Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Arts & Humanities Seek to End Western Civilization! Or, How Aristotle Gave Us Kim Kardashian

Dr. Shelby Q. Egglesworth · Thursday, November 3rd, 2011

Never doubt how dangerous creativity is. Take democracy, for example.

Two thousand years ago, the Greeks invented theatre, which gave birth to democracy, and started Western Civ on its long and winding road. Now, just this week, the Greeks say they want to be democratic again and vote on the Euro bailout plan, which has sent world financial markets into calamity. It's entirely possible that the Euro will crash, the European Union will dissolve, and fascism will rise again. All because of satyr plays in an Athenian amphitheatre 500 years BC. If it weren't for theatre, my stock portfolio would be better right now.

Creativity moves stealthily, then sucker-punches us with unintended consequences. It's like a Rube Goldberg machine. The arts and humanities are like a set of mismatched dominoes that, nonetheless, topple each other, and then topple the rest of us.

Here's another example, and theatre's the villain again. Touring theatre. Traveling productions of *The Fantasticks*. That's what Julian Assange's parents did, and they taught him to pack quickly and move place-to-place, from road show to road show. It made him furtive, suspicious and creepy. If it weren't for touring theatre companies, we wouldn't have Wiki Leaks.

What about money? After the stock market crash of 1987, a sculptor named Arturo di Modica cast that bronze *Charging Bull* and gives it to Wall St. brokers as a present, to inspire them get their game back. They did, and that gave us the crash of 2008. If it weren't for sculpted animals, our country wouldn't be in a recession.

How about military boondoggles? If George Lucas hadn't made *Star Wars*, Ronald Regan wouldn't have had a catchy nickname for his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which was never deployed and cost taxpayers over $100 billion before it was mothballed. Without R2D2, our federal deficit wouldn't be so bad.

Corporations try to control artists, but they don't do a very good job. If CBS had just said "Sure, we'll develop it for a few years," to Mark Burnett, *Survivor* would have gone to the recycling bin of TV deals. But CBS passed. So Mark was creative, hustled up product placement deals, and came back to CBS with wads of cash. Now we have hundreds of hours of reality shows each year, and product placement in every movie and TV show. Good work CBS; try to do better next time.

Sometimes dealing with artists can have worldwide consequences. Take the Spanish Republican

government, which commissioned Pablo Picasso to do a painting for the 1937 Paris World's Fair about the German and Italian air support for Franco's troops. An architect named Le Corbusier saw the *Guernica*, and it set his world on edge, and Le Corbusier's buildings influenced Frank Gehry, and now we have post-structuralist edifices dotting the globe.

At times, the ill effects or creative inspiration can be quite personal. At the end of WWI, an American serviceman named Lee Duncan found a dog and taught him tricks, and then, unfortunately, Lee's pal Charles Jones made a little movie with the dog, which was named Rin Tin Tin. Rinty became a movie star, a long story that later captivated Susan Orlean to write a book all about it, and Simon & Schuster decided to publish it at the end of September, which meant that Susan was on book tour and missed her son's Halloween school carnival. If it weren't for movies and pet tricks, she would have been able to see 3rd graders dressed like characters from *Twilight.*

These are just some of the examples why governments need to control artists. Iran jails its actors and directors, China imprisons its artists, and the Long Beach, California police detain photographers for taking pictures "with no apparent esthetic value."

However, I doubt that any of these measures will work in the long-term. Take Aristotle, another Greek, whose deep philosophic thoughts about everything – including the theatre! – inspired people to form the first universities 1,000 years ago. Soon everybody wanted to go to a university, even football players from San Francisco. That's why O.J. Simpson went to USC, got famous, got in trouble, went on trial, and found a lawyer named Robert Kardashian to represent him. When Kardashian got O.J. acquitted, Kardashian became rich and famous, which meant his kids would become self-centered and famous, and that's why we all know that Kim Kardashian's getting a divorce after being married 72 days. Kim is all over the entertainment TV shows and websites, proving that Western Civilization is doomed. Thanks, Aristotle. Inevitably, the arts and humanities drive us off the cliff.

This entry was posted on Thursday, November 3rd, 2011 at 12:40 pm and is filed under Discourse
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.