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what is an image? form as a category of meaning in philosophical anthropology

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The category of the image is generally understood in terms that emphasise its connection with visual perception.[1] The emphasis is justified in a certain sense, which we have to set out in clear terms. And yet, even in those intellectual traditions that make this connection all important, it seems that the image cannot be adequately defined as a perceptible visual form. Apart from other issues such a definition is not selective enough. James Elkins' position that the idea of the image in art history needs to be democratised gives a sense of the problem: if anything susceptible to singular perception in virtue of its form may be treated and studied as an image, the semantic coherence of the term and in particular its distinction from 'things in general' risks being lost.[2]

Those accounts that define the 'image' as a type of inner perception, or mental idea, are also insufficiently selective about what counts as an image. But they are troubling too for other reasons. The approach to the image as a type of mental idea pegs the topic of the image to the technical problem of mental perception and mental states, and over-emphasises the visual quality of the image. In some of the literature this gives rise to what may be seen from outside as minor squabbles over nomenclature: for instance, the 'image' gets tied to the seeming arbitrariness entailed in individual perception and opposed to the external solidity associated in the vocabulary of ordinary language philosophy with the 'picture'. Although there are facets of the image, notably its association with illusion, that perhaps

warrants the distinction between its 'internal' and 'external' existence, those debates focused on issues in mental perception and representation are not insightful about them.[3] This is because such approaches are anchored to the problem of distinguishing between true and false perception. The distinction, which is undeniably crucial in technical treatments of representation, is unimportant for the definition of the image. Indeed, in these technical definitions of the image, just as in the treatment of the image as the perception of organised form, the general analytical utility of the term is undermined.

Work in the field of art history, on account of its subject matter, does not concern itself with the issue of erroneous perception of form. However, different problems for a robust definition of the image are raised here. Some scholarship, impressed by the impact of new technologies, takes an unnecessarily historically restrictive approach. Eric Alliez, for instance, argues that the impact of photography was to place 'the image in crisis'.[4] However, if we consider the fact that even in its various technological modes of existence and communication the image is distinct from the physical media that transmits it, important consequences follow for such technologically inflected treatments of the image. To abbreviate a point that could be developed at more length: such treatments of the image deal not with (the concept of) the image, but with various media of its communication. Their historical sensitivities, I think, can obscure one of the crucial features of the image—that is, the striking fact of its trans-historical and cross-cultural presence, which makes the talk of the image as such being 'in crisis' somewhat odd. The continuity of the link between human life and the various activities associated with image production and reception outweighs the transformations wrought by the technological innovations to the media that communicate images.

Other limitations are placed on the analytical reach of the concept of the image in the scholarship that faithfully observes traditional ways of formulating the ontological components of the image. The ontological approach frames the image as the 'absent', 'invisible' or 'substantial' term that is rendered 'present', 'visible' or 'material' in an icon. In Christology the image is located in the ternary structure of the doctrine of incarnation. God is incarnated in the *imago dei* of the son who, in turn, stands behind iconic representations. This onto-theological definition of the image as split between image and icon is adopted and revised, even in those positions that are critical of the coherence of its dualist division between the 'natural' image and the 'artificial' icon. For instance, Jean-Luc Nancy's treatment of the topic of the image is structured entirely by the role the image has in the

dualist framework of the incarnation of God in the onto-theological conception of Western metaphysics. He considers this tradition to be fundamental for the contemporary field of image production and reception. For Nancy, the credibility of the notion that a substantial 'idea' stands behind the 'icon' as its intelligible ground has been lost. In our modern, nihilist condition we are left with material sites of presentation as the only basis for the expression and communication of 'ideas'.[5] His rehabilitation of the category of the image thus has in view a critical assessment of the coherence of the dualism between ideas and materiality, which he takes to be the all determining framework for considering images.

In fields of scholarship that do not take the 'onto-theology' of Western metaphysics to be all determinant, the way the image is framed also draws on organising features of this dualist model of representation. Hans Belting's 'anthropology of images' refers, for example, to the 'invisibility' of the image to define the capacity of images to withstand iconoclastic destruction. His conception of the image relies on the thesis of derivation that belongs to the dualist model, although he contends the relevant point of departure is not that of an invisible essence, but an 'original' and 'immediate' environment.[6] Marie Jose-Mondzain treats the relations between images and icons in the onto-theological conception as an 'economy.'[7] Like Belting, the emphasis in her account is on the ineradicable status of the image; even the iconoclasts, she points out, rely on images to regulate the relations of people to the institutions of earthly power.[8] The use of the dualist structure in either of these cases may obviously be cited as a corrective to Alliez's position, which fuses the image to the site and media of its presentation.[9]

In this essay, I would like to step back from these theories of the image and propose an alternative approach. The hypothesis I will venture here is that the question 'what is an image' is entangled with another: that of the 'significance' or 'meaning' of the image. An image that exerts a hold and that lives beyond its medium presupposes an agent who is engaged by it, i.e., who finds it meaningful or significant. Further, I think it can be argued that the image engages its recipient in a highly specific way: it provides the meaning context for action. In this respect, its defining quality is the 'immediacy' it possesses in its power of communication, a quality that can be contrasted with the discursive categories of conceptual explanation or doctrine. To expound this position I will argue that the image is more than a visual presentation; more precisely, I will show that what is distinctive about the image is that it possesses a communicative force that is surplus to its perceptible form.[10] It is this force that differentiates the image from other kinds

of perceptible form.

To make this case, I would like to define the surplus quality or force of the image in relation to two specifications: its artificiality; and its power.[11] These specifications show, I think, that and how the image is more than an object of visual perception, but they also indicate that the 'surplus' characteristics of the image address anthropological needs or desires and are in this regard very far from being able to be, pace Alliez, put 'in crisis' as a result of changes to the technology of any given media. The image is indispensable for human life because it allows human beings to step outside their ordinary experience. More precisely, the image allows the reworking of that experience for the purpose of framing it in a more or less comprehensive system of meaning. In this regard, the meaning communicated in an image provides support for ideas that would not otherwise have existential resonance.

THE ARTIFICIALITY OF THE IMAGE

Characterization of the image as 'artificial' follows from its status as a specific type of organised form. Form is to be distinguished from bare materiality as perceptible order. The distinction between form and materiality signals not that the image is devoid of material features per se, but that, on account of its artificiality, it is distinguishable from its immediate environment (and transferable to contexts beyond it) by virtue of the fact that it is perceived to carry an intention, hence a meaning. This feature of the image is important since it helps to explain how an image communicates more than its perceptible features. Further, its formal character is the basis on which the image may exercise something analogous to conceptual force in both its organising relation to an environment and its transferability between different contexts. The crucifix is a good example of an image that has these aspects of 'artificiality' and 'transferability'.[12] I will return to this example. We can also mention Immanuel Kant's idea of the 'technic of nature', which views nature in the prism of its receptivity to human moral ends. Nature is thus re-calibrated in some respects to the framework of intention and thus meaning.[13]

First, to get at the nature of the 'artificiality' of the image, it is helpful to contrast briefly the two major ways of approaching this topic in some works of philosophical anthropology. These may be roughly labelled the 'speculative' and 'functional' approaches to the image. The form of the image is fundamentally the index of the

meaning ascribed to it, this is the conclusion that can be drawn from the functional approach to the image. We can appreciate the implications of this point by considering the limitations of the speculative approach to the image.

Hans Jonas, who I take to represent the speculative approach, has argued that the ability to create and comprehend images requires the capacity to distinguish form from matter. In his view, this capacity signals at once the distinctive freedom of human beings from other animals, and their propensity, given the basis of the image in the mere appearance of form, to error and illusion. The image requires both a separation from the object (so that *form* is perceived independently of the *presence* of the thing) and a grasping of *appearance* as distinct from *reality*. The 'generality' of form is won by the independence of the image from the physical medium of its carrier as well as from the object depicted. The image thus has the status of an 'intermediary, posed between two physical realities—image qua thing and depicted thing.' This 'intermediary', he writes, 'is the *eidos* as such, which becomes the real object we experience'.[14] The question to ask of Jonas' account is what can be experienced in form? Jonas looks past this question in order to defend the unique capacities of human beings that, according to him, the 'intermediary' status of the image indicates. The human being's capacity for a free relation to their environment pivots on their capacity to perceive and make form. He explores the implications of this point through an analogy between the image and the word.
It is as 'form' that images 'do in visible fashion what names do invisibly: [that is, they] give things a new existence qua symbol.'[15] This new existence is defined partly by the generality of what is thereby perceived, and partly by the creativity it allows in relation to the environment. On both counts the production and reception of images signals the distance from particular things that is necessary for human cognition, imagination and speech. Jonas refers to the Genesis story of Adam's naming language and comments: the one who names takes 'a step beyond creation'.[16] It is the generality of the name that 'preserves the archetypical order of Creation in the face of its manifold replications in individual cases. Thus, the symbolic duplication of the world through names is at the same time an ordering of it according to its generic prototypes. Every horse is the original horse, every dog the original dog'.[17] And he continues: 'The generality of the name is the generality of the image. The prehistoric hunter did not draw this or that bison but *the* bison—every possible bison was thereby evoked, anticipated, remembered. Drawing an image of something is analogous to calling it by name, or rather is its unabridged form, since it makes physically present that inner image of which the phonetic sign is an abbreviation and whose generality alone makes it applicable to

the many individual specimens.'[18]

The comparison between name/or word and image is based in a number of factors: the origin of the line in graphic depiction, the shift from individual, interior experience, such as Jonas' 'inner image', to sharable experience in language and the exterior, symbolic form of the image, etc. Both word and image involve the idea, above all, that the shift from particular things or individual cases to representation is a move away from immediacy and that with such distance comes freedom in respect to the environment, if not some degree of control over it. Crucially, this control has a temporal dimension insofar as it includes the memory of past as well as the anticipation of new situations. The analogous structure of word and form points to the artificial nature of the image, in the sense that the presence of intention is discernible in it. Nonetheless, the approach does not set a high enough bar for organised form to qualify for the status of an image. This is because in its structuring comparison with the word, all that is required for an organised form to be an image and to order an environment is the classificatory feature of the (general) type. But this feature is synonymous with form itself, or rather it is implied by the distinction between form and materiality. Missing from Jonas' conception of the artificiality of form is an account of the source of the communicative power of the image. This topic cannot be adequately treated through his position that the generality of the image makes it the visual counterpart to the word. After all, the image does not just allow freedom in relation to the environment; it produces a world, whose transmission of 'meaning' is direct and immediate, and not necessarily reliant on visual perception. In this respect, a full definition of the image calls into question the terms of Jonas' comparison, since it allows, what many would consider to be the uncontroversial point, that an image can be expressed in words.

In functional approaches the question of the effectiveness of the image comes to the fore. With this focus many of the habitual ways of looking at the image in the speculative tradition are discarded.

According to the functional perspective the species engages its environment through the image or form in general, in the modes of both compensation and basic operability. Viewed this way, the image is part of the repertoire that helps to manage the peculiar 'instinct deficiency' of the species in its dealings with the environment. Aesthetic activities are not expressive or creative outlets that testify to the nebulous idea of human 'freedom' but foundational aspects of the species'

techniques of survival. Furthermore, an image is less a derivative depiction in form of a part of some pre-existing substantive 'reality' (Jonas' image qua 'thing') than it is a means of orientation that provides an alternative framework for dealing with reality. As such, an image is always an orientation toward the 'whole' environment, even if, or precisely because it treats the complexity of this environment, whatever it is, in highly selective ways.

Hans Blumenberg has argued that the basic function of the image is that of managing the specific needs of an instinct-deficient creature who inhabits a *hostile* environment. He links the phylogenetic scope of the claim of human 'instinct deficiency' to certain inescapable ontogenetic existential settings, most notably anxiety. It is the 'situational leap' that occurs in human evolution that is the core of Blumenberg's account.[19] In his parsing of the leap to the bipedal posture Blumenberg notes that whether it was induced 'by an enforced or accidental change in [its] environment', there was a significant 'sensory advantage' in assuming this posture. Whatever the cause of the leap, 'that creature had left the protection of a more hidden form of life, and an adapted one, in order to expose itself to the risks of the widened horizon of its perception, which were also those of its perceivability'. This leap 'made the unoccupied distant horizon into the ongoing expectation of hitherto unknown things'. The creature's efforts to adapt to this situation grapple with the need to overcome 'the loss of the old state of concealment in the primeval forest'. On the one hand, having left '[t]he shrinking rain forest ... for the open savannah', the species finds and perfects a new type of 'hidden' environment when it settles 'in caves'. The bipedal creature thus meets 'new requirements for performance in obtaining food outside [its] living places' and it pursues the 'old advantage of undisturbed reproduction and rearing of the next generation, with its prolonged need for learning, [but it does so] now in the protection of housing [i.e., the cave] that was easy to close off from the outside'. He concludes that an existence defined by the activities of 'hunting and [rearing]' was the outcome of 'the overcoming of the loss of the old state of concealment in the primeval forest'. Blumenberg calls the 'totality' of the factors that go with this situational leap, 'the absolutism of reality'. And he argues that the leap itself 'is inconceivable without super-accomplishment in consequence of a sudden lack of adaptation.'[20]

For my purposes what is significant is that the character of such super-accomplishment is to find artificial adaptation where natural adaptation is lacking. In this respect, the distance attained through form is double edged and it has decisive existential consequences. For instance, there is 'the capacity for foresight',

the way of anticipating 'what has not yet taken place' and the 'preparation for what is absent, beyond the horizon.' The operability the image gives to the deficient creature is to the fore here. It makes the environment familiar. Specifically, the image defines the environment as hospitable for action. Before the horizon is given shape in the substitutive form of an image, there is raw 'anxiety': the state of 'pure...indefinite anticipation'.[21] In anxiety, consciousness is in an alert state of intentionality, but it has no object. The effect is a levelling and intensification of the feeling of threat: 'the whole horizon becomes equivalent as the totality of the directions from which "it can come at one."' The reality/openness of the horizon cannot be processed and alternatives need to be found. This leads to panic or paralysis; and it is the symbolic substitution of the entirety of the horizon, that is, the effective deployment of the image, that is its remedy. 'Freud described the complete helplessness of the ego in the face of overwhelming danger as the core of the traumatic situation'.[22] For Blumenberg, the species' emergence from the protective cover of the primeval forest into the open savannah is directly parallel to the Freudian conception of the traumatic situation. The account of the leap is thus the relevant frame for considering how an individual manages the 'absolutism of reality'. More than this, it can be used to specify the artificiality of the image as a basic strategy for dealing with this absolutism in and beyond the anthropogenetic (also anthropotechnic) model used in Blumenberg's conception. An instinct deficient creature compensates for the 'absolutism of reality' through activities of 'artificial' substitution. The broader implications of this point are worth considering. The 'environment' in question may include any number of variants that address the features of an unmanageable horizon by substituting for it a new one. Here we might include religious practices that treat human mortality through the perspective of the afterlife; or speculative, philosophical theses that in their attempts to push for global explanations rely on constructions that are more than what philosophical argumentation alone can accomplish. Each of these practices involves images that are substitutive formations of a 'whole'. To have a world is always the result of an 'art', or an artificial substitution for 'reality' [i.e., a raw, unprocessed, complex environment].[23] What is important is that the awareness of the unpredictable horizon also requires a creature able to anticipate it.

The mode of anticipation in an image of a totalised or definitive situation is artificial in respect to the open horizon. It has to be. And from this perspective, the thesis of the artificiality of the image seems to invite scepticism about how a meaningful experience of the world is cobbled together: that is to say, it invites scepticism about the pivotal role artificial techniques of adaptation have in dif-

ferent practices of belief, including intellectual ones. The image is effective as a tool of orientation because it provides an agent with a definite situation. In this sense it is a medium of commitment for this [artificial/totalised] situation. The image provides not a specific outlet for derivative depictions of lost features of the immediate environment [Belting], or a luxurious mode of expression of human freedom prone to error as much as invention [Jonas]. It provides a tool of mediation to manage the absolutism of reality; and the key here is that the factor of mediation, whatever the 'reality' it manages, has existential functions. The 'reality' the image manages is the nebulous 'threat' that comes from the horizon, and its structure is also one of the orientation needed to anticipate the possibilities that come from the horizon. In all of these respects, the image may be defined as perceptible meaning that orientates action. The image provides [artificial] security of purpose; this is what it substitutes for the anxiety instilling raw awareness of an open horizon. What is crucial is that this function of orientation operates through a substitution that engages its recipient.

THE POWER OF THE IMAGE

The engaging status of an artificial form is the basis of the power of the image; it is what distinguishes an image from mere organised form and secures for it a life beyond particular media.[24] Once again, I will refer to Blumenberg to help set out this second characteristic of the image. In Blumenberg's topography of 'hunting' (outside) and 'rearing' (inside), the interior space of the cave allows for the assertion of the absolutism of the 'wish' embodied in the image in opposition to the absolutism of the 'reality' outside the cave.

The closed space of the cave reinforces the magical features of the image; it binds the image to the structure of the wish: 'the closed space allows what the open space prohibits: the power of the wish, of magic, of illusion, and the preparation of effects by thought'.[25] The powers that flourish in the protected space of the cave cover over the artificiality of the image; they assert its 'reality' against the absolute 'reality' of the open space that would otherwise dissipate its force. The power of the image in Blumenberg's genetic conception may be rephrased to give it more general applicability. Indeed the specific account of the origins of the image in the bipedal 'situational leap' may be replaced with a general opposition between a 'reality principle', or open horizon, and the rebuttal or counter it faces in and through the image. In particular, this more general perspective can help to identify the disposition that the 'recipient' of an image maintains to effect the

power of the image outside of the space of its genesis. It also lets us consider different contexts in which this work on the image occurs.

The artificiality of the image counters raw reality: it is an effective embodiment of meaning able to stem the dispersion of events. Its power lies in its defining what is pertinent in a given situation and this also means that it consigns some factors to irrelevance. In its function of selection, the image must be understood as a procedure, which gathers further meanings in addition to those at stake in its original deployment. In this respect, the space of its origins does not confine the power it thereby wins. The point can be elucidated through comparison with rule-following behaviour. The transferability of a rule is a crucial part of its successful functioning as a rule—it is in these conditions that a 'precisely determined result' may be produced that is not confined to 'the time and place of the procedure'.[26] Similarly, the powers of the image, such as its capacity to provide a survey of an unarticulated field of data, and its qualities, including its magical aura, are transferable across contexts. Thus whatever the original motivation for the painting of the images in the cave, whatever importance they had for the first painter, they are a 'procedure' that can be applied in a secondary confrontation to the world: 'In the hunting magic of his cave pictures the hunter reaches, from his housing, out and across to the world'.[27] (Or, as Walter Benjamin puts it: 'in his pictures the hunter remembers the feel of the blow he used to kill the beast', i.e., the hunter preserves the moment and makes it available for further use.)[28] The status of the image as a 'procedure' with secondary functions is akin to the conceptuality of the word in that both are transferable across contexts and their meaning functions adapt to new contexts.

Nonetheless if we follow Blumenberg's lead and consider the image in functional terms, the analogy between word and image that is so central in the literature on the topic seems inadequate. In one direction the analogy breaks down because words also function as images; they communicate feelings and organise a context for action. In the other direction, however, this analogy becomes especially problematic when we consider the distinctive power of the image, which contrasts markedly with the operations of the word in its conceptual functions.

The image invokes, whereas the word evokes. A word points its recipient to a concept that is not related to the phonetic structure or material form of the sign. The word evokes because it refers to a concept entirely dissimilar to the sign that represents it. In contrast, the image has the power to draw its percipient in; its power

to engage is the meaning it embodies. There is thus a different mode of representing in the sign and in the image. And there is also a different order of representation in each. If the relation of the word to what it evokes is in some ways arbitrary, the image, in contrast, 'is' in abbreviated form the idea it invokes. The key difference between word and image is that the image does not provide, as the sign does, conceptual order to the world - it provides instead a fundamental experience of meaning that cannot be gainsaid and that may indeed be used to generate and justify conceptual order.[29] In some substantial way the image embodies what it refers to. At the same time, what is distinctive about the image is that its power of invocation exceeds its physical medium, or component elements, but that it does so by making present in some way the meaning it bears. For this reason, the image itself is liable to become sacred. And it is the meaning it embodies for its recipient that underpins that possibility.

The contrast that opposes the initial context from which the image derives its power to the 'reality principle' that would dissipate that power is replicated in other frameworks too. We can cite the conception of aesthetic space in Kant's aesthetic theory, which requires a suspension of pragmatic and cognitive perspectives to confer expressive power on diverse categories of form, including tools from lost civilizations, the play of light in a fire and the encounter with singular instances of natural beauty, like the surprise encounter with the flower in nature.[30] The expressive power of such forms is a feature of the suspension of instrumental attitudes in the aesthetic attitude. Similarly, religious rites require a suspension of ordinary experience in order to mark out the heightened significance that is due to ritual forms.[31] In each of these cases the image provides the practical definition and orientation towards a world where none 'really' exists, whether that of the afterlife in religious ritual, or the moral view of the world in Kant. (Leroi-Gourhan re-phrases the same point when he characterises human symbolic activity as the activity that allows its recipients to step outside ordinary experience).[32] The image gives these artificial ideas a foothold or a niche that they don't otherwise have. Finally, we might also mention the distinctive processes identified in psychoanalysis as modes of obsessive and phobic attention to particular objects. In each of these cases a secluded space protects and secures for particular forms their distinctive power of signification. The psychoanalytic conception is important because it locates the role of psychic labor in establishing and maintaining the signification of form and thus extending the 'magical' power of its operation beyond the confines of its original installation.[33] Equally, in the cases of Kantian aesthetics and the maintenance of world order in religious rites,

the power of the image also depends on its capacity to engage its recipient. The way an image engages its recipient is the basis of the life any image might acquire beyond its origins.

In prayer the god presents itself to the faithful somehow. Similarly, if the image invokes, in some way its formal elements, however paltry, such as the crucifix worn on a necklace, embody a narrative, a constellation of ideas that engages its recipient. Put in other words: the image presents in abbreviated and transportable form the meaning of the phenomenon that it invokes. For example, the image of the cross does not narrowly refer to Jesus on the cross, but it presents a whole conceptual horizon or narrative, a rich constellation of concepts or notions. Moreover, what is important is that the figure of the cross itself acquires the power of what it represents, namely the credibility of the idea that the sacrifice of the Son of God to save humanity occurred. The deficit in the representational properties of the image is, as Plato complained, repaid in full in the power the image nonetheless has to invoke the experience of its 'object'.

I have argued here against the view that the contemporary ubiquity of the image must mean the erosion of its (conceptual) coherence and hence its potential as an analytic category. Against this widespread view, which tends to conflate the category of the 'image' with technological media, I have outlined the idea that an image is a sensuous experience of meaning that organises a world and inclines its recipient to particular paths of action.

I have also argued against those speculative positions from philosophical anthropology that conflate the category of form with that of the image. Sensible forms and the sense these have for the perceiver are constitutive of perception; they are aspects of the structure of perception. But the meaning embodied in the image is the 'something more' that makes the sensible form the prompt of a definite way of existing and acting meaningfully. This significance is not strictly speaking the property of perceptible form, rather it is contributed by its dynamic relation with the recipient of the image. As such, the capacity to convey meaning does not belong to the perceptible form per se. This means that among the locations of the image we must count sites such as memory, dreams and imagination. Indeed, as Hans Belting has argued, one should expect to find the image especially in these locations, since they are (presumably) places of meaning, that is, nothing but emotionally charged and selected representations.[34]

An image that works for and on its recipient is artificial in the sense that it conveys a meaning, specifically, the (presumed) intention of making one live and act in a certain way, hence its 'power'. The image is transferrable to contexts other than its original one and can take on additional layers of meaning. Human instinct deficiency may be the basis of culturally inherited meaning practices and their tools, such as the image. This is at least how the matter has been presented in the German tradition of philosophical anthropology. What is important is that whether it is a painting in a cave, a cross that is worn around someone's neck or a vivid scenario in a treatise, the image is a tool for the expression and communication of meaning. In the way it engages its recipients, the image is an artificial horizon that sets a context for human life and action.

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NOTES

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2. James Elkins, *The Domain of Images* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), see the Preface and 10. The position that focuses on organized form specifically aims to undo the pertinence of the distinction between 'art' and 'non-art' for defining the field of images. Elkins opens his book with the following statement: 'Most images are not art', 3. Although the de-restriction of images from the field of art is necessary, the ubiquity of the image that results is unhelpful. Another type of restriction of the field needs to be found.

3. Much is made in commentary on this position that the German 'bild' means *both* 'image' and 'picture', but even if such commentary endorses the association of the image with a subjective impression rather than the objective presence of a picture or looks for a type of combination between them, it sanctions the idea that we are dealing with degrees of perceivable form. The 'image'/ 'picture' distinction is often made in ordinary language philosophy, but it has also been used in studies of the disciplinary and institutional functions of the vocabulary of images. See W.T.J. Mitchell, 'What is an Image?', *New Literary History,* Vol.15, No. 3, Spring, 1984, 503-537, especially 507-512. A set of terms that does not presuppose that mental representations and perception are 'visual' would go against the assumption in Hume and others that percepts and mental images are differences in degree not kind. According to Thomas, cognitive science defines mental imagery as an unspecified form of representation and hence avoids the controversy as to whether 'the relevant representations are, in any interesting sense, picture-like.' See Nigel J.T. Thomas, 'Mental Imagery', Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), *Stanford Encyclo-*

pedia of Philosophy. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mental-imagery/(Accessed 4 August, 2016).

4. Eric Alliez and Jean-Claude Bonne, 'Défaire l'image' *Multitudes,* 2007/1, No.28. www.cairn.info/revue-multitudes-2007-1-page189.htm (Accessed, November 1, 2015). It would be unfair to characterise Alliez's position on the image solely as a response to technological innovations. He and Bonne describe their position as an 'archaeology' in Foucault's sense. Hence the way that the form-image becomes marked as a problem certainly responds to the omnipresence of images after the advent of photography. However, Alliez's focus is on how the form-image and the form-aesthetic is 'unmade' in modern art through his selection of the twin polarities of Matisse and Duchamp. Amongst the relevant aspects of Matisse's practice for this project are his disregard for categories of figurative or non-figurative form and what Alliez refers to in his Deleuzian terminology as the 'machinic' status of color.

5. See Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses,* trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994) and *The Ground of the Image,* trans. Jeff Fort (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2005). See my discussion of the intricacies of Nancy's position on the image, Alison Ross 'Image-Politics: Jean-Luc Nancy's Ontological Rehabilitation of the Image', *Nancy and the Political,* Ed. Sanja Dejanovic (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2015) 139-163.

6. He writes "images make a physical... *absence* visible by transforming it into iconic presence." The way he articulates this position draws specifically on the role of funereal images in standing in for the "*missing body* of the dead." These images need an artificial body to take the "vacant place of the deceased". This artificial body is "the medium (and not just 'material')" body. Images in general, Belting argues, require "embodiment in order to acquire visibility." The body of the image is not the image, and the medium of images can include the dreams and memories of the human body. Belting, *An Anthropology of Images,* 3, his emphases. Belting's use of the "body" in some of his formulations can seem imprecise in its inclusion of dreams and memory, which is supported by his insistence that mental phenomena belong to the body. The position conveniently skirts the literature that attempts to specify the relation of the two and asserts instead that images "colonize our bodies (our brains)", 10. The use of the language of colonization in this elision is not incidental: "... even if it seems that we are in charge of generating them, it is in fact the images that are in control", 10.

7. Marie-José Mondzain, *Image, Icon, Economy: The Byzantine Origins of the Contemporary Imaginary,* Trans. Rico Franses (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). The general perspective of her study relates to the status of what

she terms "the visible world", "the one that is given to us to see." Is this world, she asks, one of "liberty or enslavement?" (Mondzain, 3). She takes the dualism of the image used strategically in the Byzantine iconoclast controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries to underwrite the field of images per se, and especially the contemporary stakes of our relation to images in which both a participatory relation to meaning and the imposition of the authority of images are possibilities. A strategically formulated conceptual position is thus given trans-historical significance and enduring continuity for practices involving images: "In order to be able to envisage a world radically founded on visibility, and starting from the conviction that whatever constitutes its essence and meaning is itself invisible, it proved essential to establish a system of thought that set the visible and invisible in relation to each other. This relation was based on the distinction between the image and the icon. The image is invisible, the icon is visible. The economy was the concept of their living linkage. The image is a mystery. The icon is an enigma. The economy was the concept of their relation and their intimacy. The image is eternal similitude, the icon is temporal resemblance. The economy was the theory of the transfiguration of history" (Mondzain, 3). Some of the themes Mondzain treats are also prominent in Jean-Luc Nancy's attempts to rehabilitate the image from the metaphysical dualism under which its materiality is seen as different in kind from the invisible idea that is 'behind' and 'grounds' it in some way. And like Hans Belting's account of the image, Mondzain's account of the 'natural image' emphasizes that to see an image is to see things, specifically the natural meaning of the image, in their absence. Mondzain, 3; on Nancy and Belting, see respectively Notes 5 and 6.

8. Like Nancy, there is a tendency in Mondzain's work to over-systematise the results of her case study of the image. In fact, the terms of her treatment are limited to quite specific contexts. I will argue here for a functional idea of the image that identifies the common application of the term across different contexts: including, religious, aesthetic, intellectual and political. Further, one of the tenets of my position will be that the adaptive practices involved in the image render what is strange familiar and thereby increase the pragmatic hold humans exert within an environment. This is the function of the meaning an image is presumed to carry. Mondzain thinks, in contrast, that the participatory meaning practices involved in the image encourage hospitality to foreign others. This position seems overly speculative.

In Mondzain's account, the central concept in considering the image is 'economy', specifically the economy of its relation with the icon. There is a "resistance to philosophical consideration of the concept of the economy", she argues.

She thinks this resistance is the result of 'an unconscious refusal of modern subjects to recognize the common foundations of our thinking about the image and the institutions that govern us in an ecclesiastic manner' (4). And: "each great convulsion of religious and political thought' raises the question of the legitimacy of the image" (5). On her view, this question is managed by the distinction between the natural, invisible image and the artificial, visible icon. In her study of Nikephoros' defence of the icon in the Byzantine iconoclast controversy, she argues that the distinction is a strategic one which guards the use of images from the charge of idolatry and serves the temporal power of the church. Economy is the concept that allows the mastery of images, since it allows the speed with which an image operates and its emotional effectiveness to be used for 'profane objectives', without incurring the charge of idolatry, 6. What precisely does the image embody? Like Belting and Nancy, she contends that the invisible meaning of the image is not exhausted in any visible form. The 'artificiality' of the icon refers specifically to its ontological deficiency, but it recruits this deficiency for pragmatic purposes. The formulation of the economy of relations between image and icon preserved the religious image from the charge of idolatry. Simultaneously, this conceptual move opens the field of images up to participatory meaning practices. I think such practices do not depend on conceptual moves; although they may indeed be rendered legible or conceptually precise through them.

9. As Hans Belting points out in relation to Alliez, *Anthropology of Images,* 25-6.

10. Form may be distinguished as either perception of the environment in ways distinct from the perception of matter, or as the modelling and making of form as ways of organising the environment, as in the naming use of language or in image production. The form carries such force in so far as the meaning it communicates organises a view of the whole. My thesis is that something more than perceptible form is trafficked through the image. Hence it is 'artificiality' rather than 'illusion' that is the important category in assessing what images are and what they do. The artificiality of the image is the way that vital meaning is invoked and processed as an organising frame for action. Artificiality refers to the status of form as the product of an intention and to its organising status vis-à-vis the otherwise unprocessed, raw, or 'real' environment. For a systems theoretical discussion of how meaning has this organising function in a 'raw' environment see Niklas Luhmann, *Essays on Self-Reference* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1990), especially, 6-27. This use of artificiality must be distinguished from the dualist approach to the image which allocates artificial representation to the icon and natural presentation to the image on ontological grounds. See Notes 7 and 8 above.

11. Walter Benjamin objects to the auratic power of the image, which he thinks

involves 'the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be' (Walter Benjamin, 'The Artwork in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Third Version', *Selected Writings*, *Volume IV*, *1938-1940*, Ed. Michael Jennings (Boston, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003) 251-284, 255. The experience of the captivating effects of the image sets off a cycle of self-absorbed reflection in modern aesthetic experience. The authority of the image is intensified in the private, self-involving reverie an image stimulates in its 'spectator'. This can be contrasted with the iconoclasm that tries to destroy the power of the image as well as with the magical and religious practices of ritual, which are collective, and that aim to enhance this power. Finally, Benjamin sees in the existential hold of the image a crucial resource of conversion to revolutionary positions. These different positions on the image are hard to reconcile without due reference to his organising historical distinction between modern and pre-modern forms of experience. They are occasionally assigned different evaluative significations across the different periods and contexts of his writing. Nonetheless, in each case the references to the image endorse the thesis that effective images are those that possess the existential power of immediate meaning for their recipients. See my discussion of the complexities involved in Benjamin's thinking of the image in Alison Ross, *Walter Benjamin's Concept of the Image* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015).
12. See Niklaus Largier, 'The Poetics of the Image in Late Medieval Mysticism', Walter S. Melion and Lee Palmer Wandel, Ed.s, *Image and Incarnation: The Early Modern Doctrine of the Pictorial Image,* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2015) 173-187. Largier shows how in Meister Eckhardt and his student Henry Soso, the fact of the incarnation is treated as an overcoming of the representational function of images. This is because the incarnation is a divinisation which frees 'man' from images. In Soso's case, however, incarnation does not entail iconoclasm, but a path that goes 'through images' to get beyond them, 177. The 'path' is a perpetual negotiation with images. For Soso, the image of the naked man on the cross is of specific significance. This image arranges something like the degree zero of experience. On the one hand, it installs 'the challenge and desire to be one with that figure' 'where all perception is nothing else than being touched and being shaped by the image that emerges from the abyss of all emergence', 187. But, on the other hand, such a state of a 'bare, meaningless, naked and tactile' figure in which we exist in a 'sheer state of receptivity' can 'never be reached' in this life. Accordingly, Soso outlines a condition of constant movement between the dependence of humans 'on a visual poetics that produces the allegory, the rhetorical effects of sensation and affect', which will in Largier's words: 'turn time and again into the bare figure that [we]... ultimately cannot grasp conceptually but only reiterate in

the encounter with the image. This movement back and forth is, if we want to say so, the birth of aesthetic experience', 187.
13. Kant argues that 'not so much as a blade of grass' can be understood on the basis of mechanical principles alone (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987) §78, 296). The teleological principle, i.e., the idea of purpose in form, is required for the understanding of order in nature. Similarly, in his treatment of aesthetic judgment Kant entertains the assumption that the 'contingent' accord between the subject's feeling of pleasure and nature's 'organised forms' shows the receptivity of nature to 'man's moral vocation' and allows us to posit a 'technic of nature' (Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 'First Introduction', 421) in which nature may be supposed to have an interest in this vocation. In aesthetic judgment the postulation of such a technic organises nature's forms for meaning-effects in that it makes them compatible with intention (Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §42, 165-7).
14. Hans Jonas, 'Tool, Image, and Grave: On What is Beyond the Animal in Man', *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good After Auschwitz* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996) 75-86, 80. Jonas' attempt to define the specificity of human beings may be compared with Frans de Waal's view that moral sentiments, such as equality, may be shared with other primates, but moral debates are, for instance, 'uniquely human': 'There is little evidence that other animals judge the appropriateness of actions that do not directly affect themselves. ...This is what sets human morality apart: a move toward universal standards combined with an elaborate system of justification, monitoring, and punishment.' Like Jonas, de Waal argues that it is the reasoning process of speculative generality that is distinctly human. Frans de Waal, *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism Among the Primates* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 2013) 18.
15. Jonas, 'Tool, Image, and Grave', 82.
16. Jonas, 'Tool, Image, and Grave', 82.
17. Jonas, 'Tool, Image, and Grave', 82-3.
18. Jonas, 'Tool, Image, and Grave', 82.
19. Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 4.
20. All citations in this paragraph are from Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 4. The original uses "mothering", which I have replaced with "rearing".
21. Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 4.
22. Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 4 - 5.
23. Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 7.
24. Cf. Belting, *Anthropology of Images*. Belting shows that images survive between generations because one of their 'media' is the human body and brain, which sus-

tains the image in memory and dreams. See especially, chapter 2, pages 44-51.
25. Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 8.
26. Blumenberg, *Work on Myth,* 8.
27. Blumenberg, *Work on Myth,* 8.
28. Walter Benjamin, 'The Knowledge that the First Material on which the Mimetic Faculty Tested Itself', *Selected Writings: Volume 3, 1935-1938*, Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings, Ed.s (Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 2002) 253.
29. We may refer here to work that tries to clarify how an image of an intellectual endeavour performs justificatory work for that endeavour. Similarly, attention to the ways that the use of a specific image may help to endorse a thesis that otherwise might not seem remotely credible shows in what senses the image provides an ordering and artificial orientation for experience of the world. Each of these points is given focused treatment from an institutional perspective in Michèle Le Doeuff's, *The Philosophical Imaginary* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989). See in particular the 'Preface: The Shameful Face of Philosophy', 1-21, and the chapter 'Long Hair, Short Ideas', 100-129.
30. See Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, for the reverie occasioned by reflecting on flames in a fireplace ('General Comment on the First Division' 95) and for the tulip and the 'stone utensils' from ancient civilizations ('Explication of the Beautiful Inferred from the Third Moment', 84, n.60).
31. See Jonathan Z. Smith, 'The Bare Facts of Ritual,' *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 53–66.
32. André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993) 294.
33. See Sigmund Freud, 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year Old Boy' (Little Hans), *Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud*, *Volume 10*, Ed., James Strachey (London, UK: Vintage, 2001).
34. Hans Belting's approach emphasises in this way the relation between beholder and 'image', *An Anthropology of Images*, 27-32, 39-40. See also Note 23.