

# Kenneth E. Boulding Quotes

*Men, Economics, World, Skills, Conflict, Thinking, Past, Economic, Technology,  
Information, Science, Animal, Facts, Loss, Names, Communication,  
Organization, Numbers, Problem, Reality*

Anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman or an economist.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

A world of unseen dictatorship is conceivable, still using the forms of democratic government.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Economics has been incurably growth-oriented and addicted to everybody growing richer, even at the cost of exhaustion of resources and pollution of the environment.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Equilibrium is a figment of the human imagination.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Theories without facts may be barren, but facts without theories are meaningless.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

We should always bear in mind that numbers represent a simplification of reality.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

DNA has been aptly described as the first three-dimensional Xerox machine.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

If we saw tomorrow's newspaper today, tomorrow would never happen.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The world moves into the future as a result of decisions, not as a result of plans. Plans are significant only insofar as they affect decisions.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

There is no such thing as economics, only social science applied to economic problems.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The future is bound to surprise us, but we don't have to be dumbfounded.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The World is a very complex system. It is easy to have too simple a view of it, and it is easy to do harm and to make things worse under the impulse to do good and make things better.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Private property is a means, and neither its abolition nor its unrestricted right should be an end in itself.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Nothing fails like success because we don't learn from it. We learn only from failure.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Accounting for the most part, remains a legalistic and traditional practice, almost immune to self-criticism by scientific methods.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Are we to regard the world of nature simply as a storehouse to be robbed for the immediate benefit of man?

~Kenneth E. Boulding

In any evolutionary process, even in the arts, the search for novelty becomes corrupting.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Deciding under uncertainty is bad enough, but deciding under an illusion of certainty is catastrophic.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Mathematics brought rigor to Economics. Unfortunately, it also brought mortis.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The tourist business is a trap, it is a tainted honey; Man clearly should have stayed in bed, and not invented money.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

With laissez-faire and price atomic, ecology's uneconomic, But with another kind of logic economy's unecologic.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

[Peace praxis is] a peace process that deals with conflict integratively.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The evolutionary vision is agnostic in regard to systems in the universe of greater complexity than those of which human beings have clear knowledge.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

We make our tools, and then they shape us.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

We never like to admit to ourselves that we have made a mistake. Organizational structures tend to accentuate this source of failure of information.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The only religion that still demands human sacrifice is nationalism.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Canada has no cultural unity, no linguistic unity, no religious unity, no economic unity, no geographic unity. All it has is unity.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

[There will be movement toward] behavioral economics... [which] involves study of those aspects of men's images, or cognitive and affective structures that are more relevant to economic decisions.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The most fundamental form of integrative power is the power of love.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Where there is hypocrisy, there is hope.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The social system tends to be dominated by images... especially of the future, which act cybernetically, constantly guided by perceived divergences between the real and the ideal.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The organization of science into disciplines sets up a series of ghettos with remarkable distances of artificial social space between them.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Humble, honest, ignorance is one of the finest flowers of the human spirit

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Knowledge exists in minds, not in books. Before what has been found can be used by practitioners, someone must organize it, integrate it, extract the message.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Economics, we learn in the history of thought, only became a science

by escaping from the casuistry and moralizing of medieval thought.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The proposition that the meek (that is the adaptable and serviceable), inherit the earth is not merely a wishful sentiment of religion, but an iron law of evolution.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

What exists, is possible.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

[The consumer is] the supreme mover of economic order... for whom all goods are made and towards whom all economic activity is directed.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The economy of the future might be called the "spaceman economy," in which the earth has become a single spaceship, without unlimited reservoirs of anything.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Communication can only take place among equals.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

All knowledge is gained through an orderly loss of information.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

It is absurd to suppose we can think of nature as a system apart from knowledge, for it is knowledge that is increasingly determining the course of nature.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The image of the frontier is probably one of the oldest images of mankind, and it is not surprising that we should find it hard to get rid of.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Know this: though love is weak and hate is strong, Yet hate is short, and love is very long.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Mathematicians themselves set up standards of generality and elegance in their exposition which are a bar to understand.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The greater the penalties laid on sellers in the black market... the higher the black market price.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

I have been gradually coming under the conviction, disturbing for a professional theorist, that there is no such thing as economics - there is only social science applied to economic problems.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Consumption is the death of capital, and the only valid arguments in favor of consumption are arguments in favor of death itself.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Economists are like computers. They need to have facts punched into them.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

We are born to love, as we are born to breathe and eat and drink.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Economists and technologists bring the "bits", but it requires the social scientists and humanists to bring the "wits.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

[The question for the behavioral disciplines is simply] what is better, and how do we get there?

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The concept of a value-free science is absurd.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

One reason why the progressive state is 'cheerful' is that social conflict is diminished by it.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Any attempt to reduce the complex properties of biological organisms or of nervous systems or of human brains to simple physical and chemical systems is foolish.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

[The historical] development in the international system may almost be defined as the process by which we pass from stable war to stable peace.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The use of isoquants to describe the production function did not develop to any great extent until the thirties.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Integrative power [is] the ultimate power

~Kenneth E. Boulding

... the fouling of the nest which has been typical of man's activity in the past on a local scale now seems to be extending to the whole world society.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

[The loss-of-strength gradient is] the degree to which military and political power diminishes as we move a unit distance away from its home base.



~Kenneth E. Boulding

There is something, however humble, which can properly be called skill among those who recognise themselves as economists.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The right to have children should be a marketable commodity, bought and traded by individuals but absolutely limited by the state.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Production functions involving only land, labor and capital... never work and never explain economic development.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The trouble with taxonomic boxes is... that that they tend to be empty, however beautiful they are on the outside.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Almost every organization... exhibits two faces a smiling face which it turns toward its members and a frowning face which it turns to the world outside.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The process of consumption is the final act in the economic drama.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

[on the theory of the firm] It is exactly analogous to the analysis of the reactions of a consumer by means of indifferent curves. Indeed, a consumer is merely a 'firm' whose product is 'utility.'

~Kenneth E. Boulding

The controversy as to whether socialism is possible has been settled by the fact that it exists, and it is a fundamental axiom of my philosophy, at any rate, that anything that exists, is possible.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

Physicists can only talk to other physicists and economists to economists... sociologists often cannot even understand each other.

~Kenneth E. Boulding

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