

প্রশ্ন: বুধবারের চরিত্র সম্পর্কে লুকাস কি বলেছেন?

**উত্তর** বুধবার প্রবন্ধকারের কাছ সব চাইতে ভালো দিন। তিনি বলেছেন বুধবার আসার সাথে সাথেই সপ্তাহটা একটু যেন নড়ে উঠে, পাল্টে যায় এবং জেগে উঠে। অনেক অপ্রত্যাশিত জিনিস বা ঘটনা বুধবারেই ঘটে থাকে। বুধবারে 'ম্যাটিনি শো' চলে এবং অনেক পত্রিকা প্রকাশিত হয়। কিন্তু বৃহস্পতিবার দিনটা আবার সাদামাটা কারণ ঘটনাবহুল বুধবারের পরে লোকেরা পরের দিন বৃহস্পতিবার এই সব ব্যাপার ভুলে যেতে চায়। তাই বৃহস্পতিবার সপ্তাহটা একটুখানি ঝিমিয়ে পড়ে।

**Q5. How does Lucas compare and contrast Friday and Saturday?**  
[2005 Arts]

**Answer** Friday is again full of activities and life. Friday is too busy. Many interesting papers come out on that day. Again it is the beginning of the week end – the forerunner of Saturday and Sunday. One spends much of it thinking of the morrow and what of good it should bring forth. So it is perhaps the best day of the week.

প্রশ্ন: লুকাস কিভাবে শক্রবার ও শনিবারের মধ্যে তুলনা করেছেন?

**উত্তর** কিন্তু শক্রবার আবার জীবন আর কর্মে পরিপূর্ণ। শক্রবার খুবই ব্যস্ততার দিন। বেশ কিছু আকর্ষণীয় পত্রিকা শক্রবার প্রকাশিত হয়। আবার এটা সপ্তাহান্তের শুরুর দটে— শনি, রবিবারের ঠিক আগের দিন। একজন এই দিনটার বেশিরভাগটাই কাটিয়ে যেন আগামীকালের পরিকল্পনা করে এবং আগামী সকাল কী ভাল তার কাছে নিয়ে আসে তাই ভেবে। তাই এটাই হয়ত সপ্তাহের সবচেয়ে ভালো দিন।

## Knowledge and Wisdom

Bertrand Russell

### INTRODUCTION

Bertrand Arthur Russell (1872 – 1970) was born into the Whig aristocracy. His grandfather, Lord John Russell (1792 – 1878) was twice Prime Minister and introduced the first Reform Bill, which, as Russell boasted, 'started England on the road to democracy'. Russell's parents, Lord and Lady Amberly, were radicals and free-thinkers, disciples of John Stuart Mill whom they asked to stand as a sort of secular godfather to the young Bertie. But they both died young and Russell was brought up by his grandmother, Lady Russell, in an atmosphere of puritan piety. 'Only virtue was prized, virtue at the expense of intellect, health, happiness and every mundane good'. He rebelled against this atmosphere, but at first rebellion took the secret form of a series of philosophical meditations in which he abandoned belief in God and adopted utilitarianism. In 1890 he went up to Cambridge to study mathematics. Russell loved Cambridge and the friends he made there, but he found the mathematics he was taught to be something of a chore, and gave it up for philosophy in his fourth year. He carries his youthful rebellion further by deciding for philosophy rather than a political career, and by marrying Alys Pearsall Smith (1867 – 1951), an American Quaker who was regarded by his family as a designing adventuress. His grandmother spoke of his philosophical activities as 'the life you have been leading' and tried to put him off marriage by talk of madness in the family. Russell continued to lead a life of philosophical depravity and solved the madness problem, in true utilitarian style, by using contraceptives. If there was a hereditary taint of madness, then he had better ensure that he had no heirs.

The next twenty years were largely devoted to philosophy, especially the philosophy of mathematics. At first, Russell followed the then fashionable trend and tried to develop a Hegelian system. But under the influence of G.E. Moore he revolted against Hegelianism, and together they became the founding fathers of what is now known as analytic philosophy.

In 1910 Russell took up a lectureship in logic at Trinity College, Cambridge and shortly thereafter began an affair with lady Ottoline Morrell, like himself a déclassé aristocrat. This led to his separation from Alys but it was not altogether a happy relationship. But despite the storms and stresses this was a period of intellectual creativity for Russell. He also achieved great success as a teacher. The poet Eliot, the philosopher C.D. Broad and the mathematician Norbrt Wiener were all his students during this



period. This was brought to an end by the Great World War I. Russell was passionately opposed to British participation in World War I. He became one of the leading anti-war activists, but in the process he lost his job.

Afterwards Russell concentrated in literature and philosophy. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1950. He was also awarded by many other prizes for his contribution to literature and also to philosophy. Some of his best works are *The ABC of Atom*, *Problems of Philosophy*, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, *The Conquest of Happiness*, *Unpopular Essays*, *Sceptical Essays* etc.

His *Knowledge and Wisdom* is a selection from *Portraits from Memory and Other Essays* published in 1956. The essay is a specimen of Russell's class of thinking.

### TEXT

Most people would agree that, although our age far surpasses all previous ages in knowledge, there has been no correlative increase in wisdom. But agreement ceases as soon as we attempt to define 'wisdom' and consider means of promoting it. I want to ask first what wisdom is, and then what can be done to teach it.

There are, I think, several factors that contribute to wisdom. Of these I should put first a sense of proportion: the capacity to take account of all the important factors in a problem and to attach to each its due weight. This has become more difficult than it used to be owing to the extent and complexity of the specialized knowledge required of various kinds of technicians. Suppose, for example, that you are engaged in research in scientific medicine. The work is difficult and is likely to absorb the whole of your intellectual energy. You have not time to consider the effect which your discoveries or inventions may have outside the field of medicine. You succeed (let us say), as modern medicine has succeeded, in enormously lowering the infant death-rate, not only in Europe and America, but also in Asia and Africa. This has the entirely unintended result of making the food supply inadequate and lowering the standards of life in the most populous parts of the world. To take even more spectacular example, which is in every body's mind at the present time: You study the composition of the atom from a disinterested desire for knowledge, and incidentally place in the hands of powerful lunatics the means of destroying the human race. In such ways the pursuit of knowledge may become harmful unless it is combined with wisdom; and wisdom in the sense of comprehensive vision is not necessarily present in specialists in the pursuit of knowledge.

Comprehensiveness alone, however, is not enough to constitute wisdom. There must be, also, a certain awareness of the ends of human life. This may be illustrated by the study of history. Many eminent historians have done more harm than good because they viewed facts through the distorting medium of their own passions. Hegel had a philosophy of history which did not suffer from any lack of comprehensiveness, since it started from the earliest times and continued into an indefinite future. But the chief

lesson of history which he sought to inculcate was that from the year A.D. 400 down to his own time Germany had been the most important nation and the standard bearer of progress in the world. Perhaps one could stretch the comprehensiveness that constitutes wisdom to include not only intellect but also feeling. It is by no means uncommon to find men whose knowledge is wide but whose feelings are narrow. Such men lack what I am calling wisdom.

It is not only in public ways, but in private life equally, that wisdom is needed. It is needed in the choice of ends to be pursued and in emancipation from personal prejudice. Even an end which it would be noble to pursue if it were attainable may be pursued unwisely if it is inherently impossible of achievement. Many men in past ages devoted their lives to a search for the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life. No doubt, if they could have found them, they would have conferred great benefits upon mankind, but as it was their lives were wasted. To descend to less heroic matters, consider the case of two men, Mr. A. and Mr. B who hate each other and, through mutual hatred, bring each other to destruction. Suppose you go to Mr. A and say, 'Why do you hate Mr. B?' He will no doubt give you an appalling list of Mr. B's vices, partly true, partly false. And now suppose you go to Mr. B. He will no doubt give you an exactly similar list of Mr. A's vices with an equal admixture of truth and falsehood. Suppose you now come back to Mr. A and say, 'You will be surprised to learn that Mr. B says the same things about you as you say about him,' and you go to Mr. B and make a similar speech. The first effect, no doubt, will be to increase their mutual hatred, since each will be so horrified by the other's injustice. But perhaps, if you have sufficient patience and sufficient persuasiveness, you may succeed in convincing each that the other has only the normal share of human wickedness, and that their enmity is harmful to both. If you can do this, you will have instilled some fragment of wisdom.

I think the essence of wisdom is emancipation, as far as possible, from the tyranny of the here and the now. We cannot help the egotism of our senses. Sight and sound and touch are bound up with our own bodies and cannot be made impersonal. Our emotions start similarly from ourselves. An infant feels hunger or discomfort, and is unaffected except by his own physical condition. Gradually with the years, his horizon widens, and, in proportion as his thoughts and feelings become less personal and less concerned with his own physical states, he achieves growing wisdom. This is of course a matter of degree. No one can view the world with complete impartiality; and if anyone could, he would hardly be able to remain alive. But it is possible to make a continual approach towards impartiality, on the one hand, by knowing things somewhat remote in time or space, and, on the other hand, by giving to such things their due weight in our feelings. It is this approach towards impartiality that constitutes growth in wisdom.

Can wisdom in this sense be taught? And, if it can should the teaching of it be one of the aims of education? I should answer both these questions in the affirmative. We are told on Sundays that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. On the other six days of the week, we are exhorted to hate him. You may say that this is nonsense, since