

# Georg C. Lichtenberg

## Quotes

*Men, People, Believe, Thinking, Book, Science, Mind, Writing, World,  
Inspirational, Philosophy, Littles, Character, Discovery, Ideas, Nature, Soul,  
Reading, Mean, Judging*

The Greeks possessed a knowledge of human nature we seem hardly able to attain to without passing through the strengthening hibernation of a new barbarism.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

One might call habit a moral friction: something that prevents the mind from gliding over things but connects it with them and makes it hard for it to free itself from them.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Erudition can produce foliage without bearing fruit.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Everyone is a genius at least once a year. The real geniuses simply have their bright ideas closer together.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

There exists a species of transcendental ventriloquism by means of which men can be made to believe that something said on earth comes from Heaven.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Just as the performance of the vilest and most wicked deeds requires spirit and talent, so even the greatest demand a certain insensitivity which under other circumstances we would call stupidity.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

If there were only turnips and potatoes in the world, someone would complain that plants grow the wrong way.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Many things about our bodies would not seem to us so filthy and obscene if we did not have the idea of nobility in our heads.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

To read means to borrow; to create out of one's readings is paying off one's debts.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Once we know our weaknesses they cease to do us any harm.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

He who understands the wise is wise already.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

It often takes more courage to change one's opinion than to stick to it.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Man loves company - even if it is only that of a small burning candle.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Man is a masterpiece of creation if for no other reason than that, all the weight of evidence for determinism notwithstanding, he believes he has free will.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Every man has his moral backside which he refrains from showing unless he has to and keeps covered as long as possible with the trousers of decorum.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

It is in the gift for employing all the vicissitudes of life to one's own advantage and to that of one's craft that a large part of genius consists.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

One's first step in wisdom is to question everything - and one's last is to come to terms with everything.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Doubt must be no more than vigilance, otherwise it can become dangerous.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

The most dangerous untruths are truths slightly distorted.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Even truth needs to be clad in new garments if it is to appeal to a new age.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

I cannot say whether things will get better if we change; what I can say is they must change if they are to get better.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Love is blind, but marriage restores its sight.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

A book is a mirror: if an ape looks into it an apostle is hardly likely to look out.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

The great rule: If the little bit you have is nothing special in itself, at least find a way of saying it that is a little bit special.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

He was then in his fifty-fourth year, when even in the case of poets reason and passion begin to discuss a peace treaty and usually conclude it not very long afterwards.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

If another Messiah was born he could hardly do so much good as the printing-press.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

It is a question whether, when we break a murderer on the wheel, we do not fall into the error a child makes when it hits the chair it has bumped into.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Much can be inferred about a man from his mistress: in her one beholds his weaknesses and his dreams.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

I am convinced we do not only love ourselves in others but hate ourselves in others too.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Here take back the stuff that I am, nature, knead it back into the dough of being, make of me a bush, a cloud, whatever you will, even a man, only no longer make me.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Delicacy in woman is strength.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

A handful of soldiers is always better than a mouthful of arguments.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

What a blessing it would be if we could open and shut our ears...as easily as we open and shut our eyes.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Some people come by the name of genius in the same way that certain insects come by the name of centipede -- not because they have a hundred feet, but because most people can't count above 14.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

We have no words for speaking of wisdom to the stupid. He who

understands the wise is wise already.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Ask yourself always: how can this be done better?

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Just as we outgrow a pair of trousers, we outgrow acquaintances, libraries, principles, etc., at times before they're worn out and times - and this is the worst of all - before we have new ones.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

If you are going to build something in the air it is always better to build castles than houses of cards.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Man is a masterpiece of creation . . .

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Man is to be found in reason, God in the passions.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

People who never have any time on their hands are those who do the least.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Nothing puts a greater obstacle in the way of the progress of knowledge than thinking that one knows what one does not yet know.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

If all mankind were suddenly to practice honesty, many thousands of people would be sure to starve.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Rational free spirits are the light brigade who go on ahead and

reconnoiter the ground which the heavy brigade of the orthodox will eventually occupy.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

If people should ever start to do only what is necessary millions would die of hunger.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

There are people who think that everything one does with a serious face is sensible.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

To do just the opposite is also a form of imitation.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Men still have to be governed by deception.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

He who is in love with himself has at least this advantage - he won't encounter many rivals.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

The sure conviction that we could if we wanted to is the reason so many good minds are idle.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

To do the opposite of something is also a form of imitation, namely an imitation of its opposite.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Virtue by premeditation isn't worth much.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

There is no more important rule of conduct in the world than this: attach

yourself as much as you can to people who are abler than you and yet not so very different that you cannot understand them.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

It is strange that only extraordinary men make the discoveries, which later appear so easy and simple.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

One has to do something new in order to see something new.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Man is a masterpiece of creation, if only because no amount of determinism can prevent him from believing that he acts as a free being.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

To be content with life or to live merrily, rather all that is required is that we bestow on all things only a fleeting, superficial glance; the more thoughtful we become the more earnest we grow.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Man can acquire accomplishments or he can become an animal, whichever he wants. God makes the animals, man makes himself.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Much reading has brought upon us a learned barbarism.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Nowadays three witty turns of phrase and a lie make a writer.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Ambition and suspicion always go together.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg



To receive applause for works which do not demand all our powers hinders our advance towards a perfecting of our spirit. It usually means that thereafter we stand still.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

To many people virtue consists chiefly in repenting faults, not in avoiding them.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Theologians always try to turn the Bible into a book without common sense.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

He who is enamored of himself will at least have the advantage of being inconvenienced by few rivals.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Astronomy is perhaps the science whose discoveries owe least to chance, in which human understanding appears in its whole magnitude, and through which man can best learn how small he is.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Delight at having understood a very abstract and obscure system leads most people to believe in the truth of what it demonstrates.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

To grow wiser means to learn to know better and better the faults to which this instrument with which we feel and judge can be subject.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

We accumulate our opinions at an age when our understanding is at its weakest.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

One must judge men not by their opinions, but by what their opinions have made of them.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Doubt everything at least once, even the sentence "Two times two is four."

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Nothing makes one old so quickly as the ever-present thought that one is growing older.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

The worst thing you can possibly do is worrying and thinking about what you could have done.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Some people feel with their heads and think with their hearts.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Be wary of passing the judgment: obscure. To find something obscure poses no difficult, elephants and poodles find many things obscure.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

To make astute people believe one is what one is not is, in most cases, harder than actually to become what one wishes to appear.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

He who says he hates every kind of flattery, and says it in earnest, certainly does not yet know every kind of flattery.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

With most men, unbelief in one thing springs from blind belief in another.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Some theories are good for nothing except to be argued about.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Sickness is mankind's greatest defect.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

The most perfect ape cannot draw an ape; only man can do that; but, likewise, only man regards the ability to do this as a sign of superiority.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Man is so perfectable and corruptible he can become a fool through good sense.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

When an acquaintance goes by I often step back from my window, not so much to spare him the effort of acknowledging me as to spare myself the embarrassment of seeing that he has not done so.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Probably no invention came more easily to man than heaven.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

You can make a good living from soothsaying but not from truthsaying.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

I have remarked very clearly that I am often of one opinion when I am lying down and of another when I am standing up.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

A schoolteacher or professor cannot educate individuals, he educates only species.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

It is we who are the measure of what is strange and miraculous: if we

sought a universal measure the strange and miraculous would not occur and all things would be equal.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

What is called an acute knowledge of human nature is mostly nothing but the observer's own weaknesses reflected back from others.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

What we have to discover for ourselves leaves behind in our mind a pathway that can be used on another occasion.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

If this is philosophy it is at any rate a philosophy that is not in its right mind.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

We cannot remember too often that when we observe nature, and especially the ordering of nature, it is always ourselves alone we are observing.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Before we blame we should first see whether we cannot excuse.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

The greater part of human misery is caused by indolence.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

He marvelled at the fact that the cats had two holes cut in their fur at precisely the spot where their eyes were.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Of all the inventions of man I doubt whether any was more easily accomplished than that of a Heaven.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

With prophecies the commentator is often a more important man than the prophet.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

What most clearly characterizes true freedom and its true employment is its misemployment.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

The noble simplicity in the works of nature only too often originates in the noble shortsightedness of him who observes it.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

Good taste is either that which agrees with my taste or that which subjects itself to the rule of reason. From this we can see how useful it is to employ reason in seeking out the laws of taste.

~Georg C. Lichtenberg

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