Response Paper 5

Writers thoughout history has had different view of art and representations in general. Some of these views are outrageous while others are moderate. Plato, for example, has been against all forms of representation and suggested that art and representation should be outlawed. Today, new writers have expressed mixed views on arts and representations. In this short paper we will discuss what some of these stand between the view of Plato and Aristotle.

Representation today can be very controversial from the cultural aspect. During slavery, one way for the white person to show their superiority to a black is to demonstrate how the latter's culture is inferior. Slavery advocate and white supremacist such Emmanuel Kent has falsely claimed that a black person is inferior because of their inability to reproduce the western culture such as been able to read and write in Greek. As written by author from the reading, when a black individual has taken up to the challenge by learning Greek, this was interpreted as a danger to western society. The antagonists believe that a black person mimicking the western culture is doing so without understanding the real meanings.

This reflects the point of view of Plato. The main point in the argument is the misrepresentation of the western culture. Not knowing the implication of what one is representation can lead to distortion. This is not only a concern regarding western culture. Many Pan-African has long think that copying western culture is another form of slavery. As pointed out in the reading of Gates, using western literature to write about Afro-American literature is “another form of intellectual indenture, a mental servitude as pernicious in its intellectual”.

Today, in many African communities one can hear the joke “acting white”. The phrase emphasis the view of many on representation. On example and good joke from the Obama’s tripe to South Africa during the celebration of Mandela's 100th birthday. Obama is seen in the USA as a good dancer, but in Africa after a dance move, many were disapproved as to his dance move has the western taste.

One more example of people's rejection of cultural representation is today's fight over cultural appropriation. When a western person dresses in African cloth for example in the United State, he could face some backslashes. But why? In my view, dressing like people from different cultures should not a problem but there should limitation to what should be allowed. But this limitation should not be imposed by society rather the good judgment of the individual himself. There are cultural aspects that are considered sacred to the people. Thus, with respect to the religious (faith) or culture of others, one should take those into consideration while representation.

In writing, it might be tempting to say today that not a white person should write about black culture and vice versa. This idea arises generally from the fear that doing so would lead to the distortion of history or misrepresentation. However, could a white person who grew up in all black community be eligible to write about what he thinks about back culture? To my view this should be the case. Anyone could write about any aspect of any culture if they have the right information or has the expertise in doing so.

I would not say that our view today is aligned with Plato but rather close to Aristotle. Plato, as we know, rejected all types of representation but Aristotle has more favorable approaches. Representation should have some limits to it. Not everything should be allowed for reproduction.