

## Unlike Our Forefathers, We Are Uncivilized and Immoral!

By Belayneh Abate

In his article that he argued against moral relativism, Paul Stearns claims that we are generally less moral than our ancestors (even the ones who owned slaves). [1] Unlike Paul Stearns, many think that this 21<sup>st</sup> century is the epic of civilization and humans' behaviors have shifted from barbarism to civilization and morality.

In this era, civilization is entirely viewed with the Western way of life. For many, civilization is walking naked, wearing miniskirts, dressing wigs, dying hair, singing like Elvis Presley, dancing the way Michael Jackson danced, speaking English, writing in Latin scripts and so on. They associate civilization with embellishing the physique and amassing material wealth. If this form of civilization is assumed to be the source of morality, Christos and his disciples who lived the lives of the destitute were uncivil and amoral. The fact of the matter is civilization has nothing to do with shiny physical body or living the life of plenty. Civilization is highly intertwined with grooming the mind and living an ethical and a moral life.

If we were civilized and living a moral life, we would have acted better than jungle beasts. Beasts rarely murder their own species, but we daily massacre and commit genocide on our own species.

Unlike us, our forefathers lived the highest form of moral and ethical life. They used to see every human in the eyes of God and leave their beds for strangers whenever they knock their doors for accommodations. They used to practice the popular adage "it is better that my child perishes than I break my promise". They try their best to live according to the religious scriptures and they repent and ask for forgiveness whenever they make mistakes. They used to outcast and even punish individuals whose lives were based on lying, cheating, deceiving, stealing, robbing and betraying. In this very 21<sup>st</sup> century, these sorts of unethical and immoral acts are considered as signs of smartness and liars, cheaters, robbers, thieves and traitors are elected to lead countries and public sectors. Even religious institutions and organizations are flooded with unethical and immoral preachers, and they are run by hypocrite "prophets" who live luxurious lives on the graves of martyrs like the winter fungi and termites.

Portrait of an old man taken during the festival of the true cross in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia



Growing up in the culturally rich, historically, and archaeologically decorated Ethiopia, I used to watch priests providing long religious services with no incentives in return whatsoever. Similarly, I used to see community members supporting the disabled, the dejected and the less-fortunate without expecting any forms of reward from anyone in return. My own father used to protect the community from burglars and gangsters merely because he believed that was the right thing to do.

Walking on bare feet, my grandmother and my mother used to devote a large proportion of their time in providing social and material assistance to those who were less fortunate than we were. They used to deliver their goodwill in secrecy as they did not want to receive any form of reward in the form of praise or admiration from the community members. When my mother shared meat and milk products to those who were too poor to buy even two or three eggs during festivities such as Easter, she had to do it either before dawn or after sunset so that no one could watch her.

As a child, I did not realize the significance of this secret goodwill. I believe now that my community and my family were strictly practicing what the holy bible teaches, and what Immanuel Kant wrote about morality although they did not know that he even ever existed. Kant's supreme principles of morality lie in the motives, but not in the outcomes of deeds. According to Kant, only deeds accomplished or intended to be accomplished merely because they are the right things to do for the causes of humanity are classified as moral deeds. [2] In other words, if deeds are implemented only for personal gains, they should not be considered as moral deeds. I believe this view of Kant is like the views of the society that cultivated me in general, and the views of my parents, in particular.

But what are we who came from similar societies doing today? Epidemics of immorality inundated Western Europe as education boomed in the 18th century. During this period, Rousseau [3] wrote the following in his famous essay about education: "Since learned men had appeared, honest men were nowhere to be found". The legendary writer continued "a learned man is a depraved animal; education does not make a man good; it only makes him clever, usually for mischief." Rousseau won a prestigious award for this essay.

Rousseau's essay may not win another dignified prize today since just men who vote for honesty are nowhere to be found since educated people flourished and infiltrated the world communities in the 20th and 21st centuries. Those of us who consider ourselves as learned men today are slaves of power, money, fear, envy, perfidy, theft, grandiosity, praise, fame, sexual lust, gluttony and so on.

According to Scriptures and Immanuel Kant, morality is highly connected to autonomy, defined as liberty from any form of slavery. Therefore, only free, or autonomous men can perform deeds worth of morals. People who lack autonomy are prone to carry out evil acts and immoral deeds. A dictator massacres people because he is an all-time slave of fear. An educated man serves the callous dictators when he becomes loyal slave of excess money, power, fame, fear or other secondary gains.

In this very 21<sup>st</sup> century, we observe priests and monks threatening to discontinue spreading the message of the gospel unless they are paid a good sum of money. Similarly, we witness physicians, engineers, lawyers, journalists, economists, pharmacists, sociologists, nurses, and other professionals supporting and serving ruthless tyrants just for the sake of material prosperity at the expense of the victims. We listen to politicians preaching freedom, good governance, and prosperity while their real motive is driven by the pillars of evil such as power, money and fame. The list goes on.

The hypocrisy reaches its zenith when the tyrants and their servants as well as other “learned people” try to cover up their treacherous acts and indifference to evil with moral blankets. However, as indicated above, only free men can carry out moral deeds. Free, here, does not necessarily mean free from tyranny but free from unholy behaviors such as excess greed for power, money, fame, fear and other self-interests.

Grasping all the outlets of mass media with their blood-soaked fists, the despots at the different parts of the world try to convince us that they imprison, harass, and murder citizens for the “stability and safety of their people.” In fact, they further shamelessly proclaim their victims love them unto death for doing so. I do not think anyone will expect them to tell us that they committed such atrocities because they suffer from unfathomable fear and boundless greed. However, any rational man could understand that these wicked despots massacre and harass people because they are prisoners and slaves of cyclical fear and greed.

With the same token, the elected Western governments preach to the world that their foreign policies are based on democracy and solid moral grounds although they do not hide their self-interests, which never get along with moralistic deeds. To promote their self-interests, these governments classify the world tyrants as wild (unfriendly), domesticated (friendly), and hermaphrodite (potentially friendly) tyrants. Wild tyrants are predators with puffy testicles, and they think they do not need the support of the superpowers to survive the oppressed people's (their victims') revolts. Wild tyrants do not obey the superpowers. The domesticated tyrants are castrated predators who strongly believe that their survival as tyrants depends on the support of the superpowers. Therefore, wild tyrants always serve the superpowers like donkeys. The hermaphrodite tyrants are those despots with one puffy and another castrated testicle. The hermaphrodites act like the wild tyrants when they think their power is unshakeable but serve as the domesticated ones when their power grip gets weaker. To promote their self-interests, the superpowers cultivate the domesticated tyrants as their garden mushrooms, but they turn every rock to overthrow the wild despots. The fate of the hermaphrodite tyrants depends on the level of their testosterone.

These facts herald that whether we are living in the West, East, South or North, we all are uncivilized and immoral unlike our forefathers. The world will continue to be inundated with daily news of war, massacre, genocide, crime against humanity, displacement, robbery, and natural disasters since the Earth suffers from famine of morality and superfluity of hypocrisy. Thank you.

End notes:

1. Paul Stern, Right & Wrong About Right Wrong, Philosophy Now Magazine, Issue 156
2. Michael Sandel, Justice: What is the right thing to do, First Edition 2010
3. Will Durant, the story of philosophy, 1953 edition

The writer can be reached at [abatebelai@yahoo.com](mailto:abatebelai@yahoo.com)

July 7, 2023