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Oscillations Between Barbarism and Civilization

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Abstract

Human advancement has never been a steady progression from *barbarism* to *civilization*, there usually were ups and downs of advancement of Being, values, skills and customs invented and re-invented, abandoned, forgotten and re-invented again and again throughout millennia. Having stepped into the 21st century, when Reason has basically abandoned many of us and encountering barbarism again, it may be useful to re-examine the overall human passage from the stage of *savagery* to the more advanced stages of existence, trying to obtain the approximate pattern of changes and re-define the meaning of civilization and barbarism. This re-examination involves a second look at the phenomenon of *cyclicity* and shift, possessing a quasi- biological rhythm. This paper offers a mini transhistoric and cross-cultural analysis of the civilizational shifts.

Keywords: civilization, barbarism, moral compass, sexual communism, difference, cultural gulf, cycles, atavism, savages, cultural parents

Provinces pass from order into confusion and after ward reoccur to a state of order again. Having been reduced by disorder, and sunk to their utmost depression, unable to descend lower, they of necessity, re-ascend.

Niccolo Machiavelli, *History of Florence*

Introduction

It was clear to Aristotle that, in some points of human development, we invariably come back to the starting points of departure, re-discovering anew the old wisdom and our *cultural parents*. Egypt, for instance, re-invented the social organization of the Sumerians, so did the Babylonians who transmitted it to the Hebrews, who, in turn, re-discovered the same laws. The pagan Rome re-staged Athens, and the already familiar cultural drama was to be played out again throughout Europe, to be modified again by the adoption of Christianity. The Renaissance and later the Enlightenment Europe made an attempt to re-invent secularism and ancient wisdom and culture, only to have them later displaced by the confused Romantics and neo-Romantics, who would return humankind to the *cycles of barbarism*. It is quite symptomatic of our age that barbarism has resurfaced again, and, with it, the discourse on the meaning of civilization or clashes of civilizations. It is not nationality so much as religion that now attempts to destroy the edifice of civilization.

1. What is Civilization?

Aristotle, one of the grandest contributors to the edifice of Western and human civilization did not actually define the term “civilization”. For two millennia since Aristotle, humans had been struggling with building civilized society, but not defining the term. The attempt to define would not happen up until the Enlightenment. James Boswell (1740-95), one of the leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, regretted that Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-84), the compiler of the famed *Dictionary*, did not admit “civilization” into its 4th edition (M. Levin, 2004:9). At that time, the prevailing conception of “civilization” was the French *politesse* or *civilite*. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) identified it with the rule of law. John Stuart Mill (1806-73) tackled the problem by giving civilization a double meaning: “human improvement,” in general, and in particular (1836). He attributed this improvement to collective accumulation of material goods, the employment of law, trade, agriculture and manufacture. Witnessing the decline in art,

ethical standards and overall civilization even at the dawn of the 20th century, Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) defiantly asked, “Who can define for me Freedom, Civilization and Barbarism?”

Up until recently, a single ethnocentric or rather Eurocentric view of civilization prevailed, despite the contributions of the Chinese, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Hebrews, with the scholars chiefly focusing on the Graeco-Roman prototype of the European culture. Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975), who gave a panoramic survey of major civilizations in his ten-volume study, published during 1934-1954, still regarded as a canonical authority on the subject, acknowledged the cyclicity of human creativity, unevenness of the specific forms of development and contrast between the *cultural universes* throughout history. His approach was tinged with *bio-metaphoric perception* — he likened all societies to organic entities, subject to birth, growth, maturity and ultimate decay. He did not rise above the *biological analogy*, nor did he attempt to define civilization *per se*.

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), a post-modern scholar who had cultural roots both in the Middle East and Europe, raised the issue of civilization as a phenomenon in post-modernity. Witnessing the ideological turmoil and confusion on the eve of the unification of Europe, he uttered, “Europe is returning in its history and geography like one who is returning home” (“Reflections on Today’s Europe,” 1992). In the same article, Derrida pointed out to the versatile and multiple origins of European civilization and the impossibility of constructing *monogenealogy*, “A culture never has a single origin,” he stated. European civilization, in his view, is a “complex hybrid, a sum of memories, battles, victories and losses.” He tried to approach the definition of European civilization without the emphasis on *Difference* that could be traced to the unexpected sameness, or a part of the sum. Derrida saw the impulse to unite the disjointed parts of the European continent as an effort of retrieving the whole. He cautioned the guardians of the new reconfigured civilization of post-modern Europe against the possible revival of the old petty nationalisms, passionately and timely preaching:

It is necessary not to cultivate for their own sake minority differences, untranslatable idiolects, national antagonisms, or the chauvinisms of the idiom (1992:44).

Derrida viewed the project of united Europe as an existential *differance*, “an experiment of the impossible” or a victorious “philosophism,” since, like any “avant garde of

geography and history, it will never cease to induce, seduce, produce, spread out, or make advances on the other, or colonize" (1992:49). This novel and original characterization of European civilization reveals a natural fear of the civilized lest another possible assault on civilization may occur, another imposition of the *barbaric will* upon others, causing the tragic change in the way of life. The overall survey of the history of civilizations is a testimony to the *universal omnipresent terror of the Will*, the singular perception, imposed upon others and rebellion caused by it. Derrida mentions that the idea of the market economy, a strictly European idea, imposed currently on the entire globe without the opportunity to question, doubt or choose a different mode of organizing daily life, may be not in the best interests of all.

Toynbee's attempt to describe civilizations in terms of linguistic differences (Chinese, Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Slavic), or the Derridian definition in terms of geography or continent (Europe versus Asia) represented a certain advance— until recently the religious paradigm predetermined the description of cultural universes, i.e. Christian, Hebrew or Islamic. Only recently, the post-modern scholars were attempting to re-classify Western civilization as a general secular civilization. Peter Stearns, the author of *Western Civilization in World History*, for instance, claims that are the following features of human civilization:

1. favorable economic conditions;
2. developed urbanity;
3. writing;
4. statehood;
5. inherent change

(2003:32).

This definition echoes the predominant Dictionary explanations of the term that favor "material comfort, produced with technical means," placing it before keeping the written records (*Webster's New College Dictionary*, 1987). It is not therefore surprising then that this American scholar does not put writing as the first precondition of civilization, but places the emphasis on wealth, as if it may arrive prior to, or independently of, literacy. Mature Adam Smith also associated civilization with wealth. According to the anthropologist Claude Levy Strauss, the road to civilization could be outlined with the help of the *raw/cooked paradigm*, implying that the first step to civilization was made with the

invention of the stove and cooked food, and, with it, the sophisticated gastronomy as a sign of civilization. According to Clive Bell, “the road to Athens [began] — when a man caught a rabbit and cooked it at home” (1928:163). But the raw/cooked paradigm covers only a very small segment of the human road to civilization. Reiterating the basic Aristotelian premise, C. Bell argued that the most crucial role in making the civilized man should be accorded to education. Much like Aristotle millennia prior, C. Bell argues that the first step towards civilization is made “when instinct is corrected by Reason” (1928:162). The *savage*, our common parent, was a slave of one’s instincts and desires while the civilized man was capable of self-command.

It is precisely *Self-command* that was defined as the main fundamental characteristics of the “proper” or “superior” man by Confucius who had created the image of the civilized man and civilized utopian society even a century earlier than Aristotle, independently from the West, in remote China. One can only marvel at his monumental *Analects* and the forgotten wisdom of the ancient sage which European Jesuits would discover only in the 17th century AD and pass it on to the enlightened Europeans. From then on, Europe had obtained the two major analogous theories of civilization, coming from ancient Greece and ancient China, only to be challenged by the *anti-civilizational dogmas* of Rousseau and later Freud (A. Makolkin, 2000). The “superior” and “proper” man of Confucius and “self-disciplined” and seeking knowledge man of Aristotle would survive for millennia, capable of challenging the concepts of the Rousseauvian “noble savage” and Freudian “primordial man” (A. Makolkin, 2000).

2. Who are /were the Barbarians?

Confucius, unlike Aristotle, did not compare men with animals, but with other, “small men,” i.e. uneducated, untutored in ethics, morality and lacking self-command. In his view, it is up to man himself either to remain “small” or be cultivated. According to Confucius, an educated man and ethically proper one can raise a proper family, who in turn, represent the backbone of the proper society. It is interesting, that Confucius condemned death sentence as barbaric, suggesting instead effective corrective instruction. In his view, one did not need such barbaric measures if society had a strong and effective educational system. In the days of Aristotle (384-322 BC), all non-Greeks were perceived as barbarians. Greek language, Greek culture and Greek way of life were regarded as superior to all others. In Aristotle’s lifetime, Greek society was, indeed, very advanced, with relatively humane attitude towards each other, enjoying the participatory democracy, developed legal system and long established monogamy that guaranteed *civilized sexual policy* and protection to women and children, unlike that of other neighboring countries in the area. Greece also had been moving towards a secular society.

In many ways, the ancient Greeks could pride themselves in their organized society and civil way of life. Indeed, they were ahead of their *cultural mentors*, the Phoenicians, whose alphabet, philosophy, literature, science, technology, shipbuilding, art, architecture and urban planning they amply appropriated. But the Greeks, the able students of civilization, had surpassed their mentors in ethics and existential customs. The highly advanced Phoenicians had regrettably practiced human sacrifice in the honor of the god Baal, the cult which would be more than abominable to the Greeks and regarded as utterly barbaric, the same as temples where prostitution was a religious cult.

The traces of human sacrifice are also visible even in the Old Testament (the famous horrible scene of possible killing of one's own son by Abraham, averted by God, that would horrify Søren Kierkegaard in the 19th century and make him question Christianity) are the testimony to the barbaric ways of living even among the "people of the Book" and their neighbors in the Middle East. In mid-19th century, after his travels on *Beagle*, Charles Darwin reported cannibalism among the South American and Australian tribes and how, during the seasons with scarce food, the elderly were consumed before dogs. Christian missionaries encountered the same phenomenon among the inhabitants of Hawaii prior to their conversion to Christianity. Thus, the first most decisive step towards civilization and away from *barbarism* must have been the abolition of human sacrifice to pacify the deities, preceded by the abolition of the widely spread practice of cannibalism.

Another step on the road to civilization was the millennia -old passage from "sexual communism," as Edward Westermarck (1925) described the primitive sexual politics of legal incest and pluralistic marriage, to the ultimately approved monogamy. The ultimate stage towards raising the *homo sapiens*, as we know it, was the *monogamous marriage*, marking the fundamental shift in human relations and true *ascent to civilization*. No society, regardless of its scientific and technological assets, can call itself civilized while outside of this institution. The invention of monogamy, safeguarding the rights of women and children, was the most efficient instrument of controlling animalistic impulses, "ennobling the sexual desire" and designing the moral and *ethical compass* of the future civilized societies. In this respect, the urban, literate, technologically and economically advanced Phoenicians were less civilized than the primitive rural nomadic Hebrews who had eventually outlawed polygamy and human sacrifice. The advanced ancient Egypt who possessed writing, art, technology, law, engineering and architecture, was also known for its *peculiar sexual politics* — the sexual relations between parents and children, and among relatives were approved in order to maintain the purity of royal genealogy.

The road to monogamy was exceedingly long, full of detours in morality and ethics, via the ritualistic polygamy, exploitation of women in religious temples even in ancient Rome. Nearly all the presently civilized societies had invariably passed through those barbaric stages. Monogamy, finally adopted by the most ethically minded societies, curtailed the sexual freedom and pushed human libido aside, or “sublimating” it in Freudian terminology, making it subject to the human will, control and discipline, transferring human attention towards one’s own cultivation and education of the young, and construction of *Culture* and *Civilization* in a true sense. (Later to be condemned by Sigmund Freud as **the** sources of trauma). The features of barbarism, thus could be summarized as follows:

1. Cannibalism;
2. Incest;
3. Polygamy;
4. Polyandry;
5. Cruelty towards each other, be it women, children, elderly or enemies

3. Traces of Barbarism among the Civilized

With the advancement of *homo sapiens* the most striking features of barbarism, such as cannibalism, incest and “sexual communism,” had been eradicated while the inhumane attitudes towards one another regrettably have not. The causes of cruelty have remained – intolerance of opinions, cultural peculiarities, ways of life, religious practices or secularism. One may recall the fate of Protagoras (483-410 BC) and Socrates (? – 399 BC) in civilized Greece, the death of slaves in the Roman Coliseum as a form of entertainment, and public burning of Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) in the most civilized, artistic and sophisticated Renaissance Italy. Public execution of criminals continued to be practiced in civilized Europe up until the 19th century and in a country of the most advanced thought, law and art such as France. Fedor Dostoevsky (1821-81) who visited France and personally witnessed the public beheading uttered in dismay, “I cannot fathom how a nation so sensitive to culture and so humane could be so close to barbarism” (1955:18).

The 20th-century Nazi atrocities, committed in the heart of allegedly civilized Europe, would shake the world and horrify humanity by the apparent thinness of the veneer of civilization on the body of humanity. The barbarism had occurred, after all, in the country of Goethe, Heine, Bach, Kant, Hegel, Herder, Durer and others?! The paradoxical mode of human conduct observed through centuries leads us to believe that the *barbaric ways* of Being and reasoning have never been totally expunged. Polygamy condemned by the ethics of Judaism and Christianity has never been criticized by Islam – Qua’ran condones the four-partner polygamy, perhaps, in contrast to the sexual communism of the Arab antiquity. The global community does not have any sanctions against the African and Arab states which live by the anachronistic codes of Islam, that exploit women and children, depriving them of the basic equal human rights to be educated and cared for properly. It remains as the greatest paradox of Post-modernity.

Aristotle had an excellent explanation— people tend to rediscover every step of advancement anew at every new phase of history. Hence, the forgotten Sumer had to be re-invented in Egypt, Phoenicia, Greece, Israel, Babylonia, Rome and modern Europe. There is no straight line of continuity from the wondrous Sumer to modernity. Human history could be described as the perennial search for the lost *existential compass*, after the brief periods of finding and losing it again. The lost and found paradigm best encapsulates the faulty mechanism of the existential engine. The secular developmental pathway of such an advanced society as the Roman Republic had been interrupted and violated by the powerful religious dogma, coming from the rural subjects of their backward provinces. Since the adoption of Christianity in the 4th century AD, the Romans were forced to descend from the summit of their urban secular society into the difficult existential plain of co-existence with blind Belief and periods of brutal submission to the tyranny of the priests. The Western European civilization would never completely break away from the clutches of the Church. For centuries, science, art, architecture, literature and music would be constructed under her watchful eye.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) dared to accuse Christianity for suppressing thought, imagination and creativity of all Europeans, treating it as a stumbling block on the pathway to civilization. He blamed Christianity for the cultural decline of Europe. Machiavelli proved in his *Discourses* that Christianity discouraged reading, acquisition of knowledge, having created the greatest climate of unfreedom that brought on the centuries of cultural stagnation. He reminded the Renaissance readers that the freedom of the ancient Rome had been crushed by Christianity, that “had persecuted all the ancient memories, burning the works of poets and historians, having ruined many visual images and spoiled every other thing that might convey some sign of antiquity” (1996 ,D II,,5.1). He could not comprehend how the highly advanced Roman urban civilization

could have adopted the cult of the backward nomadic rural tribe. The tyranny of church censorship in Europe lasted for centuries. Even in the 19th century, the operatic librettos of Romantic Italian operas had to be accompanied by the affidavit, certifying the proper Christian content and suitability for the Catholic audiences (A. Makolkin, 2011:116-119).

Despite the post-colonial ethos of the 21st century and the political correctness, prohibiting the discourse on Difference, one may argue that the greatest advances of civilization currently are in the least religious or most *secular* Nordic countries, such as Norway, Sweden, Finland or Denmark, i.e the most secular European societies which were able to separate Church and State truly and effectively for the benefit of civilization. These are the countries where Christianity through Protestantism had undergone re-examination. The same societies have secured equal rights for women, proper education, protection of children and of family interests, as well as relatively equal distribution of wealth among all their citizens. The most religious and fanatically devoted to religion countries, like Saudi Arabia, Gulf States, African States, Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan have the worst record of human rights and the worst condition of women. The reality of this difference is not properly publicly acknowledged. The *cultural gulf* between the various countries is not on the international agenda, adumbrated by the economic discourse and *market economy mythology*, tinged with the confusing calculations of the level of productivity, production and trade. The United Nations seldom measures and compares quality of civilized life in the world – educated healthy Cubans are never discussed in comparison with the terrorized women and children in India, Pakistan, and African states.

4. Paradoxes of Civilization

In the 20th century, the archeologists discovered a highly advanced ancient civilization of Sumer which completely overturned our knowledge about the history of civilization. For centuries, under the influence of the sole popular sacred Text, our perception about the human ascent as well as the efforts of the archeologists had been revolving around the Biblical map and its chronology. Leonard Wooley's excavation of the ancient Sumer revealed a civilization, predating Egypt, Phoenicia, Babylonia, and Israel. Wooley's work undertaken in 1924 uncovered the dazzling monuments and traces of a society which had attained the highest possible level of sophistication in 3400 BC, at a time when "Egypt was still barbarous." The archeologist passionately wrote:

It is the Sumerians [that] we can trace so much that is at the root
of Babylonian, Assyrian, Hebrew and Phoenician art and thought,

and see that the Greeks too were in debt to this ancient and for long forgotten people, the pioneers of the progress of Western man (1954:67).

The later deciphered clay tablets from the earliest human library, in the peculiar cuneiform code, contained the most marvelous, dazzling and history-shattering data about this destroyed ancient *proto-civilization*. This modern finding had overturned our records of the cultural history and archeology. The “pioneers of progress,” the distant ancient Sumerians had created a civilization whose characteristics in many respects stood high above the societies that would succeed them much later. Their written documents preserved data about their art, architecture, engineering, agriculture, law and highly sophisticated social organization. Not only were they highly educated, skilled, artistic, but they also were guided by high ethical principles. They knew how to take care of each other, the unemployed, the elderly and the sick – it was, apparently, the earlier example of the ancient welfare state, to be re-invented and re-discovered millennia later. Incidentally, the Sumerians despised their less civilized neighbors who did not know the skills of agriculture. In their literature, one finds the motif of “*martu*,” people who were too lazy to bend and tilt the soil, whom they regarded as barbarians. Forty centuries later, the population of the British Isles would be deprived of plumbing and housing, not enjoying the same modern conveniences regarded as necessity by the ancient Sumerians. Most modern architects would not be able to rival their Sumerian counterparts. Millennia that would follow the Sumerian civilization would be the times of *cultural detour*. In fact, the land of ancient Sumer, which would fall into the hands of the Semites (Babylonians, Assyrians, Hebrews and Arabs), would ultimately become known as modern Iraq. The post-modern barbarians would destroy the memories of Sumer, searching for the non-existent weapons of mass destruction. The succession of centuries not only failed to re-create the past, but even to keep its memory sacred.

The paradoxes of our century are numerous, vociferous and blatant. Humans managed to explore space, circulate sputniks around the Earth, send man on the moon, receive images from Mars and Mercury, invent and utilize Internet, and yet we are unable to tackle hunger, racial and religious hatred, sexual violence, polygamy, and rape. Most of the people on the planet do not enjoy the benefits of modern technology, nor could they be regarded as civilized. The countries- custodians of nuclear weapons, such as India and Pakistan, and most African countries have the worst human rights record, no access to adequate education and health care. Every minute a woman is raped in India and Pakistan. Migrants from those countries even brought polygamy, forced marriages and honor killings into Canada, USA and Europe. France had to deal with the consequences of polygamy that came with the arrivals from the former French African colonies back in the eighties (A. Makolkin, 2014:69). It is not clear how it is being resolved there now. Canada at the moment is discussing the new laws, barring the immigrants who follow the “barbaric cultural practices” from entering the country, given the seriousness of the phenomenon in post-modern developing countries and its paradoxical spread in the West. Barbarism found its way via migration. The Western

institutions and achievements of their civilization are currently being internally subverted by the atavistic rituals and religious fanaticism of the new comers, who take advantage of the freedoms of the host societies and under the pretext of “religious freedom” are trying to stage a *cultural detour*.

One of the main achievements of civilization, as per Clive Bell, is laughter, ability to correct existence with humor. Savages have no concept of satire and are strangers to the *corrective power of laughter*. The best illustration of this is the recent attack of the Moslem radicals on the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, known for its caustic satire on religion and politics. The brutal killing of 12 people, including most prominent caricaturists of the magazine, in broad daylight, in the offices of their publication in the heart of Paris, has been perceived by the entire civilized world as an attack on civilization, a *crusade of the barbarians* who would like to turn the clock of history back to the 7th century and enslave the civilized. The religious fanatics, like savages, cannot produce laughter in response, they can only kill. The candle vigils and signs “*Je suis Charlie*” would not help to deal with the modern barbarians who have declared a war on civilization. One can blame our own educational institutions and legal systems for inability to continue to civilize and protect against barbarism.

The electronic tyranny affects our ability to enjoy daily life, acquire new knowledge, and develop creativity and critical attitudes towards information. In the age of information, we are the least informed species, plunging into barbarism. There are no new Aristotles, new Ciceros, Leonardos, Michelangelos, Rossinis, Monteverdis, in our culturally barren age. Our idols are “false notes” — Madonna, Lady Gaga, Zuckerberg et als. Art, music, literature, philosophy, and human relations are in crisis. The Internet is the electronic cemetery of the human past next to the *cultural waste* of post-modernity. Our is the age of the crisis of the human values, of the most advanced Western civilization, standing on the brink of corruption. Our is the new Dark Age of Ignorance, Prejudice, Intolerance and rejection of Wisdom. The forces of collective barbarism are more virulent and potent than even before. The ambitious delusional technocrats, driven by envy to their *cultural parents* and *cultural impotence*, are trying to convince the masses that they possess new wisdom and could offer new existential order and lead on the road to happiness. We have surrendered our analytical power to the semi-literate technocrats, who have brainwashed the world and managed to enslave humanity. We have not used the *cultural capital* of the past to be able to counterattack the onslaught of Barbarism and religious fanaticism. Possessing the code of High Culture, we have not dared to challenge the New Order, the *idiolect of collective idiocy*, translated into the universal language of collective wisdom. We may repeat what Paul Valery (1871-1945) wrote on the eve of the World War II, “our cultural capital is in peril.” (*History and Politics*, vol. II, p.200-201). The Internet, advertised as the new vehicle of knowledge has become the efficient instrument in the hands of

criminals and barbarians — the success of the Islamic radicalism and the dangers of new Arabic Caliphate would not have occurred without the freedom of the Internet.

5. Is there Universal Civilization?

Civilization has traditionally been an attempt of creating an advanced humane habitat of species, interested in their own perfection and advancement, away from barbarism of their ancestors. It could equally embrace the Sumerian Odes, Hesiod and Homer, Confucius and Aristotle, Vergil and Dante, Shakespeare and Pushkin, Machiavelli and Kant, Rossini and Tchaikovsky, Durer and Rembrandt, Leonardo and Boromini, etc. etc. It collectively rejects cannibalism, incest, polygamy, Roman circus, Hebrew, Christian and Islamic fanaticism, the desire to colonize, control and abuse the Other. The “irreplacable inscription of the universal,” using the Derridian term, is the essential part of the collective wisdom and the historic collective plight for civilization. “Universal is common,” taught Aristotle in distant or not so distant Hellenic antiquity, and his wisdom is still valid and applicable for Today, torn apart between the monuments of civilization and post modern *cultural terrorism* of the religious and technocratic fanatics, as well as those deluded by the market place mythology and its tyranny.

Where are we, as far as reaching the stage of the universal shared wisdom? Our civilization is in the phase of its profound crisis, standing over the abyss of the universal ignorance, barbarism and facing the possibility of its extinction. Freedom is more ephemeral than ever before since it is being formulated and dictated by the fanatics, with their fixation either on the “religion of trade” with the triumph of the market place, or “the religion of peace,” with the triumph of darkness. The basic freedoms are denied to the majority of the population of the planet. The freedom to choose the free medical services, free education and housing is denied to the people who need the most — the entire African continent would never embark on the road to civilization within the context of being an addendum to the global market place. The former brutal colonizers have invented a *new idiom*, new mythology, which blocks the gate way to advancement and civilization. The “medicine of democratic elections” is over-prescribed with the enormous side effects to the societies whose priorities and agenda are different from the eager advisers. The spread of useless political carnival replaces the genuine efforts to advance and civilize.

The leap to civilization, as we desire and perceive it, could be made with the understanding, empathy and cultural assistance to the suffering people of the planet. Instead of the occasional campaigns against malaria, AIDS or Ebola in Africa, there should be a recognized freedom to choose the more beneficial social structure that could remedy the systemic flaws in shorter periods of time. The socialized medicine practiced in France, Spain, Nordic countries, Germany, Cuba and the former USSR

would have been the bridge to civilized African societies. The radical free market economy imposed on the world has failed both in the developing disadvantaged world, and the developed one, undermining the road to civilization.

“One cannot worship God and Mammon,” as we learnt from the ancient Sumerians, Babylonians and Hebrews. One cannot claim civility while spreading barbaric ways of existence and in the presence of the radical barbarians – access to culture and its institutions is the precondition for partaking civility. It was clear to Aristotle that civilized society could not be built without the state-sponsored art and culture. He expressed this idea in *Politics* where he unequivocally stated that “the entertainment ought to have been provided at a public cost, as in Crete” (a former Phoenician colony) (1985, vol. II: 2017). In the same work, Aristotle also exposed the desire for wealth, as an evil of civilization. In his view, the civilized human being ought to have courage “which is not intended to make wealth-getting,” necessary for being a good citizen and a good professional. He distinguished between the honorable ways and dishonorable ones (inherited money from money made). He advocated the bridled system of wealth making in order to curtail the appetite of many who continue to be engaged in “breeding money” without point, and beyond the satisfaction of their needs (1985, vol. II: 1996-7). Thus, in the Aristotelian universe, civilization is unthinkable without the control of money.

In his view, the ruler has the responsibility to curtail the “breeding of money” and instill the values that would make artistic aspirations, intellectual and professional activities more important than simple ordinary money making. Hence, according to Aristotle, to be civilized did not imply to be wealthy, but to understand the purpose and limits of enrichment. Following Aristotle, we may conclude that no civilization may be constructed in the presence of the ongoing senseless “breeding money” by the few for the few. Modern mass media, the arm of the government, “dogmatizes the values,” seizes the imagination and transforms the public mind. To be civilized means to doubt and critique the media that daily undermines civilized values. The barbarian is in all of us, but we also possess the collective memory of the Past, own the cultural heritage of our mentors, and our duty is to revive it amidst the global electronic graveyard and return to the public Forum, Direct Discourse, resurrecting the *direct democracy* in order to counterattack the present assault on civilization and the assumed axiom of Today.

Conclusion

Our age is the time of clash of the semi-civilized and barbarians. The civilization eroded from within by the numerous assaults on its core (be it religion, or scientific madness), insufficiently secular and ethically strong, is challenged by the new wave of the post-modern barbarism. Our is not yet erected civilization, but a work in progress

with different degree of success. We may repeat with Clive Bell – “neither St. Francis, nor Dante, nor Blake, nor Cezanne, nor Dostoevsky was completely civilized” – asking, “Are we?” In Toynbee’s view, “civilization is a voyage, not a harbor. No known civilization has ever reached the goal of civilization yet” (1948:55). Not having reached the goals, we have to resist the cultural detours, imposed upon us by resurrected.

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