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

Simple solutions seldom are. It takes a very unusual mind to undertake analysis of the obvious.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

True courage is not the brutal force of vulgar heroes. Rather the firm resolve of virtue and reason.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

In the conditions of modern life the rule is absolute, the race which does not value trained intelligence is doomed. Not all your heroism, not all your social charm, not all your wit, not all your victories on land or at sea, can move back the finger of fate. To-day we maintain ourselves. To-morrow science will have moved forward yet one more step, and there will be no appeal from the judgment which will then be pronounced on the uneducated.

- Whitehead, Alfred North

It is the first step in sociological wisdom, to recognize that the major advances in civilization are processes which all but wreck the societies in which they occur: like unto an arrow in the hand of a child. The art of free society consists first in the maintenance of the symbolic code; and secondly in fearlessness of revision, to secure that the code serves those purposes which satisfy an enlightened reason. Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision, must ultimately decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows.

- Whitehead, Alfred North





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