



# LANGUAGE, CULTURE, ART AND POLITICS

IN THE CHANGING WORLD

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Editörler:

**Prof. Dr. Muhlise Coşgun ÖGEYİK  
Dr. Kutay UZUN**



## Language, Culture, Art and Politics in the Changing World

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Kapak Tasarım:   
Baskı Öncesi Hazırlık: **Mehmet ATEŞ**  
meh\_ates@hotmail.com

Baskı & Cilt: **Şelale Ofset**  
Fevzi Çakmak Mh. Hacı Bayram Cad. No. 22 Karatay/KONYA  
Tel: +90.532.159 40 91 selalemat2012@hotmail.com  
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Ул. М. Музаффер, рынок Разматты, пнраэний ятаж № 35-36-41  
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Dağıtım: **EMEK KİTAP**

Akçaburgaz Mah. 3137. Sk. Ali Rıza Güvener İş Merkezi No: 28  
Esenyurt / İSTANBUL  
www.emekkitap.com - Telefaks +90 212 671 68 10

Дистрибутор: **EMEK KİTAP**

Район Акчабургаз, ул. Али Рыза 3137, бизнес центр «Гювeнер» № 28,  
Эсeньюрт / СТАМБУЛ  
www.emekkitap.com – Телефакс: +90 212 671 68 10

**ORTA ASYA OFFICE:**

Mikrareyon Kok Jar/23 Bishkek / KYRGYSZTAN  
Tel: +996 700 13 50 00 - Telefaks: +996 552 13 50 00

**ОФИС В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ:**

Микрарайон Кок Жар/23 Бишкек / КЫРГЫЗСТАН  
Тел.: +996 700 13 50 00 – Телефакс: +996 552 13 50 00

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## THE BICONDITIONALITY OF ART-POLITICS

*Bartıř ÇAĐLAR\**

It is high time to correct the falsehood that art is a luxury. The fact of the matter is that art is actually a necessity without which politics are remarkably impoverished. It is all the more urgent to correct that falsehood in our current era owing to the pressures of globalization. Art is not distinct from life at large because art is life at our mirroring-minds. As such, it is not separate from politics. Both politics and art are about designing how we live. Figuring out problems and implementing response policies constitutes the most fundamental activities of that design. Both art and politics are the processes through which we humans shape life. Indeed, this is exactly the commonality where art and politics meet. However, the reason why politics all around the world has become lowly and insensitive to the demands of the citizens, and the reason why politics remains helplessly uncreative in solving local, national, regional and global problems is the contemporary absence of aesthetics in our societies.

Since aesthetics is a set of principles concerned with nature and appreciation of beauty, it transforms and feeds the human soul and mind so as to ameliorate the human condition. Yet, the reverse is also true: absence of aesthetics, especially in the activities of politicians, exacerbate the human condition even more. Thus, a feel for beauty of the living beings -plant, animal or human- comes from experiencing art. A feel and appreciation for beauty of animate beings brings about an enlightenment of human consciousness. Since art is

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\* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, MEF Üniversitesi, İİSB Fakültesi, Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü, İstanbul, Türkiye, ORCID: 0000-0002-9294-3377.

about having or cultivating a culture for beauty, it is an endeavour that forms a particular mind-set and a breeze of soul that brings about anti-violence through acceptance, if not love. That is a mode of existence where one is socialized into learning and acquiring it in time by means of getting exposed to different forms of beauty/artwork. Lofty as it may sound, it is not unrealistic though. Such a consistent exposure may inculcate individuals with keen eyes that see and appreciate the artful/beautiful in everything.

Such a social conditioning can only be realised via societal familiarity with and appreciation of art and the artful in every sector and moment of any job or occupation undertaken in daily happenstances. The glue and fabric of such social conditioning is exposure to anything and everything that is artful. 'Artful' means the acknowledgment and appreciation of the beauty of nature and all living beings. Anything artful or any artful touch, be it a lively and moving speech of a politician or a song, or a single flower on the street provides spiritual wherewithal for the laymen.

Appreciation of beauty in anything we experience is not only about intellect, but also morality and norms. It is about the right of others to exist independent of what we want them to do or not to do. Art, indirectly but nevertheless effectively, enlightens all voters and politicians alike by helping and encouraging them to question self-anointed or socially accepted extant outlooks on any issue-area. This originates from the inner working mechanism of art, which inculcates peaceful coexistence and respect for 'the other' whether that other is a tree, forest, an environmental problem or a group of people deemed hostile. Hence, art is not only about the intellect, but also about aesthetics, morality, and self-criticism. This is how art and artists bring forth ways and means to make us notice and grasp our basic motivations and self-engineered internal obstacles that in turn create political problems with 'others'. We not only come to see the othering process through which we demonize others, but also through art, we come to 'feel' what we do. That is exactly where artists are brilliant: in making us to remember that we are all human beings after all.

Art, much as politics does, creates a process through which we devise and design solutions to problems of othering. At each and every facet and sector of our everyday activities, art and politics coexist and they inter-are. Inter-are; that is, they cannot be separated from one another for artful humanism and the appreciation of peaceful coexistence with others is inevitable for the successful conduct of domestic and international politics. Unconscionable and cruel wars are the result of uncultivated minds that are restless even with the ideas of peace and cooperation. This is exactly why it is critically determinative for all nations and states to avoid living artless. The 21<sup>st</sup> century challenge for the whole peoples of the world is to resuscitate the will and beauty of living together without putting up a fight or war against one another. Artful politics and political art help achieve that.

The need to avoid living artless in any field, job or walk of life has become more apparent today especially when conventional or traditional categories have faded, intersected and sometimes disappeared altogether under globalization. The declining conceptual and narrative power of modernist terms that are binarily oppositional do not help achieve peace between either gangs in streets or among groups in international fora. The distinction between art and politics is such a faint distinction in our day. Although this may sound contradictory in the first place, when looked closely, we observe that under-performance of one wears out the other. As this is the case, politics must be the art of solving our problems without resort to war. Anti-violence is the quintessential element that makes politics better. If we are to prefer dialogue and negotiation over warfare, law over chaos, morality or ethics over arbitrariness, then politics should be artful to achieve it. Politics can only become artful if and only if beauty of human life is appreciated in the conduct of politics. Concurrently, that would be a political process where ultra egotism is eliminated. Art (through the inculcation of the sanctity of human life) instills politicians, civil society and voters alike with a certain bit of pacifism/anti-violence and altruism.

That said, an embodiment might be provided with a real-world experience from the field: The public's contact with art and artists improves our ability to live a happier life. Devlet Tiyatroları Turneleri/the Turkish State Theaters Tours that travel to Anatolian cities during the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Turkey were the glittering horizons for the common men and women at the behest of lesser developed inner lands of the country. As younger members of their families in which parents appreciate Lale Oraloglu and other precious artists with excitement, theaters constituted a different lane for the new generations to grow up along. The inseparable couple of art and politics, in enabling each other can also be referred to as 'art-politics', and much time has passed since Devlet Tiyatroları/Turkish State Theater campaigns toured and enriched the Anatolian heartland. Art-politics had a different time-space configuration back then. It is at a different stage now. In the intervening time, that is when we embark upon the beginnings of the 2000s, sociology and technology have changed. The Internet has deeply influenced the space where art and politics are made and financed. However, what is significant here is that art and politics have never really become completely separate from one another. Sometimes they nested inside each other and sometimes they, so to speak, erode and maim one another by biting and carving each other out.

The inseparable biconditionality of art-politics, which is often ignored in the 21st Century, urgently needs to be addressed because the modernist conception that art and politics are distinct does not correspond to our day. Such distinction purges politics of aesthetic feelings without which one cannot easily appreciate the beauty and sanctity of all humans' right to live. Put differently, artful politics or politics infused with the artful spirit of humanism makes room for peace-making. Thus, art-politics has a freedom dimension. Another dimension demonstrates itself via rhetoric. Eloquence, skill, tact and lyrical addresses, enables sophisticated policies to be crafted and communicated effectively. When political discourses do not overlap the discourses of art, the art of speech is

also lost - the effective expression and the anti-violence agenda go down together with it.

Still another and related dimension is technology-driven dynamics of time-space where art-politics is carried out. No matter how much we resist today's digital technologies, in a world where it is increasingly evolving into a cyber universe, a global digital culture has been created. This culture has also created a common language with images. As in many branches of art, theatre has been affected by this. To reiterate for the sake of emphasis and significance, the physical mobile Anatolian tours of Lale Oraloglu and his dear friends have been replaced today by virtual Anatolian touring. Politics and art can undoubtedly be considered and evaluated separately though. However, this is just an analytical distinction in our minds. The real world application on the ground does not see a separation between the two. The complementariness of the art and politics in reciprocally enabling themselves to exist in the very first place reminds us how important their coexistence has become. This is one of the manifestations of the postmodern practices of life. Art-politics reimagines and reproduces life each and every day. Art-politics starts each new day with a new production (discourse) and offers this production to consumption. This union has to carry out a new production every day due to globalization without repeating the previous one. If the inseparable union of art-politics is forced to work separately, it will quickly drawdown and exacerbate politics.