

A Liberal Decalogue
(“Ten Commandments for Beginning Philosophers”)
Bertrand Russell

Perhaps the essence of the Liberal outlook could be summed up in a new decalogue, not intended to replace the old one but only to supplement it. The Ten Commandments that, as a teacher, I should wish to promulgate, might be set forth as follows:

1. Do not feel absolutely certain of anything.
2. Do not think it worthwhile to proceed by concealing evidence, for the evidence is sure to come to light.
3. Never try to discourage thinking for you are sure to succeed.
4. When you meet with opposition, even if it should be from your husband or your children, endeavor to overcome it by argument and not by authority, for a victory dependent upon authority is unreal and illusory.
5. Have no respect for the authority of others, for there are always contrary authorities to be found.
6. Do not use power to suppress opinions you think pernicious, for if you do the opinions will suppress you.
7. Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.
8. Find more pleasure in intelligent dissent than in passive agreement, for, if you value intelligence as you should, the former implies a deeper agreement than the latter.
9. Be scrupulously truthful, even if the truth is inconvenient, for it is more inconvenient when you try to conceal it.
10. Do not feel envious of the happiness of those who live in a fool's paradise, for only a fool will think that it is happiness.

Bertrand Russell, “The Best Answer to Fanaticism—Liberalism,” *New York Times Magazine*, 16 December 1951, p. 183. Reprinted in Bertrand Russell, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell: 1944-1969*, vol. 3 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), pp. 71-72.

All Philosophy Students
Dr. Close

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”
-- Socrates

“There is nothing more wholesome for us than to find problems that quite transcend our powers.”
-- C. S. Peirce

“Philosophic study means the habit of always seeing an alternative.”
-- William James

“Philosophy is the activity by means of which the meaning of statements is clarified and defined.”
-- Moritz Schlick

“Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men.”
-- John Dewey

“It is absolutely correct and proper to say that ‘You can’t do anything with philosophy.’ . . . granted that *we* cannot do anything with philosophy, might not philosophy, if we concern ourselves with it, do something with us?”
-- Martin Heidegger

“Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves.”
-- Bertrand Russell

“What is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., and if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life . . .?”
-- Ludwig Wittgenstein

“To ridicule philosophy is really to philosophize.”
-- Blaise Pascal

“All men by nature desire to know . . . It is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize.”
-- Aristotle

“I am uneasy to think I approve of one object, and disapprove of another; call one thing beautiful, and another deformed; decide concerning truth and falsehood, reason and folly, without knowing upon what principles I proceed.”
-- David Hume