



In Search of Civilization: Remaking a Tarnished Idea

John Armstrong

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"A self-effacing, humane and unparanoid call to change our wealthy yet often barbaric world for the better." *

In this provocative cri de coeur, the philosopher John Armstrong rescues the idea of civilization from irrelevance and connects it to our search for individual happiness. "Civilization" once referred to a society's technological prowess, its political development, or its cultural achievement. In the modern era, however, the word became burdened by the legacy of colonialism and connotations of elitism. For it to have value once again, according to Armstrong, we must understand that a society balances material prosperity with spiritual prosperity if it is to merit the term "civilized"?and currently we are impoverished.

In Search of Civilization is his corrective. As he roams from anecdote to aesthetic appreciation?from the banality of an early job at an insurance company to the redemptive wonders of a seventeenth-century church spire visible out an office window, from Adam Smith's philosophy to the Japanese tea ceremony?Armstrong reminds us that culture lies within us and that its nourishment is essential to a flourishing society.

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