

Name

Instructor

Course

Date

Defining a Civilization

Civilizations have existed almost since the beginning of man. Groups of individuals come together and establish both written and unwritten rules for social interaction, conduct, and various attitudes towards aspects of life. These codes of conduct and ways of thinking and doing eventually evolve into more defined expectations, spilling over into areas of language, art, science, work, philosophy, and government (Durant 12). They also become more formalized in developing a centralized government that controls areas of industry, religion, law, and money (13). With these functions in mind, an advanced civilization can be defined in terms of legally overseeing segments of civilization and developing segments of government that work together towards developing and maintaining a cohesive society that to some degree monitors and protects all of its citizens.

The idea of civilization is positive in that it connotes civility, that is, protection of a people. It equates to the idea of a society that develops rules by which it governs itself. It also relates to the idea of a shared culture which involves a common language, attitude towards life, and traditions in how one lives, works, and celebrates life events. Civilizations develop their own histories and commonalities among its people (Durant 15). They are identified as having shared values, distinctive contributions to mankind, and the gathering of a people in a specific geographic location. They often are known for the goods they produce, services they provide, or

the kinds of knowledge they discover and share. The people of a society are dependent on each other for survival and a sense of being.

An important characteristic of an advanced civilization is a written language, though not all civilizations developed written languages. However, a written language helps a civilization to record its history, allowing it to pass onto its future generations and to other civilizations its worth, its worldly contributions (Bederman 44). This sense of leaving behind a legacy is important because man builds his knowledge on the foundations provided by those who have come before him. The sharing and progression of knowledge is a contributing factor in the continuing advancement of civilization.

Civilizations grow and develop in different ways. For example, some civilizations promote only one religion, whereas others allow religions to evolve among its people, viewing choice of religion as an example of freedom to think and to express oneself as an individual. For example, Monotheism advocates the acceptance and worship of a single supreme being, God. A monotheistic civilization, then, would limit individual freedoms to worshipping God. However, other civilizations, such as Greece and India, might recognize religions that worship the one true God, but they also allow adherence to religions that do not believe in just one god. These civilizations recognize and respect the rights of their citizens to have freedom of thought. Such freedom to think and to express one's ideas is often associated with advanced civilizations that respect intelligence and intellectual pursuits.

Certainly, individuals who study civilizations have preferences as to which ones they would have enjoyed being part of or in which they would like to participate in the present. However, all civilizations should be respected for what they contribute, can contribute, or have contributed throughout the existence of mankind. One can always learn from others in how better

to govern oneself. Additionally, people learn from each other in examining experiences and events. The arts have much to relate concerning the human condition, and so art, dance, music, and literature should be enjoyed and studied. Finally, one should examine one's own language for contributions from other civilizations. Words to express ideas are often provided by other civilizations, as well.

Works Cited

Bederman, Gail. *Manliness & Civilization*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995. Print.

Durant, Will. *The Story of Civilization*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1939. print.