

Theodor Adorno

Quotes

Art, Men, Culture, People, Doe, Self, Thinking, Life, Lying, Philosophy, Believe, World, Order, Way, Differences, Past, Writing, Mean, Individual, Reality

Auschwitz begins wherever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks: they're only animals.

~Theodor Adorno

Every work of art is an uncommitted crime.

~Theodor Adorno

People have so manipulated the concept of freedom that it finally boils down to the right of the stronger and richer to take from the weaker and poorer whatever they still have.

~Theodor Adorno

Once the last trace of emotion has been eradicated, nothing remains of thought but absolute tautology.

~Theodor Adorno

Love is the power to see similarity in the dissimilar.

~Theodor Adorno

There is no love that is not an echo.

~Theodor Adorno

Knowledge, which is power, knows no limits, either in its enslavement of creation or in its deference to worldly masters.

~Theodor Adorno

The power of the culture industry's ideology is such that conformity has replaced consciousness

~Theodor Adorno

For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live.

~Theodor Adorno

True thoughts are those alone which do not understand themselves.

~Theodor Adorno

Freedom would be not to choose between black and white but to abjure such prescribed choices.

~Theodor Adorno

Art respects the masses, by standing up to them for what they could be, rather than conforming to them in their degraded state.

~Theodor Adorno

The task of art today is to bring chaos into order.

~Theodor Adorno

Intolerance of ambiguity is the mark of an authoritarian personality.

~Theodor Adorno

In the end, glorification of splendid underdogs is nothing other than glorification of the splendid system that makes them so.

~Theodor Adorno

The forms of art reflect the history of man more truthfully than do documents themselves.

~Theodor Adorno

Estrangement shows itself precisely in the elimination of distance between people.

~Theodor Adorno

The triumph of advertising in the culture industry is that consumers feel compelled to buy and use its products even though they see through them.

~Theodor Adorno

The positive element of kitsch lies in the fact that it sets free for a moment the glimmering realization that you have wasted your life.

~Theodor Adorno

If time is money, it seems moral to save time, above all one's own, and such parsimony is excused by consideration for others. One is straight-forward.

~Theodor Adorno

The bourgeois ... is tolerant. His love for people as they are stems from his hatred of what they might be.

~Theodor Adorno

There's not much need for prophets who are in synch with their society.

~Theodor Adorno

He who stands aloof runs the risk of believing himself better than others and misusing his critique of society as an ideology for his private interest.

~Theodor Adorno

Writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.

~Theodor Adorno

Fear and destructiveness are the major emotional sources of fascism, eros belongs mainly to democracy.

~Theodor Adorno

Everything about art has become problematic; its inner life, its relation to society, even its right to exist.

~Theodor Adorno

Art is permitted to survive only if it renounces the right to be different,

and integrates itself into the omnipotent realm of the profane.

~Theodor Adorno

Everything that has ever been called folk art has always reflected domination.

~Theodor Adorno

To say 'we' and mean 'I' is one of the most recondite insults.

~Theodor Adorno

Technology is making gestures precise and brutal, and with them men.

~Theodor Adorno

A pencil and rubber are of more use to thought than a battalion of assistants. To happiness the same applies as to truth: one does not have it, but is in it.

~Theodor Adorno

On their way toward modern science human beings have discarded meaning. The concept is replaced by the formula, the cause by rules and probability.

~Theodor Adorno

The almost insoluble task is to let neither the power of others, nor our own powerlessness, stupefy us.

~Theodor Adorno

Fascism is itself less 'ideological', in so far as it openly proclaims the principle of domination that is elsewhere concealed.

~Theodor Adorno

In sharp contrast to traditional art, modern art does not hide the fact that it is something made and produced: on the contrary, it underscores the fact.

~Theodor Adorno

Today self-consciousness no longer means anything but reflection on the ego as embarrassment, as realization of impotence: knowing that one is nothing.

~Theodor Adorno

Wrong life cannot be lived rightly.

~Theodor Adorno

Quality is decided by the depth at which the work incorporates the alternatives within itself, and so masters them.

~Theodor Adorno

When all actions are mathematically calculated, they also take on a stupid quality.

~Theodor Adorno

It is barbaric to write poetry after Auschwitz.

~Theodor Adorno

People know what they want because they know what other people want.

~Theodor Adorno

An emancipated society, on the other hand, would not be a unitary state, but the realization of universality in the reconciliation of differences.

~Theodor Adorno

Very evil people cannot really be imagined dying.

~Theodor Adorno

Art is magic delivered from the lie of being truth.

~Theodor Adorno

The basest person is capable of perceiving the weaknesses of the greatest, the most stupid, the errors in the thought of the most intelligent.

~Theodor Adorno

He who has laughter on his side has no need of proof.

~Theodor Adorno

Culture is only true when implicitly critical, and the mind which forgets this revenges itself in the critics it breeds. Criticism is an indispensable element of culture.

~Theodor Adorno

The human is indissolubly linked with imitation: a human being only becomes human at all by imitating other human beings.

~Theodor Adorno

Advancing bourgeois society liquidates memory, time, recollection as irrational leftovers of the past.

~Theodor Adorno

Horror is beyond the reach of psychology.

~Theodor Adorno

The Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant.

~Theodor Adorno

Even the loveliest dream bears like a blemish its difference from reality, the awareness that what it grants is mere illusion.

~Theodor Adorno

In the age of the individual's liquidation, the question of individuality must be raised anew.

~Theodor Adorno

Work while you work, play while you play - this is a basic rule of repressive self-discipline.

~Theodor Adorno

Love is the ability to discover similarities in the dis-similar. The audience has a right not to be fooled - even if it insists on being fooled.

~Theodor Adorno

The first and only principle of sexual ethics: the accuser is always in the wrong.

~Theodor Adorno

The capacity for fear and for happiness are the same, the unrestricted openness to experience amounting to self-abandonment in which the vanquished rediscovers himself.

~Theodor Adorno

The individual mirrors in his individuation the preordained social laws of exploitation, however mediated.

~Theodor Adorno

The hardest hit, as everywhere, are those who have no choice.

~Theodor Adorno

The culture industry not so much adapts to the reactions of its customers as it counterfeits them.

~Theodor Adorno

No harm comes to man from outside alone: dumbness is the objective spirit.

~Theodor Adorno

In his state of complete powerlessness the individual perceives the time he has left to live as a brief reprieve.

~Theodor Adorno

Those who cannot help ought also not advise: in an order where every mousehole has been plugged, mere advice exactly equals condemnation.

~Theodor Adorno

Tact is the discrimination of differences. It consists in conscious deviations.

~Theodor Adorno

He who has loved and who betrays love does harm not only to the image of the past, but to the past itself.

~Theodor Adorno

The power of works of art still continues to be secretly nourished by imitation... kitsch

~Theodor Adorno

Philosophy ... must not bargain away anything of the emphatic concept of truth.

~Theodor Adorno

The whole is the false.

~Theodor Adorno

Death is imposed only on creatures, not their creations, and has therefore always appeared in art in a broken form: as allegory.

~Theodor Adorno

Truth is inseparable from the illusory belief that from the figures of the unreal one day, in spite of all, real deliverance will come.

~Theodor Adorno

All satire is blind to the forces liberated by decay. Which is why total decay has absorbed the forces of satire.

~Theodor Adorno

Modernity is a qualitative, not a chronological, category.

~Theodor Adorno

He who integrates is lost.

~Theodor Adorno

The specific is not exclusive: it lacks the aspiration to totality.

~Theodor Adorno

The splinter in your eye is the best magnifying-glass available.

~Theodor Adorno

But he who dies in despair has lived his whole life in vain.

~Theodor Adorno

Words of the jargon sound as if they said something higher than what they mean.

~Theodor Adorno

The man for whom time stretches out painfully is one waiting in vain, disappointed at not finding tomorrow already continuing yesterday.

~Theodor Adorno

Not only is the self entwined in society; it owes society its existence in the most literal sense.

~Theodor Adorno

Insane sects grow with the same rhythm as big organizations. It is the rhythm of total destruction.

~Theodor Adorno

The most powerful person is he who is able to do least himself and burden others most with the things for which he lends his name and pockets the credit.

~Theodor Adorno

Love you will find only where you may show yourself weak without provoking strength.

~Theodor Adorno

Domination delegates the physical violence on which it rests to the dominated.

~Theodor Adorno

The good man is he who rules himself as he does his own property: his autonomous being is modelled on material power.

~Theodor Adorno

Life has become the ideology of its own absence.

~Theodor Adorno

He who matures early lives in anticipation.

~Theodor Adorno

Happiness is obsolete: uneconomic.

~Theodor Adorno

Intelligence is a moral category.

~Theodor Adorno

People at the top are closing ranks so tightly that all possibility of

subjective deviation has gone, and difference can be sought only in the more distinguished cut of an evening dress.

~Theodor Adorno

By abstaining from all definite content, whether as formal logic and theory of science or as the legend of Being beyond all beings, philosophy declared its bankruptcy regarding concrete social goals.

~Theodor Adorno

In the abstract conception of universal wrong, all concrete responsibility vanishes.

~Theodor Adorno

In many people it is already an impertinence to say 'I'.

~Theodor Adorno

Thinking no longer means anymore than checking at each moment whether one can indeed think.

~Theodor Adorno

Exuberant health is always, as such, sickness also.

~Theodor Adorno

The law of the innermost form of the essay is heresy

~Theodor Adorno

None of the abstract concepts comes closer to fulfilled utopia than that of eternal peace.

~Theodor Adorno

In the end indignation over kitsch is anger at tis shameless revelling in the joy of imitation.

~Theodor Adorno

Suffering has as much right to be expressed as a martyr has to cry out. So it may have been false to say that writing poetry after Auschwitz is impossible.

~Theodor Adorno

Anti-Semitism is the rumour about the Jews.

~Theodor Adorno

When I made my theoretical model, I could not have guessed that people would try to realise it with Molotov cocktails.

~Theodor Adorno

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