

Previously I wrote about how the understanding of all human conflict can be reduced to pride or a clash of cultures. This fact was illustrated last week when I assisted my grandson with his 4th grade homework. His assignment was to define a list of ten words. The first word was "Civilization".

I proposed that we use two references. One was Webster's 1st edition dictionary, circa 1828. The second reference was The American Heritage Dictionary, copyright 1976. I was alarmed to discover how much our culture had changed in 150 years by definition.

The 1828 definition for civilization included ".....the state of being refined in manners, from the grossness of savage life. Improvements in arts and learning" The second reference defined the term as, "An advanced stage of development in the arts and sciences accompanied by corresponding social, political, and cultural complexity."

No mention of civility was present in the modern definition. Does art, no matter how decadent, and politics, no matter how corrupt, and science, no matter how ignorant of undiscovered knowledge, all without civility qualify as "civilization"? This difference in definitions represents a shift in American culture for the worst.