

Bertrand russell's "what i have lived for" essay sample

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The prologue of his autobiography, Bertrand Russell's "What I Have Lived For" lists the three chief purposes of the aging scholar's existence - love, knowledge, and pity for human suffering. None of his goals are purely carnal or self-interested, even love, which he characterizes as ecstatic and even heavenly, transcending ordinary existence.

In his quest for knowledge, Russell has sought answers to higher questions of human existence and the human mind; like his search for love, it has a deep spiritual significance for him, and he shows no overt self-interest in either aim. His sense of pity, however, grounds him in earthly reality, particularly in the realization that he is powerless to halt the world's suffering; however, this sense of futility does not leave him embittered or frustrated. On the whole, this brief piece attests to Russell's higher emotional and intellectual aims, yet it also displays his sense of humility and the realization that even higher aspirations like his cannot necessarily change earthly reality.

Lenz, J. R. (2006). What I Have Lived For. *Bertrand Russell Society* .

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