



Philosophy is Lucid, Not for Thinkers Alone, Adopts Practical Ethics, Makes Better Individuals, and Helps Tolerate Uncertainties: An Incisive Review of Bertrand Russell's 'Philosophy for Laymen'

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ABSTRACT: Philosophy has always had two different objects: to arrive at a theoretical understanding of the structure of the world; and to discover and disseminate the best possible way of an ethical life. Some philosophers have left no stone unturned so as to make their philosophical ideas quite accessible for a cosmopolitan audience, no matter whether they are called common people or laypeople; young or old. One of them is Russell who proves philosophy should no longer be confined to decorate the discussion tables at academic establishments and within the research university settings. It is not full of high sounding words, lengthy sentences and Jargon which can only be made out by intellectuals. It is no unattainable arcadia for commonality nor is it a serious discipline of study because it is strictly institutionalized. Bertrand Russell, a multi-faceted genius, has turned the table and dispelled the illusions and delusions and spilled the beans that philosophy is for everyone, as everyone is compared to a builder by HW Long Fellow in his poem, The Builders. The poet says that people need to be careful in spending their time on good things as what they do now affects their lives and others lives later. So they should use their time and thoughts to make their lives more meaningful. Here they build their lives, it may be individual, but individual contributions ultimately become collective contributions as personal ethics become interpersonal ethics and personal discipline leads to interpersonal discipline.

KEYWORDS: authoritarian, cosmos, cruel cult, dogma, dogmatism, emancipation, freethinking, imperialism, layman, prejudice, misery, practical ethic, perennial, serenity, speculation, wisdom.

Bertrand Arthur William Russell is a gifted multi-faceted British genius of the twentieth century. He was a philosopher, mathematician, logician, social reformer, and a founding figure in analytic movement. Being a man of letters, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. Russell's rendition to logic, to the philosophical theory of knowledge, and to the philosophy of mathematics made him one of the foremost scholarly people of the 20th century. He is well-known for his work in analytical philosophy, which deals with the details of philosophical terms and the usage assigned to them, to solve a philosophical dilemma. Russell underlines the domains like ethics, history, society, and morality in his work 'Unpopular Essays.' He has taken account from Plato to Hegel's dogmatism, and the readers have been taken on a long journey to describe the constant philosophies. He discusses their role in laymen's lives. He supplies certain philosophical questions regarding the existence of the universe and the purpose of mankind which were, in fact, left unanswered for all the ages. Russell discusses main themes in his essay such as different standpoints of ancient philosophers regarding the subject of philosophy, the government system, education, and the role of philosophy in an individual's life. He has discussed all the things that affect human moral and ethical values very openly. He discusses the role of religion in relevance to philosophy as one of the central ideas in his essays.

In his enlightening essay written in 1946, Philosophy for Laymen, Russell discusses the nature, purpose and importance of philosophy even for the common people. On asking as to what is philosophy, Russell replied that philosophy is the sincere endeavour to answer the ultimate questions which can be divided into five domains. The first one is about the **Origin:** 1. Where did people come from? 2. Where do people go ultimately? 3. What place do people have in the universe? 4. Does the existing world have a fundamental purpose? 5. Is there any supernatural power behind the origin of the universe? **Guilt:** 1. Is there a supernatural basis for moral behaviour? 2. What is the relation between religion and morality? 2. What is the basis of the fear of hell? 3. Why do some



people fear hell whereas others do not? **Meaning:** 1. What is the meaning of life? 2. Is there any ultimate meaning behind the universe? 3. Should people search for meaning or create meaning? **Anxiety:** 1. Is there any basic 'fear' driving human life? 2. Do most religions recognize a fundamental problem in human existence? 3. What can people learn from the answers offered by various religions? **Death:** 1. What happens after death? 2. Do people live again after death? 3. Do people wish that we would never die? 4. Do some people live without any awareness of death? These are some of the ultimate questions of life and people who have philosophical bent of mind can only answer them in a proper way.

Now, who is a layman? A layman is a person who is without any professional or specialized knowledge in a particular subject. Here, all about, is philosophy for laymen. At the outset, let's have a look at the general meaning of philosophy: the original meaning of the word philosophy comes from the Greek roots 'philo' which means 'love' and 'sophos' means 'wisdom.' Thus it is love for wisdom. If someone has studied philosophy, he wants to understand how and why people do certain things and how to live the life in a better way. In other words, he wants to know the meaning of life. If a suffix - er is added to philosophy, and one can get a word for someone whose line of work is to ponder over profound thoughts. The opening move of philosophy is found at the dawn of civilization; with the germination of free thought in human mind. Free thought is a mighty phrase which is an epistemological viewpoint which holds that beliefs should not be formed on the basis of authority, tradition, revelation, or religious dogma. On the other hand, the beliefs should rather be attained by other lofty methods such as logical system, reason, rationality, argument, and empirical observation. Freethinkers acknowledge that meaning of anything must spring up in human mind. Now that, they consider that the universe is unsystematic, reasonless, senseless, and purposeless.

The cosmos cares one no longer, one must care oneself, if one wishes to have purpose behind the cosmos, one gets nothing. Individuals are free to choose, within the limits of humanistic morality; which that would not hurt others is morality, for the freethinkers. However, some freethinkers do find meaning in human compassion, interpersonal help, social progress, the beauty of humanity, art, music, literature, personal happiness, pleasure, joy, love, and the progression of knowledge and wisdom.

Thus the curious individuals who, nurtured the free thought, were eager to investigate the central questions about the existence of things and beings took the free thought ahead for the betterment of the human world. Their objective was to revise various facets of life to acquire a deeper understanding which led to the earlier traces of philosophical thoughts and led to the pursuance of wisdom. The one, who has free mind, first confutes the thought that philosophy studies only controversies to which the answer is impossible to know. Any philosopher says that it will only matter, and have an effect on those who study philosophy for the purpose of gaining knowledge to connect the sciences for an understanding of the universe.

It is Greeks who advanced far beyond the mythological stage and developed philosophy with their freethinking. They laid foundations upon which the Western thought was built. The Greek philosophy was the best in the evolution of human thinking ranging from simple to complex and comprehensive systems. The spirit of independence and the love of truth animated the Greek thinkers. Greek philosophy took its turn by beginning with an inquiry into the essence of the objective world at the beginning. Later slowly the philosophers turned their eyes from external nature to man. This shift of interest from nature to man led to the study of human mind and human conduct like logic, psychology, politics and poetics. They questioned as to what the highest good was and what was the end and aim of life? Socrates says, 'Wonder is the feeling of a philosopher and philosophy begins in wonder.' Russell too compares a life without philosophy and a life with philosophy, the difference is that a life sans philosophy is limited to only thinking of the world, while the one who lives a philosophical life is free to think of the world outside, as well as beyond, thus he would become a little other-centred. Russell resolves by saying philosophy is not a study for the sake of answers, but for the sake of the questions themselves. In order to expand the knowledge of possibilities and intellectual imagination, in addition to understanding the capabilities and greatness of mankind, one should have knowledge of philosophy.

In the beginning, Russell states that ever since there evolved civilized communities in the world, humans have found out that the forces of nature can never be pacified by their worships, yet the religious dogma, weakened to the maximum extent, has continued. They have realized human effort plays an important role to have an upper hand on nature. Here human effort means, the application of appropriate actions with suitable skills and techniques by humans for the safe, comfortable and better life. The sea change in the way of thinking of humans was because of the natural calamities like, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, blizzards, avalanches, volcanic eruptions, dust storms, and wildfires were seen with their worst effect on humans in spite of their fulfilling of the worships. By the time of the civilized communities, man has understood that the places of worships were built on false premises. They witnessed the utter failure of the places of worships in their fruitless efforts to bring comfort and cheer to the



multitude. But some religions were still successful in keeping their followers in their iron fold and didn't allow them to think freely, to question against what was written in their holy books. Yet the followers realized that their efforts and endeavours were must and should to save themselves from nature.

The only way was to master nature. For that, humans had to acquire the right knowledge and skills in order to produce tools and weapons. They are necessary to encourage nature to produce useful animals and plants. This mighty task was handed over to science, scientists, technologists and experience has showed them in order to deal with these, it is felt necessary to train a large number of rather narrow minded-specialists or scientists. This turned out to be a Pandora's Box of problems, according to Russell. The specialists or scientists should have both knowledge and wisdom. Russell has commented that they ought to have been wise as problems arise when knowledge is wide and wisdom is narrow. In his thought provoking essay, Knowledge and Wisdom, Russell points at, 'Most people would agree that, even if our age far goes past all previous ages in knowledge, there has been no correlative enhancement in wisdom.'

Thus Russell underlines the prominence of wisdom. In general sense, knowledge includes realities, information, and skills gathered through experience or education or it may be through the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject or subjects. On the other hand, in the words of Russell, wisdom consists of sense of proportionality, awareness of comprehensiveness and feeling, liberation from personal prejudice, non-partisanship with intellectual element. A wise person has sound judging capacity as he takes all the factors, related to an issue, into consideration before taking decision. This is sound judging capacity. By this, it can be understood that both knowledge and wisdom are not one and the same. When people are just knowledgeable, there is possibility that they would become narrow-minded which is not at all good for mankind. For example, scientists invented medicine to reduce infant mortality, but they didn't think their medicine would bring in population explosion. If the scientist had been wise, they would have asked the governments to introduce the medicine and implement family planning simultaneously. That's why it is said that good people are good people because they have come to wisdom through knowledge and there is close association between wisdom and philosophy.

In short, wisdom is to understand the fundamental nature of reality, life, and humanity. At the same time, philosophy is the love of wisdom. Now it is at best a friendly acquaintanceship, between wisdom and philosophy. Both the domains are complement to each other. In a lighter vein, to be a friend of someone is to think of him or her often; but one may read book after book on philosophy and finds no mention of wisdom; it is like trying to find blood in blood. Where there is philosophy, there is wisdom. It may be appropriate to quote Brutus who tells Cassius in Julius Caesar, 'There is a tide in the affairs of men. Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.' Similarly there is wisdom in the world, by taking and following it, everyone can become a philosopher or live a philosophical life. Later Russell goes ahead and points out a second problem which is less precise, and by some mistakenly considered as unimportant. The problem is as to how best to utilize man's authority on the forces of nature. This, according to Russell, lets in such universal issues like dictatorship versus democracy, socialism versus socialism and free thinking versus authoritarian dogmatism. The glaring fact is these issues can never be addressed by science or the experiments in laboratories. In order to solve such problems, from the point of view of Russell, an extensive historical survey of making human life in the past and in the present as the center point is necessary to find out the true sources of human misery or contentment.

Russell has felt that increase of skill has not insured any augment of human happiness or wellbeing because one man's food can be another man's poison. But he presents here some true examples: when man learnt to grow crops to produce food grains, he used his knowledge to establish a cruel cult of human sacrifice. When man tamed the horse, he started stealing things and escaping safely and later he enslaved peaceable people. In the beginning of the industrial revolution, man found out how to make cotton goods with the help of machinery, but the outcome was horrible as it led to slave trade, child labour, cruel working conditions and labour exploitation. Thomas Jefferson in 19th century, from America, became an ardent advocate of human rights, freedom of thought, speech and religion. He was a leading inspiration behind the American Revolution which at last led to American independence and the United States Constitution. Now Russell comes down to the present age and points out that the combination of scientific genius and technical skill resulted in the production of atomic bomb and now the thinking people are worried as to what should be done with it. It is nothing but man's peril. All the above instances happened at different periods of the history shows that the more skills and technology mankind acquires, the more wisdom they ought to have, otherwise people have to bear the brunt of it. It is already stated that every wise man is a philosopher.



Russell exhorts that men must acquire the love of wisdom, means philosophy, as the new powers are invented by scientists and technologists and be handed over to the common people to use them and ultimately plunge mankind into a terrible disaster. Therefore philosophy should be introduced in educational institutions and at the same time, it must not be like the philosophy of specialists. There should be distinction between the cultural value and professional interest. Cultural values define a culture's central part of beliefs about what is good or right. On the other hand, professional interests are literally the things that matter to one about one's occupation. They refer to the facets of one's career that one find engaging, basically motivating, or that one sets them as personal goals. Russell directs that philosophy ought to be an integral part of academic education and at the same time it should be noted that specialization in any branch of study would unquestionably increase knowledge. Therefore education has to aim at permitting cultural value in such studies as history, literature and philosophy. According to the author, Greeks take the lion's share of credit in contributing to philosophy. He feels that it would be made easy for a student to learn what Greeks have accomplished, now available through translations.

Russell wants people should remember the roots. He suggests all the students in the world should make a sincere attempt to acquire the abstract of the history of the world and compare the problems which exist now with that of the Egyptian priests, Babylonian rulers and Athenian social reformers. Apart from it, they have to balance the hopes and despairs of the intervening centuries. The meaning of intervening century what happened between two eras or between two remarkable events. This should be done from a neural point of view. Now, Russell goes to write about philosophy which was treated from a similar view point. According to the author, philosophy from its very most former days has had two dissimilar objects which had been believed to be intimately interconnected. On the one hand, it aimed at a theoretical understanding of the structure of the world and on the other hand, it tried to discover and inculcate the best possible manner of human life.

Starting right from Heraclitus to Hegel or even up to the world famous communist Karl Marx, it time after time kept both the ends in view which means it was neither purely theoretical nor solely practical. However, it looked for a theory of the universe upon which it is to base a practical value-system. It is a very wide range of study because Heraclitus was a Greek philosopher of 540 BC, remembered for his cosmology. Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was a celebrated German philosopher and thinker and he is one of the most important personalities related to German idealism and he is one of the founding fathers of modern Western philosophy. Yet, his philosophy was felt shortsighted. Bertrand Russell remarked that Hegel was attracted to mysticism when he was a young man and that even his matured philosophy was 'an intellectualizing of what he had first appeared to him as a mystic insight.' Thus mysticism continued in him even as he grew. Mysticism means an obscure or ill-defined religious or spiritual belief. Karl Heinrich Marx was a Fellow of Royal Society of Arts, and he was a philosopher and a world famous economist, historian, sociologist, political theorist, critic of political economy, and socialist revolutionary. His best-known two of his works are The Communist Manifesto and the four-volume Das Capital. By and large philosophy has thus been intimately related to religion on one hand and science on the other hand as Heraclitus was believer and he felt 'The world exists as a logical system in which any change in one way is in the end balanced by a comparable change in another.'

Hegel speaking about religion sounds out, 'The commencement of religion is, as a matter of fact, precisely its content, and it is the concept of religion itself. God is the absolute truth and the truth of all things. And one-sidedly that religion alone is the absolutely factual knowledge.' Quite contrary to the comment, Karl Marx who was a fervent advocate of scientific socialism annotates, 'Religion is the sigh of the subjugated people and the heart of a merciless or callous world. The soul of soulless considerations and at last, it is the opiate of the people.' At first, the relation of philosophy was considered as science. Eighteenth century, as far as philosophy was concerned, is a demarcation period because until at that time science was treated what was commonly called 'philosophy.' However, since eighteenth century the word 'philosophy' has been limited in sense, to its theoretical side, to what is more inquisitive and general in the topics with which science deals. It means philosophy moved from practical domain to speculative domain of science. But this transition period was limited. Yet, it is often commented that philosophy is unprogressive, but this remained a largely a verbal matter, it means a spoken matter.

But as soon as a way was found of arriving at some definite answers to some ancient tough questions which existed for many centuries, the new knowledge was treated as belonging to 'science', and 'philosophy' was still deprived of recognition. For example, from the times of Greeks and down to the time of Sir Isaac Newton planetary theory belonged to 'philosophy,' because the field was quite uncertain, speculative and there was a lot of complexity and controversy in it. The great scientist Newton took the subject out of the clutches of the free play of speculation. He made the field of planetary theory as a one which requires a different type of systematic



and scientific study with skill. Yet, it was in such a position that it was still exposed to some pertinent and fundamental doubts. For example, Anaximander, in the sixth century BC in Greek, proposed a theory of evolution, and asserted that humans were descended from fishes.

This was treated as philosophy because it was a speculation and unassisted by any detailed evidence. So, absence of evidence does not mean evidence of absence. When it comes to Darwin's theory of evolution, it is considered science, because it is based on the sequence of forms of life as found in fossils, upon the distribution of animals and plants to all parts of the world. An American astronomer Dr. Carl Sagan can be remembered here and he said, 'The fact that some geniuses were laughed at does not imply that all who are laughed at were geniuses. They laughed at Columbus, they laughed at Gregory Mendel, and they laughed at the Wright brothers and many more.' Russell praises and welcomes philosophical speculation or hypothesis because some of them led to groundbreaking scientific discoveries and inventions. He wants to say that everything begins with a thought or a hunch whether it is good or evil. For instance, the guesses of the Pythagoras in astronomy, of Anaximander and Empedocles in biological evolutions, and of Democritus as to the atomic constitution of matter provided the men of science, in later times, with hypotheses which entered the heads of philosophers alone. Thus it can be said that the large general hypotheses were imagined by philosophical minds which science was not able to test at that time, but when it became possible to test, the hypotheses became a part of science and ultimately ceased as philosophy.

According to Bertrand Russell, the utility of philosophy is not confined to speculations alone, on the theoretical side, as people may hope to see that it is proved or disproved by science within a period of time. Those people who have belief in science think that science is everything. They would normally become complacent, cocksure and condemn all interest in the problems which don't have the limited definiteness and which require for scientific treatment. Russell says, ironically, in practical matters people tend to think that skill can take the place of wisdom, and that to kill one another by means of the latest technique is more 'progressive', and therefore it is better than to keep one another alive by the old-fashioned methods. So technology should be for constructive purpose, but not for destructive purpose. This is the age of science with many path breaking discoveries and inventions. Science is making the impossible possible with the blink of an eye, giving no place for superstition. Science and superstitions are poles apart; one wants proof and the other wants belief. Yet they are the two sides of the same coin, but they are unknown of their interdependence. But it is philosophy which can show the proper use of science. Thinking science is everything or thinking science is nothing are to be regretted strongly, and it is philosophy alone which shows the right attitude, by making very clear at once of the scope and the limitations of scientific knowledge.

All questions that have to do with ethics or values or world or cosmos or human life, there are a number of purely theoretical questions and, the point is, to keep such interest in the questions alive and to examine carefully the suggested answers is one of the functions of philosophy. Those who want quick results of anything may feel impatient of philosophy which takes its own time to arrive at a certainty and so they may think that it is a waste of time. Russell doesn't agree with such people. He strongly feels that some kind of philosophy is a necessity to all, nevertheless the most thoughtless, and especially in the absence of knowledge, it is almost sure to be an empty-headed philosophy. Empty headed philosophy means, the thoughts one has lack of sense or discretion; and it is scatterbrained. The result of this is that the people are separated into rival groups of fanaticism; each group firmly adopts a certain position that its own brand of nonsensicalness is a holy truth, while that of the other side is a damnable heresy. Russell has taken, for example, there are a good number of such sides, Arians and Catholics, Crusaders and Muslims, Protestants and adherents of the Pope, Communists and Fascists, Sunnis and Shias have filled large sections of the last 1,600 years with their vain contraventions.

However, a little philosophy would have shown both sides that in all these disputes neither had any good reason to believe them were in the right. The groups had nothing but dogmatism which is an enemy to peace and it is an invincible barrier to democracy. From the past and till the present, it is the greatest of mental obstacles to human happiness. Here everyone can understand how philosophy can change the lives of even laypeople positively. The demand for certainty or certitude or sureness is one which is natural to man, because man what wants order in everything, nevertheless it is an intellectual vice according to Russell. Here the philosopher has taken a mundane example, if one takes one's children for a picnic on a doubtful day, the children will demand a dogmatic answer to whether it will be sunny or wet, and one will be disappointed if one is not sure. This shows that people are unable to bear uncertainty. The same sort of guarantee is called for, in later life, of those who undertake to lead populations into the Promised Land, a place or situation in which someone expects to find great happiness.



The socialists want the liquidation of the capitalists, what Christians want to be virtuous with the extermination of Jews; Serbs would live in peace if all the Croats are decimated and Croats would live in peace if all the Serbs are killed. If A wants the peril of B, undoubtedly, B wants the peril of A. Russia wants the downfall of Ukraine and Ukraine wants the downfall of Russia. These are the samples of some of the popular slogans. Even a small amount of philosophy would make it impossible to accept such bloody-minded nonsense. But as long as men are not trained to withhold judgment in the absence of evidence, they will be led away from the right path or direction by overconfident prophets, and it is likely that their leaders will be either ignorant fanatics or cunning deceivers. It is difficult to endure uncertainty, and so are most of the other virtues. In order to learn different virtues there are different disciplines, and at the same time, to learn the suspended judgment the best discipline is philosophy. People ought to realize that they have to live with uncertainties.

As a matter of fact, uncertainties are an integral part of human life and none can escape from them. Certainty is short lived, but confidence is long-lived. As all the uncertainties collect in human mind, then fear and anxiety start to take hold of it. However, one of the keys to a successful retrieval from uncertainty is to learn to accept the uncertainty because the life itself is uncertain. If people do this, they will feel more positive as they go forward towards the process. Human life is filled with uncertainties and worries about future and expectations. The fact is many things remain outside human control; but human mind can be the key to cope with difficult circumstances. Whether people may acknowledge or not, uncertainty is a natural and unavoidable part of life. Very little about human life is constant or totally certain. People can have control over some things, but they can't control everything that happens to them. Uncertainty is all around the people, and it was never more so than today. Whether it concerns a global pandemic, the economy, or the finances, health, and relationships, much of what lies ahead in life remains uncertain. Yet as human beings, they crave for security order and pattern. Normally people want to feel safe and have a sense of control over their lives. Fearful uncertainties can leave humans feeling stressed, anxious, and powerless over the journey of their lives. Besides, it can drain people mentally and physically and trap them in a downward spiral of endless with 'ifs, buts, what-ifs' and the worst-case assumptions about what tomorrow will bring. Most people fear the recovery process because of its uncertainty.

However, living on these fears and focusing on irrational assumptive meaningless impending failure can lead to self-destruction. Sometimes it so happens, that one may be overwhelmed by uncertainty, but if he learns how to deal with the uncertainties each day, he will become more confident. And he will be able to trust that things will work out for the best. Just like any new thought pattern, people need to go on accepting uncertainties while accepting reality. Moving through these difficult feelings allow people to develop self-confidence and faith in them. The only certainty in life is that uncertainty isn't going anywhere; it is one's own shadow. The best thing is to accept uncertainty and one has to accept it as a challenge. Russell believes that uncertainty in the presence of vivid hopes and fears is painful, but must be endured if man wishes to live without the support of reassuring fairy stories. What is meant by suspended judgment? It is a knowledgeable process and a realistic state of mind in which one withholds judgments, and it is particularly on the drawing of moral or ethical conclusions.

The opposite of suspension of judgment is premature judgment, in short, prejudice. In this way people can learn that maturity of mind is the capacity to endure uncertainty and matured mind don't confuse with trivial thoughts. As a matter of fact, life is full of uncertainties: difficulties, obstacles, opportunities, possibilities, ups and downs. The ancestors taught people about certainties but not about uncertainties. The reality of human everyday existence is that things change every day, even when they wish that they would stay the same, and nothing is certain. Unsystematic events can and do happen when weather people are prepared or unprepared. So people tend to think of uncertainty, and the stress it causes, as the enemy. The general attitude of humans is they believe that once they get to the next stage in their lives, such as a new job or a new home, or a new place or a hike in the salary, that the uncertainty they are undergoing or experiencing will disappear and then there would be certainty. However, the fact will be different, as soon as they get to that new stage, they will encounter different uncertainties relevant to that stage. Helen Keller, an American author and advocate of disability rights, tells a mighty sentence that a bend in the road is not the end of the road unless one fails to make the turn. Thus it is right to say that every end of the road is the beginning of the other.

In accordance with Bertrand Russell, philosophy is to serve a positive purpose, but it must not teach only skepticism. He pronounces that when dogmatism is harmful, skepticism is useless. Dogmatism and skepticism are both, in a sense, absolute doctrines: one is very certain of knowing something which is not based on reason and the other is of not knowing anything at all. Russell says what philosophy should break up is 'certainty' whether it is of knowledge or whether it is of ignorance. From philosophic point of view, 'certainty' is a lack of any doubt and everything in life is perfect about something. Here is another example of certainty, if one



has no doubt that the earth is the third planet from the Sun, then one can be said to be certain of that fact, but it is not as easy to prove as two plus two are four. It is true that certainty admits of degrees, and at the same time doubt admits of degrees too. Up to what degrees it is certain and up to what degrees it is uncertain. Absolute certainty is the lack of any doubt at all about any particular thing or matter. Russell feels so because knowledge is not as precise a concept as is commonly thought.

It is true that this stipulated condition is hardly necessary as regards the multiplication table for it is easy to prove. And at the same time knowledge in practical affairs is different from the knowledge of the certainty or the precision of arithmetic matters. Suppose one says 'democracy is a good thing': one must admit, first, that one is less sure of this than one is that two and two are four. And one of the aims of education ought to be to make the students know of certainty and uncertainty and they should be taught how to endure uncertainty. Ethics, a separate branch of philosophy, is the motivation founded on the ideas of right and wrong or study of moral values and rules in the setting of human action as a means towards providing guidance for making decisions that will lead to right action which results in right results. It also attempts to provide a justifiable, rational way to regard what is either good or bad with regards of human behaviour or activities. However, practical ethics is different as it is applied ethics or functional ethics.

Ethics aims at examining and defining principles for moral behaviour and applies to real life settings or situations so that quality of human life can be enhanced. Functional ethics is also to apply general principles to specific situations; abstract to concrete and thought to practice. The study of ethics has a long tradition and has been a point of discourse for all the thinking people across the world for generations. As far as the West is concerned, the ethical tradition can probably be said to have started with the discussions and deliberations that Socrates had in Athens with his contemporaries and disciples like, Anaxagoras, Pericles, Alcibiades, Plato and others. Socrates was, said to be, a very much a practical ethicist. He thought that the most important question for any philosopher, indeed anyone, is how one should live. Practical ethics reflects on personal, professional, policy, communication, and social choices and structures and holds them up to examination. It may balance or prioritize different values and interests. Good practical ethics relies on deep understanding of the relevant real life facts and issues and so it is often interdisciplinary, includes two or more fields of study.

As a matter of fact, there are several dissimilar advances to practical ethics and different ethical theories could be employed. The consideration of right and wrong also distinguishes ethics from the other branches of philosophy like, metaphysics and epistemology. Besides considering whether the outcome of an action is 'right,' the notion of 'right' itself should be a topic to be considered. In short, what is right? More often than not, rights are normally defined as legal, social, or ethical principles of freedom or enlightenment. In one way, rights are the basically directive rules about what is allowed of people or owed to people according to some legal system, social convention, or ethical theory. Going deeper would lead to a great deal of complexity. The function of ethics is defined as providing guidance, with the significance that it is to be applied to the future. Ethics can evaluate the actions of the past; its principle value is as a guide for actions to be taken in the future. Ultimately, it refers to actions as being ethical or unethical, but every action is preceded by a decision which should also be ethical. And finally, the objective of ethics is defined as leading to 'right' thought, 'right' decision, 'right' choice and 'right' course of action. Interpersonal ethics depends on one's loyalty, honesty, safety, truthfulness, and empathy and actions that demonstrate these values improve the ability of people to co-operate with others and so they are also called ethical actions.

To call a spade a spade and in short, Russell was an ethical non-cognitivist and he did not accept that there is any such thing as an objective ethical fact as true: he says that when people assert that this or that has 'value' people are giving expression to their own emotions, not to a fact which would still be true if their personal feelings were different. According to Russell, the interrelation of logical and emotional ethics has always been an interesting subject. The relaxation of the bonds of moral authority has brought with it a dominant conception that ethics is a matter of expediency, the quality of being suited to the end in view. Idealism has fallen into discredit to such an extent that the term is synonymous with 'dreamism' or an idealist dreamer.

There are two types of dreamers. They are the realist and the idealist. The realist fixes an achievable goal whereas an idealist is more likely to pursue a pipe dream. It is 'an idea or plan that is impossible or very unlikely to happen. The idealist dreamers become obsessed with their dreams, overestimate their chances of success, and make foolish decisions. They are often willing to risk everything, no matter what the cost or consequences of it and have no plan B. But a realist is a person who accepts a situation as it is and he is prepared to deal with it accordingly. The difference between ethics and logic is ethics concerns right behaviour, as logic relates to right reasoning. Logic deals with the reasoning process which is related to the truth or falsehood of statements, while ethics deals with the rightness or wrongness of actions. The two elements logic and ethics are believed to regard truth and goodness



as real ones. And that reasoning logically or ethically can bring them closer to the ideal or the standard. Logic is cornerstone of ethics, because ethics is reasoning about the rightness or wrongness of conduct.

It can be said that reasoning can either be logical, and conclusions necessarily derived from assumptions, or illogical and inconsistent. On the other hand, logic can also assist people to think clearly about what they are talking about or what kind of argument it is, and whether the basis of the argument can just be guessed, or actually proved. However, ethical reasoning reflection is only as good as its standard for what constitutes true goodness which is an amalgamation of virtue, kindness and generosity. Today, much ethical reflection is offered that acknowledges the truth or existence of no absolute moral standard, and is thus self-contradicting. For instance, if one thinks that there is no absolute moral standard for what constitutes right conduct, then any conclusion about some action being immoral is only a matter of one's personal opinion or taste. Even the sacrifice of innocent children, according to the Bible to the God Moloch in the ancient days, might be perfectly justifiable, but it is widely found that it is totally cruel at present for non-believers; even now some ardent believers may justify it. But the ironical thing is if A asks B, who has supported the sacrifice of children, to be ready to be sacrificed at A's God, B will say that it's wrong and cruel; and escapes from there and he will do the same whenever A is seen with a knife in his hand. So ethics should be tested on a broad canvass.

Thus all humans however should never be ruled by instinct as they vary from person to person. They are able to and must make choices of what to believe and how to act, and while they are accountable for their choices and their repercussions because they have choices and freedom of will. These choices, as a matter of fact, are made in various contexts, and some choices are more apparent than others. This comes under existentialism. By and large, logic and ethics should never cause others any kind of detriment. Russell drives his point home effectively by declaring that hypothesis of knowledge is a product of doubt either it is general or scientific. In science, a hypothesis means, an idea or elucidation that one then test through study and experimentation in the later stage. Outside science, a theory or a guess can also be called a hypothesis. A hypothesis is commonly something which is more than a wild guess but at the same time less than a well-established theory. Scientists, in general, apply any scientific hypotheses to previously done observances which couldn't acceptably be explained with the available scientific theories at the present point of time.

Meanwhile, when people have asked themselves earnestly whether they really know anything at all, they are naturally directed into an examination of knowing; in the hope of being able to discern trustworthy beliefs from untrustworthy beliefs. So it is necessary to learn to act upon the best hypothesis while not believing anything dogmatically. Russell says that it can broadly be supposed that all that is considered knowledge can be arranged in a hierarchy of degrees of certainty. But something like, 'two and two are four,' 'we breathe in air' are the statements as to which no serious doubt is necessary. But, more distant memories are more doubtful, for example, how did you celebrate your fifteenth birthday or to prove black holes in the space without suitable equipment? Thus, philosophy possesses both a theoretical and a practical aim. Now, it is time to consider about the second. Among most of the philosophers of ancient times, there was close relationship between a view of the universe and a doctrine as far as the best way of life is concerned. Some of them established fraternities which had a certain similarity to the monastic orders of later times. The Greek philosophers, Socrates and Plato were taken aback by the sophists because they no longer had religious objectives in their teachings.

Who are sophists? The word 'sophists,' is of Greek origin, formed from the noun 'sophia,' 'wisdom' or 'learning', has the general sense that it is the one who practices or teaches or learns wisdom. As sophia could assign specific types of proficiency as well as general understanding to the conduct of life and the higher kinds of insight and linked with visionaries and men of letters. The word originally meant 'sage' or 'expert.' Thus, the sophists could be any of certain Greek lecturers, writers, and teachers who belonged to the 4th and 5th centuries BC. Most of the sophists used to move around the Greek-speaking world teaching a wide range of disciplines in return for fees. The remarkable thing was religion was not a part of their areas of teaching and that surprised Socrates and Plato. In the light of the present, if philosophy is expected to play a serious role in the lives of people who are generalists (non-professionals), it should recommend some way of life. When it is so, the general people want something what religion has, so far, done, however with certain differences. The greatest difference is that there is no appeal to authority in the life of a philosopher, whether that is of political or that of any sacred book or God.

The second important difference is that a philosopher should not undertake to establish any Church or Mosque or Temple or any place of worship. Besides, many ancient philosophers thought that philosophy itself was a way of life. They believed philosophy should improve and transform human existence. Some philosophers felt that philosophers would seek out communities of like-minded people to assist them in self-transformation. In such case, philosophy is at least expected to show a way of life. Now, it is about ethical



teachings and philosophy. Auguste Comte, a French philosopher, mathematician and writer developed a doctrine of positivism. In fact, he formulated a new Religion of Humanity, a secular religion, but he failed though he deserved to do it, because of lack of public patronage. It is felt that more emphasis should be laid on the intellectual virtues than has been customary ever since the crumble of Hellenic civilization.

The decline of the Hellenic civilization occurred as Rome gained strength and won wars against Macedonia turning the kingdoms and their allies into Roman provinces. Egypt was the last to fall, after having been drawn into the civil war between Mark Antony and Octavian Caesar. There lies one significant difference between the ethical teachings of the ancient philosophers and those philosophers of the present day. The ancient philosophers appealed to the people of means, who had free time and didn't want to work to earn a living, to live as it seemed good to them, even they could live in an independent city where their doctrines are the laws and they can live according to their will and pleasure. On the contrary, the immense majority of modern educated people have no such freedom. They have to make a living within the existing framework of society and they can't make any substantial changes in their own way of life unless they first secure substantial changes in political and economic system. In short, their way of living should follow the socially accepted way. The result is that a man's ethical convictions have to be expressed more in political advocacy, and less in his private behaviour, than was the case in the olden days. Thus the concept of a good way of life has to be a social rather than an individual conception.

In establishing logical philosophy, Russell broke many old buildings, and built a new castle which is utilitarian and based on logical empiricism. His attitude towards Aristotelian logic in any of its forms was that it had provided a Trojan horse (= a program that appears desirable but actually contains something harmful) for importing non-scientific assumptions into philosophy. Here Russell oftentimes portrayed Hegel's philosophy, which he understood as it was based on Aristotle's logic, as exemplifying the way that a metaphysical house of cards could be constructed upon a faulty logical basis. The new Russell's approach to logic was soon accepted as a progressive way forward. It was a new intellectual environment and so it was difficult to imagine that it would give any niche for Hegel. It was so because Hegel had placed his baseless logic at the centre of his philosophical system of rules. Nevertheless, it would not take long for Russell's vision and mission for a new philosophy to start establishing itself, and by the mid-twentieth century there emerged paths along which the philosophy of Hegel's could not travel. Russell's vision was born in the context of a logical foundation, but any philosophy, of course, must be capable of addressing a much wider range of issues and depending on a cause and effect relation.

The apparent development for Russell was to expatiate the role of logic to the foundations of the natural sciences. The sciences, at that time, were undergoing revolutionary changes, and the strains of the new approach to philosophy soon started to show with the profound patronage of thinking people. When compared to pure mathematics, the natural sciences are essentially based on empirical experience, and Russell soon attempted to employ his logical project to a form of empiricism, with his novel ideas of a logical empiricism or logical positivism especially among various influential groups in the world. When one had a retrospective look, even among the ancients, it was so conceived by Plato in his *The Republic*, that many of them had a more individualistic concept of the goals of life. The goal of life has always been a question that has puzzled philosophers and theologians for centuries. It is felt by eminent philosophers that it is deeply a personal matter that changes from person to person, and should be in accordance with more cultural, societal, and less individual values and beliefs.

As people are living in the society, their lives should follow societal norms and values. Plato says that he who is of a calm and happy nature will hardly feel the pressure of age. But to him who is of the opposite disposition, everything, youth and old age are equally a burden. Now, from this stand point, what philosophy has to say on the topic of ethics can be examined. Russell, further, declares that the studying of philosophy depends on the belief that knowledge is beneficial, even if it is painful. A man who has the philosophic bent of mind, no matter whether he is a professional philosopher or not, wishes his beliefs to be as true as he can make them, he loves to know more and at the same time hates to be faulty. This principle has a wider measure than it seems at the opening move. The beliefs of people spring from a great variety of reasons: what they were told in youth by their parents and at schools by teachers, what is preached at the places of worships, the books they read, what either embodies or allays their fears, what wants and needs to their self-esteem, and so on and so forth.

Any one of the reasons cited above may happen to lead them to true beliefs, but it is more likely to lead them in the opposite direction because they accept whatever that comes from others or other sources. Thus the information is not examined. Socrates says, 'The unexamined life is not worth living.' But, it is intellectual sobriety which leads them to scrutinize their beliefs intimately. By



using intellectual sobriety, people can have a view to discover which of them is believable and trustworthy. Russell adds another point that if people have wisdom, they would apply solvent criticism particularly to the beliefs they find that it is most painful to doubt, and at the same time, to those which are most likely to involve them in violent conflict with men who have opposite but equally groundless beliefs.

Thus intellectual sobriety and solvent criticism would pave way to scrutinize human beliefs. And the ultimate goal is to acquire true ethical philosophy for people. This can be done by any layman with a philosophical bent of mind and it hardly requires any abnormal knowledge and capability. A philosopher is expected to be impartial to be wise. Impartiality means the management of different views or opinions equally and fairly. In many cases people have emotional bias which can damage their judgment so it is very important to think objectively. That's why people have to think in abstract terms and they have to substitute emotionally charged terms with abstract terms. Russell has taken an example, ABC. There are three countries named A, B and C with some particulars. If one is asked to express his opinion, the opinion will be quite impersonal and the judgment will be fair as the letters are used as in elementary algebra as there is no emotional interest in the person. But when it is said that A is England, B is Germany and C is Russia, the person's judgment would be diluted if he belongs to any of the three countries.

Russell feels that thinking in abstract terms alone is not the only way to achieve ethical code of conduct. Abstract terms denote ideas or concepts and they have no physical referents. Ethical attitude can be achieved, perhaps even better, if one possesses generalized emotions. Generalized emotions means involving many different things, rather than one or two specific feelings, moods or relationships with others; it can also be trying to understand something from the others points of views or positions and viewing the world from generalized emotions. Meanwhile, Russell feels intellectual sobriety can do a lot of good to humans. The phrase means, intensive reasoning, balancing and deep thinking behaviour that shows a serious attitude to life. This intellectual sobriety would lead people to scrutinize their beliefs closely. If people are wise, they would get the gains in reducing the bitterness of disputes which would be in incalculable. He adds that there is another intellectual virtue, which is that of generality or impartiality. What are intellectual virtues? Intellectual virtues are the attributes that aim at lofty things like truth, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. It is strongly felt that any intellectually righteous person requires these virtues. A writer named, Jason Baehr wrote a book 'Deep Thought' which throws light on the intellectual virtues required in education.

The virtues give people characteristics like, curiosity, open-mindedness, attentiveness and intellectual courage. Apart from it, intellectual virtues can make people excellent thinkers. There are different analyses of exactly which qualities count as intellectual virtues and some of them are: virtue of responsibility, emphasized and praiseworthy character attributes, such as open-mindedness and intellectual humility. They also give vision, memory, and skills of logic importantly. Human emotions can be set on a parallel line as they have a hierarchy. For instance, if a man is hungry, the man can make great efforts to find food. If his children are hungry, the man feels more urgency to find food for them. If his friend is hungry, he will comfort his friend. His efforts are not urgent. But he finds that some millions of people in some South African country are on the verge of death from malnutrition, the problem is very big and it is in a distant place.

Unless he is officially responsible, he will soon forget all about it. But if the person has the emotional capacity to feel distant evils acutely, he can be ethical through feeling. Logic and emotions in ethics have an interesting subject. The two words look different, but when they are examined thoroughly, they are hardly distinguishable in the practical importance. In the light of meaning, logic is a way of making decisions that uses rational decision making to find the best conclusion. Emotions, on the other hand, are true feelings but they are not constant. Thus both of these are decision making tools and they have their strengths and they join hands in ethics. The groups which are antithetical to each other like Hindus and Muslims, Communists and Capitalists, Americans and Russians should think of the greatest amount of good for both together. But the problem is neither logic nor emotion is to be expected on either side in any of the major disputes in the world. Meanwhile, Russell expects that the students who are busy in getting specialized knowledge should spend some time to study philosophy. In the last paragraph of his interpretive essay, Russell has linked philosophy to education by exhorting students to dabble in philosophy at the least.

It is felt pertinent to have a look at philosophy and problem solving. It is widely agreed that the study of philosophy would enhance a person's problem-solving capabilities. Proper study of philosophy helps people analyze concepts, definitions, arguments, and problems. Philosophy is also the study of attitudes, existence, guidelines, knowledge, nature, reality and theory that fundamentally aims at maintaining, managing, monitoring the behaviour and principles of life and the environments. Understanding human environment and things from the philosophical perspective as to who they are, and what they actually need, makes it easier to



provide solutions and solving the related problems amicably. In other words, Philosophy is a science, now that it has a particular subject and method of study and research. It is the subject that studies the fundamental aspects of the nature of human existence.

The inherent task of philosophy is to provide man with a comprehensive view of life without dogmatism. This view serves as a base, a frame of reference, for all man's actions; no matter whether they are mental or physical or psychological or existential or all. This perspective tells man the nature of the world and universe; the means by which he is to deal with it; the means of acquiring knowledge; the standards by which he has to choose his goals and objectives, in regard to his life and ethics. Philosophy helps people, on the one hand, to distinguish fine and subtle differences between or among views and, on the other hand, to discover common ground between or among opposing positions. It helps people combine a variety of views or perception into one unified entity. Here is something else, in order to live, man must act and in order to act, he must make choices. Similarly, in order to make choices, he must define a code of values; in order to define a code of values, he must know what he is and where he is and what he really wants. It is strongly felt that man can't escape from this need; his only alternative is whether the philosophy guiding him is to be chosen by his mind or by chance. Thus philosophy comes in handy to offer solutions as man gets rational clarity of his problems.

Bertrand Russell exhorts students to spare some time for philosophy, willy-nilly as it is said above, without causing any detriment to their focus on their principal studies. Prof. Erica opines that education without philosophy is blind, because it does not have a strong foundation. Philosophy in education acts as a central system which furnishes the direction, purpose, as well as methodology to achieve the objective of education. Russell and Prof. Erica have felt the same because the relationship between philosophy and education is quite complex and comprehensive and to the point where the both are intertwined with each other in a rather tangled ropes, not so much as to be indistinguishable from one another, but enough to understand the importance of each other. Philosophy can make an educator a truth seeker. Fact is different from truth as fact changes, but truth doesn't change. A philosopher is often seen as one who seeks truth. It is strongly felt philosophy and education are the two sides of a coin. When the former is the reflective part, the latter is the active part.

Thus it is clear; education is the dynamic side of philosophy, which beautifully establishes the relationship between philosophy and education. In short, it can be said that philosophy sets the goal of life while education offers the ways and means for its achievement. The biggest relationship between philosophy and education is apparent that all the greatest philosophers of all times, starting from Socrates, Plato, Bertrand Russell, Jean Paul Sartre and to those of the present age have all been great educators. The great educators have reflected their philosophical view on their educational objectives. Now that education can be seen as the working arm of philosophy, all the problems of education are, at its core, philosophical problems. It is strongly felt that philosophy provides an aim to the foundation of education. These aims influence the creation of the curriculum, the teaching methodology, the problems of academic organization, discipline, and even the role of the teacher. Besides, philosophy can make the students wise and they can become better individuals or professionals.

Russell believes philosophy can make the students acquire the habit of employing exact and careful thought when they apply their skills. It can also give them an impersonal vertical and horizontal scope to the conception of their goals of life. Besides, philosophy is an antidote to the anxieties and anguish of the present, and makes possible the nearest approach to peace of mind that is available to an insightful mind in the tormented and uncertain world. Russell sees the best practical aim of philosophy with four main points: 1. Philosophy advocates a definite way of life. 2. Unlike religion the appeal of philosophy is to reason, not a sacred or privileged body of truths. 3. Philosophy doesn't establish any place of worship. 4. Philosophy stresses the importance of the intellectual virtues and impartiality for a good code of conduct. In the very last paragraph of his essay, Russell mentions that at least young people should read philosophy to play a better role in the society as individuals. He asks them to have clarity of the objects of their thoughts. When humans are practical about the objects of their thinking, it would become an antidote to the anxieties and anguish of the present. The relation between any individual and his society is very intimate. Essentially, society is the regularities and customs. These practices are immensely important to know how humans act and interact with one another.

Society does not exist independently without individuals. The individuals live and act within society. On the other hand, society exists to serve individuals and keep them together. Human life and society almost go together. Man is both, biologically and psychologically fitted to live in societal groups. Thus, society is an essential condition for human life to grow and to continue. Relationship between individual and society is finally one of the fundamental of all the problems of social philosophy. As a matter of fact, it is more philosophical rather than sociological because it involves the question of values. People depend on society and society



is formed by people. It is in society an individual is surrounded and encompassed by culture which works as a societal force. It is in society people have to adapt to the norms, standards, occupy statuses and become a member of groups. The question of the relationship between the individual and the society is the beginning point of many discussions and debates. It is intimately connected with the question of the association of man and society. The relation between the above cited two depends on one fact that the individual and the society are reciprocally dependent where one grows with the help of the other. Good and benevolent individuals make a good and benevolent society and undoubtedly individuals with philosophical bent of mind can make a better society.

‘If you don’t get what you want, you suffer; if you get what you don’t want, you suffer; even when you get exactly what you want, you still suffer because you can’t hold on to it forever. Your mind is your predicament. It wants to be free of change, free of pain, free of the obligations of life and death. But change is law and no amount of pretending will alter that reality.’ –Socrates

Conclusion: Bertrand Russell, in his essay entitled *Philosophy for Laymen*, defends the view that philosophy should be ‘a part of general education and life.’ He proposes that, even in the time that can easily be spared without injury to the learning of technical skills, philosophy can give certain things that will greatly increase the learner’s value as a human being and as a citizen of the world. What is shown in the essay here is the idea of philosophy as a practice; something that people do, and a way of thinking which is beneficial for every rational human. Bertrand Russell confirms that laymen and laywomen can be taught philosophy and it can help them think more objectively about emotional issues. The idea is that people practice the habit of philosophical thinking, and that they get better at it. When it comes to who should learn and follow philosophy, it is believed that everyone can ‘give it a try’ as reasonable citizens who reflect on the meaning they make of their lives. Philosophy is the best suited to the university setting where the experts train the learners. In order to further philosophical dialogue in educational establishments and in public spaces is to engage and encourage careful consideration of fundamentally important and significant ‘big’ questions that have always occupied the human thought process. And especially these days, when knowledge is wide and wisdom is narrow, those questions are moral and political, as these would impress man’s individual autonomy and his collective humanity. Russell maintains that as philosophy is a broad study, it would help any individual studying it, thinks openly and with no limitations of conventional thought. While the view of people of the universe is influenced by the physical world, personal prejudices, culture, instinct, dogma, religion etc., philosophy is impartial, unbiased and looks outside of the individual. By assuming philosophical mindset, people will be able to set aside their personal prejudice and view the world with a wider lens. Thus, Russell has addressed a multitude of social, political and psychological diseases in his essay using his powerful language and expressions.

In the article I have made an earnest attempt to present philosophy in my own simple English, to the best of my knowledge and abilities, and by explicating the significant role played by philosophy in everyone’s life and the necessitation of having at least some rudimentary knowledge of it so that those who can read and write English may read it and live a philosophical and brighter life of comprehension. I profusely thank my cousin Koturu Subba Reddy for hinting me inadvertently at an idea to write this philosophy based review and I do dedicate it to my only daughter Mounika P.

‘Let’s live philosophical lives!’

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