Kristóf Nyíri

Postscript:
The Victory of the Pictorial Turn

1. In the Beginning Was the Image

Pictures, carved, drawn, painted, belong to the primordial cultural heritage of humankind. Think of cave art. The earliest known cave paintings, those at the Chauvet cave, are some 37,000 years old or more. These paintings have an overwhelming quality of striking naturalism and realism (see e.g. Figure 1), applying foreshortening and hidden-line occlusion to provide perspective and depth. They do not

Figure 1: Painting of horse at the Chauvet cave.[1]

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[1] Jean-Marie Chauvet – Eliette Brunel Deschamps – Christian Hillaire, *Dawn of Art: The Chauvet Cave – The Oldest Known Paintings in the World* (1995), transl. from the French by Paul G. Bahn, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996, p. 113.

at all resemble primitive drawings like, say, those by children. Children's drawings, as Sully had famously put it, are "led not by a lively and clear sensuous imagination, but by a mass of generalised knowledge embodied in words".[2] Two decades ago Nicholas Humphrey has published a paper on the drawings of a child with mental deficiencies who possessed almost no verbal knowledge. The drawings show baffling parallels to the naturalism of early cave paintings. Attempting to offer an explanation for those parallels, Humphrey ventures to ask if it is not possible that "language was absent in the general population of human beings living in Europe 30,000 years ago", adding that the "standard answer, coming from anthropology and archaeology", is that "[h]uman spoken language surely had its beginnings at least a million years ago, and most likely had already evolved to more or less its present level by the time the ancestral group of *Homo sapiens sapiens* left Africa around 150,000 years ago".[3] Humphrey then goes on to quote some recent publications questioning the "standard answer", but does not seem to be aware of the immense literature, beginning with Plato's *Cratylus* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, reaching through the 18th century (Vico, Rousseau, Condillac, the Abbé de l'Épée) to the 19th (Sicard, Tylor, Mallery, Sittl), the 20th (Wundt, Critchley, Merleau-Ponty, Stokoe, Kendon, Hewes, Donald) and the 21st (Corballis), a literature maintaining that, and elucidating how and why, verbal language could not have possibly emerged before the coming into being of visual language – the language of gestures and facial expressions.[4]

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[2] James Sully, *Studies of Childhood*, New York: D. Appleton, 1896, p. 395. For a brief summary of some alternative directions in children's drawings studies today see my https://www.academia.edu/33641487/Childrens_Drawings_and_Common -Sense_Realism.

[3] Nicholas Humphrey, "Cave Art, Autism, and the Evolution of the Human Mind", *Cambridge Archeological Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1998), p. 173.

[4] The list of authors I provide above is far from being exhaustive. I offer a more detailed discussion of the topic in the chapter "Time and Image in the Theory of Gestures", in my volume *Meaning and Motoricity* (https://www.academia.edu /12683510/Meaning_and_Motoricity_Essays_on_Image_and_Time).

Let me here give three quotes. The first, from vol. I of Wilhelm Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie*, published in 1900. For Wundt, gesture language has "an originality and naturalness such as speech neither possesses today nor has ever had in any forms hitherto uncovered by linguistics"; he emphasizes the merits of the view according to which "gestural communication is the original means of communication. … gesture, as the natural aid of communication, preceded spoken language".[5] The second quote, from Critchley, maintaining, very much in line with what Wundt himself some pages later in his book claimed, that there is a " 'natural sign-language' of the deaf and dumb [which] is largely unfamiliar to outsiders and indeed many are unaware of its very existence. ... Even very young deaf-mutes communicate freely with each other and the presence of this natural sign-language at an age prior to their receiving systematic instruction points to an 'instinctive' or at least a primitive type of symbolization."[6] The third quote, of an earlier date, from a speech given by Amos Kendall at the inauguration of the College for the Deaf and Dumb in Washington DC, in 1864, summing up in a nutshell allegory the fundamental argument against the priority of verbal language: "We read", said Kendall, "that Adam named the beasts and birds. But how could he give them names without first pointing them out by other means? How could a particular name be fixed upon a particular animal among so many species without some sign indicating to what animal it should thereafter be applied?" In the course of human evolution, Kendall implied, it was the language of gestures,

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[5] Wilhelm Wundt, *The Language of Gestures* (English translation of a chapter of *Völkerpsychologie*, vol. I), The Hague: Mouton, 1973, p. 56.
[6] Macdonald Critchley, "Kinesics; Gestural and Mimic Language: An Aspect of Non-Verbal Communication" (a paper based in part on Critchley's 1939 book *The Language of Gesture*, London: Arnold, 1939), in his collection *Aphasiology and Other Aspects of Language*, London: Edward Arnold, 1970, pp. 305 f. I have discussed Critchley at geater length in my paper "Pictorial Meaning and Mobile Communication", in Kristóf Nyíri (ed.), *Mobile Communication: Essays on Cognition and Community*, Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2003, pp. 157–184.

and not verbal language, which introduced conceptual order into the episodic imagery of pre-linguistic thought.[7]

The definitive work on the topic is that by Michael Corballis, *From Hand to Mouth: The Origins of Language*, published in 2002.[8] The view Corballis unambiguously represents is that "human language evolved first as a system of manual gestures", with "communicative gestures emerg[ing] from actions on the physical world and … then adapted and conventionalized".[9] Indeed he agrees, also, with the position according to which "spoken words might themselves be better understood as gestures… … It may be … appropriate to think of speech … as combinations of sound 'gestures' that we can make by the deployment of … the lips, the blade of the tongue, the body of the tongue, the root of the tongue, the velum (or soft palate), and the larynx."[10] That is, Corballis sides with the so-called mouth-gesture theory, itself having a millennia-old history beginning with Plato. It was to Plato's arguments Geiger in 1869 returned when claiming that "language is an imitation by movement, a mimicking with the organs of speech".[11] And it was probably in the historical context of Geiger's (and Cassirer's) work the Hungarian playwright and critic Béla Balázs could write, in his 1924 film theory book *Der sichtbare Mensch*:

> Linguistic research has found that the origins of language lie in expressive movement – that is, that man when he began to speak moved his tongue and lips similarly to the other muscles of his face and body – just as an infant does today. Originally the purpose was not the making of sounds. The movement of tongue and lips was at first the same spontaneous gesturing as every other expressive movement of the body. That the former produced sounds was a secondary adventitious phenomenon,

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[7] I am quoting after David F. Armstrong – Sherman E. Wilcox, *The Gestural Origin of Language*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 8.
[8] Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 32 and 52.
[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 118 f.
[11] Lazarus Geiger, *Der Ursprung der Sprache*, Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1869, p. 180.

which was only later used for practical purposes. The imme-
diately visible message was thus turned into an immediately
audible message. In the course of this process, as in every
translation, a great deal was lost. It is the expressive move-
ment, the gesture, that is the aboriginal mother-tongue of the
human race.[12]

2. Image and Metaphor

Once the thesis of the historical priority of visual language is
accepted, and I do not see on what grounds it could be rejected, the
primacy of visual thinking, too, must necessarily be recognized. Our
early ancestors must have been thinking beings, but since they pos-
sessed no verbal language, their thinking must have been sensual,
and indeed fundamentally – this is what the evidence we have points
to – visual. As Rudolf Arnheim so compellingly shows in his *Visual
Thinking*[13], mental images are what we think with; words and sen-
tences are merely captions. Of course captions play an essential role.
Of course Allan Paivio's *dual coding approach*, underlining that the
thought processes of a normal human person today consist of the in-
teraction of imagery on the one hand and the verbal on the other, is
entirely convincing.[14] But in that interaction it is images that play the
dominant role. Discussing the question of how *verbal narratives* are
memorized, anthropologist Maurice Bloch argues that "narratives are
not stored as narratives", they are retained in the form of visual im-
agery, in the form of "imaginations of 'what it was like'"; it is the
"imagined event and ~~and~~ not the text that is remembered".[15] And
coming back to Paivio: recall his metaphor theory, proposing on the

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[12] English translation by Edith Bone, here quoted from Daniel Talbot (ed.), *Film:
An Anthology*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959, p. 283. I have rectified the
translation at one point.

[13] Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

[14] See especially Allan Paivio, *Imagery and Verbal Processes*, New York: Holt,
Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

[15] Maurice E. F. Bloch, *How We Think They Think: Anthropological Approaches
to Cognition, Memory, and Literacy*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1998, pp. 122 f.

basis of experiments, that to understand a new – "live" – metaphor involves visually – more broadly: sensually – imagining the picture the metaphor expresses.[16]

Nor is Paivio's proposal entirely new. In an early paper[17] Arnheim refers to works by John Murry and Stephen Brown, published in the 1920s. Murry argues, in a 1927 essay,[18] that there is merely "a formal difference between metaphor and simile and image", "metaphor is compressed simile". However, he points out, not every image is a "visual image"; we should reject "the suggestion that the image is solely or even predominantly visual". "The image may be visual, may be auditory, may refer back to any primary physical experience." By contrast to Murry, Brown definitely focuses on the role of the visual/pictorial. "Metaphor", he writes, "is in its origin an attempt to express in terms of experience thoughts lying beyond experience, to express the abstract in terms of the concrete, to picture forth the unfamiliar by means of the familiar, to express insensuous thought by sensuous terms." As he some pages later puts it: metaphor amounts to an "imported image coming vividly before our mental vision, while the notion which is the real subject of the discourse momentarily fades into the background, and is seen only through the image". And to conclude here with yet another essentially important passage by Brown: "The use of metaphor ... involves no sacrifice of truth. But I think we may go further and say that it may express a portion, or at

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[16] See Allan Paivio – Mary Walsh, "Psychological Processes in Metaphor Comprehension and Memory", in Andrew Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (1979), rev. second edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. For a more detailed description of Paivio's experiment see my "Time As a Figure of Thought and As Reality", in András Benedek and Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), *Images in Language*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2011, pp. 57–67.

[17] Rudolf Arnheim, "Abstract Language and the Metaphor" (1948), in Arnheim, *Toward a Psychology of Art: Collected Essays*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, pp. 266–282.

[18] John Middletown Murry, "Metaphor", repr. in Murry, *Countries of the Mind: Essays in Literary Criticism*, second series, London: Humphrey Milford / Oxford University Press, 1931, pp. 1–16.

least an aspect, of the truth which would not otherwise find expression."[19]

3. The Visual Mind

With images playing such an obvious role in mental processes it is understandable that philosophy, ever since Plato, took the human mind to be a predominantly visual one. The line from Plato through Aristotle to the British Empiricists in the 17th–18th centuries is continuous, but temporarily faded away in the last decades of the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries.[20] This was probably due, as Darwin's half-cousin Galton later hypothesized,[21] to the printed word becoming all too abundant. Based on empirical investigations, Galton outlined a well-rounded and extremely influential theory of mental images, a theory with immediate impact on Binet, James and Ribot, and exploited somewhat later by Titchener, Koffka, Russell[22] and innumerable others, with echoes even in Wittgenstein's thinking.[23]

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[19] Stephen J. Brown, S.J., *The World of Imagery: Metaphor and Kindred Imagery*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1927, pp. 33 and 50. For a more detailed exposition of Murry's and Brown's arguments see my online volume *Pictorial Truth*, https://www.academia.edu/32335788/Nyiri_Pictorial_Truth, pp. 116 –119.

[20] For a detailed exposition of the topics I am summarizing in the present paragraph and the next, see the sections "From Plato to Hume", "The Darwin Effect" and "The Visual and the Motor", in the chapter "Visualization and the Horizons of Scientific Realism" of my volume *Meaning and Motoricity* (cf. note 4 above).

[21] Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (1883), 2nd ed. London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1907.

[22] See Bertrand Russell, "On Propositions: What They Are and How They Mean" (1919), *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, 2, pp. 1–43, repr. in J. G. Slater (ed.), *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell*, Volume 8: *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism and Other Essays*, *1914–19*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1986, pp. 284 f.: "If you try to persuade an ordinary uneducated person that she cannot call up a visual picture of a friend sitting in a chair, but can only use words describing what such an occurrence would be like, she will conclude that you are mad. (This statement is based upon experiment.) I see no reason whatever to reject the conclusion originally suggested by Galton's investigations, namely, that

A particularly fascinating topic is the significance of mental images as seen from a religious-philosophical perspective.[24] Reflecting on the indispensable role of images in human cognition was of course never a characteristic preoccupation for philosophies of religion in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Still, there have been, and are, notable exceptions. Aquinas embraced, and built on, the Aristotelian dictum that "the soul understands nothing without a phantasm", and I take it that there is a close relationship between Aquinas's notion of phantasmata and our notion of mental images. Closer to our age, Cardinal Newman, in his *Grammar of Assent*, first published in 1870, interprets memory images as "reflections of things in a mental mirror", as "facsimiles of facts",[25] and points out that mental images possess a psychological power that mere concepts do not have. The Anglican theologian and philosopher Austin Farrer, in his 1943 book *Finite and Infinite*, taking up the notion of phantasmata construed the "concrete phantasma" as "a concrete image, but sketchy", underlining however that "there are cases in which the image is as explicit as we could make it".[26] Romano Guardini, one of the most influential Catholic intellectuals of the twentieth century, in his 1950 essay "The Senses and Religious Knowledge", stresses the role images play in the depths of our subconscious, ready to enter consciousness whenever appropriate external stimuli reach us. The

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the habit of abstract pursuits makes learned men much inferior to the average in the power of visualizing, and much more exclusively occupied with words in their 'thinking'."

[23] Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Preliminary Studies for the "Philosophical Investigations": Generally Known as the Blue and Brown Books*, ed. by Rush Rhees (1958), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964, p. 18.

[24] The passage here following I have taken over from my paper "Images in Natural Theology", in Russell Re Manning (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 581–594. For an unabridged online version of the paper see https://www.academia.edu/4365375/Nyiri_Images_in_Natural_Theology.

[25] John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, London: Burns & Oates, 1881, pp. 23 f.

[26] Austin Farrer, *Finite and Infinite: A Philosophical Essay*, Westminster: Dacre Press, 1943, p. 125.

innermost core of a human being, as Guardini puts it, is in the end essentially dependent on images, "sein inneres Wesen kann im Letzten … nur aus Bildern leben".[27] Another leading Catholic thinker, Karl Rahner, in 1983 gave a talk on the theology of images in which, referring back to Aquinas's formula *conversio ad phantasma*, he emphasized that traditional Christian anthropology has always regarded intellectual cognition on the one hand, and sensibility on the other, as forming a unity, so that even for the most sublime knowledge it is sensory experience that provides content.[28] The Russian Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov, in his 1972 book *The Art of the Icon*, underlined that the "visual is intimately associated with the intelligible; … the word and the image are closely linked".[29] On the Lutheran side, Rainer Volp, in his 1980 *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* entry "The Image As a Fundamental Category of Theology" recalled Schleiermacher's view that "in jedem wirklichen Denken Bilder mitgesetzt sind"[30], *in all genuine thinking images too are contained*. A relatively recent work with a Lutheran background is Sigurd Bergmann's volume *In the Beginning Is the Icon*. "[T]heology", Bergmann here maintains, "must learn to understand the uniqueness and autonomy of the visual medium. The image has a unique power vested in its capability of producing inner images with external measures and thus influencing our imaginative abilities and our capability to act in the tension between our internal landscapes

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[27] Romano Guardini, *Die Sinne und die religiöse Erkenntnis*, Würzburg: Werkbund-Verlag, 1950, p. 65.

[28] Karl Rahner, "Zur Theologie des Bildes", *Halbjahreshefte der Deutschen Gesellschaft für christliche Kunst* (München), vol. 3, no. 5 (1983), pp. 2–8, this formulation on p. 2; see also the revised version in Karl Rahner, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 30, *Anstöße systematischer Theologie: Beiträge zur Fundamentalontologie und Dogmatik*, Freiburg: Herder, 2009, this formulation on p. 472.

[29] Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty* (translation of *L'Art de L'Icône: Théologie de la Beauté*, Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1972), Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1990, p. 32.

[30] Rainer Volp, "Das Bild als Grundkategorie der Theologie", in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 6, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980, p. 558.

and external surroundings."[31] And in the book *Judaism: A Way of Being*, by David Gelernter, one encounters the following formulation: "Images are the stuff of thought. … we spend much of our mental lives … wrapped up in imagery, beyond the reach of language."[32]

4. Kinaesthesis

Coming back to Galton: he was especially struck by the problem that – bafflingly but obviously – those people, too, can get along with the task of thinking who appear to be unable to experience mental images. And this was his solution to the problem:

> the missing faculty seems to be replaced so serviceably by other modes of conception, chiefly, I believe, connected with the incipient motor sense, not of the eyeballs only but of the muscles generally, that men who declare themselves entirely deficient in the power of seeing mental pictures can nevertheless give lifelike descriptions of what they have seen and can otherwise express themselves as if they were gifted with a vivid visual imagination.[33]

The idea that the motor sense and visual imagery very much hang together was forcefully represented by the prominent turn-of-the-century American psychologist Titchener. "Meaning", Titchener claimed, "is, originally, kinaesthesis; the organism faces the situation by some bodily attitude… meaning is carried by all sorts of sensational and imaginal processes. … And words themselves, let us remember, were at first motor attitudes, gestures, kinaesthetic con-

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[31] Sigurd Bergmann, *In the Beginning Is the Icon: A Liberative Theology of Images, Visual Arts and Culture*, London: Equinox, 2009, p. 99. The book was first published in Swedish, in 2003.

[32] David Hillel Gelernter, *Judaism: A Way of Being*, New Haven: Yale University Press, Nov. 2009, pp. 3 and 20.

[33] Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, p. 61.

texts".[34] Words build on imagery, but imagery, Titchener stressed, builds on the motor dimension.[35] I venture to sum up the first part of Titchener's message in the following way: When an organism encounters a problem, it reacts with a motor answer. If that answer is not equal to the problem, and if the organism is one gifted with sight, it then *forms itself a picture of the problem* – that is, it creates a specific mental image.

5. From Typewriting to Photography

Titchener's ideas were soon submerged under the torrent of the "linguistic turn" the authors of the present volume have so often referred to. That turn, clearly, had many reasons. My outlandish conjecture is that one of them was the *typewriter* becoming the dominant device of scholarly production. Just as our computers and smartphones today have an influence on our ways of composing a text (or indeed texts combined with images, still or moving), so did the typewriter, by the 1900s, determine the thinking of its users. A famous early example is Nietzsche, who in 1882, summarizing his first type-
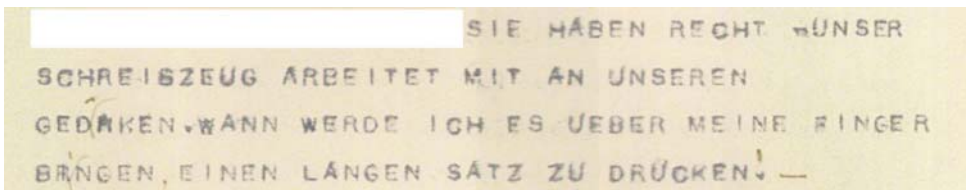

SIE HÁBEN REGHT .UNSER
SCHREIBZEUG ARBEITET MIT AN UNSEREN
GEDAKEN.WANN WERDE ICH ES UEBER MEINE FINGER
BRNGEN, EINEN LÁNGEN SÁTZ ZU DRÜCKEN. —

Figure 2: Nietzsche on typewriting.[36]

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[34] Edward Bradford Titchener, *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of the Thought-Processes*, New York: Macmillan, 1909, pp. 176 ff.

[35] For a broader framework describing Titchener's position see my paper "Towards a Theory of Common-Sense Realism", in András Benedek and Ágnes Veszelszki (eds.), *In the Beginning was the Image – The Omnipresence of Pictures: Time, Truth, Tradition*, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 2016, pp. 17–27.

[36] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Schreibmaschinentexte*, ed. by Stephan Günzel und Rüdiger Schmidt-Grépály (2002), rev. 2nd ed., Bauhaus-Universität Weimar – Universitätsverlag, 2003, p. 18.

writing experiences, punched onto paper: "our writing equipment takes part in the forming of our thoughts" (see Figure 2). One thinks what one types, and one can type only words. So one unlearns to think in images, and denies the possibility of thinking in images.[37]

However, the 20th century witnessed not only the triumph and dominance of the typewriter, but also the rise of photography and film. Psychologist and art theorist Rudolf Arnheim, an early representative of the Gestalt school, was influenced by Titchener, but even more importantly by the new visual arts, and by the Bauhaus movement analyzing the significance of those arts – recall László Moholy-Nagy and György Kepes (incidentally, both of Hungarian origin). Arnheim's decisive book is his *Visual Thinking.*[38] Two central passages from that book: "What makes language so valuable for thinking … cannot be thinking in words. It must be the help that words lend to thinking while it operates in a more appropriate medium, such as visual imagery."[39] Earlier Arnheim relates images – mental images as well as drawings expressing them – to *gestures*, pointing out that in gestures the visual is intrinsically bound up with the motor, with "the kinesthetic experiences of pushing, pulling, advancing, obstructing".[40]

6. Gombrich vs. Goodman

In the history of the pictorial turn the role of Arnheim's archrival Ernst Gombrich is widely misunderstood. The two had, ulti-

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[37] For a more detailed exposition of the above, see the section "Denken mit der Schreibmaschine" [Thinking with a typewriter] of my Leipzig inaugural lecture "Wörter und Bilder" [Words and images], published in *Humboldt-Nachrichten – Berichte des Humboldt-Vereins Ungarn*, No. 29, December 2007, pp. 24–32, see online at http://www.humboldt.hu/sites/default/files/hn29_woerter_und_bilder.pdf or at https://www.academia.edu/27619274/Image_and_Text_2006_German_talk. Hungarian translation published in *Világosság*, 2007, no. 9, pp. 3–12, see online at http://www.vilagossag.hu/pdf/20071109200756.pdf.

[38] Cf. note 13 above.

[39] *Visual Thinking*, pp. 231 f., I have alluded to this passage on p. 255 above.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

mately, rather similar views.[41] And both were sharply opposed to Nelson Goodman's position, even if the latter believed that his point of departure was Gombrich's 1960 book *Art and Illusion*. Now while in that book the beginnings of what we can call Gombrich's philosophy of images are certainly present, it was a number of studies written in the 1960s and 1970s in which that philosophy was actually elaborated. I have no space here to list those studies, but cannot omit mentioning the essay "The Visual Image", written for a *Scientific American* 1972 special issue on communication, where Gombrich on the one hand argues for the joint exploitation of the media of word and image, but on the other arrives at the momentous formulation that the "real value of the image … is its capacity to convey information that cannot be coded in any other way". Also, 1972 brought Gombrich's first direct attack on Goodman.[42] The second, devastating, attack came six years later, with Gombrich's paper "Image and Code: Scope and Limits of Conventionalism in Pictorial Representation",[43] vindicating the common-sense idea of pictures as natural signs, and explicating the controversial concept of *resemblance* by that of *equivalence of response*.[44] As Gombrich here momentously puts it: "the images of Nature, at any rate, are not conventional signs, like the words of human language, but show a real visual resemblance, not only to our eyes or our culture but also birds or beasts".[45]

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[41] For details on this and the following see the chapter "Gombrich on Image and Time", in my volume *Meaning and Motoricity* (cf. note 4 above).

[42] E. H. Gombrich, "The 'What' and the 'How': Perspective Representation and the Phenomenal World", in Richard Rudner and Israel Scheffler (eds.), *Logic & Art: Essays in Honor of Nelson Goodman*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972.

[43] Delivered at a symposium in 1978, published in Wendy Steiner (ed.), *Image and Code*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 11 and 17.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 21. This is the stance Arnheim refers to in his *Times Literary Supplement* review (29 October 1982) on Gombrich's collection *The Image and the Eye*, when he writes that here "Gombrich rises to the defence of the visual image and its inherent truthfulness, to which even animals respond – an image shaped by simplification and abstraction, to be sure, and by the conventions of pictorial styles, but nature's message nevertheless. … It is from this secure basis that Gombrich's future work should be able to proceed."

In contrast to Goodman, both Gombrich and Arnheim are epistemological realists. Let me quote two passages from Arnheim's essay "Inverted Perspective and the Axiom of Realism" (1972). He wants to make sure, Arnheim writes, that his position

> is not misunderstood to coincide with the relativistic contention that the choice of methods of representation is due entirely to the accidents of tradition. In the most extreme version of the relativistic approach, pictorial representation is said to have nothing intrinsically in common with the subjects it represents and therefore to rely on nothing better than an arbitrary agreement of the parties concerned.

Arnheim here inserts a reference to Goodman's *Languages of Art*,[46] and then continues:

> This trivially shocking challenge to beliefs taken as givens by the rest of the population is the direct opposite of what I meant to demonstrate. – … although we must realize that our continued commitment to a particular tradition of realistic picture-making has induced us to misinterpret other ways of portraying space, we are not left with the nihilistic conclusion that nothing but subjective preference ties representation to its models in nature.[47]

Also, let me cite a longer passage by Claire Golomb on how she sees relativism on the one hand, and Gombrich's relation to Goodman on the other:

> the notion of extreme relativism and of drawing as learning a language composed of arbitrary signs is not tenable. Authors frequently refer to E. H. Gombrich's view of art as a form of

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[46] The reference is to p. 15 of the Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968 first edition of Goodman's book.
[47] Rudolf Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 183 f.

illusion practiced by artists who study the graphic conventions of other artists rather than learning their trade by observing nature… This, however, is only a partial reading of Gombrich's position. He rejects Nelson Goodman's notion of graphic symbols as arbitrary conventions and insists that there are limits to perceptual relativism. … The search for meaning and the ability to perceive meaningful relations is part of our biological inheritance. The visual environment, according to Gombrich, is not neutral; our survival is dependent on the recognition of meaningful features that elicit approach responses or impel us to withdraw. Unlike words, the images of nature are not conventional signs; they are a natural language designed to apprehend meanings. Representations are meaningful statements because they stand in a systematic relationship to the objects of reality for which they create a graphic equivalent...[48]

7. Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Pictures

I believe Goodman had, and still today has, a detrimental effect on the philosophy of images. It is in no small measure due to that effect that Wittgenstein scholarship, and this is the theme I will conclude the present "Postscript" with, is unable to come to terms with Wittgenstein as a philosopher of pictures. Let me just give one example.[49] In the history of Wittgenstein research the first study that actually had Wittgenstein's attempts at a theory of images as its subject was Søren Kjørup's "Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Pictorial Languages", a talk given in 1980.[50] "Pictures", wrote Kjørup,

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[48] Claire Golomb, *The Child's Creation of a Pictorial World*, 2nd ed., Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004, pp. 358 f.

[49] The following passages I am taking over from my 2010 essay "Image and Metaphor in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein", repr. in my volume *Meaning and Motoricity*.

[50] Søren Kjørup, "Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Pictorial Languages", in *Wittgenstein – Aesthetics and Transcendental Philosophy*, edited by Kjell S. Johannessen and Tore Nordenstam, Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1981, pp. 159–173.

> always played an important role in the philosophical thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein. ... Wittgenstein never went so far as to formulate an explicit philosophy of pictures or philosophy of pictorial languages in its own right. … But from his many asides on pictures and his many examples drawn from our use of and experience with pictures one does get a rather clear impression of his implicit conception of pictorial languages. … And at certain points he even discusses pictures so straightforwardly and extensively that we come very close to an explicit theory.[51]

In his paper, Kjørup gives serious consideration to Wittgenstein's attempts, in *Philosophical Investigation*, Part II, sect. xi, to come to terms with the fact that pictures actually *depict*, that they represent by natural resemblance. Wittgenstein, as Kjørup puts it, does not deny in the *Philosophical Investigations* "that there is a connection between pictorial objects and real ones"; on the contrary, he asserts that towards, say, a "picture-face" one in some respects stands as one does towards a human face. " 'I can study its expression, can react to it as to the expression of the human face. A child can talk to picture-men or picture-animals, can treat them as it treats dolls.' " Wittgenstein, Kjørup points out, "here writes about our very direct and live relation to pictures: 'When I see the picture of a galloping horse – do I merely *know* that this is the kind of movement meant? Is it superstition to think I *see* the horse galloping in the picture?' " Wittgenstein in fact "stresses the difference between really experiencing a picture and just 'reading' it, as we might say: 'If you see the drawing as such-and-such an animal, what I expect from you will be pretty different from what I expect when you merely know what it is meant to be.' " However, after having given due scrutiny to these remarks by Wittgenstein, Kjørup deems them to be misguided. By contrast, he embraces the Wittgensteinian approach according to which as a "point of departure for theorizing on pictures one should not take 'idle' pictures, but pictures in use". The philosopher of images whose ap-

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[51] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

proach is in accordance with what the later Wittgenstein actually was up to, surprises us Kjørup, is Nelson Goodman;[52] and what the later Wittgenstein was actually up to was the elaboration of a *use-theory of pictures*. These are ideas which today dominate the field.

Of the famous and seminal philosophers of the 20th century the two most influential are, without any possible doubt, Wittgenstein – and Martin Heidegger. Wittgenstein, as I tried to indicate above, was a philosopher of pictures quite as much as he was a philosopher of language. Heidegger provided a very brief but well-rounded and indeed brilliant philosophy of pictures – unbeknownst to mainstream Heidegger research – in his 1929 *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.[53] Still, in contemporary philosophy, neither Wittgenstein nor Heidegger are regarded as figures who matter when it comes to the theory of the visual. As the present volume I trust convincingly demonstrates, in the real world, and in most of the humanities, the pictorial turn has actually happened. Philosophy, it appears, lags behind. The owl of Minerva, as so often before, takes her time before beginning her flight.

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[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 171, 167 f. and 172.
[53] For a summary of Heidegger on pictures see pp. 18 f. in my volume *Meaning and Motoricity*.