

## **The Role of Human Dignity in Promoting Creativity, Innovation and Knowledge - Humiliation as a Basis for Dehumanization, Conflict and Destruction**

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A renowned geneticist Stephen Wells (2002) points out that creativity is a hallmark that separates human beings from other animals. Genetically, *homo sapiens sapiens* emerged as the only surviving species, descending from a single tribe in Kalahari, Africa, around 60,000 years ago (Wells, 2002). Creativity is a cognitive capability of reasoning, abstract thinking, planning, implementing ideas into action, and sharing information collectively. Through a series of innovations (e.g., stones tools, controlled use of fire, domestication, agriculture, industrialization, and information technology), we have learn to control our environment. The second critical feature is our capability to empathize and to take care of others (Conrad, 2007). We enshrine these virtues in morality, values and ethics. The third critical feature is anchoring abstract ideas into material forms (e.g., art) and systematizing knowledge through religion, math, philosophy and science. Human dignity is a product of people participating in the creative process, sharing emotions, and shaping society. Democracy and the rule of law allow people to participate as equals. In contrast, the greatest humiliation occurs when people are excluded from the process. It occurs when one set of ideas become fixed and absolute - as representing the Truth, the whole Truth and the only Truth. It is when a set of ideas in religions, philosophy or science become an ideology and used to justify artificial divisions, with the select few benefiting while the rest suffers (e.g., division based on race, class, gender, or religion). The artificial division and ideological justifications can sow the seeds of anger, discontent and despair, which in turn can lead to conflict, destruction and social upheaval. In religion, Crusades and slavery were justified using Christian doctrines and terrorism is being justified by radical extremists who claim to represent Islam. In politics, social Darwinism was used to justify political ideologies of free-enterprise capitalism, fascism, and communism, which provided the ideological foundation for World War II, Cold War and genocide. In psychology, IQ tests were used to “scientifically” classify individuals as “genetically inferior” to support a policy of eugenics, immigration restriction and racial discrimination. In secular societies, non-believers herald freedom of speech to humiliate religious beliefs that are considered sacred to its followers. Currently, poverty, disease and ignorance deny many from full participation. In conclusion, it is important to recognize that no single individual or group has access to the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. We can have a version or an approximation of reality that is constructed through our senses (e.g., science) or through culture (e.g., philosophy, religion and art). Destruction, conflicts and social upheavals emerge when we erect artificial divisions and deny an individual or group access to participate as equals. Creativity is stifled when ideas become fixed or homogenous (e.g., “difference in dangerous”). It emerges when we appreciate, share and celebrate differences (e.g., *vive la différence!*) and by creating humanity through diversity.