

Mankind has Come a Long Way, but There is Always Room for Improvement

Historically, mankind has made many societal transitions. Mankind has gone from a group of simple societies whose life revolved around hunting and gathering, to farming and raising livestock, to building large civilizations with an established government and well-engineered cities, to a large complex society that makes up many nations worldwide. Today, the world is connected like never before. Mankind has gone from the Coliseum in Rome to hundreds of stadiums around the world, from the Muslim Triangle Trade of furs and spices in Eurasia, to trading stocks internationally, from emperors and kings to presidents and democracies.¹ Mankind has come a long way to becoming a more civilized and more successful human society, but will constantly need to work to improve, learn from history, and more importantly, not repeat it.

In early Greece, around 30 BC, Caesar Augustus ruled the Roman Empire for forty-five years. Augustus was praised for his political genius and his ability to rule an empire without the official title of “ruler.”² Augustus established a republic and a democracy, giving certain political power to men of his choosing. He encouraged innovation and engineering and his Empire is known for the Coliseum of Rome, which could hold around 45,000 people. The Coliseum held games of death and carnage for all to see.³ Augustus tolerated different religious beliefs including Jews, Muslims, and Christians, as long as they did not interfere with his laws.⁴ Augustus promised land and title to his soldiers and this helped him build a large army of loyal soldiers.⁵ Rome was so reputable that it had its own currency. Augustus had food and other goods brought in from Egypt, and for the wealthy, they lived a life of luxury. The things that

Augustus did during his years as emperor had never been done before, at least to that level.⁶ However, his “accomplishments” came with consequences. In order to pay his soldiers the land that he promised, he had to conquer more territories. This meant sacking outside villages and declaring war with nearby areas. The people that were able to live a life of luxury were the “elite” and were a small percentage of the masses. The rest of the Roman population was poor and were often slaves of the elite.⁷ Augustus’s political genius and many of his principles are used today. The United States in particular has adopted many of Roman’s political values and traditions. Today, the United States has the most powerful military in the world and the country praises them. The United States has many “Coliseums” that hold sporting events of all kinds. In the United States today, the small percent of people that govern the country make substantially more than the rest of the country.⁸ The United States was built by slaves.⁹ The United States of America is the modern-day Roman empire in its own right. Like the Roman empire, the United States society is on the opposite spectrum in terms of simple society, and has come a long way even since the days of Augustus, but still has many issues.

The Egyptians, Greek, and Romans all practiced slavery. Many slaves were people who owed a debt, or who committed a crime and were paying for their crime. Slaves were forms of currency to help the wealthy care for their land and do their labor.¹⁰ More recently in the Americas, slavery was prevalent until a couple hundred years ago. Europeans captured African people and brought them across the Atlantic Ocean to the American and the Caribbean to tend to their newly found crops. Tobacco, cotton, coffee, among other things were popular commodities back in Europe and the demand was so large that hundreds of thousands of slaves were sent from Africa to the Americas to ensure the production of these items.¹¹ Today, slavery is against the law, and although many can argue that there are now different forms of slavery, in context of

unpaid human slave labor, it is considered wrong and illegal. Slavery becoming illegal is a shift in the progress of a civilized nation.

The economic and political success of a civilization was and still is built on many factors, and one of those is Capitalism. Capitalism is where a nation's economy is run and controlled by private owners for trade.¹² In early civilizations examples of this would be trading spices and furs to others in exchange for currency or something else. Instead of catching a bunch of fish to feed the village, a person would catch fish to take to the market to sell for personal monetary gain.¹³ Competition has also fueled this type of economy. The better products someone has to offer, the better off they will be. Competition between nations has long fueled this economy.¹⁴ Today, advancements and innovation in science, engineering, and trade, among other things is what fuels the capitalist economy. The more advanced a nation is, the more money and power they have. The nations that cannot compete, and eventually fall.¹⁵ "Taking a knife to a gun fight" is an analogy of this example.¹⁶ Capitalism helps run the economy and politics of nations today. Without it, many, if not all societies would not exist. Another aspect of Capitalism is the division of labor. Instead of one person doing all of the work for all of the pay, many people contribute to portions of the work and get a piece of the monetary profit.¹⁷ This is progress as it allows people to contribute in some way to society and allows them a chance to make a living. In earlier times, if a person could not trade or work in some manner, or could not be self-sufficient, they made nothing and would not survive.

Capitalism and the evolution of science and technology, as well as the need for competition has allowed for the production of millions of goods to be distributed worldwide that make up a modern person's everyday life. In the United States, the majority of people are one hundred percent reliant on these goods. For example, an average person living in Florida drives a

Jeep Wrangler manufactured in Ohio, has breakfast which includes coffee from Italy, and eggs that were produced in the Northeast region., a wears clothes that were made in Asia, including Indonesia, China, and Vietnam.¹⁸ This person does not have the ability to live a day without relying on these consumer goods. This same person would not survive if they were living in a Capitalist ran nation. The luxury of having these goods readily available allows for a person to focus their energies on other aspects of life, instead of mere survival. This is progress in that it allows for an easier quality of life compared other nations, both present and past. One would argue however, that this is not progress for that exact same reason. This person could not survive without these consumer goods. If all of these goods were suddenly taken away, what would they do? This way of life functions under the assumption that these consumer goods are not going to go anywhere soon.

Mankind has come a long way and continues to innovate as time goes on in terms of modern society. From the early ages of man, to the Roman Empire, to now, societies continue to evolve and take pieces of each society that came before it with it in hopes to make the next one more efficient. Capitalism helps this process by creating competition, as well as allowing people the opportunity of working towards a better quality of life. Ways of living and people's views change with time, and issues that were once allowed, become outlawed. This evolution is not always perfect, and some changes take longer than others, but they trend in the right direction.

¹ Islam: Empire of Faith. PBS, 2000.

"Colosseum," ep. 5 of Secrets of Lost Empires (PBS, 1992

² MELLOR, Ronald. Augustus and the Creation of the Roman Empire: A Brief
Mellor Reading Guide Part 1

History with Documents. V-VIII, and Pages 1-25

³ "Colosseum," ep. 5 of Secrets of Lost Empires (PBS, 1992).

Gladiator. DreamWorks Pictures, 2000.)

⁴ MELLOR, Ronald. Augustus and the Creation of the Roman Empire: A Brief
Mellor Reading Guide Part 1

History with Documents. (30)

⁵ MELLOR, Ronald. Augustus and the Creation of the Roman Empire: A Brief
Mellor Reading Guide Part 2

History with Documents. (98)

Islam: Empire of Faith. PBS, 2000.

⁶ MELLOR, Ronald. Augustus and the Creation of the Roman Empire: A Brief
Mellor Reading Guide Part 2

History with Documents. (117)

⁷ MELLOR, Ronald. Augustus and the Creation of the Roman Empire: A Brief

History with Documents. (125)

"Colosseum,"

⁸ Lecture, "Elements of Empire."

Lecture, "Kingdoms into Nations."

Islam: Empire of Faith. PBS, 2000.

"Competition," ep. 1 of Civilization: The West and the Rest. BBC, 2012.

⁹ Lecture, "Making Slavery."

¹⁰ Lecture, "Making Slavery."

MELLOR, Ronald. Augustus and the Creation of the Roman Empire: A Brief

History with Documents. (45)

¹¹ Lecture, "At Home in Africa."

Lecture, "Making Slavery."

¹² Lecture, "Capitalism Isn't Ideal."

"Competition."

¹³ "Competition

Lecture, "Capitalism Isn't Ideal."

"Adam Smith: The Birth of the Free Market," ep. 1 of Capitalism: A Six-Part Series (Icarus Films, 2015).

¹⁴ Lecture, "Capitalism Isn't Ideal."

"Adam Smith: The Birth of the Free Market," ep. 1 of Capitalism: A Six-Part Series (Icarus Films, 2015).

Lecture, "Hammurabi to Locke/Smith."

¹⁵ Lecture, "Capitalism Isn't Ideal."

"Adam Smith: The Birth of the Free Market," ep. 1 of Capitalism: A Six-Part Series (Icarus Films, 2015).

"Science," ep. 2 of Civilization.

Lecture, "Hammurabi to Locke/Smith."

¹⁶ Spencer. Raiders of the Lost Ark. USA, 1981.

¹⁷ "The Wealth of Nations-A new Gospel," ep. 1 of Capitalism: A Six-Part Series (Icarus Films, 2015).

