

# Lionel Trilling

## Quotes

*Art, Class, Immature, Ideas, Artist, Wrath, Thinking, Men, Judging, Kind, Humanity, Imagination, Believe, Notebook, Reality, Cynical, Exercise, Mind, Fashion, Self*

We are at heart so profoundly anarchistic that the only form of state we can imagine living in is Utopian; and so cynical that the only Utopia we can believe in is authoritarian.

~Lionel Trilling

Immature artists imitate. Mature artists steal.

~Lionel Trilling

Where misunderstanding serves others as an advantage, one is helpless to make oneself understood.

~Lionel Trilling

Being a Jew is like walking in the wind or swimming: you are touched at all points and conscious everywhere.

~Lionel Trilling

The poet is in command of his fantasy, while it is exactly the mark of the neurotic that he is possessed by his fantasy.

~Lionel Trilling

What marks the artist is his power to shape the material of pain we all have.

~Lionel Trilling

It is now life and not art that requires the willing suspension of disbelief.

~Lionel Trilling

Unless we insist that politics is imagination and mind, we will learn that imagination and mind are politics, and of a kind we will not like.

~Lionel Trilling

It is possible that the contemplation of cruelty will not make us humane but cruel; that the reiteration of the badness of our spiritual condition will make us consent to it.

~Lionel Trilling

The immature artist imitates. The mature artist steals.

~Lionel Trilling

We who are liberal and progressive know that the poor are our equals in every sense except that of being equal to us.

~Lionel Trilling

At the bottom of at least popular Marxism there has always been a kind of disgust with humanity as it is and a perfect faith in humanity as it is to be.

~Lionel Trilling

Even the nonreligious may exercise aesthetic judgment in matters of religion, and indeed our age has given the unbelieving a sophisticated taste in religious literature.

~Lionel Trilling

In the American Metaphysical, reality is always material reality, hard, resistant, unformed, impenetrable, and unpleasant.

~Lionel Trilling

Youth is a time when we find the books we give up but do not get over.

~Lionel Trilling

The poet may be used as a barometer, but let us not forget that he is also part of the weather.

~Lionel Trilling

Everything which the economist takes from you in the way of life and humanity, he restores to you in the form of money and wealth.

~Lionel Trilling

Our culture peculiarly honors the act of blaming, which it takes as the sign of virtue and intellect.

~Lionel Trilling

Literature is the human activity that make the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty.

~Lionel Trilling

There is no connection between the political ideas of our educated class and the deep places of the imagination.

~Lionel Trilling

Probably it is impossible for humor to be ever a revolutionary weapon. Candide can do little more than generate irony.

~Lionel Trilling

We are all ill; but even a universal sickness implies an idea of health.

~Lionel Trilling

Freud ... showed us that poetry is indigenous to the very constitution of the mind ; he saw the mind as being, in the greater part of its tendency, exactly a poetry-making faculty.

~Lionel Trilling

After all, no one is ever taken in by the happy ending, but we are often divinely fuddled by the tragic curtain.

~Lionel Trilling

The diminution of the reality of class, however socially desirable in many respects, seems to have the practical effect of diminishing our ability to see people in their difference and specialness.

~Lionel Trilling

Immature ists imitate. Mature ists steal.

~Lionel Trilling

This desire to fashion, to shape, a self and a life has all but gone from a contemporary culture whose emphasis, paradoxically enough, is so much on self.

~Lionel Trilling

Reasons for not keeping a notebook: 1) the ambiguity of the reader

~Lionel Trilling

If one defends the bourgeois, philistine virtues, one does not defend them merely from the demonism or bohemianism of the artist but from the present bourgeoisie itself.

~Lionel Trilling

I find righteous denunciations of the present state of the language no less dismaying than the present state of the language.

~Lionel Trilling

We have all in some degree become anarchistic.

~Lionel Trilling

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