

Ignorance and Arrogance

Ignorance, generally speaking, could be defined as lack of knowledge about most things, or in regard to a specific subject. Arrogance, however, is an attitude or a behavior displayed by mostly ignorant individuals claiming to know much more than what they actually know; it comes as a result of a feeling of superiority due to wealth or power or inherited prestige. As a consequence, arrogant people tend to denigrate others and belittle their opinions; they behave in such a manner in order to hide their ignorance. They usually refuse to acknowledge their ignorance because they believe that such an acknowledgement would raise serious doubts about their fitness to occupy whatever positions they may occupy in society and thus weaken their influence and undermine their claimed prestige and social statuses.

Ignorant people who realize and acknowledge the nature and extent of their ignorance tend to be modest and show humility. As a consequence, such people are more likely to be honest, eager to learn from others, and to listen to what knowledgeable people have to say. In contrast, ignorant people who behave arrogantly tend to be dishonest and display obstinacy; they are more likely to shy away from the truth and therefore, to be less able to learn from others and improve their stock of knowledge or correct their largely undemocratic and unethical behavior.

People who are ignorant but behave with modesty are a social asset despite their lack of education and knowledge; they are an asset that can be harnessed through better education and training and productive employment. However, ignorant people who behave arrogantly are liabilities; they represent a social and national burden that undermines the potential of all people in society. Ignorant people characterized by modesty tend to have good and productive attitudes; while ignorant people characterized by arrogance are more likely to have bad and destructive attitudes.

When ignorance is reinforced by arrogance it becomes very hard for such people to value education or life experience or even scientific knowledge; they are also less likely to defend the rights of others or show respect for human rights in general. President George W. Bush is a good example of an ignorant, arrogant leader who took uneducated decisions

and made serious mistakes that adversely affected America and Americans; they undermined American credibility overseas and weakened the US government's commitment to human rights at home; they started two wars that caused untold atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan and in other places.

A knowledgeable but arrogant person is not less dangerous than an ignorant, arrogant one; he is more likely to make serious mistakes in judgment that harm the interests and maybe even the future of people close to him or associated with him. Such a person is also able and often inclined to commit certain white crimes that hurt the poor most, deceive the ignorant, exploit the weak, and cheat society of assets and opportunities it can hardly afford. Executives of American banks and investment banks who managed the American financial system during the last three decades give a good example of how dangerous and destructive knowledge and arrogance could be.

When people who set on the top of the social and economic ladder in society and hold the keys to the corridors of political power are blessed with arrogance, the society becomes vulnerable to making all kinds of mistakes and to losing its sense of directions. If arrogance and ignorance prevail as a cultural trait in society; and they do prevail in all ideologically committed societies, they create a mentality of cultural particularism that belittles new ideas and non-traditional ways of thinking, rejects creativity, and leads people to accept oppression, making societal transformation and progress hard to conceive and achieve.

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