

IDEAS THAT HAVE HELPED MANKIND BY BERTRAND RUSSEL

Bertrand Russell is a well-known British philosopher and a symbolic character in the analytic movement in Anglo-American philosophy. He is also known as a logician and social reformer, and a Nobel Prize winner for Literature in 1950. He wrote numerous books and huge numbers of articles. His subject matters include social, political and moral issues. He is preeminently known as a promoter of peace.

Ideas that have Helped mankind is an expository essay in which Russell gives a detailed account of the ideas that have helped mankind in pre-historic time and historic time. This essay is one of Russell's unpopular essays.

Russell begins the essay, Ideas that have Helped Mankind, by asking straight six questions that indispensable to outlining what would be supportive to mankind. The six questions are:

“Are mankind helped friendly with one another?” (Russell)

Russell explains each one the question one after another in detail. The very first idea in pre-historic time which helped man, according to the author, is the increase in numbers. There is a time when men were a rare species on the planet. They were afraid of giant beasts; along with difficulty in sustenance. The increase in numbers benefited them a lot in terms of safety.

Early humans were more like animals living like beasts: cloth less, and obtaining food by killing other animals. However, with the passage of time, their way of living changes and they become less like animals. The two factors that bring about this change are the “congenital skills” and the “forethought” (thinking about the future). The fact, nevertheless, is that it is not because of the congenital skills that human progress but because of acquired skills.

The author is not sure about the in what way happiness benefited the mankind. Though the foresightedness of man helped them in many ways; it has harmed them in an equal manner. The man is always in fear of upcoming disasters, and this fear of the future make them less happy, says the writer. According to Russell, facing the calamity is not that much lethal as worrying about it is.

A man is more exposed to various experiences in their life than animals. This all because of different intellect from other species of its kind. Their brainpower, consequently, empowers them to enjoy a greater diversity of experiences.

The increase in knowledge with the passage of time helped the man to progress. It is on the basis of the amount of knowledge that humans are superior to other species.

Russell, furthermore, point out toward how the development of civilization has helped mankind throughout evolution. To him, the civilization told the human to be more kind towards other fellow beings as compared to animals. A sense of love, care and helped aroused in the man with the development of civilization and this benefited the man in term of progress.

Apart from these above-mentioned elements, Russell points out ideas during the pre-historic time and the historic time that have helped mankind.

Pre-historic Time ideas:

Ideas that have helped mankind during pre-historic time are as follows.

The invention of language is the most important as well as difficult step. The exact stage during which language developed is not known, however, without language it would be impossible for any generation to develop.

The second step is the utilization of fire. With the help of fire humans and other animals keep themselves warm and cook food.

Another great step was taming of domestic animals which provide food and nutrition to man.

Along with the domestication of animals, the human need for green vegetables leads to the invention of This invention was not easy as it involves the huge sacrifice of humans.

The last but not the least is the development of the art of writing. It is, too, like writing developed gradually. First pictures and signs were used to convey a message. However, with the passage of time alphabets evolved.

Historic Time ideas:

Russell continues to contemplate the development accomplished by men in historic times. He splits the ideas into two types: ideas about knowledge and technique and the ideas that are concerned with morals and politics.

Development In Mathematics and Astronomy:

In Babylonia, in ancient times, the important steps about mathematics and astronomy were taken by Greeks. They acquire knowledge from the civilized nations like Egyptians. Whatever were offered by

Egyptians were immediately assimilated by Greeks. The Greeks used mathematics, not in the way it is used nowadays. They used it for pleasure and luxury, not for business. Greeks also made huge progress in astronomy as well but there was no practical application of astronomy until it becomes associated with astrology. Archimedes and Aristarchus of Samos are one of the greatest mathematician and astronomer of the antiquity, respectively. The Greeks developed the custom of communicating natural laws in mathematical terms.

Beneficial Ideas Contributed during 17th Century by Scientists

During the 17th century, Galileo, Descartes, Newton, and Leibniz are the most prominent figures who made huge developments. All modern scientific discoveries, with the exception of an atomic bomb, are based on old classical principles of Galileo and Newton. The undercurrents of Galileo and Newton rest upon two new principles and a new technique. One of the principles is the law of inertia which states that every body continues its state of rest or uniform motion unless a force is applied on it.

The science of the 17th century made it clear that if we wish to understand the universe; we should deal with nature without any biasness.

The Theory of Evolution:

Geology and the Darwin theory of evolution put a real blow on the face of severe conventional religious belief about the evolution of mankind. Russell says that science proves the soul to be useless. He is not sure whether a person has a soul or not, however, if it exists it has no role.

The Moral and Political Ideas:

According to Russell, moral and political ideas belongs to the second class of historic ideas that have helped mankind. The progress in science and technology, according to Russell, possibly will merely upsurge the extent of the calamity that an exploitation of ability can bring about. For example, the clash between Muslims and Jews for the control of Palestine, due to political bigotry, can cause the world war and by the use of an atomic weapon; they will destroy the whole world. Russell gives a sound, justified warning to the mankind. As far as knowledge and technology is concerned, humans have developed a lot in this field. However, when we speak of morality particularly political morality, no such development is made. There is unconditionally on no account any sensation in any sector of the world population of the unity of menfolk; the humans are divided into varied groups and communities, and every community thinks itself more vital as compare to others. The ideas of nationalism were not that widespread and strong as it is now and it narrows the mentality of man. The realm of the world proposes the vision of a dynasty alienated against itself. An objective of a world-government is by way of inaccessible from the thoughts of individuals as the far planets in the solar system. The mankind must dedicate some concerns towards moral and political development, if it has to survive.

The Idea of Comradeship of Man:

Amongst the philosophies that have benefited men in the moral domain is the idea of the comradeship of humans. This idea owed its major power to a certain political progress. This idea was invented by the Stoics. This idea was reinforced by Buddhism and Christianity, consequently. Christianity played a huge role in lessening the miseries of the slaves. They established hospitals and charity schools on a broad scale. Still, a huge figure of Christians is unsuccessful to dwell up to the principles that are promoted by their conviction.

The idea of brotherhood among humans is among the important ideas that have benefited the moral development of mankind, however, to some people this idea still doesn't hold upon some minds. This is because of the wide diversity among people that resulted in nations. We approve Russell concept of the brotherhood that it helped a lot in development of mankind, yet is not capable of preventing world wars.

The Idea of Democracy and Liberty:

The concepts of equality, fraternity, and liberty have helped mankind to a large extent. The roots of all these concepts lie in religion. Religious toleration provides a platform for individual liberty to enter into practical politics. John Locke is considered one of the supreme supporter of liberty in the 17th century. He tried his best to settle the individual liberty with constitutional control. Law and government are other extraordinary concepts in the politics that have helped mankind. The Government, of the two, is more important. The Government can be well-defined by means of the combined force of a public. It is a force which enables the control of citizens and to struggle against the pressure from overseas States. In order to maintain peace in a state of war or when there is a danger of war, the government seems to have greater control over private citizens. At the charge of citizens, governments intensify their power. In the early times, the kings had misused this political powers but nowadays, there is a complete check on government which doesn't allow the government to misuse this power. This is achieved through democracy. In democracy, government is run on the desire of people. In addition to, in democratic states, the constitution allows freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of movement. A democratic State distinguishes from a police State where individuals are controlled by governments and there is no freedom.

Government:

Russell has progressive views about government. The approach that he adopted to discuss government is quite pragmatic. Those who are hard-edge socialist will never agree with Russell's ideas of liberty and democracy. According to Russell, democracy offers the freedom that is very essential for the welfare and bliss of mankind. While on the other hand, a totalitarian system of government takes all over into their hands and treat the people as their subjects. No country can develop morally and on scientific grounds in such a system.

Russell finally proposes an idea that may benefit the mankind to a great extent in the coming future. The idea is of one single government for the whole world. To Russell, the upcoming time for mankind would be gloomy if the idea of single government is not put into practice. According to Russell, nowadays world faces unprecedented problems, and human are left with only two substitutes: one is that man should go

back ancient times as a consequence of obliteration of civilization or they should agree upon establishing a single international government. A new period of development and progress of mankind will start in case a new international government is formed. The United States and the Soviet Unions, nowadays, are considered to be truly independent states. A big step, for the welfare of mankind, on the mutual agreement, to convert two independent states to one, should be taken for establishing peace in the world.

Previously Russell seems to determine about the idea of international government. But now to him, the idea seems to be wholly impractical. The world is divided into more than one hundred and fifty states and each state has their own identity. The unity and agreement on a large scale of international government are questionable. Even if we only consider the two independent states; would they agree to form one international government?

According to Russell, when he wrote this essay, the world in coming twenty to thirty years will either abolish itself or will establish by establishing an international government. Neither of his predictions comes true. Peace still prevails in the world and in the future there would be no need of establishing world-government.