



By Bertrand Russell

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Understanding the Text

1. Why does Russell call the three passions 'simple'?

Answer: The essay actually is the preface to Bertrand Russell's autobiography. Every human is driven by a force, a passion all her/his life. It keeps her/him going. Some desire money, other, fame. There are some who desire simple satisfaction. Bertie's desires that he chased through his life were simple as well. He was driven by passions that any ordinary man or woman might feel for. For one, he wished love and got it too; he believed that it brought ecstasy. He got married four times to tell. Second, he hungered for knowledge and of course we all seek for it. He was a mathematician, a logician, political activist and wrote vastly on philosophy and contributed to literature, for which he received Nobel Prize as well. Third, he shared "an unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind". He took a stand against World War 1 and Vietnam war. Any human will pity a suffering man or a woman for they have a heart and feel, and so did Russell. Russell was a man who did not lust after materialistic gains; he was born in a prominent aristocratic family of Britain and gave away much of what he inherited. He rose his voice in favour of suffragists and world government. He believed in free thought in religion and morals.

2. Why has he compared the three passions to great winds?

Answer: Russell compared his three passions to great winds as they were the driving force in his life. They directed his life and gave him the reason for his existence. These great winds are: the love, the knowledge and the pity for the suffering of the mankind. He found ecstasy in the first two that took him to heaven while the third brought him back to the earth with the practical reality. It appears from the words of the author, these are essential parts of his life. It was because of his passions, he found his life to be worth living and that he would gladly live it again if the chance were offered to him. So, his passions are like the great winds of his life directing him all along.

3. What according to Russell, is the importance of love in life?

Answer: Bertrand Russell is of the opinion that love brings ecstasy in one's life. He believes that the bliss that love brings is so magnificent that he could sacrifice the rest of his life for this joy of few hours. It relieves one of loneliness of this world. Russell says that in love he has seen the heaven that the great saints and poets have imagined. Here, Russell has given a spiritual dimension to love. He reached beyond through love and it was pity that brought him back.

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