

Fragmentation Of The Fragmented: Global Sociological Implications Of Electing Trump

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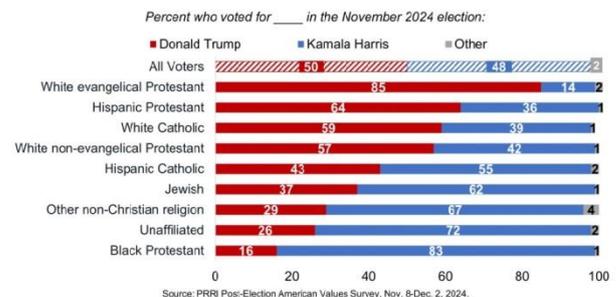
Abstract—A simple sociological observation of why and how leaders such as Donald Trump get elected by much of the population in a nation demonstrates a leap to the right and conservative side of politics. In this paper the author delves into the real sociology of why a fragmented population, vis-à-vis class identity, has become even more fragmented into extreme individualism and fear of the other. This feeling of loneliness and survival has given rise to electing the ultimate monarch in the Hobbesian sense of social order. Globally we have ended the two main epochal togetherness, class, and identity. In the past 120 years or so we have transformed social connections from class as the collective to the postmodern collectives of Black people, women, LGBTQ, Latino, ethnic minorities, and nationalities, to the extreme individualism of trusting no one, connecting with no one. We are now in solitude, on our own, in a lonely world of survival looking for the authoritarian monarch to save us from the 'other'. Electing heavy-handed authoritarians like Trump as leaders demonstrates the fragmentation of the previously fragmented.

In the realm of politics, the world is faced with two distinct phenomena at their finite end. First, the dominance of more than 150 years of class politics which began a decline since its peak after the Second World War. Second, identity politics as more contemporary and new policy peaking in the 1980s. Currently, 25 years into the 21st Century, we are facing widespread criticism with continued dissolution and the end of the ubiquitous relevance of identity politics. Global socio-politics is now going through keeping intact—possibly the last desperate attempt to keep social movements social, making populations come together as a collective to resolve sociopolitical issues—the movement of values, related to class and identity of whole populations, women, blacks, immigrants, gays, Latinos, and ethnicities, so called minorities.

The main elements of Trump's policies are anti-immigration, unquestionable freedom of the market and capital—by force or otherwise—as the foundation of neoliberalism.¹ In his theatrics, and his speeches, on the surface, he is demanding a return to traditional

¹ In many instances even natural disasters have come to the aid of neoliberalism, as Naomi Klein brilliantly demonstrates in her book, *The Shock Doctrine*, in 2007.

Christian values, especially the evangelicals², and evoking a sense of national pride, all of which are indicative of a deteriorating and repressive stance. The question is why this reactionary view of the world, at least American version of the world, with right-wing extremism has won the stamp of approval by a large majority of the American population. Is this a mere pendulum swing or a path through which the fragmented individuals of the world perceive their savior(s)? The contention, however, is not that this is merely an American occurrence, rather a disparaging global phenomenon.



The Sociology of Global Fragmentation

The concept of Sociological Imagination, by C.W. Mills, has for a long time been the cornerstone of basic sociological lessons. Mills argues that an individual in order to understand the self he/she needs to put themselves in the context of a larger cultural, political, economic, and religious realm to gain a thorough understanding of how they end up in the social hierarchy and possibly where they desire to consequentially end up. It is essential in finding a balance between systems and the individuals within them, essential to understanding their dynamic relationship, as well as the social structures that arise from conflicts between distinct groups. This perspective enables each human being to do more than just observe; it allows them to expose social injustice and inspire change.

Without sociological imagination, our logic and common sense are limited by subjective experiences. Everything becomes purely subjective and anecdotal. It provides a broader framework for understanding how personal experience connects with larger social structures. Through this perspective we can step

² High percentage of Evangelicals have repeatedly voted for Donald Trump as noted in the diagram.

away from the familiar reality of our circumstances and view social issues in a broader context, helping us see the context which shapes our individual decision-making³. No longer is this intricate way of seeing the individual, vis-à-vis the world, a valid perspective. Individuals no longer perceive themselves as a part of a whole, no longer in connection with the other, the family, the community, the group identity, the socioeconomic class, and not even the Weberian political identity/affinity. The world ends, quite literally, at the tip of our nose. The world of fear and instinct takes over, and survival prevails. Let us explain this Hobbesian world in relation to why electing the Trumps of the world makes political sense to hundreds of millions if not billions of people at the global level.

Explaining the world of despair through Nietzsche, Fromm, and Goffman

Eric Fromm believes that in each human being there are qualities of submission and authority having to do with the common human character. According to Fromm such traits are present in each of us, and that in some individuals, these traits become principal drivers of thought and behavior. Fromm's contribution to authority and those who submit to it is that the psychological effects of modern society, the convergence of increased freedom and the loneliness that accompanies it, increases the likelihood of authoritarianism and its acceptance. The idea is related to both the self as authority and acceptance of authority to be all knowing and all powerful. World leaders, dubbed populist, have those qualities of authority and authoritarianism. Well perceived and established in leaders such Trump or Milei of Argentina, or Bolsonaro of Brazil.

Furthermore, when Nietzsche proclaimed the death of traditional values most people resisted the notion and criticized him. Today, however, a tacit agreement with the statement prevails. The relentless critique of traditional morality especially the Judeo-Christian framework which he thought was inhibiting the lives of human beings is here to stay. The modern human being is in search of the *Übermensch*, a transcendent individual who rises above tradition and conventional morality and overcomes life's inherent chaos and precariousness. He rejects traditional values and creates his own meaning in a meaningless world. The main critique of Nietzsche's thought was the valorization of extreme individuality that encourages power and domination at the expense of compassion and empathy⁴.

Goffman-Dramaturgical Society

In the "Presentation of Self" Irwin Goffman argues that individuals engage in "impression management"

carefully crafting different versions of themselves to shape how others perceive them. The same way actors in theater play their roles to stimulate different reactions from the audience, individuals in society use different personas to influence how they are perceived by others. Goffman's theory provides a profound understanding of how individuals perform various roles and manage impressions to navigate social interactions⁵.

Followers of dramaturgical authority adhere to the same analysis of Fromm's depiction of the dialectical relationship between authoritarian character—ruler and the ruled—have in common. The individual is convinced that his/her leader, party, state, or idea is all-powerful and supreme, that he/she is strong and great, but a part of something greater. The irony is that this individual must denounce himself so that he can be part of something greater. The individual wants to receive commands, so that he does not have the necessity to make decisions and carry responsibility. Fromm's key concept is that this individual who is looking for dependency "is in his depth frightened." He possesses a feeling of "inferiority, powerlessness, aloneness." Because of this, he is looking for the "leader," the great power, to feel safe and protected through participation and to overcome his own inferiority. He feels his own powerlessness and needs the leader to control this feeling⁶. Leaders such as Donald Trump, Giorgia Meloni of Italy, Javier Milei of Argentina, Jaroslaw Kaczynski of Poland, and Victor Orban of Hungary, are among the right-wing conservative populist who represent such authoritarian leadership.

There are many ways, for those who care to and those who are concerned about the future of humankind, to dissect and discern electing Donald Trump for the second time. Socioeconomic and racial superiority notwithstanding, very deep-rooted sociological reasons are at play which overall are hidden under the noise of the recent shock and awe.

Martin Kronauer, a German sociologist writes: [Trump] "awakens the evil qualities of men. He cites the most vicious elements in American history, such as racism, hypocritical asceticism, corruption, and cynicism. However, it would be very crude per capita if we accepted that phenomena like this are not possible in Europe."⁷ It is not so much the evil qualities of a human being that elects Trump, rather a despair. A desperate attempt at survival as a lonely individual

⁵ Goffman, Irwin. (1959) *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York, NY. Anchor Books.

⁶ Erich Fromm. (1957). *The Authoritarian Personality*, First published: in *Deutsche Universitätszeitung*, Band 12 (Nr. 9, 1957), pp. 3-4; Translated: by Florian Nadge.

⁷ *PROKLA MAGAZINE*. Martin Kronauer is a German sociologist, a member of the Scientific and Advisory Board of the *Editorial Board of Prokla*, and a professor at the Higher School of Economics and Law in Berlin.

³ C.W. Mills. (1959). *Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press. NY. 1959.

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche. (1954). *The Portable Nietzsche*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin.

feeling unsafe and insecure in need of an ultimate redeemer.

Most of what is characterized here can be classified as the underlying reason for selecting a white man to power that has to do with fragmentation, considering a post-postmodernist world. That is, those who were fragmented have undergone more fragmentation, not by choice but by necessity, by inevitability in a world where real political alternative lacks. A life of precariousness, the struggle of the self that is seeking security in authority in the Hobbesian sense of the idea, is causing the fragmentation of the fragmented.

Trump with his ideological proximity to the Republican Party, especially that of a smaller state disregarding the affairs of the population, won the election because he abandoned class and identity politics and turned to the politics of values and drama, or better yet, "dramaturgy" in the words of Goffman⁸. Goffman's argument that people use theatrical methods to communicate and interact with each other is unequivocally applicable. Image, therefore, is everything. Goffman employs a "dramaturgical approach" in his theory, which is the mode of presentation employed by the actor and its meaning in the broader social context (1959, 240). In this sense, interaction is a performance, shaped by environment and audience, constructed to provide others with "impressions" that are consonant with the desired goals of the actor. The performance exists regardless of the mental state of the individual, as the persona is often attributed to the individual despite his or her devotion or lack of devotion, or even ignorance of it.

A notable dialectical relationship persists in the ideas of Nietzsche and Goffman. Nietzsche's thoughts of non-devotion to tradition and traditional values losing their place in everyday interaction, to Goffman's dramaturgical behavior. One can discern a type of populist leader who has perfected the drama(tic) role of his/her presentation. We traveled quite a long distance to get here. From Class to identity to values, and now dramaturgy. The former three phases necessitate collective action, the coming together of communities and groups or organizations, and the latter disconnecting and detaching the individual from their community and their in-group.

Since the late 1800s of class and class struggle, we have witnessed grand theorizing transition into fragmented postmodernism. This has been true for both the left and right, and upper and lower classes, to more fragmented societies of identities, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious sects, and even region, or as Samuel Huntington (1992) labeled, civilizations. The postmodern fragmentation questioning and creating doubt in grand theories persisted with a high rate of success for decades. The value system pushing and arguing for identities

endured to make room in most of the world for as long as these groups came together and fought together for their rights. These rights varied from legal fights to socioeconomic and sociopolitical conflicts and struggles. Despite resistance from the grand theory folks, e.g., Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche and their followers, they, postmodernists, succeeded in making the necessary inroads within almost any society. Classes were now fragmented into identity groups and coalitions with quite historical achievements.

However, from the mid-1990s onwards, the struggle began a new phase of disintegration. New identity fragments began to crumble, taking down the family structure with it. You were now on your own, in a cruel Hobbesian world of uncertainty, fear, and void of authority, of predation and retaliation. Individuals, young and old, were left out there to survive of their own accord, their own survival skills. Thus began the retaliatory society all over the world and all over again⁹. The narrative quickly became living in fear of losing all they have, as individuals with no real social, economic, or political support. According to Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2021, 61% of American youth, ages 18 to 25 claim that they feel extremely lonely almost all the time. There are now new apps designed for people to talk to an AI companion. Pets, especially dogs and cats, as the only companion for the brand-new fragmented humans, are booming in sales.

Disappearance of Class Analysis

The general understanding of politics in the twentieth century has been one of class, that human beings act politically on the basis of their material interests, on the basis of their social position in society, and in alliance or conflict with each other for the greatest material means. Grand theorists of the past theorized that society is divided into certain social groups based on the material resources of human beings, each person is aware to a certain extent of which category he/she belongs to, and each person sought to increase the amount of his/her material wealth. Marxists and many leftists, in this respect, were distinguished from others in that they considered the most important category to be the socio-economic class, the most important class, both economically, socially, and morally, the working class, and the relationship between the classes to be tense and conflict oriented. Max Weber, among the original founders of sociology, thought of people wanting to gain status based on political affiliation and rationalization. He found 'elective affinity' in grand theory style, between Capitalism and Protestantism. But the ideas of these social and political thinkers were not the only tendencies that thought human beings in society acted based on class status and turned to competition and conflict with each other to obtain more material resources. The liberal and

⁸ Erving Goffman. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. NY. Anchor Books

⁹ I refer to the Hobbesian world only metaphorically and not as established reality of any period in human history

conservative bourgeoisie also had this understanding of politics.

Within the framework of class politics, the parties presented themselves as left or right, socialist or bourgeois, radical, liberal, or conservative, seeking the votes of certain groups of workers, rural population, the middle class, or the bourgeoisie. "Workers of the world unite," said Marx, believing that they will think and act the same and will unite as a class.¹⁰ Ideas revolved around the notion that human beings vote collectively and in the same way based on their life and class mentality. The parties and politicians tried to win over the electorate with promises focused on improving material means. In this context, they sometimes even tried to make the class interests of their base class useful to other classes. The prosperity of the bourgeoisie was claimed as beneficial to the economy and, ultimately, to the greater well-being of the workers—an attitude promoted during the Reagan in the US and Thatcher in Britain¹¹. They both gave heavy tax cuts to the rich.

The end of class politics was announced by thinkers such as Geoffery Evans (1999)¹², and later Ulrich Beck (1999)¹³ The fragmentation of class, from grand theory to postmodern theories of a disintegrated society began after the second world war and crumbled further with neoliberal policies of creating a smaller and less responsible state to the point where one can "drown it in a bathtub"¹⁴, which caused another era of marginalization of class politics. In the radical individualism of today's world, there is no necessity or room for belonging to a class. Unrestrained consumerism, as Keynes would fancy it¹⁵, has focused people's attention on the moment

¹⁰ Even though Marx meant that in a Eurocentric way the idea still depicts a grand theory of an entire class coming together to fight against a common enemy.

¹¹ The theory of supply-side economics maintains that increasing the supply of goods and services is the engine of economic growth. Additionally, it advocates tax cuts as a way to encourage job creation, business expansion, and entrepreneurial activity. Using Arthur Laffer's theory—eventually trickle-down economy—the Reagan administration started giving significant tax breaks to the wealthy arguing that it will ultimately benefit working people by creating more jobs. Although this theory was false with no tangible results for creating jobs domestically, it persists to this day as justification of not taxing the very wealthy.

¹² Geoffery Evans. (1999). *End of Class Politics?* Oxford University Press.

¹³ Ulrich Beck. (1999). *World Risk Society*. Malden, MA. Polity.

¹⁴ Grover Norquist, a tax reform activist famously stated: "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub."

¹⁵ With the advent of Keynesian Economy Americans were encouraged to go from save more to consume more undermining the Protestant Ethic of delayed gratification.

and immediate excitement and has diverted their attention from their long-term material and social interests. In a society and a market in which no stability prevails, family, community, or any form of collective activity, and in an economy and a world in which capitalism dominates all its components, the individual's mentality is more concerned with self-interest than with solidarities and community attachments.

To the extent that David Broder, (2024)¹⁶ concludes that "working class has turned toward a protectionist nationalism, the fragmentation is quite clear". Broder's contention is that the left has abandoned its previously organizing and resisting past. However, the outcomes are not so much the failure of left, but the rearrangement of capital in neoliberal politics and that inevitable breakdown plays a bigger role in causing the fragmentation. Politics based on the actions of organizations that were at some point a threat to the status quo, and noble ideals have lost their ability to organize and mobilize. Seldom are we willing to sacrifice our independence for the formation of a powerful activism that may take away from our individualism. Politics like consumption habits have become about instantaneous results and the here and now more than causes with long-term goals. Undoubtedly, social movements have retained their appeal to humans, but with quite different demands. Demands are more focused on the protection of social life, and they have moved away from goals focused on improving the material conditions of life and redistributing wealth and resources as the wealth and income gap between the top and bottom quantiles widens.¹⁷

Postmodernism and Politics of the Fragmented

From the 1980s onwards, for several decades, the world was confronted with the action, social movement, and political movements of human beings who were trying to establish and recognize their cultural identity. The turn was somewhat abrupt. Suddenly, people realized their religious, racial, ethnic, and gender identities and asked society, the government, and others to recognize them as they are or want to be, as Latino, Muslim, black, gay, immigrant, or native American. The result would look like a multicultural society. In this regard, and perhaps in the background, Charles Taylor (1994)¹⁸ first

¹⁶ David Broder. *Jacobin Magazine*, Oct. 10, 2024. *Identity Crisis*.

¹⁷ According to UBS Global Wealth Report, in 2023 the world's richest 1 percent, those with more than \$1 million, owned 47.5 percent of all the world's wealth – equivalent to roughly \$214 trillion. Adults with less than \$10,000 make up nearly 40 percent of the world's population but hold less than 1 percent of the world's wealth.

¹⁸ "Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need. To treat people with dignity and respect, we need to take full account of their varied social situations. This is especially important vis-a-vis those

developed the concept of identity politics¹⁹. This idea spread throughout the world that not only does everyone have a specific identity based on their social and cultural affiliations, but society and the state are also obliged to recognize this identity and allow the individual and the group to which the individual belongs to try to flourish attachments tied to his identity in the enjoyment of public facilities. Society was supposed to achieve deep social solidarity in multiculturalism.

However, following those movements were movements by the 'majority,' those who felt they have lost their birthright social status. In an interesting analysis of power and numbers, Arjun Appadurai (2006), analyzes the anger of the population in power toward those who threaten that power, privilege and status.²⁰ In his book, he proposes the question, how is globalization that is hypothetically believed to bring global interconnection causing so much anger, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and in general political violence against the civilian population. He calls it the "anxiety of incompleteness." Which means, numerical majorities can become predatory and ethnocidal with regard to small numbers precisely when some minorities, both in quantity, number of people and quality, how much power they wield, remind these majorities of the small gap which now exists between their uncomfortable socioeconomic conditions as majorities and the illusion of ethnic, religious, racial, and national superiority.

Disappearing before their own eyes is a pure national whole, a pure and untainted national identity. White America, for instance, saw its privilege begin to diminish with the Civil Rights movement, until they found a voice in Donald Trump. For those 60 years or so the violence against blacks and browns continued uninterrupted, never relenting. This sense of incompleteness drove 'majorities' into constant eruptions of violence against minorities.

It was not long before some realized that this policy could break social solidarity and fuel a struggle between all cultural and social groups for recognition. It was also unclear what criteria could be used to recognize or honor different identities. A puzzling question, eternally unanswered, was whether the identity of any group should be recognized and honored, especially those that challenge the norms and values of the time.

whose identities have been systematically degraded and whose rights to be treated as equals have been neglected. "

¹⁹ Identity politics refers to politics based around categories rooted in religious, ethnic, linguistic, national, gender, and sexuality of any marginalized group in contrast to class-based movements. Identity politics claims that politics is shaped by aspects of their identity and act collectively to increase their power and address their marginalization.

²⁰ Arjun Appadurai. (2006). *The Fear of Small Numbers*. Duke University Press.

The liberal and leftist parties of the Western world have embraced identity politics. In this regard, they have worked to recognize various identities and have won the votes of identity-based groups. They have also paid attention to the concerns of groups such as LGBT, immigrants, Muslim, even marginalized progressive artists, and have won their votes. For instance, the Democratic Party in the US created groups with no nominal party affiliations²¹ to accomplish this. For a while it became a party that represented and advocated for a multicultural society that has the Jewish vote in New York, the Muslim vote in Michigan, the Latino vote in Nevada, and the LGBT community, and the black people who are aware of their racial identity. A party with programs so that everyone, especially those deprived of economic and cultural resources, can express their identity, and strive for its flourishing. They should get jobs, have better access to the public sphere, establish their desired social institutions, and have a more open hand in introducing themselves to society. As the world has witnessed, this same party has struggled to organize the ones it originally set out to organize going back to the days of FDR and the New Deal.

Trump

Focused on the self, on an existence without characteristics. Trump is the representative and president of such people, the detached, the one without community, and the survivors of a Hobbesian predation and retaliation. Our youth, globally, see no problem with narcissism and argue that no one should be called a narcissist anymore. Not aware of the difference between the two, they argue, because we must be extremely selfish to be able to survive. They often see affinity in the narcissism of leaders like Donald Trump whose dramaturgical behavior is irreverent and dismissive, with no empathy for the other.

Trump believes that human beings are more interested in welfare, civil liberties, individuality, and security than they have a definite socio-cultural identity or socioeconomic class. People who want to live in their individuality, in security and freedom, to have a bigger home, a more expensive car, and more friends and followers on social media.

With this approach, he was able to weaken or completely shatter the Democrat Party's dominance over the votes of identity groups. This approach reduces the appeal of Democrats to blacks, alienates many white women, the educated population, and Latino men from Democrats. His main constituency has always been white men. This group considers itself bereft of a specific identity, perceiving itself as a universal single person. White men have seen Trump as the main representative in the political sphere. Someone who, like them, has no identity and no social status. Accumulating wealth and gaining social

²¹ Blue Collar Caucus, Act Blue, MoveOn, New Florida Majority, and many others.

status. He is Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Herbert Spencer combined into one neat package of disregard for the other. The perfect leader for the survivor whose success depends on the failure of others.²²

Trump had entered the field of competition and the election campaign in response to this social setting of detachment. For him, human beings have no definite cultural identity. They can have their own religion, ethnic and racial origins, or sexual orientation, but this does not define anything about them from their point of view. For him, human beings are abstract economic elements that play a definite role within the scope of the nation-state, employees, consumers, and taxpayers. They are particles void of a bigger collective or part of a cultural and social structure, the absolute vacuum of 'sociological imagination.'

Politicians, like Trump, make a basic promise to people and attract their votes on that basis. We will not reduce you to nothing, you are nothing in yourself.²³ We also do not recognize any identity, any social status with you. But you can make everything out of nothing. This depends on your efforts and devotion. We will reduce taxes. We recognize your freedom to choose your work and to accumulate wealth. In this sphere and this field, you can accumulate wealth, gain social status, and enjoy life. But do not think about identity. There is no path to a shared identity today.

A New Beginning

There is no dispute that economic and class issues are still relevant and need to be analyzed to understand a class society. Economic issues are still as relevant as ever. Economic issues are still important for human beings, in and of themselves and in the context of a symbolic system. This is reflected in how we distrust any politician with haughty economic promises that no one has enough political and economic power to make a significant economic impact on any single economic system. We feel and understand social and cultural phenomena however, in the context of a symbolic system. As symbolic interactionists like Mead and Goffman discovered long ago. That is, the symbolic system gives a transcendent meaning to all the phenomena of the universe and therefore makes it attractive and impressive.

Phenomena such as poverty, material welfare, wealth, victory, and success are weighed only in a symbolic system that evaluates the value of each phenomenon in a framework of acceptable totality.

²² In another paper, "Explaining American Mass Shootings," I have argued how such loneliness and social detachment creates the potential in individuals to resort to 'Objective Violence' perpetrated on anonymous victims.

²³ His famous line on *The Apprentice*, "You're fired!" depicts the extreme disregard for any human being. Effectively, you are nothing.

During the 19th century when industrial capitalism was growing in Europe by leaps and bounds the notion of class entailed all symbolic definitions and values. Now, symbolic systems have been reconstructed and are tools in the hands of human beings to interpret the world, even at the level of material life. Therefore, in the realm of politics, human beings act not based on reality on the ground and what the statistical tables show but based on their perception and evaluation of reality and their sense of it and the dramaturgy of power.

The end of class and identity politics does not mean the end of the importance of politics in the social sphere. Society, in the post-postmodern era, has become bigger and more complex than ever before, and this has resulted in a less political life and political interest. The spheres of collective life have become less political in the eyes of the population due especially to the feelings of powerlessness. The end of two definite policies marks the beginning of the preeminence of the other two. One is policy of values, family values, traditional values, views on abortion, etc., and the other is a dramaturgical policy. One is about the principles on which we behave and organize our lives, and the other is about the play we perform daily in the scenes of our daily lives, as Goffman would argue.

Politics of Belief and Value

Values have always been important. Perhaps from the prehistory of civilization, we knew what we should consider important and valuable, and what attitudes and behaviors were unacceptable and wrong. In the traditional society, loyalty to the family, safeguarding its cohesion to the extent of selflessness, and participating in rituals that contribute to the cohesion of social life are important values. In contrast, in a post-postmodern society, and this is true globally, the instrumental effort within the framework of value individualism is what takes precedent over all other values and is pivotal. Individualism here and now is more of the Hobbesian individualism, surviving in what is 'brutish' and 'nasty' than the Cartesian, "I think, therefore, I am," and I can independently think individualism. More about how I survive in this world of precariousness and insecurity, than I can grow as an individual who can think freely. This is more or less known and experienced by everyone.

We live in a world where values have been debased by Nietzsche's judgment and a kind of nihilism has dominated minds. "God is dead," fundamental historical institutions and authorities such as the father, the king, the church, and the family have been discredited. It is no longer possible to live and behave on that basis. Another factor has made the situation more tense. There is no hard ground on which to stand or create values. Nothing has yet been born and has not become relevant, and the time has come to abrogate it. Social institutions, social norms, attitudes, and lifestyles are constantly changing and evolving. Marx's historical dictum that "everything that

is solid melts into air” is present more than ever. Indeed, today no one can be expected to respect himself or another and live according to them, in the absence of values.

Conservatives, led by Trump, are experts in evoking a sense of grandeur in values, however. They define values as the last bastion of a stable and ethical life, regardless of how they live their own lives. Trump is known for lying, charlatanism, and misogyny, and is a convicted felon²⁴, but he does not refrain from his insistence on the importance of values such as family cohesion and the sanctity of success. Leaders like Trump see values as a force that sustains order and stability, because they refuse to change policy to assist the individual in a society full of competition, uncertainty, and transformation in support of social unity against the forces of economic and social irregularity.

A substantial portion of the global population is disturbed by the ubiquitousness of an anomic society²⁵, lack of social cohesion and of values. They seek to identify with social institutions but see the social unity and cohesion of social institutions in danger of collapse. They turn to conservative forces to hear from them what some, and perhaps many, know will not go anywhere, but it will create a charming, delightful image that mesmerizes. Trump is the one who can justify this self-deception more than anyone else. Believing in values that are not values cannot be loyal to them and are useless, but they can be loyal to them to conquer the world.

Dramaturgy and Politics

Trump is an actor. We have heard this many times. Those who do not like him call him a swindler of sorts; he plays roles, he is a businessman of many colors. Some people repeat these statements as if the only politician or person in the world who makes a place for himself in a society by playing a role is Trump. Through Goffman, since the 1950s, and the publication of *Self-Expression in Everyday Life*, we know that human beings constantly display themselves in their daily interactions. They play the role in a way that leaves a desirable impression on others from their point of view. They emphasize their wit or slow mindedness, make themselves appear kinder or more callous than they are, hide their beauty or ugliness behind a veil of makeup or indifference to achieve their desires or achieve their desired reputation.

In such setting, in which we do not know each other but through images and snippets of self-presentation, where the media has made our lives intensely colonized, where consumer goods have become available to everyone to enhance their

bodies, faces, and personalities, and where human beings have become the focus of public attention as individuals, politics has also become dramatic. Politics has been dramatized, whether in the realm of individual politics to gain personal prestige and status, or in the realm of public politics to gain authority and power. People have realized that they need to pay more attention to the manifestations of their presence in public, such as their clothing, makeup, behavior, and the way they speak. The way we clothe ourselves, use makeup, talk, and behave must shout out our status and prestige. The social spheres have all become scenes in which people are present to present a pre-written scenario on the one hand, and on the other hand, to present themselves to others as a certain person. Dramaturgy at its best.

The important thing in theatrical politics is the emotional feeling. In its realm, we seek a sensory-emotional effect. We seek to influence not the rational calculations of others, but their emotive feelings. We behave in this way ourselves. We perceive social phenomena and human relationships based on how we feel. Sometimes we even know that it is not in our best interest to act emotionally, but we still act accordingly. We are narcissistic, vindictive, and resentful, even when we know that we should not be deceived by our feelings in the moment. In this context, politics has become about revenge and existing social and political anger. The sense of revenge is a much more crucial factor in stimulating human actions and reactions in daily life and in the realm of politics than rational calculation.

Against this backdrop, politicians have learned that they must pay close attention to the perception of the masses of their speech and behavior. They now know that they must speak and behave in such a way that the audience does not doubt themselves in their belief in the correctness of their beliefs and words. In our era, in the era of theatrical politics, authority and therefore political power derive from the behavior and rhetoric of political actors. As Neil Postman²⁶ brilliantly recognizes the value of entertainment argues, once television became ubiquitous, the decline of cultural discourse rapidly became apparent. Because TV (now social media) is a form of entertainment media, all information has now become entertainment. Politics, news, religion, education, economics—all of it is subject to the rule that entertainment is king.

Politicians have also become experts in theatrical politics. They practice for hours giving a speech or participate in a debate. They choose their clothing based on the norms and aesthetic criteria of the age in consultation with experts. They formulate their plans based on the most desirable impact on important social groups. They know that it does not matter who they are, what they believe in, or what

²⁴ The first President in history of the United States that occupies the office of the Presidency as a convicted felon.

²⁵ Durkheimian concept of persistent social disorder and lack of social cohesion.

²⁶ Neil Postman. (1986). *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. Penguin Books.

program they want to pursue, but what matters is the general perception of their personality, beliefs, and plans.

Populist Leadership

Trump is doing his best to portray himself as a successful personality, a successful personality who can be successful in executive affairs and in leadership governance, despite his 34 counts of criminal convictions. He has no fear of becoming famous for lying, stealing, indicted, and convicted as a felon. His political existence revolves around the idea that we are living in the age of theatrical politics. In politics, loyalty to moral principles is not important. The important thing is to get things done, policies passed and implemented. He is an expert of exaggeration, whether in praising others, colleagues, and companions in a pleasant way, or when he criticizes his enemies and rivals, accusing them of malice and wrongdoing.

Trump's victory can be seen in the context of the traditional competition of American politicians, the insignificant and random victory of one faction over another, the unpreparedness of American society for the victory of femininity over masculinity, the defeat of the party of lies and corruption of its whistleblower party, and the victory of populism over the politics of unifying voting blocs. But these important points do not tell us anything new. They smell old. The same could be said about the victory of any candidate in the US presidential election in the last few decades, starting with the election of Ronald Reagan. Possibly the best example of a political irony is electing of Ronald Reagan when he ran against, the incumbent President Jimmy Carter. Despite Carter being an Evangelical Christian, most Evangelical Christians voted for Ronald Reagan, a former actor from Hollywood²⁷. The modern world is constantly ridding itself of obsolete phenomena, institutions, and approaches and replacing them with new phenomena, institutions, and approaches. Endings and beginnings must be known to understand something about the course of development.

Trump's victory connotes an important historical event. Who, according to many political, social, and moral studies and predictions, should not have been the president of the most powerful country in the world, has now become its leader. He has come to rule society in a more straightforward way and to pave the way for the more intense and widespread domination of capital and the state. There are many indictments and accusations against him and his preferential policies, but he cannot be accused of secrecy, he does not have to. Voters chose him with an acknowledged acquiescence to his theatrics and rhetoric.

²⁷Steven Joseph and Joseph Tamney (1982). *Christian Right and the 1980 Presidential Election*. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion. Vol. 21, No. 2 (June 1982), pp. 123-131.

Conclusion

Trumps of the world are victorious based on two factors. One is that their personality, perceptions, and policies are in harmony with the social and political developments that have taken place in the world. What they do and utter reflects the end of the two class and identity politics and the beginning of the two values and drama politics. Second, they have skillfully used both the end and the beginning. There is no need for them to be aware of it, it is enough for their instinct to tell them what policies and words can appeal to the voters, and they can 'act' accordingly. The fact that these dramaturgical leaders do not believe in anything but their own self-interest in the classical sense of narcissism may have helped them to recognize trends in society that could make them victorious in the political arena. Maybe the population that voted for them identifies with such narcissistic personality. But that is the topic of a different paper. Many ask themselves how social solidarity can be maintained and strengthened in a multicultural society, in a society where everyone is focused on their own identity. Where and how can a center that organizes the surroundings come from and is it not better to pay attention to its unities than to its own distinctions?