I

What Is an Image?

There have been times when the question "What is an image?" was a matter of some urgency. In eighth- and ninth-century Byzantium, for instance, your answer would have immediately identified you as a partisan in the struggle between emperor and patriarch, as a radical iconoclast seeking to purify the church of idolatry, or a conservative iconophile seeking to preserve traditional liturgical practices. The conflict over the nature and use of icons, on the surface a dispute about fine points in religious ritual and the meaning of symbols, was actually, as Jaroslav Pelikan points out, "a social movement in disguise" that "used doctrinal vocabulary to rationalize an essentially political conflict."[1] In mid-seventeenth-century England the connection between social movements, political causes, and the nature of imagery was, by contrast, quite undisguised. It is perhaps only a slight exaggeration to say that the English Civil War was fought over the issue of images, and not just the question of statues and other material symbols in religious ritual but less tangible matters such as the "idol" of monarchy and, beyond that, the "idols of the mind" that Reformation thinkers sought to purge in themselves and others.[2]

If the stakes seem a bit lower in asking what images are today, it is not because they have lost their power over us, and certainly not because their nature is now clearly understood. It is a commonplace of modern

1. See Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition,* 5 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974–), vol. 2, chap. 3, for an account of the iconoclastic controversy in Eastern Christendom.

2. See Christopher Hill's chapter on "*Eikonoklastes* and Idolatry" in his *Milton and the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), 171–81, for an introduction to this problem.

cultural criticism that images have a power in our world undreamed of by the ancient idolaters.[3] And it seems equally evident that the question of the nature of imagery has been second only to the problem of language in the evolution of modern criticism. If linguistics has its Saussure and Chomsky, iconology has its Panofsky and Gombrich. But the presence of these great synthesizers should not be taken as a sign that the riddles of language or imagery are finally about to be solved. The situation is precisely the reverse: language and imagery are no longer what they promised to be for critics and philosophers of the Enlightenment—perfect, transparent media through which reality may be represented to the understanding. For modern criticism, language and imagery have become enigmas, problems to be explained, prison-houses which lock the understanding away from the world. The commonplace of modern studies of images, in fact, is that they must be understood as a kind of language; instead of providing a transparent window on the world, images are now regarded as the sort of sign that presents a deceptive appearance of naturalness and transparence concealing an opaque, distorting, arbitrary mechanism of representation, a process of ideological mystification.[4]

My purpose in this chapter is neither to advance the theoretical understanding of the image nor to add yet another critique of modern idolatry to the growing collection of iconoclastic polemics. My aim is rather to survey some of what Wittgenstein would call the "language games" that we play with the notion of images, and to suggest some questions about the historical forms of life that sustain those games. I

3. Susan Sontag gives eloquent expression to many of these commonplaces in *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), a book that would more accurately be titled, "Against Photography." Sontag opens her discussion of photography by noting that "humankind lingers unregenerately in Plato's cave, still reveling, its age-old habit, in mere images of the truth" (p. 3). Photographic images, Sontag concludes, are even more threatening than the artisanal images Plato contended with because they are "potent means for turning the tables on reality—for turning *it* into a shadow" (180). Other important critiques of modern imagery and ideology include Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 217–51, Daniel J. Boorstin's *The Image* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image/Music/Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977, 32–51), and Bill Nichols, *Ideology and the Image* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).

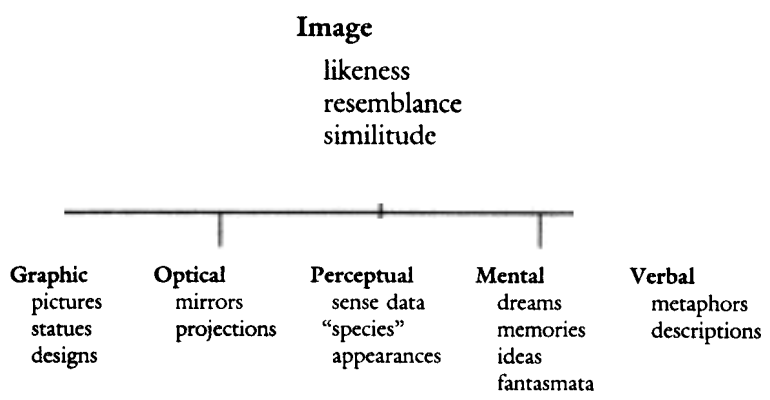
4. For a compendium of recent work predicated on the notion that images are a kind of language, see *The Language of Images*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

don't propose, therefore, to produce a new or better definition of the essential nature of images, or even to examine any specific pictures or works of art. My procedure instead will be to examine some of the ways we use the word "image" in a number of institutionalized discourses—particularly literary criticism, art history, theology, and philosophy—and to criticize the ways each of these disciplines makes use of notions of imagery borrowed from its neighbors. My aim is to open up for inquiry the ways our "theoretical" understanding of imagery grounds itself in social and cultural practices, and in a history fundamental to our understanding not only of what images are but of what human nature is or might become. Images are not just a particular kind of sign, but something like an actor on the historical stage, a presence or character endowed with legendary status, a history that parallels and participates in the stories we tell ourselves about our own evolution from creatures "made in the image" of a creator, to creatures who make themselves and their world in their own image.

The Family of Images

Two things must immediately strike the notice of anyone who tries to take a general view of the phenomena called by the name of imagery. The first is simply the wide variety of things that go by this name. We speak of pictures, statues, optical illusions, maps, diagrams, dreams, hallucinations, spectacles, projections, poems, patterns, memories, and even ideas as images, and the sheer diversity of this list would seem to make any systematic, unified understanding impossible. The second thing that may strike us is that the calling of all these things by the name of "image" does not necessarily mean that they all have something in common. It might be better to begin by thinking of images as a far-flung family which has migrated in time and space and undergone profound mutations in the process.

If images are a family, however, it may be possible to construct some sense of their genealogy. If we begin by looking, not for some universal definition of the term, but at those places where images have differentiated themselves from one another on the basis of boundaries between different institutional discourses, we come up with a family tree something like the following:



Each branch of this family tree designates a type of imagery that is central to the discourse of some intellectual discipline: mental imagery belongs to psychology and epistemology; optical imagery to physics; graphic, sculptural, and architectural imagery to the art historian; verbal imagery to the literary critic; perceptual images occupy a kind of border region where physiologists, neurologists, psychologists, art historians, and students of optics find themselves collaborating with philosophers and literary critics. This is the region occupied by a number of strange creatures that haunt the border between physical and psychological accounts of imagery: the "species" or "sensible forms" which (according to Aristotle) emanate from objects and imprint themselves on the wax-like receptacles of our senses like a signet ring;[5] the *fantasmata,* which are revived versions of those impressions called up by the imagination in the absence of the objects that originally stimulated them; "sense data" or "percepts" which play a roughly analogous role in modern psychology; and finally, those "appearances" which (in common parlance) intrude between ouselves and reality, and which we so often refer to as "images"—from the image projected by a skilled actor, to those created for products and personages by experts in advertising and propaganda.

The history of optical theory abounds with these intermediate agencies that stand between us and the objects we perceive. Sometimes, as in the Platonic doctrine of "visual fire" and the atomistic theory of *eidola* or *simulacra,* they are understood as material emanations from objects,

5. *De Anima* II.12.424a; W. S. Hett, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 137.

subtle but nevertheless substantial images propagated by objects and forcibly impressing themselves on our senses. Sometimes the species are regarded as merely formal entities, without substance, propagated through an immaterial medium. And some theories even describe the transmission as moving in the other direction, from our eyes to the objects. Roger Bacon provides a good synthesis of the common assumptions of ancient optical theory:

> Every efficient cause acts through its own power, which it exercises on the adjacent matter, as the light [*lux*] of the sun exercises its power on the air (which power is light [*lumen*] diffused through the whole world from the solar light [*lux*]). And this power is called "likeness," "image," and "species" and is designated by many other names. . . . This species produces every action in the world, for it acts on sense, on the intellect, and on all matter of the world for the generation of things.[6]

It should be clear from Bacon's account that the image is not simply a particular kind of sign but a fundamental principle of what Michel Foucault would call "the order of things." The image is the general notion, ramified in various specific similitudes (*convenientia, aemulatio, analogy, sympathy*) that holds the world together with "figures of knowledge."[7] Presiding over all the special cases of imagery, therefore, I locate a parent concept, the notion of the image "as such," the phenomenon whose appropriate institutional discourses are philosophy and theology.

Now each of these disciplines has produced a vast literature on the function of images in its own domain, a situation that tends to intimidate anyone who tries to take an overview of the problem. There are encouraging precedents in work that brings together different disciplines concerned with imagery, such as Gombrich's studies of pictorial imagery in terms of perception and optics, or Jean Hagstrum's inquiries into the sister arts of poetry and painting. In general, however, accounts of any one kind of image tend to relegate the others to the status of an unex-

6. Quoted in David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 113.

7. See Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), chap. 2.

amined "background" to the main subject. If there is a unified study of imagery, a coherent iconology, it threatens to behave, as Panofsky warned, "not like ethnology as opposed to ethnography, but like astrology as opposed to astrography."[8] Discussions of poetic imagery generally rely on a theory of the mental image improvised out of the shreds of seventeenth-century notions of the mind;[9] discussions of mental imagery depend in turn upon rather limited acquaintance with graphic imagery, often proceeding on the questionable assumption that there are certain kinds of images (photographs, mirror images) that provide a direct, unmediated copy of what they represent;[10] optical analyses of mirror images resolutely ignore the question of what sort of creature is capable of using a mirror; and discussions of graphic images tend to be insulated by the parochialism of art history from excessive contact with the broader issues of theory or intellectual history. It would seem useful, therefore, to attempt an overview of the image that scrutinizes the boundary lines we draw between different kinds of images, and criticizes the assumptions which each of these disciplines makes about the nature of images in neighboring fields.

We clearly cannot talk about all these topics at once, so the next question is where to start. The general rule is to begin with the basic, obvious facts and to work from there into the dubious or problematic. We might start, then, by asking which members of the family of images are called by that name in a strict, proper, or literal sense, and which kinds involve some extended, figurative, or improper use of the term. It is hard

8. *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1955), 32.

9. The entry on "Imagery" in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), begins with a definition that could have come straight from Locke: "an image is a reproduction in the mind of a sensation produced by a physical perception."

10. I will have more to say about the fallacy of the "copy theory" of mental imagery in what follows. For the present, it might be helpful to note that both critics and proponents of mental imagery have fallen into this fallacy when it serves the purposes of their arguments. Proponents of mental imagery see the copy theory as a guarantee of the cognitive efficacy of mental images; true ideas are regarded as faithful copies that "reflect" the objects they represent. Opponents have used this doctrine as a straw man for debunking mental images, or for claiming that mental images must be quite unlike "real images" which (so the argument goes) "resemble" what they represent. For a good introduction to the debate between modern iconophiles and iconophobes in psychology, see *Imagery,* ed. Ned Block (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981). The best critique of the copy theory is provided by Nelson Goodman in *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), discussed below in chapter 2.

to resist the conclusion that the image "proper" is the sort of thing we found on the left side of our tree-diagram, the graphic or optical representations we see displayed in an objective, publicly shareable space. We might want to argue about the status of certain special cases and ask whether abstract, nonrepresentational paintings, ornamental or structural designs, diagrams and graphs are properly understood as images. But whatever borderline cases we might wish to consider, it seems fair to say that we have a rough idea about what images are in the literal sense of the word. And along with this rough idea goes a sense that other uses of the word are figurative and improper.

The mental and verbal images on the right side of our diagram, for instance, would seem to be images only in some doubtful, metaphoric sense. People may report experiencing images in their heads while reading or dreaming, but we have only their word for this; there is no way (so the argument goes) to check up on this objectively. And even if we trust the reports of mental imagery, it seems clear that they must be different from real, material pictures. Mental images don't seem to be stable and permanent the way real images are, and they vary from one person to the next: if I say "green," some listeners may see green in their mind's eye, but some may see a word, or nothing at all. And mental images don't seem to be exclusively visual the way real pictures are; they involve all the senses. Verbal imagery, moreover, can involve all the senses, or it may involve no sensory component at all, sometimes suggesting nothing more than a recurrent abstract idea like justice or grace or evil. It is no wonder that literary scholars get very nervous when people start taking the notion of verbal imagery too literally.[11] And it is hardly surprising that one of the main thrusts of modern psychology and philosophy has been to discredit the notions of both mental and verbal imagery.[12]

Eventually I will argue that all three of these commonplace contrasts between images "proper" and their illegitimate offspring are suspect. That is, I hope to show that, contrary to common belief, images

11. For the most exhaustive case against the propriety of the notion of literary imagery, see P. N. Furbank, *Reflections on the Word 'Image'* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1970). Furbank debunks all notions of mental and verbal imagery as illegitimate metaphors, and argues that we should confine ouselves to "the natural sense of the word 'image', as meaning a likeness, a picture, or a simulacrum" (1).

12. Mental imagery has, however, been making a comeback. As Ned Block observes, "after fifty years of neglect during the heyday of behaviorism, mental imagery is once again a topic of research in psychology" (*Imagery,* 1).

"proper" are not stable, static, or permanent in any metaphysical sense; they are not perceived in the same way by viewers any more than are dream images; and they are not exclusively visual in any important way, but involve multisensory apprehension and interpretation. Real, proper images have more in common with their bastard children than they might like to admit. But for the moment let us take these proprieties at face value, and examine the genealogy of those illegitimate notions, images in the mind and images in language.

The Mental Image: A Wittgensteinian Critique

> Now for the thinking soul images take the place of direct perceptions; and when it asserts or denies that they are good or bad, it avoids or pursues them. Hence the soul never thinks without a mental image.
>
> Aristotle, *De Anima* III.7.431a

A notion with the entrenched authority of three hundred years of institutionalized research and speculation behind it is not going to give up without a struggle. Mental imagery has been a central feature of theories of the mind at least since Aristotle's *De Anima,* and it continues to be a cornerstone of psychoanalysis, experimental studies of perception, and popular folk-beliefs about the mind.[13] The status of mental

13. Plato compares memory images to impressions in a wax tablet in the *Theaetatus,* and his theory of Forms is often invoked in support of innate or archetypal images in the mind. Empirical studies of mental imagery have generally followed the Aristotelian tradition, inaugurated in the *De Anima*'s account of perception: "sense is that which is receptive of the form of sensible objects without the matter, just as the wax receives the impression of the signet ring without the iron or the gold" (II.12.424a). Imagination for Aristotle is the power of reproducing these impressions in the absence of sensory stimulation by the objects, and it is given the name of "phantasia" (derived from the word for light) because "sight is the most highly developed sense" and serves as the model for all the others. While various features of this model were questioned, its fundamental assumptions remained in force through the eighteenth century. Hobbes, for instance, debunks the Aristotelian notion of the "visible species," which plays the role of the signet ring in sensory impressions, but accepts the notion of imagination as decaying sense (see *Leviathan,* chaps. I and II). Locke acknowledges the similarity between his views of perception and those of Aristotle in his *Examination of P. Malebranche's Opinion* (1706). The first real opponent of mental imagery, the Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid, regarded Aristotle's doctrine of the phantasm as the beginning (to quote Richard Rorty's summary), of "the descent down the slippery slope which led to Hume." See Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 144.

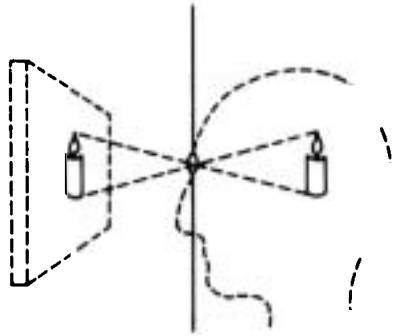
representation in general, and the mental image in particular, has been one of the main battlegrounds of modern theories of the mind. A good index of the strengths on both sides of this issue is the fact that the most formidable critic of mental imagery in our time developed a "picture theory" of meaning as the keystone of his early work, and then spent the rest of his life fighting against the influence of his own theory, trying to expel the notion of mental imagery along with all its metaphysical baggage.[14]

Wittgenstein's way of attacking mental imagery is not, however, the direct strategy of denying the existence of such images. He freely concedes that we may have mental images associated with thought or speech, insisting only that these images should not be thought of as private, metaphysical, immaterial entities any more than real images are. Wittgenstein's tactic is to demystify the mental image by bringing it right out in the open where we can see it: "Mental images of colours, shapes, sounds, etc., etc., which play a role in communication by means of language we put in the same category with patches of color actually seen, sounds heard."[15] It is a bit hard, however, to see how we can put mental and physical images "in the same category." We certainly can't do it by cutting open someone's head to compare mental pictures with the ones on our walls. A better strategy, and more in the Wittgensteinian spirit, would be to examine the ways we put those images "into our heads" in the first place by trying to picture the sort of world in which this move would make sense. I offer the figure on the next page as just such a picture.

The figure should be read as a palimpsest displaying three overlapping relationships: (1) between a real object (the candle on the left) and a reflected, projected, or depicted image of that object; (2) between a real object and a mental image in a mind conceived (as in Aristotle, Hobbes,

14. Wittgenstein elaborated the picture theory in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (first German edition, 1921) and is generally regarded as abandoning it in the work which leads up to the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). My argument here will be that Wittgenstein's picture theory is quite compatible with his critique of mental imagery, and that he was primarily concerned to correct misinterpretation of the picture theory, particularly the sort which linked it to the empiricist account of perceptual images, or the positivist notion of an ideal language.

15. *The Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 89.



Locke, or Hume) as a mirror, *camera obscura,* or a surface for drawing or printing; (3) between a material image and a mental one. (It may help here to imagine the diagram as three overlapping transparencies, the first showing just the two candles, the left one real, the right one an image; the second adding the human head to show the mental introjection of the depicted or reflected candle; the third adding the frame around the "real" candle to make it mirror the imaginary status of the candle on the right. I assume, for simplicity, that all optical inversions have been rectified.) What the diagram displays as a whole is the matrix of analogies (particularly ocular metaphors) that govern representational theories of the mind. In particular it shows how the classic divisions of Western metaphysics (mind-matter, subject-object) translate into a model of representation, the relation between visual images and the objects they stand for. Consciousness itself is understood as an activity of pictorial production, reproduction, and representation governed by mechanisms such as lenses, receptive surfaces, and agencies for printing, impressing, or leaving traces on these surfaces.

This model is clearly subject to a wide variety of objections: it absorbs all perception and consciousness into the visual and pictorial paradigm; it posits a relation of absolute symmetry and similitude between mind and the world; and it affirms the possibility of a point by point identity between object and image, worldly phenomena and representation in the mind or in graphic symbols. I present this model graphically, not to argue for its rightness, but to make visible the way we divide up our universe in common parlance, especially in that parlance that takes sensory experience as the basis for all knowledge. The model also provides us with a way of taking literally Wittgenstein's advice to put mental and physical images "in the same category," and helps us to see the reciprocity and interdependence of these two notions.

Let me put this a slightly different way. If the half of the sketch here represented as "mind"—i.e., my mind, yours, all human consciousness—were to be annihilated, the physical world, we tend to assume, would continue to exist quite nicely. But the reverse would not be the case: if the world were annihilated, consciousness would not go on (this, by the way, is what is misleading about the symmetry of the model). When we take the model, however, as an account of the way we talk about imagery, then the symmetry is not so misleading. If there were no more minds, there would be no more images, mental or material. The world may not depend upon consciousness, but images in (not to mention *of*) the world clearly do. And this is not just because it takes human hands to make a picture or a mirror or any other kind of simulacrum (animals are capable of presenting images in some sense when they camouflage themselves or imitate one another). It is because an image cannot be seen *as such* without a paradoxical trick of consciousness, an ability to see something as "there" and "not there" at the same time. When a duck responds to a decoy, or when the birds peck at the grapes in the legendary paintings of Zeuxis, they are not seeing images: they are seeing other ducks, or real grapes—the things themselves, and not images of the things.

But if the key to the recognition of real, material images in the world is our curious ability to say "there" and "not there" at the same time, we must then ask why mental images should be seen as any more—or less—mysterious than "real" images. The problem philosophers and ordinary people have always had with the notion of mental images is that they seem to have a universal basis in real, shared experience (we all dream, visualize, and are capable, in varying degrees, of re-presenting concrete sensations to ourselves), but we cannot point to them and say "There—that is a mental image." Exactly the same sort of problem occurs, however, if I try to point to a real image and explain what it is to someone who doesn't already know what an image is. I point at Xeuxis's painting and say "There, that is an image." And the reply is, "Do you mean that colored surface?" Or "Do you mean those grapes?"

When we say, then, that the mind is like a mirror or drawing surface, we inevitably postulate another mind to draw or decipher the pictures in it. But it must be understood that the metaphor cuts the other way at the

same time: the physical "blank slate" on the classroom wall, the mirror in my vestibule, the page before me are what they are because the mind uses them to represent the world, and itself, to itself. If we begin talking as if the mind is a tabula rasa or a camera obscura, it won't be long before the blank page and the camera begin to have minds of their own, and become sites of consciousness in their own right.[16]

This is not to be taken as a claim that the mind really is a blank slate or a mirror—only that these are ways the mind is capable of picturing itself. It might picture itself in other ways: as a building, a statue, as an invisible gas or fluid, as a text, a narrative, or a melody, or as nothing in particular. It might decline to have a picture of itself, and refuse all self-representation, just as we can look at a picture, a statue, or a mirror and not see it as a representational object. We might look at mirrors as shiny vertical objects, paintings as masses of colors on flat surfaces. There is no rule that the mind has to picture itself, or see pictures in itself, any more than there is a rule that we must go into a picture gallery, or that once inside we must look at the pictures. If we eliminate the notion that there is something necessary, natural, or automatic about the formation of both mental and material images, then we can do as Wittgenstein suggests, and put them "in the same category" as functional symbols, or, as in our model, in the same logical space.[17] This does not eliminate all differences between mental and physical images, but it may help to demystify the metaphysical or occult quality of this difference, and to allay our suspicion that mental images are somehow improper or illegitimately modeled on the "real thing." The path of derivation from original model to illegitimate analogy could as easily be traced in the opposite

16. This sort of reciprocity between our picture of material signs and mental activity is described aptly by Aristotle when he says that "what the mind thinks must be in it in the same sense as letters are on a tablet which bears no actual writing" (*De Anima* III.4.430a. Ideas, images, "what the mind thinks" (or what it "thinks *in*") are no more "in" the mind than the words on this page are "on" it prior to being printed there.

17. My argument here runs parallel to Jerry Fodor's in *The Language of Thought* (New York: Crowell, 1975). Fodor discusses the many decisive arguments against the "ur-doctrine" of mental imagery in empiricism, focussing particularly on the notion that "thoughts are mental images and they refer to their objects just insofar as (and just by virtue of the fact that) they resemble them." As Fodor points out, the fact that there are strong arguments against this doctrine does not tell against other hypotheses that would not base the notion of mental imagery in a "copy" theory, but would regard images as conventional signs that must be interpreted in a cultural framework. See 174ff. for Fodor's discussion of these issues.

direction. Wittgenstein may say that "we could perfectly well . . . replace every process of imagining by a process of looking at an object or any painting, drawing, or modelling; and every process of speaking to oneself by speaking aloud or by writing,"[18] but this "replacement" could (and does) move in the other direction as well. We could just as easily replace what we call "the physical manipulation of signs" (painting, writing, speaking) with locutions such as "thinking on paper, out loud, in images, etc."

A good way to clarify the relation of mental and physical images is to reflect on the way we have just used a diagram to illustrate the matrix of analogies that connects theories of representation to theories of mind. We might be tempted to say that a mental version of this diagram was in our heads all along, before it appeared on the page, and that it was governing the way we discussed the boundary between mental and physical images. Well, perhaps it was; or perhaps it only occurred to us at a certain point in the discussion, when we began to use words like "boundary line" and "realm." Or perhaps it never occurred to us at all while thinking about these things or writing them down, and it was only later, after many revisions, that it came to mind. Does that mean that the mental diagram was there all along as a kind of unconscious deep structure determining our usage of the word "image"? Or is it a posterior construction, a graphic projection of the logical space implied in our propositions about imagery? In either case we certainly cannot regard the diagram as something mental in the sense of "private" or "subjective"; it is rather something that surfaced in language, and not just my language, but a way of speaking that we inherit from a long tradition of talking about minds and pictures. Our diagram might just as well be called a "verbal image" as a mental one, which brings us to that other notoriously illegitimate branch in the family tree of imagery, the notion of imagery in language.

A Short History of Verbal Imagery

> Thoughts are the images of things, as words are of thoughts; and we all know that images and pictures are only so far true as they are true representations of men and things. . . . For poets as well as

18. *The Blue and Brown Books*, 4.

> painters think it their business to take the likeness of things from their appearance."
>
> Joseph Trapp, *Lectures on Poetry* (1711)[19]

> It is no more necessary to the understanding of a proposition that one should imagine anything in connexion with it, than that one should make a sketch from it.
>
> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* no. 396 [20]

In contrast to mental imagery, verbal images seem immune to the charge of being unknowable metaphysical entities locked away in a private, subjective space. Texts and speech-acts are, after all, not simply affairs of "consciousness," but are public expressions that belong right out there with all the other kinds of material representations we create—pictures, statues, graphs, maps, etc. We don't have to say that a descriptive paragraph is exactly like a picture to see that they do have similar functions as public symbols that project states of affairs about which we can reach rough, provisional agreements.

One of the strongest claims for the propriety of the notion of verbal imagery appears ironically enough in the early Wittgenstein's claim that "A proposition is a picture of reality . . . a model of reality as we imagine it," and that this is no metaphor but a matter of "ordinary sense":

> At first sight a proposition—one set out on the printed page, for example—does not seem to be a picture of the reality with which it is concerned. But neither do written notes seem at first sight to be a picture of a piece of music, nor our phonetic notation (the alphabet) to be a picture of our speech. And yet these sign languages prove to be pictures, even in the ordinary sense, of what they represent." (*Tractatus*, 4.01)

This "ordinary sense" turns out to be just that: Wittgenstein goes on to claim that a proposition is "a likeness of what is signified (4.012), and suggests that "in order to understand the essential nature of a proposition, we should consider hieroglyphic script, which depicts the facts that it describes" (4.106). It is important to realize that the "pictures" that

19. From Lecture VIII: "Of the Beauty of Thought in Poetry," trans. William Clarke and William Bowyer (London, 1742). Quoted from Scott Elledge, ed., *Eighteenth Century Critical Essays,* 2 vols. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), 1:230–31.

20. Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 120.

reside in language, threatening (in Wittgenstein's view) to trap us with their false models, are not quite the same thing as these likenesses and hieroglyphics. The pictures of the *Tractatus* are not occult forces or mechanisms of some psychological process. They are translations, isomorphisms, structural homologies—symbolic structures which obey a system of rules for translation. Wittgenstein sometimes calls them "logical spaces," and the fact that he sees them as applicable to musical notation, phonetic script, and even the groove on a gramaphone record indicates that they are not to be confused with graphic images in the narrow sense. Wittgenstein's notion of verbal imagery might be illustrated, as we have seen, by the model that displays the relations between mental and material imagery in empirical models of perception. It is not that this model corresponds to some mental image we necessarily have as we think about this topic. It is just that it displays in graphic space the logical space determined by a typical set of empiricist propositions.

And yet the whole question of whether verbal images are properly called "images" gives us what Wittgenstein would call a "mental cramp," because the very distinction it assumes between literal and figurative expressions is, in literary discourse, entangled with the notion we want to explain, the verbal image. Literal language is generally understood (by literary critics) as straight, unadorned, unpicturesque expression, free of verbal images and figures of speech. Figurative language, on the other hand, is what we ordinarily mean when we talk about verbal imagery.[21] The phrase, "verbal imagery," in other words, seems to be a metaphor for metaphor itself! Small wonder that many literary critics have suggested retiring the term from critical usage.

Before the term is retired, however, we ought to subject it to critical and historical reflection. We might begin by noticing that the notion of verbal imagery designates two very different, perhaps antithetical, kinds of linguistic practice. We speak of verbal imagery as, on the one hand, metaphoric, figurative, or ornamented langauge, a technique that deflects attention away from the literal subject of the utterance and toward something else. But we also speak of it in Wittgenstein's manner, as the way a proposition "like a tableau vivant . . . presents a state of affairs" (*Tractatus*, 4.0311). This view of verbal imagery treats it as just the literal sense of a proposition, that state of affairs which, if it obtained in

21. This is the second meaning (after "images produced in the mind by language") for verbal imagery cited by *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 363.

the real world, would make the proposition true. In modern poetic theory this version of verbal imagery has been given its clearest formulation by Hugh Kenner, who says that a verbal image is just "what the words actually name," a definition that leads toward a view of poetic language as literal, nonmetaphoric expresison.[22]

Kenner's modernist notion of verbal images as simple, concrete objects of reference has ample precedent in a body of common assumptions about language that goes back at least to the seventeenth century.[23] This is the assumption that what words signify are the "mental images" that have been impressed on us by the experience of objects. On this account we are to think of a word (such as "man") as a "verbal image" twice removed from the original that it represents. A word is an image of an idea, and an idea is an image of a thing, a chain of representation that may be depicted by adding another link to the sketch of the empirical model of cognition:

Object or
Original Impression

Idea or
Mental Image

MAN

Word

I have depicted the "real man" (or the "original impression" of him) here with more pictorial detail than the stick figure which represents the mental image or "idea." This contrast could be used to illustrate Hume's

22. *The Art of Poetry* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1959), 38. The usual strategy with the two meanings of verbal imagery is to blue them together as C. Day Lewis does when he speaks in one sentence of poetic imagery as "an epithet, a metaphor, a simile," and as a "purely descriptive" passage (*Poetic Image* [London: Jonathan Cape, 1947], 18).

23. I rely here on Ray Frazer's important article, "The Origin of the Term 'Image,'" *ELH* 27 (1960), 149-61.

distinction between impressions and ideas in terms of "force and liveliness," terms employed in the vocabulary of pictorial representation to differentiate realistic or lifelike paintings from mannered, abstract, or schematic pictures. Hume follows Hobbes and Locke in his use of pictorial metaphors to describe the chain of cognition and signification: ideas are "faint images" or "decayed sensations" that become linked by conventional association with words. Hume regards the proper method of clarifying the meaning of words, especially abstract terms, as a retracing of the chain of ideas to its origin:

> When we entertain . . . any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but inquire, *from what impression is that supposed idea derived?*[24]

The poetic consequences of this sort of language theory are of course a thoroughgoing pictorialism, an understanding of the art of language as the art of reviving the original impressions of sense. Addison probably expressed the confidence in this art most eloquently:

> Words, when well chosen, have so great force in them that a description often gives us more lively ideas than the sight of things themselves. The reader finds a scene drawn in stronger colors and painted more to the life in his imagination by the help of words than by an actual survey of the scene which they describe. In this case the poet seems to get the better of nature; he takes, indeed, the landscape after her but gives it more vigorous touches, heightens its beauty, and so enlivens the whole piece that the images which flow from objects themselves appear weak and faint in comparison of those that come from the expressions.[25]

For Addison and other eighteenth-century critics, the verbal image is neither a metaphorical concept nor a term for (literally) designating metaphors, figures, or other "ornaments" of ordinary language. The verbal image (usually glossed as "description") is the keystone of all language. Accurate, precise descriptions produce images that "come

24. *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), sec. II; ed. Charles W. Hendel (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), 30; The emphasis is Hume's.

25. *The Spectator,* no. 416, June 27, 1712 ("The Pleasures of the Imagination, VI"), in Elledge, *Eighteenth Century Critical Essays,* 1:60.

from the verbal expressions" more vividly than the "images which flow from objects" themselves. The "species" Aristotle postulated as flowing from objects to impress themselves on our senses are, in Addison's theory of writing and reading, made into properties of words themselves.

This view of poetry, and of language in general, as a process of pictorial production and reproduction was accompanied in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English literary theory by a decline in the prestige of rhetorical figures and tropes. The notion of "image" replaced that of "figure," which began to be regarded as a feature of old-fashioned "ornamented" language. The literary style of verbal *imagery* is "plain" and "perspicuous," a style that reaches right out to objects, representing them (as Addison claims) even more vividly than the objects can represent themselves. This in contrast to the "deceptive ornament" of rhetoric, which is now seen as nothing but a matter of relations among signs. When the rhetorical figures are mentioned, they are either dismissed as the artificial excesses of a prerational, prescientific age, or they are redefined in ways that accommodate them to the hegemony of the verbal image. Metaphors are redefined as "short descriptions"; "allusions and similes are descriptions placed in an opposite point of view . . . and hyperbole is often nothing more than a description carried beyond the bounds of probability."[26] Even abstractions are treated as pictorial, visual objects, projected in the verbal imagery of personification.[27]

In Romantic and modern poetics the verbal image retained its hold over the understanding of literary language, and the confused application of the term to both literal and figuative expression continued to encourage a lumping of notions such as description, concrete nouns, tropes, "sensory" terms, and even recurrent semantic, syntactic, or phonemic motifs under the rubric of "imagery." In order to do all this work, however, the notion of imagery had to be sublimated and mystified. Romantic writers typically assimilate mental, verbal, and even pictorial imagery into the mysterious process of "imagination," which is typically defined in contrast to the "mere" recall of mental pictures, the "mere" description of external scenes, and (in painting) the "mere" depiction of external visibilia, as opposed to the spirit, feeling, or "poetry" of a scene.[28]

26. John Newberry, *The Art of Poetry on a New Plan* (London, 1762), 43.

27. See Earl Wasserman, "Inherent Values of Eighteenth-Century Personification," *PMLA* 65 (1950), 435–63.

28. The classic studies of this "sublimation" of the poetic image are Frank Kermode, *The Romantic Image* (New York: Random House, 1957), and M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

Under the aegis of "imagination," in other words, the notion of imagery is split in two, and a distinction is made between the pictorial or graphic image which is a lower form—external, mechanical, dead, and often associated with the empiricist model of perception—and a "higher" image which is internal, organic, and living. Despite M. H. Abrams's claim that figures of "expression" (like the lamp) replace figures of mimesis (the mirror), the vocabulary of imagery and picturing continues to dominate discussions of verbal art in the nineteenth century. In Romantic poetics, however, imagery is refined and abstracted into such notions as the Kantian schematism, the Coleridgean symbol, and the nonrepresentational image of "pure form" or transcendental structure. And this sublimated, abstracted image displaces and subsumes the empiricist notion of the verbal image as a perspicuous representation of material reality, just as that picture had earlier subsumed the figures of rhetoric.[29]

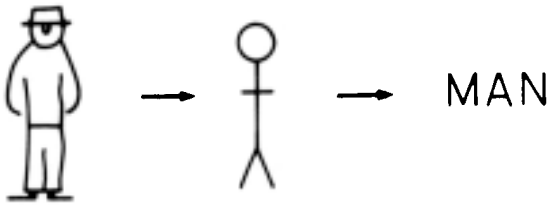
This progressive sublimation of the image reaches its logical culmination when the entire poem or text is regarded as an image or "verbal icon," and this image is defined, not as a pictorial likeness or impression, but as a synchronic structure in some metaphorical space—"that which" (in Pound's words) "presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." The Imagists's emphasis on concrete, particular descriptions in their poetry is, by itself, a residue of the eighteenth-century notion we have seen in Addison that poetry strives to outdo in vividness and immediacy the "images which flow from objects themselves" (Williams's "no ideas but in things" would seem to be another version of this idea). But the distinctive modernist emphasis is on the image as a sort of crystalline structure, a dynamic pattern of the intellectual and emotional energy bodied forth by a poem. Formalist criticism is both a poetics and a hermeneutics for this kind of verbal image, showing us how poems contain their energies in matrices of architectonic tension, and demonstrating the congruence of these matrices with the propositional content of the poem.

With the modernist image as pure form or structure I come back to my starting point in this tour of the verbal image, back to the young

29. See my essay, "Diagrammatology," *Critical Inquiry* 7:3 (Spring, 1981), 622–33, for a discussion of Wordsworth's interest in geometry and his tendency to evoke "vanishing" or "erased" poetic images.

Wittgenstein's claim that the really important verbal image is the "picture" in "logical space" that is projected by a proposition. This picture was mistaken by the logical positivists, however, for a kind of unmediated window on reality, a fulfilment of the seventeenth-century dream of a perfectly transparent language that would give direct access to objects and ideas.[30] Wittgenstein spent much of his career trying to correct this misreading by insisting that the pictures in language are not unmediated copies of any reality. The pictures that seem to reside in our language, whether they are projected in the mind's eye or on paper, are artificial, conventional signs no less than the propositions with which they are associated. The status of these pictures is like that of a geometrical diagram in relation to an algebraic equation.[31] That is why Wittgenstein suggests that we demystify the notion of mental imagery by replacing it with its material equivalent ("replace every process of imagining by a process of looking at an object or by painting, drawing, or modelling"). That is why "thinking" is, for Wittgenstein, not a private, occult process, but "the activity of working with signs," both verbal and pictorial.[32]

The force of Wittgenstein's critique of the mental and verbal image may be illustrated by showing a new way of reading our picture of the links between word, idea, and image in empirical epistemology:

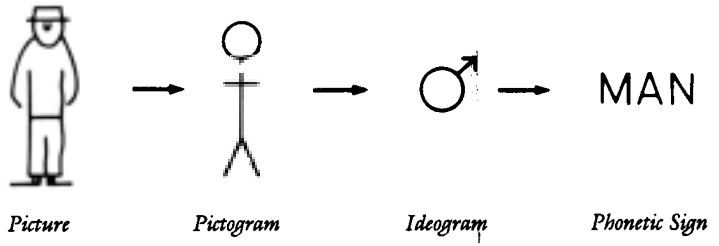


30. This misunderstanding is generally traced to one of the first readers of the *Tractatus,* Bertrand Russell, whose introduction in 1922 set the stage for its reception: "Mr Wittgenstein is concerned with the conditions for a logically perfect language—not that any language is logically perfect, or that we believe ourselves capable, here and now, of constructing a logically perfect language, but that the whole function of language is to have meaning, and it only fulfills this function in proportion as it approaches to the ideal language which we postulate" (*Tractatus,* x).

31. In this respect, Wittgenstein's "pictures" are very much like C. S. Peirce's "icons." See Peirce, "The Icon, Index, and Symbol," in *Collected Papers,* 8 vols., ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931–58) 2:158, on the "iconicity" of diagrams and algebraic equations.

32. *The Blue and Brown Books,* 4, 6.

Try reading this tableau now, not as a movement from world to mind to language, but from one kind of sign to another, as an illustrated history of the development of systems of writing. The progression is now from picture to a relatively schematic "pictogram" to expression by phonetic signs, a sequence that may be fleshed out by the insertion of a new, intermediary sign, the hieroglyph or "ideogram" (recall here Wittgenstein's suggestion in the *Tractatus* that a proposition is like "hieroglyphic script" which "depicts the facts that it describes"):



What the hieroglyph shows is a displacement of the original image by a figure of speech, technically, a synecdoche or metonymy. If we read the circle and arrow as pictures of a body and phallus, then the symbol is synecdochic, presenting part for whole; if we read it as a shield and spear, then it is metonymic, substituting associated objects for the thing itself. This sort of substitution can, of course, also proceed by verbal-visual punning, so that the *name* of the thing pictured is associated with another thing with a similar sounding name, as in the familiar rebus:

These illustrations should suggest another "literal" sense of the notion of verbal imagery—the most literal of all, clearly, in that it denotes *written* language, the translation of speech into a visible code. Insofar as language is written it is bound up with material, graphic figures and pictures that are abridged or condensed in a variety of ways to form alphabetical script. But the figures of writing and of drawing are from the first

inseparable from figures of speech, manners of speaking. The picture of an eagle in Northwest Indian petroglyphs may be a signature of a warrior, an emblem of a tribe, a symbol of courage, or—just a picture of an eagle. The meaning of the picture does not declare itself by a simple and direct reference to the object it depicts. It may depict an idea, a person, a "sound image" (in the case of the rebus), or a thing. In order to know how to read it, we must know how it speaks, what is proper to say about it and on its behalf. The idea of the "speaking picture" which is often invoked to describe certain kinds of poetic presence or vividness on the one hand, and pictorial eloquence on the other hand, is not merely a figure for certain special effects in the arts, but lies at the common origin of writing and painting.

If the figure of the pictogram or hieroglyph demands a viewer who knows what to say, it also has a way of shaping the things that can be said. Consider further the ambiguous emblem/signature/ideogram of the petroglyph "eagle." If the warrior is an eagle, or "like" an eagle, or (more likely) if "Eagle himself" goes to war, and returns to tell about it, we can expect the picture to be extended. Eagle will no doubt see his enemies from afar and swoop down on them without warning. The "verbal image" of Eagle is a complex of speech, depiction, and writing that not only describes what he does, but predicts and shapes what he can and will do. It is his "character," a signature that is both verbal and pictorial, both a narrative of his actions and a summation of what he is.

The figure of the hieroglyph has a history that runs parallel to the stories of the verbal and mental image. The elaborate figures of rhetoric and allegory that were abandoned as "superstitious" or Gothic excesses by seventeenth-century critics were often compared to hieroglyphics. Shaftesbury called them "false imitations," "magical, mystical, monkish and Gothic emblems," and contrasted them to a true, perspicuous "mirror-writing" that would call attention to the writer's subject, not his witty artifices.[33] But there was one way of saving hieroglyphs for a modern, enlightened age, and that was to detach them from their association with magic and mystery, and to see them as models for a new, scientific language that would guarantee perfect communication and

33. *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), quoted from Elledge, *Eighteenth Century Critical Essays,* I. 180. Shaftesbury's remarks on hieroglyphics appear in *Second Characters or the Language of Forms,* ed. Benjamin Rand (Cambridge, 1914), 91.

perspicuous access to objective reality. This hope for a universal, scientific language was associated by Vico and Leibniz with the invention of a new system of hieroglyphics based in mathematics. The pictorial image, meanwhile, was being psychologized and given a privileged mediating role between word and thing in the epistemology of empiricism and in literary theories based in the model of the mirror. And the Egyptian hieroglyphics themselves were subjected to a revisionist, antihermetic interpretation (most notably by Bishop Warburton in the eighteenth century) that treated the ancient symbols as transparent, universally readable signs that had been occulted by the passage of time.[34]

The verbal image as hieroglyph recovered much of its sublimity and mystery in the poetics of Romanticism, as we might expect, and it has had a central function in modernism as well. Wittgenstein's use of the hieroglyphic as a model for the picture theory of language and Ezra Pound's fascination with Chinese picture-writing as a model for the poetic image might be taken as marking the boundaries of this role. And most recently we see the figure of the hieroglyph revived in postmodern criticism in Jacques Derrida's notion of a "grammatology," a "science of writing" that removes spoken language from its dominant place in the study of language and communication, and replaces it with the general notion of the *graphein* or *gramme*, the graphic mark, trace, character, or other sign that makes "language . . . a possibility founded on the general possibility of writing."[35] Derrida reinstates the ancient figure of the world as a text (a figure which, in Renaissance poetics, made nature itself a system of hieroglyphics), but with a new twist. Since the author of this text is no longer with us, or has lost his authority, there is no foundation for the sign, no way of stopping the endless chain of signification. This realization can lead us to a perception of the *mise en abime*, a nauseating void of signifiers in which a nihilistic abandonment to free play and arbitrary will seems the only appropriate strategy. Or it can lead to a sense that our signs, and thus our world, are a product of human action and understanding, that although our modes of knowledge and representation may be "arbitrary" and "conventional," they are the constit-

34. For this antihermetic account of hieroglyphics, see Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated,* bk. IV, sec. 4 (1738, 1754), in *Works of . . . William Warburton,* ed. Richard Hurd (London, 1811), 4:116–214.

35. *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 52.

uents of the forms of life, the practices and traditions within which we must make epistemological, ethical, and political choices. Derrida's answer to the question, "What is an image?" would undoubtedly be: "Nothing but another kind of writing, a kind of graphic sign that dissembles itself as a direct transcript of that which it represents, or of the way things look, or of what they essentially are." This sort of suspicion of the image seems only appropriate in a time when the very view from one's window, much less the scenes played out in everyday life and in the various media of representation, seem to require constant interpretive vigilance. Everything—nature, politics, sex, other people—comes to us now as an image, preinscribed with a speciousness that is nothing but the Aristotelian "species" under a cloud of suspicion. The question for us now would seem to be not just "What is an image?" but "How do we transform images, and the imagination that produces them, into powers worthy of trust and respect?"

One way of answering this question has been to dismiss the whole notion of imagination and mental representation as a Cartesian mirage. The concept of mental and verbal images, and all their stage machinery of mirrors and surfaces for writing, printing, and drawing, all this (as Richard Rorty argues) is to be abandoned as the machinery of an outmoded paradigm, the confusion of philosophy with psychology that has dominated Western thought under the name of "epistemology" for the last three hundred years.[36] This is one of the main thrusts of behaviorism, and I agree with it to the extent that it opposes the notion that knowledge is a copy or image of reality imprinted on the mind. It seems clear that knowledge is better understood as a matter of social practices, disputes, and agreements, and not as the property of some particular mode of natural or unmediated representation. And yet there is something curiously anachronistic about the modern attack on the notion of mental images as "privileged representations" when the main thrust of modern studies of *material* images has been to take away these privileges. It's hard to debunk a picture theory of language when we no longer have a picture theory of pictures themselves.[37]

36. This answer has been popular at least since Thomas Reid's attack on Hume's concept of "idea" as mental image. In the following discussion I draw on Richard Rorty's critique in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

37. I echo here Colin Murray Turbayne's argument in "Visual Language from the Verbal Model," *The Journal of Typographical Research* 3:4 (October, 1969), 345–54.

The solution to our difficulties, then, would not seem to be a jettisoning of representational theories of mind or language. That would be as futile as iconoclastic attempts to purge the world of images have always been. What we might do, however, is retrace the steps by which the notion of the image as a transparent picture or "privileged representation" took over our notions of mind and language. If we can understand how images have come to possess their present power over us, we may be in a position to repossess the imagination that produces them.

Image as Likeness

I have been proceeding up to this point on the assumption that the literal sense of the word "image" is a graphic, pictorial representation, a concrete, material object, and that notions such as mental, verbal, or perceptual imagery are improper derivations from this literal sense, figurative extensions of the pictorial into regions where pictures have no real business. It's time now to acknowledge that this whole story could be told another way, from the standpoint of a tradition which sees the *literal* sense of the word "image" as a resolutely non- or even anti-pictorial notion. This is the tradition which begins, of course, with the account of man's creation "in the image and likeness" of God. The words we now translate as "image" (the Hebrew *tselem*, the Greek *eikon*, and the Latin *imago*) are properly understood, as the commentators never tire of telling us, not as any material picture, but as an abstract, general, spiritual "likeness."[38] The regular addition, after "image," of the phrase "and likeness" (the Hebrew *demuth*, the Greek *homoiōs*, and the Latin *similitude*) is to be understood, not as adding new information, but as preventing a possible confusion: "image" is to be understood not as "picture" but as "likeness," a matter of spiritual similarity.

It should come as no surprise that a religious tradition obsessed with

38. Clarke's commentary provides a typical gloss on Genesis 1:26, dividing God's proclamation, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness" into two parts. "What is said above ["let us make man"] refers only to the *body* of man; what is here said ["in our own image, after our likeness"] refers to his *soul*. This was made in the *image* and *likeness* of God. Now as the Divine Being is infinite, he is neither limited by parts, nor definable by passions; therefore he can have no *corporeal image* after which he made the body of man. The image and likeness must necessarily be intellectual" (*The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes by Adam Clarke* [New York: Ezra Sargeant, 1811] vol. 1).

taboos against graven images and idolatry would want to stress a spiritual, immaterial sense of the notion of images. The commentary of a Talmudic scholar such as Maimonides helps us see the precise terms in which this spiritual sense was understood: "the term *image* is applied to the natural form, I mean to the notion in virtue of which a thing is constituted as a substance and becomes what it is. It is the true reality of the thing in so far as the latter is that particular being."[39] It must be stressed that for Maimonides the image (*tselem*) is literally this essential reality of a thing, and it is only by a kind of corruption that it becomes associated with corporeal things like idols: "the reason why idols are called images lies in the fact that what was sought in them was deemed to subsist in them, and not in their shape or configuration."[40] The true, literal image is the mental or spiritual one; the improper, derivative, figurative image is the material shape perceived by our senses, especially the eye.[41]

This, at any rate, is a radical statement of the view that an image is a likeness, not a picture. In practical usage even Maimonides admits that image is an "equivocal" or "amphibolous" term that may refer to "specific form" (i.e., the identity or "species" of a thing) or "artificial form" (its corporeal shape).[42] But he is very clear about the difference between the two meanings, and very sure about which one is original and authentic, which one derived by improper application. His tendency to privilege the abstract, ideal version of the image epitomizes, I would suggest, both Jewish and Christian thinking on this issue.[43] This sense of an original

39. Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), *The Guide of the Perplexed,* 2 vols., trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 1:22.

40. Ibid., Maimonides, 1:22.

41. Cf. St. Augustine's analysis of idolatry as the subordination of the true spiritual image to the false material one: "that people . . . worshipped the head of a four-footed beast instead of thee, turning in their heart back towards Egypt; and bowing thy image (their own soul) before the image of a calf that eateth hay" (*Confessions,* bk. VII, chap. 9, trans. William Watts (1631), Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 1:369.

42. Maimonides' "specific form" might be contrasted with Aristotle's use of "species" in its literal, material "specular" sense, as the image propagated by a body and imprinted on our senses. Aristotle's "species" is Maimonides' "artificial form."

43. A good index to the power of the essentialist notion of the image as the bearer of the inner presence of that which it represents is the fact that this assumption was shared by both iconoclasts and iconophiles in the battle over religious images in eighth- and ninth-century Byzantium. (There is a striking similarity here in the tendency of modern iconophobes and iconophiles in psychology to agree on "natural resemblance" theories of the image). Both parties to the debate regarded the Eucharist, for instance, as one of "the true and present signs of the body and blood of Christ," and therefore "worthy of worship" (*The Liturgy of Basil,* quoted from Pelikan, 2:94). The "question between them," as Pelikan notes, "was not . . . the nature of the eucharistic presence, but its implications for the definition of 'image' and for the use of images. Was the eucharistic presence to be extended to a general principle about the sacramental mediation of divine power through material objects, or was it an exclusive principle that precluded any such extension to other means of grace, such as images?" (2:94).

"spiritual" meaning for a word and a later, derived "material" application may be difficult for us to comprehend, largely because our understanding of the history of words has been oriented around the empirical epistemology I described earlier: we tend to think of the most concrete, material application of a word as its original, primitive sense because we have a model of the derivation of words from things by way of images. This model has no greater power than in our understanding of the word "image" itself.

But what exactly is this "spiritual" likeness which is not to be confused with any material image? We should note first that it seems to include a presumption of difference. To say that one tree, or one member of a species of tree, is like another, is not to argue that they are identical but that they are similar in some respects and not in others. Normally, however, we don't say that every likeness is an image. One tree is like another, but we don't call one the image of the other. The word "image" only comes up in relation to this sort of likeness when we try to construct a theory about the way we perceive the likeness between one tree and another. This explanation will typically resort to some intermediate or transcendental object—an idea, form, or mental image—that provides a mechanism for explaining how our categories arise. The "origin of species" is not just a matter of biological evolution then, but of the mechanisms of consciousness as they are described in representational models of the mind.

But we should note that these ideal objects—forms, species, or images—need not be understood as pictures or impressions. These kinds of "images" could just as well be understood as lists of predicates enumerating the characteristics of a class of objects, such as: tree (1) tall, vertical object; (2) spreading green top; (3) rooted in ground. There is no possibility of mistaking this group of propositions for a picture of a tree,

but it is, I submit, the sort of thing we mean when we talk about an image which is not (just) a picture. We might use the words "model" or "schema" or even "definition" to explain the sort of thing we mean when we talk about an image that is not (just) a picture.[44] The image as likeness, then, can be understood as a series of predicates listing similarities and differences.[45] But if that is all this sort of "spiritual" image involves, we must wonder why it ever took on the name of "image," which confused it with pictorial representation. It was certainly not in the interests of foes of idolatry to foster this usage; one can only surmise that the terminology of the image was the result of a sort of metaphorical "drift," a search for a concrete analogy that became literalized under the pressure of idolatrous tendencies among surrounding peoples and

44. This verbal or "descriptional" account of the image is frequently invoked by iconophobes of cognitive psychology such as Daniel Dennett. "All 'mental imagery,'" argues Dennett, stressing the scare quotes, "including seeing and hallucinating, is descriptional." Dennett suggests that cognition is more like writing and reading than like painting or looking at pictures: "The writing analogy has its pitfalls but is still a good antidote to the picture analogy. When we perceive something in the environment, we are not aware of every fleck of color all at once, but rather of highlights of the scene, an edited commentary on the things of interest" (from "The Nature of Images and the Introspective Trap," in *Imagery,* ed. Ned Block, 54–55). Dennett's analysis seems to me unexceptionable but misdirected. He could as easily apply his "writing analogy" to the construction and perception of real, graphic images as to mental images; the "all at once" awareness which is so often postulated of pictorial cognition is simply a strawman. We see graphic images, like everything else, selectively and in time (which is not to deny that there are special habits and conventions for the seeing of various kinds of images). Dennett's claim that mental images are not like real images can only be sustained by a dubious characterization of real images as things that involve some holistic, instantaneous cognition to the exclusion of all temporality, and by an insistence that real images, unlike mental ones, "must *resemble* what they represent"(52).

45. This notion of the image as funadamentally a matter of words has its theological precedent in the claim that the spiritual image, the *imago dei,* is not only the soul or mind of man, but the word of God. Here is Clement of Alexandria's comment on this issue:

> For "the image of God" is His Word (and the divine Word, the light who is the archetype of light, is a genuine son of Mind); and an image of the Word is the true man, that is, the mind in man, who on this account is said to have been created "in the image" of God and "in His likeness," because through his understanding heart he is made like the divine Word or Reason, and so reasonable. But statues in human form, being an earthen image of visible, earthborn man, and far away from the truth, plainly show themselves to be but a temporary impression upon matter.

Clement also calls statues such as the Olympian Zeus "an image of an image" (*Exhortation to the Greeks,* trans. G. W. Butterworth, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 215.

among the Israelites themselves. The confusion between likeness and picture could also be useful for a priesthood concerned with the education of an illiterate laity. The priest would know that the "true image" is not in any material object, but is encoded in the spiritual—that is, the verbal and textual—understanding, while the people could be given an outward image to gratify their senses and encourage devotion.[46] The distinction between the spiritual and material, inner and outer image, was never simply a matter of theological doctrine, but was always a question of politics, from the power of priestly castes, to the struggle between conservative and reform movements (the iconophiles and iconoclasts), to the preservation of national identity (the Israelites' struggle to purge themselves of idolatry).

The tension between the appeals of spiritual likeness and material image is never expressed more poignantly than in Milton's treatment of Adam and Eve as the *imago dei* in the fourth book of *Paradise Lost*:

> Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
> Godlike erect, with native honour clad
> In naked majesty seemed lords of all
> And worthy seemed, for in their looks divine
> The image of thir glorious Maker shone,
> Truth, Wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure,
> Severe, but in true filial freedom plac't.
>
> (*P.L.* 4:288–93)

Milton deliberately confuses the visual, pictorial sense of the image with an invisible, spiritual, and verbal understanding of it.[47] Everything hinges on the equivocal function of the key word "looks," which may

46. See, in the preceding note, Clement of Alexandria's claim that the true image is the word of God. The iconophiles were quite resourceful in making subtle distinctions to preserve the popular and widespread use of images and to answer the charge (very powerful on the face of it) that they were practicing idolatry. Distinctions were drawn between images for worship, for veneration, and for educational purposes (the Eucharist, the cross, statues of saints, and scenes from Scripture exemplify this descending scale of sacred "aura" attributed to imagery). And the iconoclasts' appeal to scriptural texts prohibiting the use of graven images were turned against them by a logic of "guilt by association": since these prohibitions were taken literally and practiced faithfully only by Jews and Muslims, the iconoclasts could be characterized as heretical conspirators against immemorial Christian traditions. See Pelikan, vol 2, chap. 3 for more on these strategies.

47. For an account of the use of this equivocation in Milton's larger design for *Paradise Lost,* see Anthony C. Yu, "Life in the Garden: Freedom and the Image of God in *Paradise Lost,*" *The Journal of Religion* 60:3 (July, 1980), 247–71.

refer us to the outward appearance of Adam and Eve, their "nobler shape," nakedness, and erectness, or to the less tangible sense of "looks" as the quality of their gazes, the character of their "expressions." This quality is not a visual image that looks like something else; it is more like the light by which an image can be seen at all, a matter of radiance rather than reflection. And to explain how this image "shone" in "their looks divine," Milton must resort to a series of predicates, a list of abstract spiritual attributes that Adam and Eve have in common with God—"Truth, Wisdom, Sanctitude severe and pure"—along with a qualifying difference to stress that man is not identical with God: "Severe, but in true filial freedom placed." God in his perfect solitude has no need of filial relationships, but for his image to be perfected in mankind the social and sexual relation of man and woman must be instituted in "true filial freedom."[48]

Is man created in the image of God, then, in that he looks like God, or in that we can say similar things about man and God? Milton wants to have it both ways, a desire we can trace to his rather unorthodox materialism, or perhaps more fundamentally, to a historic transformation in the concept of imagery which tended to identify the notion of spiritual likeness—particularly the "rational soul" that makes man an image of God—with a certain kind of material image. Milton's poetry is the scene of a struggle between iconoclastic distrust of the outward image and iconophilic fascination with its power, a struggle which manifests itself in his practice of proliferating visual images in order to prevent readers from focusing on any particular picture or scene. In order to see how the stage was set for this struggle we need to look more closely at the revolution which identified pictures or "artificial forms" with images as "likenesses" (Maimonides' "specific forms").

48. Milton's treatment of Adam and Eve's relationship and fall from grace can be understood quite precisely in terms of the dialectic between inner and outer image, iconoclasm and iconophilia. Eve is the creature of the outward image, her "looks" offering a temptation both to herself and to Adam. Adam is the creature of the inner, spiritual image; he is the verbal, intellectual being in contrast to Eve's silence and passivity. Eve is guilty of a narcissistic idolatry, tempted by Satan's treatment of her as a goddess; Adam, in turn, makes Eve the goddess of his idolatry. Milton's point, however, is not simply to denigrate the outer, sensible image, but to affirm its necessity in the human image of God, and to dramatize its tragic, ineluctable appeal.

The Tyranny of the Picture

The revolution I am thinking of here was, of course, the invention of artificial perspective, first systematized by Alberti in 1435. The effect of this invention was nothing less than to convince an entire civilization that it possessed an infallible method of representation, a system for the automatic and mechanical production of truths about both the material and the mental worlds. The best index to the hegemony of the artificial perspective is the way it denies its own artificiality and lays claims to being a "natural" representation of "the way things look," "the way we see," or (in a phrase that turns Maimonides on his head) "the way things really are." Aided by the political and economic ascendance of Western Europe, artificial perspective conquered the world of representation under the banner of reason, science, and objectivity. No amount of counterdemonstration from artists that there are other ways of picturing what "we really see" has been able to shake the conviction that these pictures have a kind of identity with natural human vision and objective external space. And the invention of a machine (the camera) built to produce this sort of image has, ironically, only reinforced the conviction that this is the natural mode of representation. What is natural is, evidently, what we can build a machine to do for us.

Even E. H. Gombrich, who has done so much to reveal the historical and conventional character of this system, seems unable to break the spell of scientism which surrounds it, and frequently reverts to a view of pictorial illusionism as providing "keys to the locks of our senses," a phrase which ignores his own warning that "our" senses are windows through which a purposive and acculturated imagination is looking, not a door that springs open to one master key.[49] Gombrich's scientistic understanding of artificial perspective is especially vulnerable when it is couched in this sort of ahistorical and sociobiological claim that "our senses" dictate certain privileged modes of representation. It sounds more plausible, however, when presented in the sophisticated terminology of information theory and Popperian accounts of scientific discovery. Gombrich seems to save the purposive imagination by treating perspective not as a fixed canon of representation but as a flexible method

49. *Art and Illusion,* 359.

of trial and error in which pictorial schemata are likened to scientific hypotheses tested against the facts of vision. The "making" of schematic pictorial hypotheses always precedes, for Gombrich, the "matching" of them against the visible world.[50] The only problem with this formulation is that there is no neutral, univocal, "visible world" there to match things against, no unmediated "facts" about what or how we see. Gombrich himself has been the most eloquent exponent of the claim that there is no vision without purpose, that the innocent eye is blind.[51] But if vision itself is a product of experience and acculturation—including the experience of making pictures—then what we are matching against pictorial representations is not any sort of naked reality but a world already clothed in our systems of representation.

It is important to guard against misunderstanding here. I am not arguing for some facile relativism that abandons "standards of truth" or the possibility of valid knowledge. I am arguing for a hard, rigorous, relativism that regards knowledge as a social product, a matter of dialogue between different versions of the world, including different languages, ideologies, and modes of representations. The notion that there is "a" scientific method so flexible and capacious that it can contain all these differences and adjudicate among them is a handy ideology for the scientist and a social system committed to the authority of science, but it seems mistaken in both theory and practice. Science, as Paul Feyerabend has argued, is not an orderly procedure of erecting hypotheses and "falsifying" them against independent, neutral facts; it is a disorderly and highly political process in which "facts" derive their authority as constituent parts of some world model that has come to seem natural.[52] Scientific progress is as much a matter of rhetoric, intuition, and counterinduction (i.e., the adopting of assumptions which contradict the

50. Ibid., 116.

51. Gombrich has also been one of the leading spokesmen for the linguistic approach to imagery. He never tires of telling us that vision, picturing, painting, and plain seeing are activities much like reading and writing. And yet in recent years he has steadily drawn back from this analogy in favor of a naturalistic and scientistic account of certain kinds of images as containing inherent epistemological guarantees. See, for instance, his distinction between "man-made" and "machine-made" or "scientific" images in "Standards of Truth: The Arrested Image and the Moving Eye," in Mitchell, *The Language of Images,* 181–217. For a fuller account of Gombrich's complex reversals on the question of natural and linguistic accounts of imagery, see chapter 3 below.

52. See *Against Method* (New York: Schocken, 1978).

apparent facts) as it is of methodical observation and information gathering. The greatest scientific discoveries have often followed decisions to ignore the apparent "facts" and to look for an explanation that would account for a situation that can never be observed. "Experiment," as Feyerabend observes, is not just passive observation but "the invention of a *new kind of experience*," made possible by a willingness to let "reason . . . affirm what sensible experience seemed to contradict."[53]

The principle of counterinduction, of ignoring the apparent, visible "facts," in order to produce a new kind of experience, has a direct counterpart in the world of image-making, and it is this: the pictorial artist, even one who works in the tradition known as "realism" or "illusionism," is as much concerned with the invisible as the visible world. We can never understand a picture unless we grasp the ways in which it shows what cannot be seen. One thing that cannot be seen in an illusionistic picture, or which tends to conceal itself, is precisely its own artificiality. The whole system of assumptions about the innate rationality of the mind and the mathematical character of space is like the grammar which allows us to make or recognize a proposition. As Wittgenstein puts it: "a picture cannot depict its pictorial form: it displays it," just as a sentence cannot describe its own logical form but can only employ it to describe something else (*Tractatus*, 2.172). This notion of "picturing the invisible" may seem a bit less paradoxical if we remind ourselves that painters have always claimed to present us with "more than meets the eye," generally under the rubric of terms like "expression." And we have seen in our brief look at the ancient concept of the image as a spiritual "likeness" that there was always a sense, a primary sense in fact, in which images were to be understood as something inward and invisible. Part of the power of perspectival illusionism was that it seemed to reveal not just the outward, visible world but the very nature of the rational soul whose vision is represented.[54]

It is no wonder that the category of realistic, illusionistic, or naturalistic images has become the focus of a modern, secular idolatry linked with the ideology of Western science and rationalism, and that the hegemony of these images has generated iconoclastic reactions in art, psychology,

53. Ibid., 92 and 101.

54. As Joel Snyder puts it, "to an early Renaissance lover of paintings, the sight of these pictures must have been extraordinary—something akin to looking into the soul." See his "Picturing Vision," in Mitchell, *The Language of Images,* 246.

philosophy, and poetics. The real miracle has been the successful resistance of pictorial artists to this idolatry, their insistence on continuing to show us more than meets the eye with whatever resources they can muster.

Picturing the Invisible

Sometimes the best way to demystify a miracle, especially when it has hardened into a mystery, is to take a fresh look at it through the eyes of an unbeliever. The notion that painting is capable of expressing some invisible essence made very little impression on the skeptical eyes of Mark Twain. Standing before Guido Reni's famous painting of Beatrice Cenci he had this to say:

> A good legible label is usually worth, for information, a ton of significant attitude and expression in a historical picture. In Rome, people with fine sympathetic natures stand up and weep in front of the celebrated "Beatrice Cenci the Day Before Her Execution." It shows what a label can do. If they did not know the picture, they would inspect it unmoved, and say, "Young Girl with Hay Fever; Young Girl with Her Head in a Bag."[55]

Twain's skeptical response to the finer things in art is an echo of a more sophisticated critique of the limits of pictorial expresison. In his *Laocoon*, Lessing has argued that "expression," whether of persons, ideas, or narrative progressions, is inappropriate, or at best of secondary importance in painting. The sculptor of the Laocoön group showed the faces in a kind of repose not because of any Stoic doctrine requiring the suppression of pain but because the proper goal of sculpture (and of all the visual arts) is the depiction of physical beauty. Any expression of the strong emotions attributed to Laocoön in Greek poetry would have required deforming the harmonious equilibrium of the statue, and distracted from its primary end. Lessing argued along similar lines that painting was incapable of telling stories because its imitation is static rather than progressive, and that it should not try to articulate ideas because these are

55. *Life on the Mississippi,* chap. 44, "City Sights."

properly expressed in language rather than in imagery. The attempt to "express universal ideas" in pictorial form, warns Lessing, produces only the grotesque forms of allegory; ultimately it can lead painting into "abandoning its proper sphere and degenerating into an arbitrary method of writing"—the pictogram or hieroglyph.[56]

If we discount the obvious hostility from Twain and Lessing's comments on the poverty of pictorial expression, we find a rather perspicuous account of what is meant by the notion of painting the invisible. What expression amounts to is the artful planting of certain clues in a picture that allow us to form a act of ventriloquism, an act which endows the picture with eloquence, and particularly with a nonvisual and verbal eloquence. A picture may articulate abstract ideas by means of allegorical imagery, a practice which, as Lessing notes, approaches the notational procedures of writing systems. The image of an eagle may depict a feathered predator, but it expresses the idea of wisdom, and thus works as a hieroglyph. Or we may understand expression in dramatic, oratorical terms, as did the Renaissance humanists who formulated a rhetoric of history painting complete with a language of facial expression and gesture, a language precise enough to let us verbalize what depicted figures are thinking, feeling, or saying. And expression need not be limited to predicates we can attach to pictured objects: the setting, compositional arrangement, and color scheme may all carry expressive charge, so that we can speak of moods and emotional atmospheres whose appropriate verbal counterparts may be something on the order of a lyric poem.

The expressive aspect of imagery may, of course, become such a predominant presence that the image becomes totally abstract and ornamental, representing neither figures nor space, but simply *pre*senting its own material and formal elements. The abstract image may seem at first glance to have escaped from the realm of representation and verbal eloquence, leaving behind both figural mimesis and literary features like narrative or allegory. But abstract expressionist painting is, to use Tom Wolfe's phrase (but not his debunking attitude) a "painted word," a pictorial code requiring a verbal apologetics as elaborate as that of any

56. *Laocoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting* (1766), trans. Ellen Frothingham (1873; rpt., New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1969), x.

traditional mode of painting, the ersatz metaphysics of "art theory."[57] The colored daubs and streaks on the canvas become, in the proper context—that is, in the presence of the proper ventriloquist—statements about the nature of space, perception, and representation.

If I seem to be taking Twain's ironic attitude toward the claims of pictorial expression, it is not because I think that expression is impossible or illusory, but because our understanding of it is so often clouded by the same mystique of "natural representation" that obstructs our understanding of mimetic representation. Twain says that the label is worth more, for information, than "a ton of significant expression." But we might ask Twain how much the label would be worth, for information or for anything else, without this picture by Guido Reni, or the entire tradition of representing in pictorial, dramatic, or literary images the story of the Cenci. The painting is a confluence of pictorial and verbal traditions, neither of which is apparent to the innocent eyes of Twain, and so he can scarcely see what it is, much less respond to it.

Twain and Lessing's skepticism about pictorial expression is useful insofar as it reveals the necessarily verbal character of imaging the invisible. It is misleading in that it condemns this verbal supplementation of the image as improper or unnatural. The devices of representation that allow people with "fine, sympathetic natures" to respond to Reni's painting of Beatrice Cenci may be arbitrary, conventional signals that depend on our prior knowledge of the story. But the devices of representation that allow Twain to see a "Young Girl with Hay Fever; Young Girl with Her Head in a Bag" are, though more easily learned, no less conventional and no less bound up with language.

Image and Word

The recognition that pictorial images are inevitably conventional and contaminated by language need not cast us into an abyss of infinitely regressive signifiers. What it does imply for the study of art is simply that

57. See Wolfe's *The Painted Word* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1975). Wolfe, like Twain and Lessing, regards the reliance of painting on verbal contexts as somehow inherently inappropriate. My view here is that it is inevitable, and that appropriateness is a separate question which can only be settled in the aesthetic judgment brought to particular images.

something like the Renaissance notion of *ut pictura poesis* and the sisterhood of the arts is always with us. The dialectic of word and image seems to be a constant in the fabric of signs that a culture weaves around itself. What varies is the precise nature of the weave, the relation of warp and woof. The history of culture is in part the story of a protracted struggle for dominance between pictorial and linguistic signs, each claiming for itself certain proprietary rights on a "nature" to which only it has access. At some moments this struggle seems to settle into a relationship of free exchange along open borders; at other times (as in Lessing's *Laocoon*) the borders are closed and a separate peace is declared. Among the most interesting and complex versions of this struggle is what might be called the relationship of subversion, in which language or imagery looks into its own heart and finds lurking there its opposite number. One version of this relation has haunted the philosophy of language since the rise of empiricism, the suspicion that beneath words, beneath ideas, the ultimate reference in the mind is the image, the impression of outward experience printed, painted, or reflected in the surface of consciousness. It was this subversive image that Wittgenstein sought to expel from language, which the behaviorists sought to purge from psychology, and which contemporary art-theorists have sought to cast out of pictorial representation itself. The modern pictorial image, like the ancient notion of "likeness," is at last revealed to be linguistic in its inner workings.

Why do we have this compulsion to conceive of the relation between words and images in political terms, as a struggle for territory, a contest of rival ideologies? I try to suggest some detailed answers to this question in subsequent chapters, but a short answer may be provided here: the relationship between words and images reflects, within the realm of representation, signification, and communication, the relations we posit between symbols and the world, signs and their meanings. We imagine the gulf between words and images to be as wide as the one between words and things, between (in the largest sense) culture and nature. The image is the sign that pretends not to be a sign, masquerading as (or, for the believer, actually achieving) natural immediacy and presence. The word is its "other," the artificial, arbitrary production of human will that disrupts natural presence by introducing unnatural elements into the world—time, consciousness, history, and the alienating intervention of symbolic mediation. Versions of this gap reappear in the distinctions we apply to each type of sign in its own turn. There is the natural, mimetic image, which looks like or "captures" what it represents, and its pictorial

rival, the artificial, expressive image which cannot "look like" what it represents because that thing can only be conveyed in words. There is the word which is a natural image of what it means (as in onomatopoeia) and the word as arbitrary signifier. And there is the split in written language between "natural" writing by pictures of objects, and the arbitrary signs of hieroglyphics and the phonetic alphabet.

What are we to make of this contest between the interests of verbal and pictorial representation? I propose that we historicize it, and treat it, not as a matter for peaceful settlement under the terms of some all-embracing theory of signs, but as a struggle that carries the fundamental contradictions of our culture into the heart of theoretical discourse itself. The point, then, is not to heal the split between words and images, but to see what interests and powers it serves. This view can only be had, of course, from a standpoint which begins with skepticism about the adequacy of any particular theory of the relation of words and images, but which also preserves an intuitive conviction that there is some difference that is fundamental. It seems to me that Lessing, for instance, is absolutely right insofar as he regards poetry and painting as radically different modes or representation, but that his "mistake" (which theory still participates in) is the reification of this difference in terms of analogous oppositions like nature and culture, space and time.

What sorts of analogies would be less reified, less mystifying, more appropriate as a basis for historical criticism of the word-image difference? One model might be the relation between two different languages that have a long history of interaction and mutual translation. This analogy is, of course, far from perfect. It immediately loads the case in favor of language, and it minimizes the difficulties in making connections between words and images. We know how to connect English and French literature more precisely than we do English literature and English painting. The other analogy which offers itself is the relationship between algebra and geometry, the one working by arbitrary phonetic signs read progressively, the other displaying equally arbitrary figures in space. The attraction of this analogy is that it looks rather like the relation of word and image in an illustrated text, and the relation between the two modes is a complex one of mutual translation, interpretation, illustration, and embellishment. The problem with the analogy is that it is too perfect: it seems to hold out an impossible ideal of systematic, rule-governed translation between word and image. Sometimes an impossible ideal can be useful, however, so long as we recognize its impossibility.

The advantage of the mathematical model is that it suggests the interpretive and representational complementarity of word and image, the way in which the understanding of one seems inevitably to appeal to the other.

In the modern era the main direction of this appeal would seem to be from the image, conceived as a manifest, surface content or "material," to the word, conceived as the latent, hidden meaning lying behind the pictorial surface. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud comments on "the incapacity of dreams" to express logical, verbal connections and latent dream-thoughts by comparing "the psychical material out of which dreams are made" to the material of visual art:

> The plastic arts of painting and sculpture labour, indeed, under a similar limitation as compared with poetry, which can make use of speech; and here once again the reason for their incapacity lies in the nature of the material which these two forms of art manipulate in their effort to express something. Before painting became acquainted with the laws of expression by which it is governed, it made attempts to get over this handicap. In ancient paintings small labels were hung from the mouths of the persons represented, containing in written characters the speeches which the artist despaired of representing pictorially.[58]

For Freud, psychoanalysis is a science of the "laws of expression" that govern the interpretation of the mute image. Whether that image is projected in dreams or in the scenes of everyday life, analysis provides the method for extracting the hidden verbal message from the misleading and inarticulate pictorial surface.

But we have to remind ourselves that there is a countertradition which conceives of interpretation as going in just the opposite direction, from a verbal surface to the "vision" that lies behind it, from the proposition to the "picture in logical space" that gives it sense, from the linear recitation of the text to the "structures" or "forms" that control its order. The recognition that these "pictures" which Wittgenstein found residing in language are no more natural, automatic, or necessary than any other sorts of images we produce may put us in a position to make use of them in a less mystified way. Chief among these uses would be, on the one

58. Trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 347.

hand, a renewed respect for the eloquence of images and, on the other hand, a renewed faith in the perspicuousness of language, a sense that discourse does project worlds and states of affairs that can be pictured concretely and tested against other representations. Perhaps the redemption of the imagination lies in accepting the fact that we create much of our world out of the dialogue between verbal and pictorial representations, and that our task is not to renounce this dialogue in favor of a direct assault on nature but to see that nature already informs both sides of the conversation.