Eurocentrism, Art and Art Education

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Windows on the Pale of Art

By

David Gall

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This book first published 2025

Cambridge Scholars Publishings

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

To my grandchildren
McKenzi Kali, Azad Nile, Amaya Isabel, Ilina Mia
A small contribution to, hopefully, a better future for you
than our present (2024) suggests.
Remember it is darkest before dawn.
Love y'all.
Dadu-Granddad

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

MODERN ANXIETY, EUROCENTRISM AND ART EDUCATION

This book investigates the workings of the racial and ethnocentric assumptions involved in the terms modern and postmodern. To a great extent those terms function in art discourse to preserve notions of inherent White Euro-Western authority and dominance in academe generally, but especially in art education discourse. In other words, they are strongly Eurocentric. The term "art education" in this text includes all levels of art teaching, from the training of MFA studio artists, PhD art historians, through the training of elementary teachers. Here "art education" is not restricted to K–12 teacher preparation and its related discourse. The "windows" in the book's subtitle gives an idea of the method taken in the investigation. Each chapter opens a view on how Eurocentrism has inhabited art discourse particularly in the United States. This approach permits the incorporation of historical progression without being preoccupied with the strictures of precise chronology.

In this text Eurocentrism is distinguished from modernity and modernism, according to the explanation of the latter two proposed here. Other books have investigated Eurocentrism, starting arguably with Samir Amin's text titled *Eurocentrism*.[1] Amin's *Eurocentrism* remains one of the most insightful and informative perspectives on modernity, modernism, and Eurocentrism. However, even though his term "culturalism" —defined as the assumption that there are "cultural invariants able to persist through and beyond possible transformations in economic, social, and political systems"— recognizes that essentialist notions of culture strongly affect modernity, for him the key principle of modernity is that it is "constructed on the principle that human beings, individually and collectively, make their own history."[2] This distinguishes the modern from the premodern, ties it to European "enlightenment" notions that make atomic identity humans the authors of their history. It associates the premodern with religious explanations of human history and purpose, relies on human reason and actions as the effective shapers of human history, and makes the dismissal

of extra-human (divine) causes central to modernity.

The perspective I advanced in this book reorganizes the relations among these ideas. Amin's "culturalism" and the claims to modernity and modernism that affect it are expressions of what I call the conceit or ego of difference. The ego or the conceit of difference disavows its relational dependence on and emergence from others. Rather it presumes to be completely independent of others and, if anything, others are significant only as they relate to the conceited entity. Identifying the claim to modernity as an expression of egocentricity and conceit of difference effectively recognizes that the white European and Euro-American claim to modernity is not new but is rather the most recent expression of this conceit. What is new is that this claim was buttressed by European colonization of most of the rest of the world following Columbus's contact with the "new world." Its global scope, therefore, is what makes this claim to modernity so consequential and problematic. This perspective comprehends better the emergence of such modern institutions as the nation state, capitalism, the sacred secular schism, the Enlightenment's pivot on reason and science, the displacement of "faith" onto religion and premodernity, the emergence of the art object as possessed of subjectivity that apparently elevated Euro-western art objects above all other cultural objects, and the profound anthropocentrism at the heart of our environmental crisis. It also allows us to recognize counter modern forces and movements, which are distinct from apparent antimodern ones that are also expressions of the conceit of difference. Defining modernity as an expression of the conceit of difference also allows us to recognize that the "modernity" of postcolonial societies is also an expression of the conceit of difference, and that globalized nationalism and ethnocentrism is a major source of ongoing conflicts which education must address.

Socio-historically the expression of the conceit of difference ranges from the most brutal violent forms, such as genocide, Jim Crow and apartheid segregation laws, to the most subtle of a simple gaze with the implicit question "what are you doing here?" Or, when we think, for example, that something should not happen to us *because* we are good, or in the way terms like "civilization" and "art" are defined to subtly exclude some people from humanity, or even to exclude them from being animals, which reduces another person to the status of being an inanimate object, an object humans can possess. The most telling recent example of the unconscious conceit of difference, and of Eurocentrism, occurred when some TV reporters commenting on the Ukrainian war, regarded as unnatural the fact that they were seeing Ukrainian refugees, white people, not Haitians, Syrians, Africans, Asians, or some other ethnic or racial group … fleeing for their

lives.[3] Seemingly lost to those reporters was the fact that this was caused by one set of Europeans to another. Lost too were memories of World Wars I and II, in which Europe was the main site of similar carnage and displacement.

The conceit of difference and self, the ego, even in relation to behaviors that are good, is delusional, is a misrepresentation of the truth of our interdependence on and with others. It is delusional because the effective agent of actions and substantial subject in things, which essentially gives its difference to others selflessly, is eclipsed by the misconception that the limited moment/instance of difference is the singular cause of itself. When we presume and assert that we are entitled to positive experiences *because* of our difference, or that some others deserve the negatives they experience *because* of their difference, the conceit of difference is finding expression through us. The claim of modernity is itself a presumption that "my time is best." The white European exclusive claim to modernity is *an* expression of ethnocentric and racial conceit of difference or ego, it denies any progressive agency to other times and communities, and denies that it and its difference is constituted of those very others on whom it depends in order to exist, to be, not simply philosophically or conceptually, but practically and materially.

The social theorist and philosopher Roy Bhaskar similarly identified the two main characteristics of modernity as "atomic egocentricity" and "abstract universality," followed by six others.[4]

> Atomic egocentricity is of course a defining characteristic of capitalism and much else in our contemporary 'civilization'. It is underpinned and reinforced by a persistent model of the human being as propertied and tacitly gendered as male…
>
> The whole point of characterizing a society as modern depends on a contrast with the non-modern or pre-modern. So at first blush this contrast would seem hard to reconcile with abstract universality, which suggests that people are (as Hume remarked) 'much the same, at all times and places'. However, the functioning of the modern world depends in very large part on its relations with the allegedly 'pre-modern' and non-modern; this part of the world — absent in theory, but present in practice — constituted a kind of intrinsic exterior, an outside that was also crucially inside the modern in that the latter depended in practice on exploiting and dominating the 'non-modern'.[5]

The abstractness of universals results from the presumption that a universal can only be expressed one way historically and socially. In the context of Euro-modern understanding of the concepts it is, so to speak, prior to Wittgenstein's concept of concepts that they are like "family

resemblances," and pre-Bhaskar's notions of dialectical universalizability.[6] It is especially present in the denial of the equal but different expression of humanity by others.

Modern imperial nations, all of which were European—Japan's twentieth century attempt is the brief exception, and the United States with its constitution enshrining the equality of all men, nevertheless pivots on a "western" liberal notion of atomic identity that legitimates the exclusion of others from self, i.e., the reduction of other people and things to mere instrumentality, and on their disenfranchisement as equal constituents of global community. The liberal atomic subject is not conceived as constituted *of* others but as self-created and self-creating, others are related to it solely as property which that liberal subject may use for its ends. This is the description of a profoundly alienated person. Unsurprisingly therefore, at the heart of the white European exclusive claim to inherent superiority and thence to modernity is an anxiety, a deep suspicion that its claim of essential superiority is unsustainable, is false. The presence of non-white others, colonized, enslaved, or otherwise subordinated, and their diverse historical trajectories on which white European empires depended for their existence and dominance, are a constant reminder of the falsity of the claim.

The main thrust of Eurocentrism is the disavowal of non-white others as constituents of its modern identity. The Eurocentric assumptions of inherent white superiority that accompanied the development of European empires globally between the fifteenth and the twentieth centuries, is sustained in the twenty first century by the orientation of social and cultural institutions, including therefore art education discourse, toward that end. As mentioned in the first paragraph of this introduction, this book examines the presence of that anxiety, which underlies all ethnocentrisms including therefore Eurocentrism, in art discourse. It focuses on tertiary art education as a whole, resisting those tendencies within education and visual arts academe that would locate K–12 art education in a diluted and diminished lower stratum beneath or marginal to other areas of tertiary art education. Racial and ethnic assumptions are intertwined with these institutional disciplinary prejudices that pervade the entire system of US education, which seek to preserve color and phenotype coded hierarchies that identify civilization, intelligence, culture and art with a white European image, and savagery, unreflective instinctiveness, and crude culture with a black image, with black people generally, but black African peoples particularly.

The systemic institutionalized nature of these assumptions poses a challenge, where should one start the task of exposing and undoing these assumptions that are deep-seated premises of how mainstream discourse

understands modernism and postmodernism? A good place to start is Arthur Danto's ideas about what distinguishes art objects from what he refers to as mere real things, which are otherwise identical to "art" objects. It is elaborated in several texts and is crucial to his end-of-art thesis. Danto's end-of-art thesis is exemplary both of the explicit Eurocentrism of modernism and of the subtle way it is elaborated in postmodern forms. The "Pale of art" part of the subtitle comes from him.

Danto's explanation of what "modern" means in art discourse is a perfect place to start unpacking the assumptions and tensions involved in the term modern particularly, and the term postmodern consequently. In elaborating on his "end-of-art" thesis he expanded on the significance it had for the enfranchisement of art beyond the pale.

> Part of what the "end of art" means is the enfranchisement of what had lain beyond the pale, where the very idea of a pale—a wall—is exclusionary, the way the great wall of China was, built to keep the Mongol hordes outside, or as the Berlin Wall was built, to keep the innocent socialist population protected from the toxins of capitalism.[7]

The "pale" suggests to me a dense fog rather than a wall, partly because the pale is, to a significant extent, a socio-cultural conceptual construct. Either way, as a historical belief, its effects were no less real than a physical wall or fog, and must be contended with regardless. But whether it is regarded as fog or wall, Danto's thesis is problematic. The grand emancipatory gesture that Danto conceives, which apparently dispenses the enfranchisement intrinsic to the art concept to cultural objects "beyond the pale," and that too in the latter part of the twentieth century, cannot escape the fact that Danto's end-of-art thesis, like other prevailing perspectives within the "pale," depends on the assumption that all objects outside of it were disenfranchised, were not-art: or as Danto puts it, mere real things. But if we are to regard them as intrinsically objects without the kind of cultural capital and agency, such as distinguishes art objects from mere real things, then those objects of other cultures outside the pale can never be art objects. This vision of what "modern" and "art" means involves a quite deep level of conceit, and a subtle—or maybe not so subtle—form of it. It pits the conceited idea of self (the modernist exclusive claim) against the effective agent and effective self which is the emergent selfless no-ego hybrid subject.

Conceit, as pointed out before, involves self-deception. The term "modern" added to "art" sought to insulate the assumptions of Euro-Western cultural superiority from the implications of its hybrid constitution. Euro-modernist self-deception is carried forward in the term "postmodern."

By adding "post," rather than "counter" for example, the term postmodern preserves continuity, particularly of atomicity, with the Euro-modern even as it tries to differentiate itself from it. Understandably, cultural relativity is something it champions more than hybridity or emergence, so the excluding function that the term "modern" was conscripted to serve remains in place, along with modernism's central motive, which is to elevate Euro-western societies above all others.

"The point is that 'modern' does not merely mean 'the most recent,'" Danto states, elaborating an argument that is untroubled by the Euro-Western conceit involved, "it means rather, in philosophy as well as in art, a notion of strategy and style and agenda."[8] In this quote, though Danto is partially correct in saying modern was "a notion of strategy and style and agenda," he glosses over the tension latent in the word that always presumes "the most recent" is best, and that the past and non-modern are necessarily inferior. The use of "modern" to mean "a notion of strategy and style and agenda," cloaks the assumption that it is the best and most recent. So it inflames that tension between time and structure even as it glossed over the time aspect; stretched it radically, so to speak, to mean the best of all times and places for all time. Which is to say it is universally the best mode of being. Modern European culture, presumably devoid of any hybridity whatsoever, of course—others being only raw material—presented itself as this universal, this absolute, this epitome of what it means to be human, and presented modern art objects, misconceived as purely white and Euro-Western, as representing what it really means to be art. This elision of race and national—White and European—being with universal being, endures as a truth-premise in Danto's thesis of art enfranchisement, and art education generally.

An instance of the subtle way in which this elision occurs is available when Danto elaborated on the tension between the universal and the historical (the temporal and stylistic/nontemporal) by pointing to the Museum of Modern Art's unconsciousness of it. He states,

> For when the stylistic profile of modern art revealed itself, it did so because contemporary art itself revealed a profile very different from modern art. This tended to put the Museum of Modern Art in a kind of bind no one had anticipated when it was the home of "our art." The bind was due to the fact that "modern" had a stylistic *and* temporal meaning. It would not have occurred to anyone that these would conflict, that contemporary art would stop being modern art.[9]

The phrases "contemporary art" and "modern art" are delimited by the phrase "our art," they do not refer to objects outside white "European"

culture, no matter how hybrid the latter is, or how much without others it could not be. Nor do the words "anyone" and "no one" refer or are addressed to anyone outside of the Euro-western "our," though "anyone" and "no one" imply people everywhere, that is, universally. The cultural and identity space within which the fissure between "contemporary" and "modern" occur for art, and where the temporal and stylistic notions of modern conflict, is the space shared by Danto and the Museum of Modern Art, an American institution, both of which, we are to assume, are exclusively essentially white, not Euro-African (mulatto), not Euro-Asian, not mestizo/a, not-other inclusive. It is only from within that apparently unquestionable fact of modern art's white identity, its apparently unique exclusive gestation within European cultural history, that art's enfranchising powers could be liberated from Euro-western philosophy and dispensed to the rest of the world.

In Danto's various books on the topic of art's enfranchisement and emancipating power, the self-realization of that power does not happen immediately, but in his scheme, it does happen exclusively within Euro-western specific cultural spaces, at the end of specifically the Euro-West's cultural trajectory, and primarily to the subject of that cultural space and history. Danto traces the origins of art's disenfranchisement to classical Greek philosophy and tracks the longevity of it into the early twentieth century.[10] Art's enfranchising power is not realized in the dramatic moments/movements that mark the separation of modern from contemporary art—cubism, expressionism, surrealism etc. It self-realizes, if we are to take Danto's word, in Warhol's Brillo Box artwork, which triggered his "end of art" epiphany. "What about art after the end of art, whereby 'after the end of art' I mean 'after the ascent to philosophical self-reflection?'" Danto asks, "where an artwork can consist of any object whatsoever that is enfranchised as art, raising the question 'Why am I a work of art?'"[11] The subtlety of self-deception involved in this narrative of art's self-realization of its emancipating and enfranchising power, requires the inertia of dense layers of art history and Eurocentric philosophical discourse to so swiftly occlude the plurality of being and selfless agency involved in the emergence of being anything, including an art object, for that aggregate power to be sucked up and funneled into "the ascent to philosophical self-reflection" of one constituency of modern "Id-entity," namely modern Western (meaning white European and Euro-American) art. And, for that ascent and transfiguration to register not as conceited but as reasonable, natural, and true.

Danto is not the kind of art philosopher theorist that one can say is unaware of non-Euro-Western art and philosophies, he is familiar with

Asian ones.[12] To elaborate his thesis so conscientiously through many texts requires strong disavowals, specifically of modernism's plural constitution and especially its profound hybridity, and of the fact that it was art beyond the pale of Euro-Western cultures that more fully embodied and exemplified art's more global enfranchised subject. Danto's thesis works only when the diverse trajectories of non-Euro-Western art are discounted, excluded from being integral to modern subjectivity.

Which returns us to an important notion of the pale, the assumption that non-Euro-Western cultural objects were mere objects, were at best arti-facts, "mere-real-things" to use Danto's term. They were not and could not self-realize. The question "why am I a work of art?" could not arise in them, since they did not possess the kind of reflexive subjectivity that makes the question possible. As we shall see this is a question at the heart of the art-notion. Can objects be sentient? Are art objects, cultural objects, in some way persons? Are they agents with powers they may or may not exercise?

Danto wants to convince us that there is an essential difference between the art object/Brillo Box and its twin on the supermarket shelf. The wedge of "mere-ness" introduces the illusion of permanent asymmetry, but it pivots on the denial of powers to one, hence none to exercise, and the automatic exercise of power by the "art" empowered other. Bhaskar calls this destratification of entities "actualism."[13] Actualism assumes that powers only exist when exercised (in repeated patterns especially), or that powers do not exist unexercised. And furthermore, they are not real if they are not perceived. Danto extrudes this destratification, this split in two, into two opposing social categories, art objects and mere real things, the former free the latter perpetually bound.

Fortunately, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the epiphany that art could look like anything led Danto to the revelatory question, "Why am I a work of art?" Even though the question masks considerable Euro-Western conceit—given the assumption that only art objects within the pale could achieve this self-realization—it is a question that assumes that objects can be, indeed are alive and sentient. By doing so Danto turns the attention of all of us who engage in art discourse, practice, and pedagogy, to so-called "primitive" animist ideas. It opens a space in Euro-Western dominated art discourse for non-European constituencies of art to ask, "why did you think we were not works of art?" Which is a question this book seeks to answer.

The Layout of This Book

This book investigates why and how mainstream art education, at all levels, successfully deferred that question well into the twenty first century. The

answer exposes the depth of Euro-modern anxiety, but also moves gradually to show that what Euro-modernity and Euro-modernist discourse considered to be "savage" turns out to be the cure for its ailment. Chapter one turns the light on formalism, a term that has fallen into general disfavor among art educators strongly influenced by postmodern linguistic models of culture. Euro-formalism—as I prefer to call it—and primitivism are tightly interwoven. Significant threads of Euro-formalism are supplied by Kant, Clive Bell, Roger Fry and Clement Greenberg. Euro-Formalism's racist aspects are not unknown, but the latter, generally restricted to formalism's imperialist function of giving non-Western, especially "primitive" art, honorary "Art" status, never allow Euro-formalism's hybridity to appear. Among the four, Fry is the most open to the global person overshadowed by Euro-modernist conceit. He is the one among the four that perceived that the "Western" person will never be the same after the modern encounter of the West with` sub-Saharan African art. Nevertheless, his openness to Far Eastern aesthetics did not help him to see how deeply dualistic Greek philosophy and aesthetics were, and how much they blocked the very freedom art supposedly embodied but was, or seemed, powerless to share. Chapter one shows how deeply racist early twentieth century Euro-modernist aesthetics and art criticism was.

Chapter two investigates the linguistic and cognitive psychological turn art education took, most significantly in the work of E. H. Gombrich. Gombrich's mission in *Art and Illusion* is quite clear, it is to restore the miraculous Greek and Renaissance culture, the apogee of Euro-Western culture, to the privileged authority they had in Western identity over its other constituents, specifically ancient African-Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures (a subordinate southern not-really "west"), and to marginalize Asian ones; an authority threatened by modern art forms. Gombrich's thesis is pervaded with the anxiety caused by African art, the latter was dramatically transforming "Western" civilization into a different person; shifting its center of authority from a white Greco-Renaissance Europe to something other.[14] For Gombrich the way to retain Euro-Western authority over the emerging civilized global subject (or should we say global civilian) was to try to ensure that the Greco-Renaissance complex in it retain directional control of that emerging person. But it did not work, even Gombrich had to admit that the Egyptian within "us" (i.e., white Euro-Westerners) may be suppressed but never defeated.[15]

Chapter two also draws on a not well-known variant of Gombrich's thesis developed by Göran Sörbom, which develops a reconsideration of the crucial axis of his thesis. Gombrich had expressed the opinion that, in *Art and Illusion,* he had overlooked the importance of realistic sculpture and

overestimated the importance of narrative.[16] Proceeding from Gombrich's revised thinking, Sörbom's article clarifies similarities between pre-Classical or archaic Greek ideas and those of African Egyptian culture. Contrary to Sörbom's intentions, however, the information he gives provides evidence of the sharing of a collage aesthetic across African cultures both in time—Ancient Egypt to the present—and space, east and west. In other words, across "Black" African cultures generally.

The critiques of Gombrich's thesis by Rudolf Arnheim and W. J. T. Mitchell are important counter currents to his ethnocentrism.[17] Of the two, Mitchell's critique explicitly points out Gombrich's ethnocentrism, which is part of Mitchell's broader recognition that non-Euro-Western others need to be included and listened to in `influential academic forums. Mitchell also notes Gombrich's struggle with nominalist tendencies that would subvert objectivity; that is to say, effectively deny us any access to an objective world, only to our subjectively constructed one.

Arnheim's critique, which is earlier than Mitchell's, is less focused on Gombrich's ethnocentrism, though he is clearly aware of it. His own pivot around gestalt psychology, and grasp of the consequences of subordinating the intelligence in perception to assumptions that language and abstract reason mediate reality and indeed supplant reality, places Arnheim on the wrong side of postmodern linguisticism. Though not the focus of this book or chapter, it is important to note that Arnheim's insights are submerged and misconstrued by the wave of anti-formalism that swept through postmodern art education's contextualist discourse. Lost in that wave is any consciousness or consideration that the view of formalism espoused by postmodernist inspired art education is ethnocentric.

Chapters three and four deal with the emergence to prominence of the structuralist and poststructuralist semiotic linguistic wave as a postmodern counter current to the cultural imperialism of modernism, and to the displacement of formalist aesthetic that was the main instrument of securing the imperial relation of the "West" to the "rest." Chapter three focuses on the critiques by James Clifford and Hal Foster on the *Primitivism in 20th century art* exhibition mounted by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Insightful as these critiques were, they stayed within postmodern enclosures and assumptions of impervious boundaries of essentially stable cultural entities. Hybrid identity is not seriously considered. Clifford situates the exhibition within a broader anthropological and aesthetic system that requires the "primitive" for the global hierarchy and civilized difference that system needs.

Articulating a somewhat different take, Foster recognizes the need for a different genealogy of modern art to that recycled by Euro-modernist

discourse, but disappointingly the one he suggests, unfortunately too briefly, is entirely of European savants. It as if the essentials of the bricolage/collage insight of poststructuralist thinking were never accessed before, were anathema to cultures prior to and outside the pale of Euro-Western culture. Consequently, the complex genealogy of the hybrid global subject is deferred in favor of one that identifies the dissident Surrealist as central to that genealogy. In them the ostensibly transformed primitive reincarnates— no black bodies permitted though—to link up with poststructuralism and feminism—both presumptively Euro-Western—to challenge orthodox modernism.

Chapter four starts to peel away the covers of postmodernism's ethnocentrisms and sketches out such an alternative genealogy. Rosalind Krauss's *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* is an important part of that process.[18] The stream of linguisticism and constructivism that Gombrich introduced takes a more radical turn when married to poststructuralism. Krauss's theoretical perspective as revealed there is exemplary of that connection and more radical turn. The main point of this chapter is to highlight the strength of the tendency to ignore relevant and profound non-Euro-Western insights, such as the philosopher Nagarjuna's deconstruction of notions of self, juxtaposing it against Krauss's—essentially poststructuralist—concept of the copy. Nagarjuna's succinct presentation of Madhyamika Buddhism's perspective is one of those elements of the alternative genealogy that Foster and Krauss completely ignore as they critique modernist myths. Another element of the alternative genealogy is implicit in Picasso's Minotaur series, whose form, as an embodiment of the copy concept, on reflection, points to the need for art educators of all stripes to take the emergence and hybridity of identity into greater account when creating curricula and deciding on pedagogy. Picasso's Minotaur series, I argue, is not simply a return to some pure pre-classical Greek/European past but intuitively finds in the past the apparently new Afro-European—hybrid, more global—identity communicating itself through cubism, expressionism, and surrealism, misrecognized and represented simply as European modern identity.

Chapter five, shifts focus from the sphere of art education that is more concerned with researching or critiquing art, and or with training professional artist, to art education concerned with the preparation of teachers for teaching art from kindergarten through high school. It turns to the influence of postmodern thinking on K-12 art education theory and discourse. Articles by Tom Anderson and Sally McRorie and by John White are the main objects of discussion of this chapter. Each emphasizes a different kind of pragmatism. Anderson and McRorie emphasize an

instrumentalist version of pragmatism, whereas White emphasizes a non-instrumentalist version of it. The first part of the chapter elaborates on the strong turn to nominalism and language models, that can reproduce the monster of ethnocentrism. To initiate the transition the chapter extends its critique of the Minotaur series followed by explanations of how philosophers like Danto, Goodman, Dickie, and Richard Rorty, influenced postmodern art education discourse. Goodman, Dickie, and Danto were particularly significant to Anderson's and McRorie's instrumentalist reading of pragmatism. White's turn to pragmatism's non-instrumentalist version was particularly influenced by Rorty's neopragmatism.

White's reliance on Rorty allows exposure of assumptions undergirding the humanities/science split that is typical of educational institutions. But it also facilitates showing, via Roy Bhaskar's critique of Rorty, the subtle way in which Kantian perspectives inhabit both formalism and postmodern linguistic contextualism. White's incorporation of Rorty's notions of redescription into K-12 art education theory exposes its positive advantages and potential dangers. The danger being that the neopragmatist strategy of redescription may leave conceited difference intact, because it does not require acknowledgement of others in self or self in others. Instead, it produces notions of a plurality of identities sealed in essence-free cultural bubbles, that reproduce the effect of essences by different means.

Chapter six continues the focus on K-12 art educators. It particularly attends to the tension within the discipline caused by the emergence of the Visual Culture movement, whose theoretical premises tend to undermine the assumption of fine art superiority. The crucial figure in this chapter is Arthur Efland. He redescribes or reinterprets Kant's concept of disinterestedness to counter what he and some others perceived to be the tendency in Visual Culture theory to equate, by leveling down, fine art with popular visual culture. Efland's reinterpretation, which grounds his proposed postformalism, however, makes it possible to show the flawed basis of the Kantian legacy. His reinterpretation proposes that disinterestedness is a ruse to make art *appear* to be void of social interest and influence, so that it could avoid immediate, possibly deadly, social consequences, so that art could actually affect social change. This would mean that art practice is founded on deceit, which would be contrary to claims of interest in truth, morality, or social good.

Chapter seven counters the polarization of science and art that Efland also emphasized to ground his postformalist aesthetics. A polarization that visual culture theorists in art education discourse do not contest. To accomplish this polarization aesthetics is excluded from any role in science. This chapter shows the opposite to be the case, aesthetics is deeply involved

in scientific practice. However, by starting with the idea that emerging with modernity was a notion that the art object possessed a kind of subjectivity, the chapter expands the parameters of the issue to connect the artifact/art hierarchy and contrast, to the hard/soft science hierarchy and contrast. It links them together by establishing, via the work of Roy Bhaskar, that science relies significantly on what Efland called "What if" questions, which he made the defining feature of art. Bhaskar recognizes abduction as fundamental to scientific processes, at the heart of which are "what if" questions and therefore science. Particularly the question, what the world must be like for particular events to occur and be possible (hypothesizing)? Followed by imagining experiments to check whether the hypotheses are true. A recently recovered lost manuscript of Dewey's, also discussed in this chapter, strongly indicated that he had arrived at a very similar diagnosis and critique of dominant explanations of science.

Bhaskar's critique of orthodox science explanations removes the grounds for the hard/soft hierarchy. It also allows marginalized aspects of pragmatism, specifically C. S. Peirce's philosophy of science, to be highlighted. Peirce's assertions that logic depends on ethics, and ethics on aesthetics, his recognition that "feeling" plays a more important role in thinking than is generally acknowledged, and his choice of the word "icon" to ground his semiotic trinity that elaborates his cognitive theory, altogether make aesthetics integral to science. Semiotics was crucial to Peirce's effort to show how thinking can be made clearer and more effective for scientific practice. It also allowed him to question the science/religion schisms and polarizations that prevailed, especially via questioning and clarifying the role of terms like "belief" in science. Modernism's science/religion schism relates to science/art polarization in education, in that those devalued notions of belief, and I argue faith, were displaced from science onto religion. First onto Christianity as the "western" religion, but with deeper prejudice onto non-Christian religions and belief systems. Those aspects of Peirce's philosophy and the later Dewey's, which constitute a realist (rather than nominalist) stream of pragmatism, along with Bhaskar's critical realist philosophy, open the door for a very different art/science relation, one with potential to revise what the term aesthetic means. That revision overturns notions of civilized/primitive hierarchy that linger in art education discourse.

Chapter eight, "Primitive Mode" Writing, pivots from Derrida's overturning of a key assumption of modern linguistics, that spoken language has priority over written language, the latter being a substitute of a substitute. In investigating and elaborating the possibility of a science of Grammatology, Derrida opens the possibility of undoing the subordination

of material visual culture objects, artefacts and art objects, to verbal discourse. It allows Derrida to challenging a key plank of civilize/primitive distinctions. But to do this Derrida had to go into the history of the overcoming of traditional scholarly prejudices—for example notions of pure writing—by moving outside of phonetic systems of writing into hieroglyphic and other non-phonetic systems such as Chinese. That move allows him to trace the possibility of a grammatology. So once again we see a global perspective being necessary to advancing a modern science, in this case the step outside Euro-Western cultural parameters enabled the overcoming of internal prejudices.

From his tracing of a history of grammatology Derrida was able to develop his concept of arche writing that questions the restriction of the notion of writing to even such non-phonetic examples. He expands it to encompasses all varieties of object/image making, including what are called religious icons. This opens the door to presenting the two subsequent moves in the chapter's argument, Martin Powers's critique of the overlooking, or suppression, of the impact of Chinese aesthetics on Euro-modern formalism, and the presentation of Dogon cosmology and ideas about creation as surprisingly profoundly science based. This deeper insight into a tradition of African knowledge, enabled by the "soft" science of anthropology, undercuts notions of "primitive" cultures as necessarily unscientific, and allows a further elaboration of what the term aesthetic could be revised to mean, a possibility that becomes available when the "primitive" is listened to as a knowledgeable authority. Contrary to modernist notions expressed from Sir Kenneth Clark, through Greenberg to Danto, there is not an abyss of unbridgeable difference separating the Euro-civilized from the presumed primitive African.

Chapter nine elaborates on Danto's arguments for retaining the art/mere-real-thing distinction. Necessarily mentioned in prior chapters because of the impact of his artworld concept on art education discourse, here his positions on culture and art are given closer scrutiny. His book, *Mysticism and Morality: Oriental Thought and Moral Philosophy* is examined to show him as exemplary of how comfortable one may be with an ethnocentric position, basically sustained by convictions that hybridity is a fiction and that the ego-self is all there is to personhood, so there is no escaping our cultural bubbles. *Mysticism and Morality*, which plainly asserted that its aim was to dissuade Westerners from looking to the Orient for moral guidance, was severely criticized for its shallow knowledge of Asian philosophies and, more egregious, dispensing misinformation. The fact that a second preface by Danto to the second reprinting of the book showed no desire to revise his position, was a strong indication that possession of analytical philosophy

methods as a Euro-Western cultural marker, was of greater consequence than any universal applicability they held. Indeed, that position threaded itself through Danto's end of art and disenfranchisement theses.

Moving on from the evident ethnocentrism of *Mysticism and Morality*, the chapter examines Danto's arguments justifying the art and mere-real-thing status distinctions that are central to his artworld thesis. The Buddha's Miracle at Sravasthi, in which the Buddha reportedly created duplicates of himself stretching up to high heavens, is situated against Danto's claim that the unique trajectory of Euro-western art history was necessary for the Brillo Box epiphany to take place. Clearly the insight the Brillo Box held was available centuries before the twentieth century.

The insight of fundamental twinness incorporated in Bhedabheda Vedanta's philosophy (the divine is both different and not different from creation), and Dogon images of male and female twins, are used to critique Danto's explanations of representation and his two worlds or two-tier world scenario. Transposing different/nondifferent twins into a continuity/discontinuity fundamental pair, the flaws in Danto's explanation of representation are exposed. Also explained is that it is a consequence of what Bhaskar calls "actualism." Danto's two-tier world construct is a product of this confusion, objects and people apparently have no choice between continuity and discontinuity with others, they must exercise their intrinsic powers, nor can their powers be nullified or frustrated by other forces. Which is like saying there can be no switching on and off the generator producing the power that lights a bulb, or that it does not structurally have the potential to produce power. This conflation of powers with events sneaks in an invariable essence that condemns the mere real thing to a dull irredeemable nature and situates the art object in a heaven of unfallen nature, never needing redemption. The last section of chapter nine uses the Sravasthi Miracle to expand on the counter to Danto's assertion that the history of Euro-Western art was key to realizing the insight the Brillo Box artwork holds. A variety of examples of nondual thinking from various sources including the New Testament Gospels are used to contest Danto's interpretation of the insight of indistinguishable but actually different twins.

Chapter ten, "Copy, Art, and Integrity: Why did you think I was not a work of art?", drills down further into three subtopics, which are dealt with in three subsections. The first subsection advances the argument that the copy concept is about integrity, developing that thought from the miracle of Sravasthi. Mass production in a competitive market system recognizes this as the important feature of the copy concept. Especially in the production of medicines, one must have reliability and consistency in the structure or constitution of medicines, to guarantee their efficacy. The focus on copy as

integrity reiterates the power of structure or form independent of context. But integrity or consistency in the structure of natural materials like copper or water is also important.

The idea of integrity leads to the concept of character and personality, which is taken up in the next subsection in which the importance of the concepts of no-ego-self and animism are elaborated. A crucial, though overlooked moment in the performance of any action, is that they are grounded in a moment of unselfconsciousness; a moment in which the maker, making, and the made are one continuous being. This leads to discussion of the idea of "animism." The idea that the "modern" art object is a kind of subject was discussed by Terry Eagleton in his *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, but it is also implicit in Danto's question "why am I a work of art?" and in W. J. T. Mitchell's book title *What do Pictures Want?*[19] The setting of this idea in a dualistic framework leads to the contradictions and displacements that characterize modern/primitive hierarchies, in which the latter's animist beliefs are deemed superstitious, while the former's are somehow sophisticated. Danto's interpretation of the Brillo box insight perpetuates that displacement. The corrective needed is to set the animist idea within a nondualist framework, which will give it a solid philosophical basis and leads to scientific investigation that can comprehend its rational and superstitious aspects, rejecting the displacement of the latter onto "primitives," recognizing its presence in the "civilized." The setting of the animist concept in nondualist frameworks avoids the anthropocentrism that characterizes Danto's philosophy, as it does much of postmodern philosophy.

The final subsection, "Art Education for Cosmopolis," develops the cosmopolitan ideals implicit in the previous sections' arguments for recognition that objects, material things, are possessed of subjectivity. This recognition is crucial for shifting our anthropocentric and nationalistic attitudes from the narrow "humanism" that characterizes capitalist human/environmental and people-to-people relations. Also crucial is incorporating C. S. Peirce's hierarchy of logic's dependence on ethics, and ethics' dependence on a revised notion of aesthetics. Even as the chapter emphasizes the importance of nondualist perspectives, it recognizes and makes clear that it is a solution that requires theory/practice consistency to affect the necessary institutional changes locally and globally. Chapter ten urges that because the discipline of art education involves establishing a nondual relation with objects and object-making it is well placed to advance the kind of ethics and change in attitudes towards our environment and towards others that is desperately needed in this twenty first century.

CHAPTER 1

NATIONAL MOTIVES, UNIVERSAL DISGUISE: EURO-MODERNIST FORMALISM AND "PRIMITIVE OTHERS"

First, an explanation of the term Euro-modernist. Adding "Euro" to modernist or Western is a way of highlighting and problematizing the assumption that there is only one West or one unchanging stable European identity, that represented by white European and Euro-American cultures of a particular time span and of a particular ideological (or metaphysical) orientation. It is also a way of signaling that denial of the dependent origination relation of self to not-self others is intrinsic to the claim of modernity or modernism anytime and anywhere. The claim to modernity, which involves claims to racial and cultural superiority by White Euro-Western cultures in recent times (15th Century to the present) denies dependence on non-Euro-Western others, "Orientals" and "primitives," the latter referring to black Africans, Native Americans, and others deemed uncivilized by modern-claiming white Europeans. Claims to modernity or modernism interpret the irreducibility and uniqueness of emergent difference to mean that it is superior to others. Imagine water claiming to be superior to hydrogen and oxygen. This would be a manifestation of water's conceit, a distortion of its relations to its "constituents," an expression of ego. Behind that conceit of superiority, which is not simply difference, is the ego's anxiety about its validity and substantial reality. Even in their best moments, which is to say their least conflictual, modernist interpretations (especially at this time and not exclusively European ones) stop short of a subject that, in its mode of being, fully acknowledges others in self and self in others. In other words, modernist identity, inflected as it is by the conceit that others depend on it, stops short of acknowledging that its substantial being and existence is dependent on the self-lessness of "others." And, anxious about the continuity of itself, because it is aware of the self's historically contingent and transient nature, claims and asserts superiority. Postmodern concepts of identity and society still harbor those denials and anxieties. In the U.S.A and the Euro-West generally, art education, which

for this text includes university level studio teaching, art history and aesthetics, and teacher preparation, is still deeply inflected by modernist and postmodernist frameworks for comprehending and representing difference and plurality. Consequently, despite postmodernism's differentiation of itself from modernism, the vital transcultural person, or global subject, is never properly or sufficiently comprehensively recognized. Rather, modernist and postmodernist discourse on art, culture, and identity, obscure the more comprehensive human being or more comprehensive self without which the ego, the pseudo agent, would not appear and seem to be real.

Perhaps nothing in U.S. art education has worked to obscure the global transcultural subject more than modernist Euro-Western formalism, at least up until the nineteen eighties. Its function in relation to Euro-modernism has been, in the main, to present the radically different identity implied in the emerging works designated modern art as proof of the superiority and progressive character of European culture, and to tie the global subject, person, and identity involved in modern art, exclusively to white European and Euro-Western identity. This assimilative function only works, however, when it simultaneously purifies the emerging art forms and identities of any "foreign" presence and substance, disavowing both their hybridity and the substantial presence of others in the new forms. At least the attempt is to purify Euro-modern identity of its hybridity. That is how formalism, or rather a particular version of regarding formal qualities, facilitated the plethora of historical narratives that present the various Euro-modernist "isms"—impressionism, postimpressionism, fauvism, cubism, expressionism, surrealism—as modern and as exclusively and unproblematically white European. There is no need to deny the objects' "Europeanness," but there is a deep problem with claiming them as exclusively and purely white European identities, persons, or subjects. The presumption of permanent fixed identity essences, pure white or black—or, in this case, presuming that "European" and "American" as national identities really and exclusive refer to a white historical trajectory of being—is how the term modernism occludes its hybridity, and how that term and the term postmodernism that succeeds it, defer affirming a more global humanity and a deeper more comprehensive being. They effectively say to other constituents that make them global persons, "not you, not yet."

Euro-modernist formalism, effectively regarded as the only version formalism can take, served the white European constituency's conceit of superiority, self-enlargement, separateness, and progressiveness, while it simultaneously obscured or seem to preclude other explanations and understandings of form. As an "extra benefit," Euro-modernist formalism also served to grant honorary art status to "primitive" tribal objects, boosting

European self-esteem as magnanimous on the one hand, and on the other, ensuring that the elevated non-European art objects were divorced from their "primitive" makers, who remained sequestered in designated "tribal" premodern reservations. The sublime identity of these "honorary art objects" remained essentially alienated from their producers, who were "unconscious" of their sublimity and their value as art, and who, as art agents, were accidentally not essentially so. In Euro-modernist discourse the global modern subject *is* the white European person, who in no way could or should be confused with the makers of primitive objects. The latter were neither modern nor global, but tribal and local; and, most important of all, incapable of consuming and comprehending, the imperial modern and postmodern subjects, who alone have the power to consume and comprehend others, at least according to most modernist and postmodernist discourse. Euro-modernist formalism and primitivism are integral parts of the historical myth that translated a province of global identity into the whole of it. Unfortunately, it is a cultural myth with deep roots in more disciplines than art education, hence the difficulty of undoing it. However, Euro-modernist formalism has prominent historical figures associated with its emergence, whose discourse about it make its relation to race very clear. Immanuel Kant, Clive Bell and Roger Fry, and Clement Greenberg, supply enough discourse to show the interweaving of Euro-modernist aesthetics and race. They are enough to present a picture of how Euro-formalism worked to insert a province or slice of humanity between global transcultural self and other identities, in such a way as to affect the eclipse of global identity by a fraction of itself.

Euro-Modernist Formalism's Racial Legacy

Kant's ideas about the role of aesthetics profoundly affected Euro-modernist formalism, particularly his ideas about beauty, the sublime, and disinterestedness. The Kantian Euro-modern subject prided itself on being a rational-moral being; indeed, on being *the* rational-moral subject without parallel among others. For Kant the optimum functioning of aesthetic discrimination or judgment, the exercise of taste, required the attitude of disinterestedness. For him disinterestedness was necessary if taste, the— discriminating intelligent-feeling—aesthetic faculty, was to serve its purpose in expanding the freedom intrinsic to the rational-moral character that distinguished human being, man, from other animal species of being. It is important to keep in mind that, in Kant's psychological scheme, sensations and feelings originate from and carry the un-freedom of the nature-dominated animal part of our human constitution, and consequently

incline man away from the fullness of his true human nature. The progressive refinement and translation of sensibility and feeling is necessary if humanity is to realize deeper personal and social harmony with itself, and fulfill the role ordained for it by nature. This is done through education, specifically through steeping sensibility and feeling in aesthetic experiences of updated images of rational-moral man that fine art produces.

Kant explicated his philosophy to an eighteenth-century community of imperial nations, who, even though they were constantly at war over colonial territory in the old and new worlds, saw themselves as essentially different and superior to the varieties of human being they encountered. European colonial expansion and the conflicts it produced in colonial non-European territories and in Europe were, for Kant, a source of deep concern, even dismay. It is a historical connection noted, among others, by Paul Guyer, who states.

> As the blood of the French Revolution began to flow in earnest, Kant recognized that politics alone could create community only through violence, creating consensus simply by eliminating those who would be diverse … He certainly considered the realization of the highest good for human beings requires the culture of morality and good taste. He just wanted us to be clear that any attempt to bring about the highest good possible for us through coercion rather than the noncoercive means of morality and taste would end up destroying us. About that, history has proved him right.[1]

"We will never be well served by blurring the lines between aesthetics, ethics, and politics," Guyer states.[2] Perhaps, however, it is cognizance of where they do blur into each other that will be most helpful in showing the limits of their distinctive powers. It would no doubt be especially helpful to see where they blur into each other in Kant's discourse, in his theory-practice. On doing so one would perhaps more readily wonder who is the referent of "we" and "us" in Guyer's remarks above? Attempts to rehabilitate Kantian aesthetics without considering how his opinions about race, gender and class are inflected in them, runs the risk of reproducing, indeed most likely would reproduce, them. For anyone reflecting on the subtle ways in which the "the pale of art" assumption persists in art, aesthetics, and art education discourse, that risk is to be avoided.

In his essay "The Color of Reason: The Idea of Race in Kant's Anthropology" Emmanuel Eze points to this "scholarly forgetfulness of Kant's racial theories."[3]

> In his important book, *This is Race*, Earl W. Count observes that scholars often forget "that Immanuel Kant produced the most profound raciological thought of the eighteenth century." This scholarly forgetfulness of Kant's