

Isaiah Berlin says in his essay, "Two Concepts of Liberty": "[T]o realize the relative validity of one's convictions and yet stand for them unflinchingly is what distinguishes a civilized man from a barbarian."

I agree with Michael Lynch, who cites this passage in *True to Life*, that its point is that "we need to understand our views about what matters as being subject to revision." We need to acknowledge "[our] own fallibility and the fallibility of [our] entire group." But I would say making such an acknowledgement distinguishes the one who makes it not only from a barbarian but also from a premodern civilized man. Granted that "civilization" and "modernity" both represent the "to live well/to live better" stages, as distinct from the merely "to live," barbarian, stage of the art of life as exhibited by human history, "civilization" as such is to be thought of as more toward the "to live well" stage, "modernity," more toward the "to live better" stage.

Unless I'm mistaken, there is a strikingly close convergence between Berlin's point and Justice Holmes's in his talk about "the theory of our Constitution" and men's coming to believe "even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct" that "the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market, and that truth is the only ground upon which their wishes safely can be carried out."

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