

Power and Impact of Art & Culture

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Abstract

A brief outline of the main points discussed in the session on Power and Impact of Art & Culture

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Today's world is characterized by growing fragmentation and divergence, causing dysfunction of politics, economy and society. It is difficult to find a democracy which is run by a single party. Public opinion is getting more and more divergent producing proliferation of political parties that represent only a small segment of voters. Coalition is the only way to form a government, but it is often a marriage of convenience, not one based on ideology. Why is this?

Sustainable collaboration among many members of society, both at the individual and sovereign state levels, has become so difficult because of the absence of high values that could otherwise govern the world and serve as a glue to connect members of a community with different backgrounds. In ancient times it was myth that legitimized the government and connected people. During the medieval ages it was religion. In the modern world it is liberal democracy.

Based on its universal values liberal democracy found its way to almost the entire world and won the battle against communism, another universalism. This was called "the end of history". Ironically, however, the penetration of liberal values, such as freedom of speech, into people's minds without being accompanied by a moral sense (sense of responsibility, respect for others and self-discipline) has given rise to fragmentation. Freedom leads to selfishness. Market mechanism often drives people to short-sighted profit making. Liberal democracy itself is a neutral mechanism; it does not automatically guarantee justice, peace and

prosperity. It works for the society only when it is run properly by the people. It is like driving a car. Even with products of highest technology, such as the excellent Toyota Lexus, if drivers do not follow the rules their cars would go in divergent directions, causing accidents and disorder. Confronting a formidable enemy, such as communism, liberal democracy served as a glue to unite the people. After victory it started losing its adhesive power.

Today, people are primarily interested in their own short-term material/economic wealth, and the acceleration of globalization has forced them to compete for it. Identity crisis produced populism. Every individual has conscience and vice. It is vitally important to build a system with which one can mobilize all one's conscience to restore mutual trust, beyond national borders, languages, and religions, which is crucially important to build peace. Herein lies the power of the arts & culture.

The power of the arts & culture consists of seven elements: the means to express oneself and establish communication with others without depending on words; providing dreams and motivation; contribution to social integration; revitalization of economy; national branding; giving inspiration and innovation; and the means to inherit the wisdom of ancestors. In addition arts and culture dislike war, whereas politics and economy tend to antagonize others, creating winners and losers.

Arts and culture can awaken everyone's conscience and moral sense and help develop further to make friends and followers. In this way we can properly run a liberal democratic society which is the best (or the least harmful) system for human society. We should not give ammunition to terrorists who try to downgrade liberal democracy.