
Erich Fromm and Universal
Humane Experience: Application
in the Aesthetic Domain for
Art Educators



R. Michael Fisher, Ph.D.
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Technical Paper No. 39

In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute

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First Edition 2012

Cover and layout by R. Michael Fisher
ISOF Logo (original 1989) designed by RMF

Printed in USA

The In Search of Fearlessness Institute is dedicated to research and publishing on fear, fearlessness and emotions in general, as well as critical reviews of such works. Preference is given to works with an integral theoretical perspective.

Erich Fromm and Universal Humane Experience: Application in the Aesthetic Domain for Art Educators

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Abstract: Recent re-reading of Erich Fromm's (1968) *The Revolution of Hope*, has proven to be compatible with an aesthetic model (A-ness/D-ness) that I have been researching on and developing in the past 30 years. Fromm's call for a radical humanistic agenda, if not revolution, was appealing to my own call for a radical aesthetic and art education agenda on how we teach coloring and drawing and how that impacts our worldview, our value system and choices and how that impacts the sustainability and health of ourselves and the ecological relationships with the earth-solar system. Fromm suggests a set of universal qualities to the human experience which he specifically distinguishes as "humane" and from there he asks us to consider how those ought to be the main criteria and reference for designing and planning, of which curriculum and pedagogy ought to pay close attention. The bulk of this paper is focused on a specific application of these reference criteria in an aesthetic model I created for demonstrating where people are at in terms of their value-biases aesthetically and implications of those mostly unconscious biases. A specific illustration, with empirical data, offers art teachers specifically a way to understand, and teach, Fromm's "humane" agenda, in a world which is arguably more and more becoming mechanized, digitalized and inhumane.

INTRODUCTION

To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.
- H. D. Thoreau, *Walden*

We have, indeed, an unbounded imagination and initiative for solving technical problems, but a most restricted imagination when we deal with human problems.
-Erich Fromm

¹ The author's work and projects can be seen in more detail at <http://csiie.org> and <http://loveandfearsolutions.com> and <http://www.feareducation.com>.

It has been three decades since I developed an aesthetic (arts-based) approach to assessing a notion of "Quality." This article will present the model (A-ness/D-ness) which demonstrates, arguably, a useful way to distinguish qualities and ultimate universal Quality. As controversial as that may sound, and is, because who is to say "what is better quality than something else?", I proceed upon a lot of theories and philosophies, and empirical evidence as well as my own experience as an artist and amateur philosopher-educator. I am not intimidated by postmodern claims "there are no universals." In the most subtle realms of Nature, and the aesthetic experience, I think we can assess what things are universal and what are not.

Indeed, I'll never say such and such is "absolutely universal" because that is not the point. Nature always throws in a deviation and the breaking of some universal law or principle, by an example, and so that claim of absolute seems arrogant and just not accurate. My point is to find general orientations of universality that are useful guides. This aesthetic model presented here is such a guide. I offer art educators (and others) a simplified way of using the A-ness/D-ness quality assessment tool in classrooms and other settings, especially for younger people who are still developing their value systems and who remain relatively rather flexible to learn new value systems. We really need new value systems on this planet, of which the following will explain why.

Long after discovering the A-ness/D-ness model (in the mid-1980s), and testing it, I have recently re-read Erich Fromm's (1968) *The Revolution of Hope*, which is his book in the late-stage of his illustrious career as a social psychoanalyst and humanist educator and philosopher. His description of "hope" was very intriguing and not what I had read before in so many writers on hope from different disciplines over the decades. I've never been a big fan of "hope" and have rather suggested we replace it with "fearlessness" (see Fisher, 2010). But most important was his description of "hope" as some principle and quality that is inherent in the universe, and especially in living systems which he focuses on as the "Man system." He is after a universal theory of "Man system" by which he can suggest a "human nature" and more specifically a set of qualities of "human experience" (i.e., the brighter and unique side of what makes us more than animal).

Although my own philosophical journey has been in and out of humanist works and beliefs, I have recently found them less and less convincing as my postmodern (if not cyborgic) understanding and thinking has been critical of humanist assumptions. The re-reading of Fromm, whom I have always liked but not really studied, in the last month has taken me for a bit of a loop. I really thought about his idea of "humane experience" and its

universal quality that makes up human nature (i.e., our best-side as unique from the animal world). Hope and courage, and other virtues are discussed in his book as the better parts of human nature, but he defined hope in a unique way that was evolutionary and equated it with the built-in aspect of humans (i.e., the Man system) of a design and expectation for "*aliveness*." I really like that, as it is not just human, nor humane, but evolutionary and I had come up with this same thesis in the mid-1980s when I was researching on "aliveness" and how the A-ness/D-ness model was very much a tool to demonstrate what "aliveness" is using an aesthetic (arts-based) medium or modality. Again, I'll leave that for you to read about and explore later in this paper.

I'm introducing, ever so brief and inadequately, Fromm's agenda of universal humane experience, that is, humane qualities (principles) that are our highest qualities for growth and aliveness. I won't go into any detail here as to how he describes them, as that would make this paper too long and take it to a different focus. I want this to be more a pointing to kind of introduction to Fromm, of which he points to the qualities of "aliveness" and "hope" (if you want to use that word) that are inherent in living things, humans, and that ought to be developed consciously to their ultimate expressions (e.g., see D-ness). I will show the contrast (in A-ness) to "aliveness" as "deadness." Fromm is big on this notion as well, and it validates my own early research. He makes the distinction in a set of patterns of perception, values, thinking and worldviews that are "necrophilous" and "biophilous." Indeed, the first being death-loving, and the second life-loving, this is very important and the first I would argue is fear-based and the second is love-based. But I don't want to side-track down that discussion, and you can read more on that in my book (Fisher, 2010).

Fromm lists and describes, with convincing arguments that there are qualities of human experience (i.e., biophilous) that ought to constitute all human management and planning, and I would add design (i.e., curriculum and pedagogy). He argues these qualities are the only sane criteria for all planning-- that is, following the wish/principle of Life itself-- as the pursuit, and expectation (hope) for "optimal aliveness" (Fromm, 1968, p. 101)-- which one could also put in that position the term today used often called "wellness" or "well-being." Yes, it is humanistic and holistic. It is sane thinking. Where do we draw upon today for referents of ethical decision-making for a sane society, if we do not draw on our human nature, says Fromm. And indeed, problematic as it is, as philosophers and politicians may argue, "human nature" is the only foundation we can trust we really know something about.

What Fromm's great move is in this book is to distinguish human nature from humane experience. He admits, as any good psychoanalyst or observer would, that human nature is not all wonderful. It has a shadow

side, of which Fromm was ever so aware and it was the side he saw as moving toward the tendency of a necrophilous paradigm or existence—a self-destructivity (Freud's Thanatos principle). Fromm's book is on the dangers of an overly technique-mechanical world of technology values over human values. The *humane experience* he said is universal and our best side which we all know and can access but mostly we confuse it with ideas of human nature that are taught to us by all kinds of players (and socialization itself). So, what are those universal qualities of the humane? I'll list them, but the point is for you as readers to take them and translate them, as I have only recently begun to do, into the A-ness/D-ness aesthetic model presented in the bulk of this paper. I think you'll see, rather nicely, how Fromm's human experience list is of the qualities of D-ness.

Fromm's list of **humane experiences and qualities** (in no particular order): being, vulnerability, courage(ous), hope, faith, identity and integrity, aliveness, alertness, awakeness, interest, empathy, compassion, tenderness, responsibility (response-ability), freedom, transcendence. Okay, now it is time to move on into the bulk of the focus of this paper. Enjoy.

Mindfulness as an Art

The Thoreau quote connects the quality of our experience with arts. Interestingly, the quote opens a recent book entitled *The Mindful Teacher* (MacDonald and Shirley, 2009). The authors present the case of the “crisis of values” in teaching, schools, families and society as a whole, especially in America. Without blaming teachers for the crisis, they label the immense data-driven problem in schools (e.g., the paradoxical No Child Left Behind quantitative indicators of “quality”) as “accountability becomes transformed into accountancy” (p. 2). This leads to “alienated teaching,” a good deal of burnout, and a very narrow view of quality achievement “endemic in American schools”—as teachers feel compelled to comply with external forces that they know often don't serve their specific students and contexts well. The alternative is “mindful teaching” (see MacDonald and Shirley, 2009).

The art classroom is as good of place as any to be a source for affecting the quality of the day and mindful practices. MacDonald and Shirley's research shows that “mindfulness” is currently having an “enormous popular resonance in American society.” For example, Harvard psychologist, Ellen Langer, describes “mindful learning.” And Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, writes of “mindfulness training.” Both books have been bestsellers attracting attention from educational practitioners and a wide audience with their aim to bring more peace in one's life.

This article introduces a unique and practical aesthetic model for teaching and evaluating “quality” and “mindfulness” (Figure 1). It consists of a systematically designed drawing/coloring activity (invented by the

author) as a demonstration of four basic types of qualities that compose four ways of organizing and participating in reality. They also serve as elucidating metaphors when applied with related questions. I have used this device with hundreds of adults and students, offering a reflective activity, particularly on aesthetics but also under objectives related to drawing and shading. It can that can be incorporated into most art education lessons (grades 2-12).

Teacher's Pre-Activity

How do we discern quality? Early in the 1980s, after reading a good deal of research on developmental theories, creativity, environmentalism, ecology, quality of life and values surveys, I was aware of future educational challenges. I asked an artistic-aesthetic and creative question: *If I were 'god'—'creator'—how many different (qualitatively distinct) ways could I draw and color a shape—let's say a rectangular shape?* I arrived four basic patterns for making a rectangular shape (Figure 1).

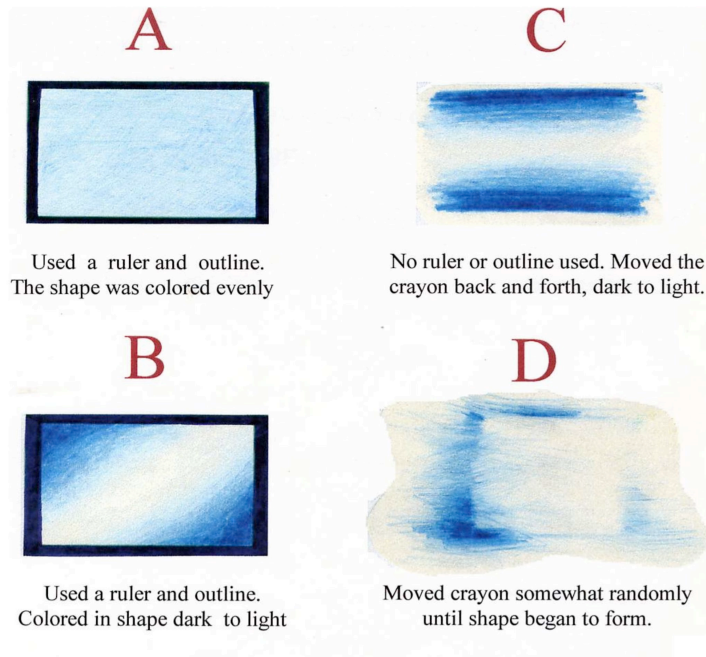


Figure 1 Four Models and Visual Metaphors

I drew and colored 'A' first, then 'B' emerged and so on. Although one may find *in between* minor variations on these four models of drawing/coloring, there are no significant variations.

Your task (20-30 minutes) is to copy these first in your mind, one by one. Start with A-ness and move to D-ness, as a mindful activity. Notice how you feel doing this and compare each one. Then draw them. You'll need a sheet of white paper, dark-colored pencil, a straight-edge and a black felt pen.

Quality Discernment: A Mindful Practice

The experience of making these is profound in terms of the degree of difference between 'A' and 'D.' The set of four depicts a full-spectrum of ways of organizing, creating, and being creative—and each with a distinctive aesthetic quality. Take a moment to write down notes on your experience, memories, and feelings connected with each type of drawing/coloring.

These are visual metaphors which have proven in practice to be heuristically engaging for learning about four types/models of creativity. They also have value for discussions of aesthetic qualities in art and life for older children.

As an art teacher, what is *your* answer to the question: *Which is the normal way of drawing and coloring?* (in the society you live in); using multiple choice answers ('A,' 'B,' 'C,' or 'D'). If you chose 'A' then you are one of approximately 98% of modern Western people, who believe that 'normal' drawing and coloring is based upon a formative design, and set of implicit and explicit rules, I call *A-ness*. What does this heuristic¹ research result tell us about 'normal' creativity and 'normal' creation-making processes, and about quality (value) preferences? I have asked nearly 700 people, from all walks of life, this question using the four models. Here are some other questions I have used. Answer them spontaneously yourself and record your results. Later in this article you'll be able to compare your results with others' responses.

List of Ten Questions: (re: Four Visual Models/Metaphors in Figure 1)

1. Which is the *normal* way of drawing and coloring a rectangular shape?
2. Which is the *best*?
3. Which is the most *beautiful*?
4. Which is the most *ugly*?
5. Which is the most *natural, living, alive*?
6. Which is the most *dead and machine-like*?
7. Which is the most *difficult to do*?
8. Which is most like *your personality*?
9. Which is most like *your parents (teachers) personalities*?
10. Which is the most *creative and artistic*?

Before proceeding to the lesson applications of this exercise for your students, a brief historical and theoretical context is offered to enrich the meaningfulness and purpose of this activity.

Historical Overview: Art Education Philosophy and Quality

The intention of this activity is to point out current dominating and habitual types of organization and aesthetic preferences in the art classroom and bring forth a critical awareness of a counter-diversity of perspectives and approaches essential to discerning quality in art and art-making.

As early as 1969 the Education Commission of the States coordinated a massive study of subject areas for standard assessment. In the area of Art they set five broad educational objectives of which number five was “make and justify judgments about aesthetic merit and quality of works of art” (Efland, 1990, p. 250). For some in art education this assessment was part of the content of art history and art criticism; yet it is more than that, and arguably it also involves the ability to assess quality in the students’ own art and art making as well.

Many art educators in schools today, especially in the current conservative environment of America, may not understand the subtleties of aesthetic development and its aim to improve *quality discernment*² and thus, are not attracted to teach it. They may be turned-off such an emphasis because of the controversial nature of assessing aesthetics and quality, the latter often being accused of “elitism”³—or, they simply don’t have time for it and have no idea how to assess quality by expected quantitative (objective) means. For these pressured contemporary art educators the emphasis on universal objective content-standards and strict accountability (e.g., *No Schools Left Behind* act) may have exhausted their initial enthusiasm for teaching and assessing aesthetic aspects in art education. Alienated teaching, is the inevitable outcome.

With such potential teacher resistance in mind and challenging classroom conditions, I have designed an easy to use template for lessons in *quality*.⁴ Art teachers and students are invited into *qualitative inquiry* as an approach to curriculum and pedagogy. Efland (1990), writing on the history of educational movements and their influence on streams of art education, labels “qualitative inquiry” as a constant rival movement of “accountability”; the latter, he argued has dominated education in America in the 20th century (p. 248) and beyond. This article and activity falls into a particular perspective (stream) of art education philosophy, that is, an integral perspective (*a la* Efland).⁵ The larger intention is to provide integral and appropriate means of matching assessment⁶ with “educational intentions” (see Davis, 2010).

Analyzing A-ness/D-ness

The two approaches on the left ('A' and 'B') are *Mechanical*, the two on the right ('C' and 'D') are *Organic* (Fisher, 1986). The qualities they exude and the processes that went into making them are A-ness, B-ness, C-ness and D-ness. Ideally, I show these to the students and have them copy them on paper in their own hand drawings/colorings. The *learning by doing* is basic to the *heuristic* teaching style and method (Beng, 2006; Broudy, 1972; Manzo and Manzo, 1994). Follow-up discussions with students, of diverse ages, around this experience are always pedagogically rich. One conclusion is that, we *become* as we enact the process of creation through the four different approaches. Students talk about feeling like a “machine” and “dead” when they make A-ness. They feel “free” and “alive” when they make D-ness, and so on. Each visual model is a metaphor for a set of organizing values and aesthetic preferences, and each is an imaginary pattern that guides us to promote and become those values—that is, a particular worldview, paradigm, and perspective.

Student Activity (Part 1): Basic “Drawing” Lesson for Quality Discernment

Give your students (grades 2-12, or adults) a drawing/coloring assignment on the first day of your art class. *Draw an apple*; the common symbol of education or schooling. “Why draw one, when I can download it from my “Clip Art” on my computer?,” a quick-pragmatic student might say or think to themselves (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Clip Art: Apple/School Symbol

“No, cheating, no digital,” you might say. *Draw by hand, an apple on a sheet of white paper using three colored pencils, red, brown and green. Draw from memory. Do the best job you can. You have five minutes and don't peek at others work. No copying.*

Observe their bodies and facial expressions. Witness the process of how they organize the problem. Do they draw small with cautiousness? Do they draw big with abandon? Where do they begin? Where do they end? As their art teacher, what would you draw? What would you have drawn, based on this assignment, when you were in grade 2? How creative is your apple drawing/coloring? How would you assess the quality, creativity and beauty? How would your students evaluate their own or others' work? Good teaching is: *heuristic*- "providing aid or direction in the solution of a problem . . . of or relating to exploratory problem-solving techniques that utilize self-educating techniques (as the evaluation of feedback) to improve performance" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1981, p. 533).

My experience, in a Western technologized capitalist world, using this exercise with children and adults over the years in art classes, is revealing. In terms of the level of creativity people can imagine and manifest in an art process and product—like the apple exercise above—the results are somewhat depressing. Are we such creatures of habit? Figure 3 depicts two major, virtually universal, process stages and techniques by which this class assignment is handled (i.e., problem-solved).



Figure 3 Two Major Stages of Drawing/Coloring an Apple

Granted, talented and visual arts majors in a college or university may not follow this formulaic approach in Figure 3. The assignment is solved by the vast majority using heavy drawn uniform outlines, followed by smooth homogeneous coloring inside the shape; monotone (flat 2-D) shading; neat and clean cut and lacking diversity in lines; authoritative, symbolic and stereotypical borders and shapes are maintained, with little to no transgressions 'outside the line'; predictable and strategically organized in a linear progression of parts and processes like a manufacturing assembly line or putting a puzzle together, all rather mechanically.

The standard drawing that comes out of this exercise is a symbolic 'apple' *cut-off* from the tree, from an environment, from the organic flow of Life, reality, and nature itself. There is no empathic affect of living "apple-ness" depicted as a whole experience; that is, there are no bruises, no mix-

ing of green and red and brown on the apple. Creatures that feed on apples and leaves are absent and no trace of a hole or cut is revealed in the apple surface. The leaf is always straight green, instead of being twisted, mostly brown and dead, as they often can be. There is no tree to be seen, nor earth nor sun, nor human bite into the apple. There is no living apple-narrative, and no significant individual expression or meaning depicted. Typically, all uniqueness, ambiguity, relational connectivity, wonder and mystery are left out by the dominating symbolic perfectionism of a properly (normal = A-ness) drawn and colored image.

It does not take a lot of imagination to create Figure 3. There is little spontaneous, curious or mindful inquiry; rather, a 'downloaded' fixed memory of what looks like a soul-less object ends up as the finished drawing/coloring. It hardly seems human and not very holistic.

A great deal of our modern standardized and culturally validated ways to draw and color, regardless of the object/subject, are depicted in this way. Is it ugly or beautiful? Is such a normative approach to modern image construction that of a declining epoch, a failed and falling civilization? One could argue all civilizations have built beautiful structures and ugly structures. These structures are physical and mental. Our mental structures and ways of organizing may be beautiful or ugly. Each culture/civilization goes through a growth cycle of expansion to a high cultural state of much created beauty and elegance to a decline phase of much ugliness (Applewhite, 1986). One could analyze and philosophize endlessly, and complexly, from a rather simple apple assignment.

Figure 3 depicts the Western-industrial *coloring book syndrome* of creativity with its concomitant qualities, values (i.e., aesthetics) and behaviors. The syndrome is started very young in children taught by well-meaning adults (Powers, 1997; Wood and LaBan, 1996). It represents a static flat worldview, which acts as a visual metaphor, that is more than merely a way of drawing/coloring; it is also a normative modern way of organizing reality, problem-solving, behaving properly, and representing the way "things should be" in a sociopolitical (ideological) sense. One thinks of the analogy when one looks at a standard world map of (symbolic) countries and compares that with the actual reality of the world as a sphere (e.g., photographed from space) in Figure 4. The thick rigid borders (i.e., boundaries, fences and walls) that divide the world into sovereign countries or owned-properties are certainly strange cultural-political (symbolic) markings of power and defense imposed on the natural landscape. What kind of creation do such markings (metaphors) inscribe and proscribe? Are they based on fear or love? Trust or mistrust? Unity or separation? Life or death? Beauty or ugliness? Sustainability or ...?

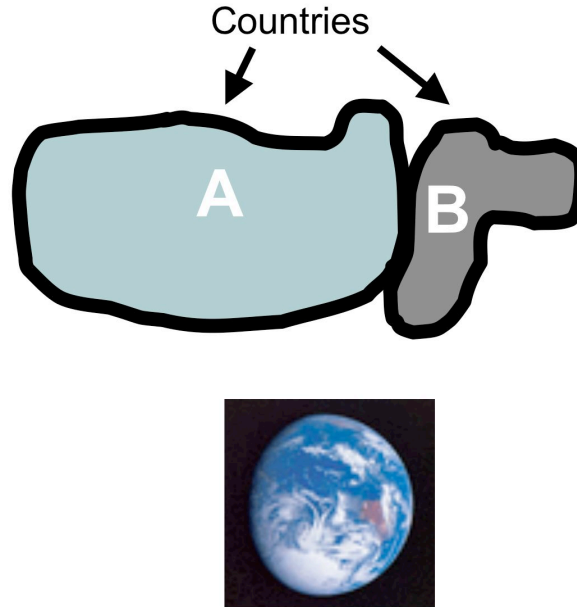


Figure 4 Comparison of Symbolic and Real Mapping of Earth

In recent years corporations like *Crayola* (the manufacturer of colored crayons and other art supplies) have heavily promoted their websites to children, parents and school teachers. Children may log-in on a computer and download all kinds of coloring books with pre-drawn digital images. Worse yet, is how they color the images. A digital color/paint palette is made available on the screen and by a “click” on a color, then on the heavy-bordered section of the coloring book; in a digital second—the child has controlled the “coloring” of a machine to reproduce “perfect” clean-in-the-line images.

In this digitalized procedure there’s a virtually complete dissociation of the organic hand, muscles, pressure, texture, and differential effects with coloring variations. The computer makes the same type of “coloring” each and every time (this author labels “A-ness”; see Figure 1); predictable, repeatable, isolating and boring (like Figures 2 and 3). One wonders if children really like doing these digital coloring books? What do they get out of them? Where is the creativity or quality in them?

Arguably, anything or anyone who makes something—is involved in a “creation” which utilizes a particular form of creativity. Surely, we ought to identify and critique the qualities in creations, as well. We ought to ask how the type of process of creativity in creations serves life or doesn’t. I suggest there is a universal *spectrum* of types of creation making or creativity (Fig-

ure 1) that teachers ought to be aware of. We ought to expose our students to them all, in order to expand their imaginary⁷ of quality and aesthetics.

Student Activity (Part 2): Questions and More Questions

A-ness is predominant in the apple drawing/coloring exercise. Now project Figure 1 on a wall or screen or provide students with a color photocopy of the four models (Figure 1). Ideally have them mimic them on a clean sheet of white paper with pencil crayons, felt pen, and ruler. If there isn't time, have them look at them while you describe how they are made, by reading out the description below each model. Once the students have some degree of exposure to the four models of creativity, I ask them questions (listed earlier). For example, the first question is: *Which is the normal way of drawing and coloring, in your opinion?* Students ought to be assured "there is no right and wrong answer, rather their opinions are important," which can be compared to others' opinions.

In a class or workshop group setting, I record their answers individually⁸ and sometimes anonymously. The data accumulates with each group and norms appear in their answers. Graphic research results can be shared with them later for reflecting on their own preferences and aesthetic values.

"The idea of heuristic teaching is a fresh idea that is over 2500 years old," traceable to Socrates teaching through questioning in ancient Greece (Manzo and Manzo, 1994, p. 35). Learning about quality, aesthetics and creativity and developing an imaginary for it, requires students and teachers learn how to explore—and learn to learn by asking questions. Encourage students at the end of this exercise to come up with observations of their own process. They may have other questions beyond the 10, that could be asked. They could take this exercise out to the whole school as a survey, and/or with friends and/or parents. The research possibilities are endless.

Some Significant Results

What result may come from asking question #10: *Which is the most creative and artistic?* Here are two samples. When I ask that creativity question of a mixed class of **second, third and fourth year Art Education majors** at an American university (n=12, in 2008) they respond as follows:

Mechanical: 'A' = 0 'B' = 1 *Organic:* 'C' = 1 'D' = 10

When I asked that tenth question of a **grade two class** of "extra-challenged" children

(n= 12, 1985) they responded as follows:

Mechanical: 'A' = 3 'B' = 4 *Organic:* 'C' = 4 'D' = 1

In this grade two class over half of the children pick A-ness and/or B-ness as the most creative and artistic in comparison to one out of 12 pre-service art teachers. That's cause for pedagogical disturbance and indicates a clear educative "gap" in the quality and aesthetic value discernment of art teachers in training relative to students.

How do these sample responses indicate perceptions of quality and aesthetic discernment in relationship to creativity and Life itself? What do they tell us regarding their ideas of "artistic"—and the general socialization of children? More and more questions can be asked. However, a superficial observation from these opinions, values, and choices above suggests that younger people tend to be more conditioned to favor the familiar *coloring book syndrome* (A-ness especially) than adults, at least when it comes to discriminating the "most creative and artistic" qualities of the four models. Again, the heuristic approach is not intended to statistically prove anything, rather it uses the empirical data from the visual metaphors and the questions asked to probe and learn more about our relationship to quality and the ethical implications thereof.

Summary and Applications

To teach heuristically about the nature of quality and aesthetics, and their relationship to art making, I suggest the use of the four visual models/metaphors (Figure 1). By exploring these as images or imaginaries on the first day of art class, the students are made aware of the fact that there is a spectrum of possibilities of ways to create, evaluate, and organize reality. They are made aware that the teacher is encouraging a diversity of approaches (i.e., models) in their art assignments. Yet, all four ways are valid; though some have more valid use for some things and others for other things. For example: A-ness is good for making "widgets" in industry; B-ness is good for making computer or television screens; C-ness and D-ness are good for making living things, etc.

Evidence from teaching has shown me that children and adults come into art classes with preconceived habitual notions of how to draw and color. Largely, they are unconscious of their biased approach and values. Some habits may be useful and some less so. That's not a new discovery to art teachers. Unfortunately, most of our learners are victims of the normalization of the coloring book syndrome (Mechanical approaches = A-ness or B-ness). Virtually, they are unaware of the other options (Organic approaches = C-ness or D-ness). Thus, their approach to and enactment of creativity in general is limited, reductionistic, and tends to be mechanical. The implication of such a limitation, to my way of thinking, is significant and will impact the rest of their problem-solving lives beyond the art classroom.

My own approach to art education, through practices of drawing and coloring, comes from a deep concern with the quality of the human-environment relationship. It seems we, in the Western technologized world, are on a rather tenuous course to ensuring sustainable (organic) life-conditions on this planet for future generations. Futurist Toffler (1980), in his book *The Third Wave*, made a good case that humanity “faces a quantum leap” in terms of changing the way we see the world and operate in it. The “industrial order” (Mechanical) can no longer solve all the problems it has created (p. 17). For Toffler, like this author, our habits and values have to change and transform. He suggested that there must be a “creative restructuring” the likes of which our species has not yet been confronted to make in its entire history (p. 9).

One of my aims is to teach art practices so learners experience the qualitative differences between A-ness and D-ness (Figure 1), and that they may at least decide that ‘normal’ drawing and coloring (Mechanical/Industrial = A-ness and B-ness) may *not* be the most beautiful, most alive, most creative and artistic. That change alone, would positively impact quality and move our societies to value and create imaginaries and real worlds more Organic and less Mechanical. Some educators-philosophers, like Herbert Read for example, would likely have argued that the Organic models (especially D-ness) consist of “spiritual values” that make art so important to a human existence beyond the “graceless and brutish” (Read, 1986, p. 113). Eco-feminist theologians, like Sallie McFague (1993, pp. 27-64) have thoroughly documented the history of the demise and rise of “The Organic Model” (in contrast to “The Mechanical Model”) and its role in shaping our civilizations and theologies. The ecological and sustainability imperative so many activists, educators and scholars are talking about today (e.g., Gradle, 2007; London, 2003), require us to shift our very aesthetic preferences in how we do things with “green” values. The role of art (drawing and coloring basic lessons) in that shift is undeniable. A whole lot less A-ness and more D-ness, please! The organic model requires more “mindfulness” than the others and is least alienated, when compared to MacDonald and Shirley’s (2009) descriptions. D-ness is validated as universal to the “human experience” by Fromm (1968).

To further apply the heuristic tool (visual metaphors for creativity) presented in this article:

1. follow-up from the apple exercise (Figure 3), and the visual metaphor exercise (Figure 1) by asking students in the next class to *draw an apple* using B-ness, then C-ness, then D-ness (and give them a full range of colors and media as appropriate to their age and skill sets); compare and contrast these images, ask more questions, and see if the students can find a fifth or sixth model beyond the four given

2. give the students a copy of the four models (Figure 1) and ask them to keep it with them when they evaluate and analyze art works, or when they walk around their home, or their neighborhood, or in a forest; all things (creations) are more or less made up of the qualities of A-ness, B-ness, C-ness, or D-ness.

I would *not* recommend using the device with very young children under four years old, so as not to overly-educate their imaginations that are still developing and exploring freely. For art educators, the model can bring a wealth of discussion into the art room, the staff room, and wherever else we are attempting to evaluate our educational and socialization biases through art-based means.⁹

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¹ Heuristic research (Moustakas, 1990) and phenomenological research (Braud and Anderson, 1998) are of particular value to guiding my work for the past 23 years using this A-ness/D-ness model. The aim, in essence, of both these interior and intuitive qualitative research methods is to explore intensively into the qualities of the models, their making as a process of art/creation, and their impact on the self and on others. The purpose is to deeply understand the perspectives we bring to the models and how the models reveal our perspectives as experience and learning, rather than as quantitative statistical generalizations per se.

² According to the Dept. of Art, Lander University (within the College of Arts and Humanities), following the discipline-based standards of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, of five broad program objectives, number two is: “gained at least a rudimentary discernment of quality in design projects and works of art.” Retrieved May 29, 2010 from <http://www.lander.edu/art/program/>.

³ Ralph Smith, aesthetic and art education philosopher, attempted a conceptualization of “excellence” in art education (1987) and had faced intense criticism that his excellence curriculum for art education was elitist (i.e., insensitive to marginalized perspectives, such as from feminists and African-Americans) (Efland, 1990, pp. 252-53).

⁴ *Quality* is a very complex and ambiguous aspect of reality and human discernment, with ethical implications, well explored by many philosophers and artists but none perhaps, as cleverly and accessible as Pirsig’s (1984) novel that inquires into values in our society.

⁵ The three main streams of American art education movements in the 20th century, according to Efland (1990) are *expressionist* (radical freedom of expression via romantic idealism), *reconstructionist* (education can transform society and appeared as “arts-in-education” movement) and, *scientific rationalism* (discipline-based, science-based and objectivist reforms with emphasis on technology and economics) (p. 261). These streams are different but related to what I see as four perspectives (lenses) one can bring to determining what is good quality “art education” and how to measure it: (1) education-based, (2) discipline-based, (3) humanities-based, and very recently (4) visual culture (new media)-based. Emphasis on aesthetics and quality discernment are primarily humanities-based (less so on discipline-based). The integral approach of Efland is one where one seeks a “harmonious confluence” (p. 262) as each stream or lens is brought to play together on the same stage, without allowing one to dominate (as has been the historical case). Efland (1990) wrote, “Today we are apt to talk in terms of balance among the arts, the sciences, and the humanities” (p. 263). Ken Wilber’s integral philosophy (relying somewhat on the critical theory of philosopher-sociologist Jürgen Habermas) names the “Big Three” forms of knowledge and validity; respectively, the Beautiful, the True, the Good (or aesthetics, science, morals). Efland, like Wilber, and myself, are interested in an integral approach that respects these different lenses and yet wishes to apply them critically, holistically, and appropriately to the intention of a particular inquiry and its assessment; that’s a complex topic beyond the scope of this paper.

⁶ An integral approach to art education (and educational philosophy) is beyond the scope of this paper to outline further. In particular, I utilize integral philosophy (*à la* Ken Wilber), of which references to his work and applications to assessment are developed by Davis (2010); see also my linking of art educator Ken Beittel with integral philosophy (Fisher and Bickel, 2006).

⁷ I distinguish “imagination” (in its ordinary use) from “imaginary” by the latter being a construct less psychological and more cultural, sociopolitical and historical. Imaginary encompasses more than the “mind” (as in the former); rather, it encompasses architecture, discourses, beliefs, values, perceptions all as a “whole”

imaginary that operates in cultures to influence the ways we can (and do) “imagine.” Figure 1, for example, is a spectrum of imaginaries not imaginations.

⁸ Pass out an index card or small sheet of paper to each student. Have them number from one to ten, leaving space for a short multiple-choice answer (‘A,’ ‘B,’ ‘C’ or ‘D’ but only one choice per question. Ask them to answer the questions spontaneously and quickly but accurately as to their opinion. You may ask them for their gender (M or F or other identity they as they wish) to be put on the top of the card and in some cases you may want their name on the card.

⁹ I would encourage anyone using this model (Figure 1) with the ten questions, or other questions, to send the data of students’ (anonymous) responses to: r.michaelfisher@yahoo.com