



*Ideas that have harmed Mankind*  
**Bertrand Russell**

**T**he misfortunes of human beings may be divided into two classes: First, those inflicted by the non-human environment and, second, those inflicted by other people. As mankind have progressed in knowledge and technique, the second class has become a continually increasing percentage of the total. In old times, famine, for example, was due to natural causes, and although people did their best to combat it, large numbers of them died of starvation. At the present moment large parts of the world are faced with the threat of famine, but although natural causes have contributed to the situation, the principal causes are human. For six years the civilized nations of the world devoted all their best energies to killing each other, and they find it difficult suddenly to switch over to keeping each other alive. Having destroyed harvests, dismantled agricultural machinery, and disorganized shipping, they find it no easy matter to relieve the shortage of crops in one place by means of a superabundance in another, as would easily be done if the economic system were in normal working order. As this illustration shows, it is now man that is man's worst enemy. Nature, it is true, still sees to it that we are mortal, but with the progress in medicine it will become more and more common for people to live until they have had their fill of life. We are supposed to wish to live for ever and to look forward to the unending joys of heaven, of which, by miracle, the monotony will never grow stale. But in fact, if you question any candid person who is no longer young, he is very likely to tell you that, having tasted life in this world, he has no wish to begin again as a 'new boy' in another. For the future, therefore, it may be taken that much the most

important evils that mankind have to consider are those which they inflict upon each other through stupidity or malevolence or both.

I think that the evils that men inflict on each other, and by resection upon themselves, have their main source in evil passions rather than in ideas or beliefs. But ideas and principles that do harm are, as a rule, though not always, cloaks for evil passions. In Lisbon when heretics were publicly burnt, it sometimes happened that one of them, by a particularly edifying recantation, would be granted the boon of being strangled before being put into the flames. This would make the spectators so furious that the authorities had great difficulty in preventing them from lynching the penitent and burning him on their own account. The spectacle of the writhing torments of the victims was, in fact, one of the principal pleasures to which the populace looked forward to enliven a somewhat drab existence. I cannot doubt that this pleasure greatly contributed to the general belief that the burning of heretics was a righteous act. The same sort of thing applies to war. People who are vigorous and brutal often find war enjoyable, provided that it is a victorious war and that there is not too much interference with rape and plunder. This is a great help in persuading people that wars are righteous. Dr Arnold, the hero of Tom Brown's Schooldays, and the admired reformer of Public Schools, came across some cranks who thought it a mistake to flog boys. Anyone reading his outburst of furious indignation against this opinion will be forced to the conclusion that he enjoyed inflicting floggings, and did not wish to be deprived of this pleasure.

It would be easy to multiply instances in support of the thesis that opinions which justify cruelty are inspired by cruel impulses. When we pass in review the opinions of former times which are now recognized as absurd, it will be found that nine times out of ten they were such as to justify the infliction of suffering. Take, for instance, medical practice. When anesthetics were invented they were thought to be wicked as being an attempt to thwart God's will. Insanity was thought to be due to diabolic possession, and it was believed that demons inhabiting a madman could be driven out by inflicting pain upon him, and so making them uncomfortable. In pursuit of this opinion, lunatics were treated for years on end with systematic and conscientious brutality. I cannot think of any instance of an erroneous medical treatment that was agreeable rather than disagreeable to the patient. Or again, take moral education. Consider how much brutality has been justified by the rhyme:

A dog, a wife, and a walnut tree,  
The more you beat them the better they be.

**I** have no experience of the moral effect of flagellation on walnut trees, but no civilized person would now justify the rhyme as regards wives. The reformatory effect of punishment is a belief that dies hard, chiefly I think, because it is so satisfying to our sadistic impulses.

**B**ut although passions have had more to do than beliefs with what is amiss in human life, yet beliefs, especially where they are ancient and systematic and embodied in organizations, have a great power of delaying desirable changes of opinion and of influencing in the wrong direction people who otherwise would have no strong feelings either way. Since my subject is 'Ideas that have Harmed Mankind,' it is especially harmful systems of beliefs that I shall consider.

**T**he most obvious case as regards past history is constituted by the beliefs which may be called religious or superstitious, according to one's personal bias. It was supposed that human sacrifice would improve the crops, at first for purely magical reasons, and then because the blood of victims was thought pleasing to the gods, who certainly were made in the image of their worshippers. We read in the Old Testament that it was a religious duty to exterminate conquered races completely, and that to spare even their cattle and sheep was an impiety. Dark terrors and misfortunes in the life to come oppressed the Egyptians and Etruscans, but never reached their full development until the victory of Christianity. Gloomy saints who abstained from all pleasures of sense, who lived in solitude in the desert, denying themselves meat and wine and the society of women, were, nevertheless, not obliged to abstain from all pleasures. The pleasures of the mind were considered to be superior to those of the body, and a high place among the pleasures of the mind was assigned to the contemplation of the eternal tortures to which the pagans and heretics would hereafter be subjected. It is one of the drawbacks to asceticism that it sees no harm in pleasures other than those of sense, and yet, in fact, not only the best pleasures, but also the very worst, are purely mental. Consider the pleasures of Milton's Satan when he contemplates the harm that he could do to man. As Milton makes him say:

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a heav'n hell, a hell of heav'n.

and his psychology is not so very different from that of Tertullian, exulting in the thought that he will be able to look out from heaven at the sufferings of the damned. The ascetic depreciation of the pleasures of sense has not promoted kindness or tolerance, or any of the other virtues that a non-superstitious outlook on human life would lead us to desire. On the contrary, when a man tortures himself he feels that it gives him a right to torture others, and inclines him to accept any system of dogma by which this right is fortified.

**T**he ascetic form of cruelty is, unfortunately, not confined to the fiercer forms of Christian dogma, which are now seldom believed with their former ferocity. The world has produced new and menacing forms of the same psychological pattern. The Nazis in the days before they achieved power lived laborious lives, involving much sacrifice of ease and present pleasure in obedience to the belief in strenuousness and Nietzsche's maxim that one should make oneself hard. Even after they achieved power, the slogan 'guns rather than butter' still involved a sacrifice of the pleasures of sense for the mental pleasures of prospective victory - the very pleasures, in fact, with which Milton's Satan consoles himself while tortured by the fires of hell. The same mentality is to be found among earnest Communists, to whom luxury is an evil, hard work the principal duty, and universal poverty the means to the millennium. The combination of asceticism and cruelty has not disappeared with the softening of Christian dogma, but has taken on new forms hostile to Christianity. There is still much of the same mentality: mankind are divided into saints and sinners; the saints are to achieve bliss in the Nazi or Communists heaven, while the sinners are to be liquidated, or to suffer such pains as human beings can inflict in concentration camps - inferior, of course, to those which Omnipotence was thought to inflict in hell, but the worst that human beings with their limited powers are able to achieve. There is still, for the saints, a hard period of probation followed by 'the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast', as the Christian hymn says in describing the joys of heaven.

**A**s this psychological pattern seems so persistent and so capable of clothing itself in completely new mantles of dogma, it must have its roots somewhat deep in human nature. This is the kind of matter that is studied by psycho-analysts, and while I am very far from subscribing to all their doctrines, I think that their general methods are important if we wish to seek out the source of evil in our innermost depths. The twin conceptions of sin and vindictive punishment seem to be at the root of much that is most vigorous, both in religion and

politics. I cannot believe, as some psycho-analysts do, that the feeling of sin is innate, though I believe it to be a product of very early infancy. I think that, if this feeling could be eradicated, the amount of cruelty in the world would be very greatly diminished. Given that we are all sinners and that we all deserve punishment, there is evidently much to be said for a system that causes the punishment to fall upon others than ourselves. Calvinists, by the fiat of undeserved mercy, would go to heaven, and their feelings that sin deserved punishment would receive a merely vicarious satisfaction. Communists have a similar outlook. When we are born we do not choose whether we are to be born capitalists or proletarians, but if the latter we are among the elect, and if the former we are not Without any choice on our own parts, by the working of economic determinism, we are fated to be on the right side in the one case, and on the wrong side in the other. Marx' father became a Christian when Marx was a little boy, and some, at least, of the dogmas he must have then accepted seem to have borne fruit in his son's psychology.

**O**ne of the odd effects of the importance which each of us attaches to himself, is that we tend to imagine our own good or evil fortune to be the purpose of other people's actions. If you pass in a train a field containing grazing cows, you may sometimes see them running away in terror as the train passes. The cow, if it were a metaphysician, would argue: 'Everything in my own desires and hopes and fears has reference to myself; hence by induction I conclude that everything in the universe has reference to myself. This noisy train, therefore, intends to do me either good or evil. I cannot suppose that it intends to do me good, since it comes in such a terrifying form, and therefore, as a prudent cow, I shall endeavor to escape from it.' If you were to explain to this metaphysical ruminant that the train has no intention of leaving the rails, and is totally indifferent to the fate of the cow, the poor beast would be bewildered by anything so unnatural. The train that wishes her neither well nor ill would seem more cold and more abysmally horrifying than a train that wished her ill. Just this has happened with human beings. The course of nature brings them sometimes good fortune, sometimes evil. They cannot believe that this happens by accident. The cow, having known of a companion which had strayed on to the railway line and been killed by a train, would pursue her philosophical reflections, if she were endowed with that moderate degree of intelligence that characterizes most human beings, to the point of concluding that the unfortunate cow had been punished for sin by the god of the railway. She would be glad when his priests put fences along the line, and would warn younger and friskier cows

never to avail themselves of accidental openings in the fence, since the wages of sin is death. By similar myths men have succeeded, without sacrificing their selfimportance, in explaining many of the misfortunes to which they are subject. But sometimes misfortune befalls the wholly virtuous, and what are we to say in this case? We shall still be prevented by our feeling that we must be the centre of the universe from admitting that misfortune has merely happened to us without anybody's intending it, and since we are not wicked by hypothesis, our misfortune must be due to somebody's malevolence, that is to say, to somebody wishing to injure us from mere hatred and not from the hope of any advantage to himself. It was this state of mind that gave rise to demonology, and the belief in witchcraft and black magic. The witch is a person who injures her neighbors from sheer hatred, not from any hope of gain. The belief in witchcraft, until about the middle of the seventeenth century, afforded a most satisfying outlet for the delicious emotion of self-righteous cruelty. There was Biblical warrant for the belief, since the Bible says: 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.' And on this ground the Inquisition punished not only witches, but those who did not believe in the possibility of witchcraft, since to disbelieve it was heresy. Science, by giving some insight into natural causation, dissipated the belief in magic, but could not wholly dispel the fear and sense of insecurity that had given rise to it. In modern times, these same emotions find an outlet in fear of foreign nations, an outlet which, it must be confessed, requires not much in the way of superstitious support.

**O**ne of the most powerful sources of false belief is envy. In any small town you will find, if you question the comparatively well-to-do, that they all exaggerate their neighbors' incomes, which gives them an opportunity to justify an accusation of meanness. The jealousies of women are proverbial among men, but in any large office you will find exactly the same kind of jealousy among male officials. When one of them secures promotion the others will say: 'Humph! So-and-so knows how to make up to the big men. I could have risen quite as fast as he has if I had chosen to debase myself by using the sycophantic arts of which he is not ashamed. No doubt his work has a flashy brilliance, but it lacks solidly, and sooner or later the authorities will find out their mistake.' So all the mediocre men will say if a really able man is allowed to rise as fast as his abilities deserve, and that is why there is a tendency to adopt the rule of seniority, which, since it has nothing to do with merit, does not give rise to the same envious discontent.

**O**ne of the most unfortunate results of our proneness to envy is that it has caused a complete misconception of economic selfinterest, both individual and national. I will illustrate by a parable. There was once upon a time a medium sized town containing a number of butchers, a number of bakers, and so forth. One butcher, who was exceptionally energetic, decided that he would make much larger profits if all the other butchers were ruined and he became a monopolist. By systematically under-selling them he succeeded in his object, though his losses meanwhile had almost exhausted his command of capital and credit. At the same time an energetic baker had had the same idea and had pursued it to a similar successful conclusion. In every trade which lived by selling goods to consumers the same thing had happened. Each of the successful monopolists had a happy anticipation of making a fortune, but unfortunately the ruined butchers were no longer in the position to buy bread, and the ruined bakers were no longer in the position to buy meat. Their employees had had to be dismissed and had gone elsewhere. The consequence was that, although the butcher and the baker each had a monopoly, they sold less than they had done in the old days. They had forgotten that while a man may be injured by his competitors he is benefited by his customers, and that customers become more numerous when the general level of prosperity is increased. Envy had made them concentrate their attention upon competitors and forget altogether the aspect of their prosperity that depended upon customers.

**T**his is a fable, and the town of which I have been speaking never existed, but substitute for a town the world, and for individuals nations, and you will have a perfect picture of the economic policy universally pursued in the present day. Every nation is persuaded that its economic interest is opposed to that of every other nation, and that it must profit if other nations are reduced to destitution. During the first World War, I used to hear English people saying how immensely British trade would benefit from the destruction of German trade, which was to be one of the principal fruits of our victory. After the war, although we should have liked to find a market on the Continent of Europe, and although the industrial life of Western Europe depended upon coal from the Ruhr, we could not bring ourselves to allow the Ruhr coal industry to produce more than a tiny fraction of what it produced before the Germans were defeated. The whole philosophy of economic nationalism, which is now universal throughout the world, is based upon the false belief that the economic interest of one nation is necessarily opposed to that of another. This false belief, by producing international hatreds and rivalries, is a cause of war, and in this way

tends to make itself true, since when war has once broken out the conflict of national interests becomes only too real. If you try to explain to someone, say, in the steel industry, that possibly prosperity in other countries might be advantageous to him, you will find it quite impossible to make him see the argument, because the only foreigners of whom he is vividly aware are his competitors in the steel industry. Other foreigners are shadowy beings in whom he has no emotional interest. This is the psychological root of economic nationalism, and war, and manmade starvation, and all the other evils which will bring our civilization to a disastrous and disgraceful end unless men can be induced to take a wider and less hysterical view of their mutual relations.

**A**nother passion which gives rise to false beliefs that are politically harmful is pride - pride of nationality, race, sex, class, or creed. When I was young France was still regarded as the traditional enemy of England, and I gathered as an unquestionable truth that one Englishman could defeat three Frenchmen. When Germany became the enemy this belief was modified and English people ceased to mention derisively the French propensity for eating frogs. But in spite of governmental efforts, I think few Englishmen succeeded in genuinely regarding the French as their equals. Americans and Englishmen, when they become acquainted with the Balkans, feel an astonished contempt when they study the mutual enmities of Bulgarians and Serbs, or Hungarians and Rumanians. It is evident to them that these enmities are absurd and that the belief of each little nation in its own superiority has no objective basis. But most of them are quite unable to see that the national pride of a Great Power is essentially as unjustifiable as that of a little Balkan country.

**P**ride of race is even more harmful than national pride. When I was in China I was struck by the fact that cultivated Chinese were perhaps more highly civilized than any other human beings that it has been my good fortune to meet. Nevertheless, I found numbers of gross and ignorant white men who despised even the best of the Chinese solely because their skins were yellow. In general, the British were more to blame in this than the Americans, but there were exceptions. I was once in the company of a Chinese scholar of vast learning, not only of the traditional Chinese kind, but also of the kind taught in Western universities, a man with a breadth of culture which I scarcely hoped to equal. He and I went together into a garage to hire a motor car. The garage proprietor was a bad type of American, who treated my Chinese friend like dirt, contemptuously accused him of being

Japanese, and made my blood boil by his ignorant malevolence. The similar attitude of the English in India, exacerbated by their political power, was one of the main causes of the friction that arose in that country between the British and the educated Indians. The superiority of one race to another is hardly ever believed in for any good reason. Where the belief persists it is kept alive by military supremacy. So long as the Japanese were victorious, they entertained a contempt for the white man, which was the counterpart of the contempt that the white man had felt for them while they were weak. Sometimes, however, the feeling of superiority has nothing to do with military prowess. The Greeks despised the barbarians, even at times when the barbarians surpassed them in warlike strength. The more enlightened among the Greeks held that slavery was justifiable so long as the masters were Greek and the slaves barbarian, but that otherwise it was contrary to nature. The Jews had, in antiquity, a quite peculiar belief in their own racial superiority; ever since Christianity became the religion of the State Gentiles have had an equally irrational belief in their superiority to Jews. Beliefs of this kind do infinite harm, and it should be, but is not, one of the aims of education to eradicate them. I spoke a moment ago about the attitude of superiority that Englishmen have permitted themselves in their dealings with the inhabitants of India, which was naturally resented in that country, but the caste system arose as a result of successive invasions by 'superior' races from the North, and is every bit as objectionable as white arrogance.

**T**he belief in the superiority of the male sex, which has now officially died out in Western nations, is a curious example of the sin of pride. There was, I think, never any reason to believe in any innate superiority of the male, except his superior muscle. I remember once going to a place where they kept a number of pedigree bulls, and what made a bull illustrious was the milk-giving qualities of his female ancestors. But if bulls had drawn up the pedigrees they would have been very different. Nothing would have been said about the female ancestors, except that they were docile and virtuous, whereas the male ancestors would have been celebrated for their supremacy in battle. In the case of cattle we can take a disinterested view of the relative merits of the sexes, but in the case of our own species we find this more difficult. Male superiority in former days was easily demonstrated, because if a woman questioned her husband's he could beat her. From superiority in this respect others were thought to follow. Men were more reasonable than women, more inventive, less swayed by their emotions, and so on. Anatomists, until the women had the vote, developed a number of ingenious arguments from the study

of the brain to show that men's intellectual capacities must be greater than women's. Each of these arguments in turn was proved to be fallacious, but it always gave place to another from which the same conclusion would follow. It used to be held that the male fetus acquires a soul after six weeks, but the female only after three months. This opinion also has been abandoned since women have had the vote. Thomas Aquinas states parenthetically, as something entirely obvious, that men are more rational than women. For my part, I see no evidence of this. Some few individuals have some slight glimmerings of rationality in some directions, but so far as my observations go, such glimmerings are no commoner among men than among women.

**M**ale domination has had some very unfortunate effects. It made the most intimate of human relations, that of marriage, one of master and slave, instead of one between equal partners. It made it unnecessary for a man to please a woman in order to acquire her as his wife, and thus confined the arts of courtship to irregular relations. By the seclusion which it forced upon respectable women it made them dull and uninteresting; the only women who could be interesting and adventurous were social outcasts. Owing to the dullness of respectable women, the most civilized men in the most civilized countries often became homosexual. Owing to the fact that there was no equality in marriage men became confirmed in domineering habits. All this has now more or less ended in civilized countries, but it will be a long time before either men or women learn to adapt their behavior completely to the new state of affairs. Emancipation always has at first certain bad effects; it leaves former superiors sore and former inferiors self-assertive. But it is to be hoped that time will bring adjustment in this matter as in others.

**A**nother kind of superiority which is rapidly disappearing is that of class, which now survives only in Soviet Russia. In that country the son of a proletarian has advantages over the son of a bourgeois, but elsewhere such hereditary privileges are regarded as unjust. The disappearance of class distinction is, however, far from complete. In America everybody is of opinion that he has no social superiors, since all men are equal, but he does not admit that he has no social inferiors, for, from the time of Jefferson onward, the doctrine that all men are equal applies only upwards, not downwards. There is on this subject a profound and widespread hypocrisy whenever people talk in general terms. What they really think and feel can be discovered by reading second-rate novels, where one finds that it is a dreadful thing

to be born on the wrong side of the tracks, and that there is as much fuss about a mesalliance as there used to be in a small German Court. So long as great inequalities of wealth survive it is not easy to see how this can be otherwise. In England, where snobbery is deeply ingrained, the equalization of incomes which has been brought about by the war has had a profound effect, and among the young the snobbery of their elders has begun to seem somewhat ridiculous. There is still a very large amount of regrettable snobbery in England, but it is connected more with education and manner of speech than with income or with social status in the old sense.

**P**ride of creed is another variety of the same kind of feeling. When I had recently returned from China I lectured on that country to a number of women's clubs in America. There was always one elderly woman who appeared to be sleeping throughout the lecture, but at the end would ask me, somewhat portentously, why I had omitted to mention that the Chinese, being heathen, could of course have no virtues. I imagine that the Mormons of Salt Lake City must have had a similar attitude when non-Mormons were first admitted among them. Throughout the Middle Ages, Christians and Mohammedans were entirely persuaded of each other's wickedness and were incapable of doubting their own superiority.

**A**ll these are pleasant ways of feeling 'grand'. In order to be happy we require all kinds of supports to our self-esteem. We are human beings, therefore human beings are the purpose of creation. We are Americans, therefore America is God's own country. We are white, and therefore God cursed Ham and his descendants who were black. We are Protestant or Catholic, as the case may be, therefore Catholics or Protestants, as the case may be, are an abomination. We are male, and therefore women are unreasonable; or female, and therefore men are brutes. We are Easterners, and therefore the West is wild and woolly; or Westerners, and therefore the East is effete. We work with our brains, and therefore it is the educated classes that are important; or we work with our hands, and therefore manual labor alone gives dignity. Finally, and above all, we each have one merit which is entirely unique, we are Ourselves. With these comforting reflections we go out to do battle with the world; without them our courage might fail. Without them, as things are, we should feel inferior because we have not learnt the sentiment of equality. If we could feel genuinely that we are the equals of our neighbors, neither their betters nor their inferiors, perhaps life would become less of a battle, and we should need less in the way of intoxicating myth to give us Dutch courage.

**O**ne of the most interesting and harmful delusions to which men and nations can be subjected, is that of imagining themselves special instruments of the Divine Will. We know that when the Israelites invaded the Promised Land it was they who were fulfilling the Divine Purpose, and not the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizites, the Hivites, or the Jebbusites. Perhaps if these others had written long history books the matter might have looked a little different. In fact, the Hittites did leave some inscriptions, from which you would never guess what abandoned wretches they were. It was discovered, 'after the fact', that Rome was destined by the gods for the conquest of the world. Then came Islam with its fanatical belief that every soldier dying in battle for the True Faith went straight to a Paradise more attractive than that of the Christians, as houris are more attractive than harps. Cromwell was persuaded that he was the Divinely appointed instrument of justice for suppressing Catholics and malignants. Andrew Jackson was the agent of Manifest Destiny in freeing North America from the incubus of Sabbath-breaking Spaniards. In our day, the sword of the Lord has been put into the hands of the Marxists. Hegel thought that the Dialectic with fatalistic logic had given supremacy to Germany. 'No,' said Marx, 'not to Germany, but to the Proletariat'. This doctrine has kinship with the earlier doctrines of the Chosen People and Manifest Destiny. In its character of fatalism it has viewed the struggle of opponent' as one against destiny, and argued that therefore the wise man would put himself on the winning side as quickly as possible. That is why this argument is such a useful one politically. The only objection to it is that it assumes a knowledge of the Divine purposes to which no rational man can lay claim, and that in the execution of them it justifies a ruthless cruelty which would be condemned if our programme had a merely mundane origin. It is good to know that God is on our side, but a little confusing when you find the enemy equally convinced of the opposite. To quote the immortal lines of the poet during the first World War:

Gott strafe England, and God save the King.  
God this, and God that, and God the other thing.  
'Good God,' said God, 'I've got my work cut out.'

**B**elief in a Divine mission is one of the many forms of certainty that have afflicted the human race. I think perhaps one of the wisest things ever said was when Cromwell said to the Scots before the battle of Dunbar: 'I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, think it possible that you may be mistaken.' But the Scots did not, and so he had to defeat

them in battle. It is a pity that Cromwell never addressed the same remark to himself. Most of the greatest evils that man has inflicted upon man have come through people feeling quite certain about something which, in fact, was false. To know the truth is more difficult than most men suppose, and to act with ruthless determination in the belief that truth is the monopoly of their party is to invite disaster. Long calculations that certain evil in the present is worth inflicting for the sake of some doubtful benefit in the future are always to be viewed with suspicion, for, as Shakespeare says: 'What's to come is still unsure.' Even the shrewdest men are apt to be wildly astray if they prophesy so much as ten years ahead. Some people will consider this doctrine immoral, but after all it is the Gospel which says 'take no thought for the morrow'.

**I**n public, as in private life, the important thing is tolerance and kindness, without the presumption of a superhuman ability to read the future.

**I**nstead of calling this essay 'Ideas that have harmed mankind', I might perhaps have called it simply 'Ideas have harmed mankind', for, seeing that the future cannot be foretold and that there is an almost endless variety of possible beliefs about it, the chance that any belief which a man may hold may be true is very slender. Whatever you think is going to happen ten years hence, unless it is something like the sun rising tomorrow that has nothing to do with human relations, you are almost sure to be wrong. I find this thought consoling when I remember some gloomy prophecies of which I myself have rashly been guilty.

**B**ut you will say: how is statesmanship possible except on the assumption that the future can be to some extent foretold? I admit that some degree of prevision is necessary, and I am not suggesting that we are completely ignorant. It is a fair prophecy that if you tell a man he is a knave and a fool he will not love you, and it is a fair prophecy that if you say the same thing to seventy million people they will not love you. It is safe to assume that cutthroat competition will not produce a feeling of good fellowship between the competitors. It is highly probable that if two States equipped with modern armament face each other across a frontier, and if their leading statesmen devote themselves to mutual insults, the population of each side will in time become nervous, and one side will attack for fear of the other doing so. It is safe to assume that a great modern war will not raise the level of prosperity even among the victors. Such generalizations are not

difficult to know. What is difficult is to foresee in detail the long-run consequences of a concrete policy. Bismarck with extreme astuteness won three wars and unified Germany. The long run result of his policy has been that Germany has suffered two colossal defeats. These resulted because he taught Germans to be indifferent to the interests of all countries except Germany, and generated an aggressive spirit which in the end united the world against his successors. Selfishness beyond a point, whether individual or national, is not wise. It may with luck succeed, but if it fails failure is terrible. Few men will run this risk unless they are supported by a theory, for it is only theory that makes men completely incautious.

**P**assing from the moral to the purely intellectual point of view, we have to ask ourselves what social science can do in the way of establishing such causal laws as should be a help to statesmen in making political decisions. Some things of real importance have begun to be known, for example how to avoid slumps and largescale unemployment such as afflicted the world after the last war. It is also now generally known by those who have taken the trouble to look into the matter that only an international government can prevent war, and that civilization is hardly likely to survive more than one more great war, if that. But although these things are known, the knowledge is not effective; it has not penetrated to the great masses of men, and it is not strong enough to control sinister interests. There is, in fact, a great deal more social science than politicians are willing or able to apply. Some people attribute this failure to democracy, but-it seems to me to be more marked in autocracy than anywhere else. Belief in democracy, however, like any other belief, may be carried to the point where it becomes fanatical, and therefore harmful. A democrat need not believe that the majority will always decide wisely; what he must believe is that the decision of the majority, whether wise or unwise, must be accepted until such time as the majority decides otherwise. And this he believes not from any mystic conception of the wisdom of the plain man, but as the best practical device for putting the reign of law in place of the reign of arbitrary force. Nor does the democrat necessarily believe that democracy is the best system always and everywhere. There are many nations which lack the self-restraint and political experience that are required for the success of parliamentary institutions, where the democrat, while he would wish them to acquire the necessary political education, will recognize that it is useless to thrust upon them prematurely a system which is almost certain to break down. In politics, as elsewhere, it does not do to deal in absolutes; what is good in one time and place may be bad in another,

and what satisfies the political instincts of one nation may to another seem wholly futile. The general aim of the democrat is to substitute government by general assent for government by force, but this requires a population that has undergone a certain kind of training. Given a nation divided into two nearly equal portions which hate each other and long to fly at each other's throats, that portion which is just less than half will not submit tamely to the domination of the other portion, nor will the portion which is just more than half show, in the moment of victory, the kind of moderation which might heal the breach.

**T**he world at the present day stands in need of two kinds of things. On the one hand, organization - political organization for the elimination of wars, economic organization to enable men to work productively, especially in the countries that have been devastated by war, educational organization to generate a sane internationalism. On the other hand it needs certain moral qualities the qualities which have been advocated by moralists for many ages, but hitherto with little success. The qualities most needed are charity and tolerance, not some form of fanatical faith such as is offered to us by the various rampant isms. I think these two aims, the organizational and the ethical, are closely interwoven; given either the other would soon follow. But, in effect, if the world is to move in the right direction it will have to move simultaneously in both respects. There will have to be a gradual lessening of the evil passions which are the natural aftermath of war, and a gradual increase of the organizations by means of which mankind can bring each other mutual help. There will have to be a realization at once intellectual and moral that we are all one family, and that the happiness of no one branch of this family can be built securely upon the ruin of another. At the present time, moral defects stand in the way of clear thinking, and muddled thinking encourages moral defects. Perhaps, though I scarcely dare to hope it, the hydrogen bomb will terrify mankind into sanity and tolerance. If this should happen we shall have reason to bless its inventors.

