

Baconian, and baroque systems of vision

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The scopic regime of modernity may best be understood as a contested terrain, rather than a harmoniously integrated complex of visual theories and practices.”

The discourse pertaining vision had not surfaced such era when “ modernity” began; the time for science, the time for rediscovering and further exploration of deep understanding and knowledge of the world around us. Hence, Renaissance was a remarkable epoch in history as the start of philosophical understanding on visuality in the context of modernism. Among the numerous people who have engaged in the discourse of vision is Martin Jay, who baptized the “ scopic regimes of modernity”. For Jay, modernity is ocular-centric where each knowledge must be represented by an image, a spectacle, a vision to make it concrete and credible. And this “ ocular centrism” is approached in different levels of philosophical thinking, hence the birth of Cartesian, Baconian, and Baroque systems of vision; albeit the focus of Jay’s discourse is the comparison and contrast of the first and last school of thought.

The Cartesian model, also known as Cartesian Perspectivalism centers itself in the “ harmonious and scientific” approach in defining a vision. This hegemonic perspective reduces the interpretation of “ representations” which are embedded in the mind of the beholder. Representations being symbols and symbols entrenched in images arranged accordingly to mathematical grid orders. It is like discovering and understanding the world in a strictly empirical direction of math and sciences. The spectator then is assumed a blank slate that looks at a spectacle devoid of any context, whether social, cultural, or religious. The meaning then is dependent upon who beholds what, depending on his “ discovery” on the world. This then

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creates contention between the artist who produced the perspective and the assumed beholder of that same perspective.

Baconian school of thought, on the other hand, offered an alternative visual model during the 17th century Dutch occupation but is not necessarily an independent system of vision but a product of the criticisms encountered by the previous visual model. If the aforementioned ideology is specific about seeing the world in consonance with science, the Baconian argument on the other hand inclines itself to the social and humanistic approach of understanding and viewing the world. Hence, it enables the depiction of a story or the substantive narrative content in a single spectacle. It explores the narrative and descriptive articulation of the world being presented to the beholder.

The last visual argument posited by Martin is the Baroque system of vision where it drastically differs from the coherent, harmonious, and glorified view of the world that the Cartesian system lives out. This visual system acknowledges and celebrates the bizarre, peculiar, disorienting, ambiguous reality that a spectacle may depict. The core substance of this scopic regime is the elaborate portrayal of phenomena and even natural orders in this world. Therefore, it is not only the beautiful that is seen in a perspective but the grotesque as well as part of a natural order in this world.

The discourse of Jay's scopic regimes is undoubtedly useful especially in a post-modern era like where we are in now. Though the applicability of this insight is endless as long as it pertain visual culture, it could also be criticized as it reduces people to understanding a social phenomenon by vision alone. What about the cases of audio-visual media where each sense complements the story of the other? Without the other sense, the other

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cannot independently deliver a clear and substantial information to the beholder or listener. How could one isolate the self from the narrative or knowledge that our other senses (audio, touch, smell, taste) are capable of providing?