

# 3. Knowledge and Wisdom

By Bertrand Arthur William Russell

## About the author

Bertrand Arthur William Russell (1872-1970) was a British philosopher, logician, essayist and social critic best known for his work in mathematical logic and analytic philosophy. His most influential contributions include his championing of logicism (the view that mathematics is in some important sense reducible to logic), his refining of Gottlob Frege's predicate calculus (which still forms the basis of most contemporary systems of logic), his defense of neutral monism (the view that the world consists of just one type of substance which is neither exclusively mental nor exclusively physical), and his theories of definite descriptions, logical atomism and logical types.

In this essay, Russell differentiates between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge and wisdom are different things. According to him, knowledge is defined as the acquisition of data and information, while wisdom is defined as the practical application and use of the knowledge to create value. Wisdom is gained through learning and practical experience, not just memorization.

## Summary

The essay 'Knowledge and Wisdom' is written by a British essayist Bertrand Arthur William Russell. In this essay, Russell differentiates between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge and wisdom are different things. According to him, knowledge is defined as the acquisition of data and information whereas wisdom is defined as the practical application and use of the knowledge to create value. Wisdom is gained through learning and practical experience, not just memorization.

According to Russell, knowledge is defined as the acquisition of data and information. It is like a generating theory. While wisdom is

defined as the practical application and use of the knowledge to create value. Wisdom is gained through learning and practical experience, not just memorization. A sense of proportion is very much necessary for wisdom. By inventing medicine, a scientist may reduce the infant death-rate. Apparently, it leads to population explosion and shortage of food. The standard of life comes down. If misused, knowledge of atom can lead human to destruction by manufacturing nuclear weapon. Knowledge and Wisdom have the relation like theory and practice.

In this essay the essayist talks about several factors that contribute to wisdom. According to him, the factors that contribute to wisdom are:

i) a sense of proportion, ii) aware comprehensiveness and feeling iii) emancipation from personal prejudices iv) impartiality and v) intellectual element

Only Knowledge or Wisdom can't be sufficient. Both are equally important. Knowledge without wisdom can be harmful. Even complete knowledge is not enough. For example, Hegel wrote with great knowledge about history, but made the Germans believe that they were a master race. It led to war. It is necessary, therefore to combine knowledge with feelings. We need wisdom both in public and private life. We need wisdom to decide the goal of our life. We need it to free ourselves from personal prejudices. Wisdom is needed to avoid dislike for one another. Two persons may remain enemies because of their prejudice. If they can be told that we all have flaws then they may become friends.

In this essay, Russell defines what wisdom is in the first part and in the second part he talks about how it can be attained. Without knowledge, wisdom cannot go forward. He says that wisdom and knowledge must go ahead simultaneously. Thus, knowledge and wisdom are remarkable gifts of the clear exposition of Russell. It shows Russell as a great master of lucid style. His intellect is brilliant and his vision is comprehensive.

