



Mirror-Image Confusion (Continued)

C. G. Gross; M. Bornstein

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LETTERS

Readers' comments are welcomed on texts published in Leonardo. The Editors reserve the right to shorten letters. Letters should be written in English or in French

MIRROR-IMAGE CONFUSION (cont.)

David R. Topper in his letter [*Leonardo* 12, 174 (1979)] has raised the interesting question of the confusion of vertical mirror images (e.g. 6 and 9) and its possible relation to the confusion of lateral mirror images (e.g. b and d). Vertical mirror images do tend to be confused by animals, adults and children, as we discuss elsewhere [1], but much less so than lateral mirror images. We have suggested [1] that vertical mirror images are treated as similar for the same reason as lateral mirror images: when vertical mirror images occur in the natural world, they too are usually aspects of the same object. (After all, an animal upside down is equivalent to the same animal right side up.) However, it may be that lateral mirror image equivalence is primary, and vertical equivalence is derived from it through generalization, since lateral mirror images are more common (e.g. as two sides of a bilaterally symmetrical organism or two views of a silhouette).

Reference

1. M. H. Bornstein and C. G. Gross, Perceptual Similarity of Mirror Images in Infancy, *Cognition* 6, 89 (1978).

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ON THE MEANING OF THE TERM 'COSMOPOLITAN'

I am delighted that you have thought to publish the paper by Jan L. Broeckx, On Teaching Aesthetics in Secondary Schools and Education for International Understanding [*Leonardo* 12, 60 (1979)]. It is filled with insights regarding education, the nurturing of aesthetic qualities and appreciation and international understanding. It is a refreshing change from the loose thinking and writing on these subjects (although the Unesco Recommendation on the teaching of peace and international understanding remains a major contribution to straightforward thinking).

Broeckx is right to insist that the present reaction against domination in political and economic affairs be broadened to include a stand against 'the imposition on mankind of the aesthetics of powerful nations' (and joins the Chinese in the use of the term 'hegemony').

In this regard, he speaks out against standardization and recommends an international understanding that is 'cosmopolitan'. Good. I understand what he means. But this recalls to my mind the amusing but time-consuming debate at a Unesco General Conference over the meaning of the term 'cosmopolitan'. The U.S.S.R. wanted to appropriate the term for the branding of Western (primarily U.S.A.) consumerism as an imperialistic threat to spread its standardized products, including television programs and cinema, all over the world. As so often happens at international conferences, language differences (and propagandistic motives) contributed to a sterile debate over origins and meanings of words.

Thus, Broeckx's point merits clarification. I accept that standardization contradicts creativity. But he raises questions

when he says that 'international understanding must be cosmopolitan' and then states: 'The ultimate goal of international understanding for me is the provision of conditions of life through which each human group can learn to understand and appreciate other human groups, *not because of what they have in common*, [italics supplied] but because of what each of them may contribute to specific human expressivity and sensitivity' (p. 61).

The latter part of this sentence is beautiful and needs to be remembered. But I suggest either that one drops the term 'cosmopolitan' or that one defines it tightly as a global attitude that is found or is at home everywhere in the world. I doubt that one will find 'international understanding' in all places on this planet; certainly the approaches to such understanding will differ, that is, they will not be cosmopolitan or 'common to the whole world'. One can, however, work for and hope to find a common global spirit of, as Broeckx puts it in his concluding appeal, 'teaching the person to sympathize with the emotions and expressions of all humans who share with us a wonder of life and of the riches of this Earth'.

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I wish to thank John E. Fobes for his favourable appreciation of my paper in *Leonardo* 12, 60 (1979) and also for drawing my attention to a possible misunderstanding of the term 'a cosmopolitan attitude' with regard to aesthetic education and international understanding.

For a clarification of this term, I propose to define it as follows: a *cosmopolitan attitude* means behaving in such a way that the specific forms and styles of artistic products, originating from various nations and social groups, are considered and appreciated as fundamentally equivalent contributions to the development of human sensitivity and expression.

This definition leads to the resolute rejection of two hitherto prevalent modes of cultural policy: (1) political and ideological censorship imposed upon the distribution of artistic products considered alien to the social, political or ideological system established in a given country; (2) monopolizing, by means of social pressure and by superior economic power, the world-wide distribution of artistic products originating from one's own country.

Both modes of cultural policy seem to me equally prejudicial to real freedom of human expression; they constitute a hindrance for true understanding among humans and for a complete and authentic communication on the aesthetic level between all nations.

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CORRECTION

In the article by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, An Account of