

ORGANIZATION:

Essay Model: What I Have Lived For

¹Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. ²These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

³I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy--ecstasy so great that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. ⁴I have sought it next because it relieves loneliness--that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold, unfathomable, lifeless abyss. ⁵I have sought it finally because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined. ⁶This is what I have sought, and though it might seem too good for human life, this is what--at last--I have found.

⁷With equal passion I have sought knowledge. ⁸I have wished to understand the hearts of men. ⁹I have wished to know why the stars shine. ¹⁰And I have tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux. ¹¹A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.

¹²Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. ¹³But always pity brought me back to earth. ¹⁴Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. ¹⁵Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people, a hated burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. ¹⁶I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.

¹⁷This has been my life. ¹⁸I have found it worth living and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

--from The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell