

Klaus Sachs-Hombach / Jörg R. J. Schirra (Eds.)

Origins of Pictures

Anthropological Discourses
in Image Science

Herbert von Halem Verlag

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists the publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at
<http://dnb.dnb.de>.

Klaus Sachs-Hombach / Jörg R. J. Schirra (Eds.)
Origins of Pictures.
Anthropological Discourses in Image Science
Köln: Halem, 2013

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilm or in any other way, and storage in data banks. Duplication of this publication or parts thereof is permitted only under the provisions of the German Copyright Law of September 9th, 1965, in its current version, and permission for use must always be obtained from Herbert von Halem Verlag. Violations are liable to prosecution under the German Copyright Law.

© 2013 by Herbert von Halem Verlag, Köln

ISBN 978-3-86962-057-2

<http://www.halem-verlag.de>
E-Mail: info@halem-verlag.de

TYPESETTING: Herbert von Halem Verlag
PRINT: docupoint, Magdeburg
COVER DESIGN: Claudia Ott Grafischer Entwurf, Düsseldorf
Copyright Lexicon ©1992 by The Enschedé Font Foundry.
Lexicon® is a Registered Trademark of The Enschedé Font Foundry.

CONTENTS

KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH / JÖRG R. J. SCHIRRA	9
Introduction	
I. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PICTURE ANTHROPOLOGY	
IAIN DAVIDSON	16
Origins of Pictures: An Argument for Transformation of Signs	
JEAN CLOTTES	47
Consequences of the Discovery and Study of the Chauvet Cave	
LAMBROS MALAFOURIS	73
Learning to See: Enactive Discovery and the Prehistory of Pictorial Skill	
CHRISTA SÜTTERLIN	90
Early Face Representation as Proto- or Archetype of Generalized Human Face Perception	
II. RELATION BETWEEN EMPIRICAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AND SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS	
SØREN KJØRUP	110
Resemblance Reconsidered: Confessions and Concessions of a Conventionalist	
JÖRG R. J. SCHIRRA / KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH	132
The Anthropological Function of Pictures	

III. ARCHEOLOGICAL AND PALEOANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE »FIRST« PICTURES

CHRISTIAN ZÜCHNER 160
Symbols and Signs of the Earliest Art of Ancient Europe

NICHOLAS J. CONARD / HARALD FLOSS 172
Early Figurative Art and Musical Instruments From the
Swabian Jura of Southwestern Germany and Their Implications
for Human Evolution

EKKEHART MALOTKI 201
The Road to Iconicity in the Paleoart of the American West

ELLEN DISSANAYAKE 230
Born to Artify: The Universal Origin of Picturing

TILMAN LENSSEN-ERZ 250
The Dark Ages of Picturing: Does Art Originate from Caves?
A Synopsis

IV. PICTURE COMPETENCE IN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE ROLE OF GESTURES AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

GÖRAN SONESSON 270
The Picture Between Mirror and Mind: From Phenomenology
to Empirical Studies in Pictorial Semiotics

JOHN MATTHEWS 311
Seven Spots and a Squiggle:
The Prehistory of Pictures

DIETER MAURER 353
Early Pictures in Ontogeny and Phylogeny:
Preliminaries to a Comparison

SABINE VÖLKELE / PETER ÖHLER 378
Understanding Pictures in Early Childhood

V. CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY:
ON THE ORIGINS OF PICTURES AND
PICTURE-FREE SOCIETIES

DEREK HODGSON 401
Ambiguity, Perception, and the First Representations

JOACHIM KNAPE 424
Image Textuality, Narrativity, and Pathos Formula:
Reflections on the Rhetoric of the Image

PHILIPP STÖELLGER 460
The Image – As Strong as Death?
On Death as the Origin of the Image

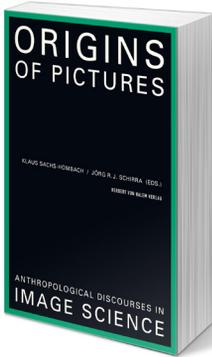
HELGE GERNDT 490
When Do Images Emerge?
Religious Image Practices in the Late Middle Ages

HANS DIETER HUBER 506
Images of the Dead

EKKEHARD JÜRGENS 521
Pictures – What For?
Seven Hypotheses on the Origin of Art

The Authors 551

Bildwissenschaft



KLAUS SACHS-HOMBACH /
JÖRG R. SCHIRRA (Hrsg.)

Origins of Pictures. Anthropological Discourses in Image Science

2013, ca. 560 S., Broschur,
213 x 142 mm, engl.

EUR(D) 36,00 / EUR(A) 36,90 / sFr. 59,30
ISBN 978-3-86962-057-2

Anyone talking about pictures by necessity refers to those using pictures. It is therefore essentially the competence of using pictures that has to be considered. Such competence is not common among higher developed mammals, at least as far as we know today. This fact raises the question whether and to what extent that ability has to be conceived as a strictly anthropological one. In an interdisciplinary approach, the first international conference of the Society for Interdisciplinary Image Science (GiB) titled *Origins of Pictures* has taken a closer look at the role of pictures for the *conditio humana*.

The primary goal of the conference was to present empirical findings of the origins of picture uses, considering in particular research in paleo-anthropology, archeology, cultural anthropology, and developmental psychology. Furthermore, those findings were to be related to philosophical considerations concerning the conditions of the conceptual formation of picture competence.



HERBERT VON HALEM VERLAG

Schanzenstr. 22 · 51063 Köln
<http://www.halem-verlag.de>
info@halem-verlag.de



Introduction

It is a tradition to characterize the human being as a linguistically talented animal. But also the extraordinary ability to employ pictures is, as far as we know empirically, common only to mankind. Are there conceptual reasons for this empirical coincidence? Posed differently: Is *homo sapiens* essentially a *homo pictor*? This basic question, which has to be understood quite apart from unreflected genocentrism, has already been raised by Hans Jonas. In his essay on »Image-making and the Freedom of Man« he reflects from a phenomenological point of view upon the status of the capability to use pictures: Which criteria are linked with the symptoms implying the existence of »understanding«, »mind«, »culture«, »civilization«, etc.? The capability to use pictures appears to be a good choice: It is on the one hand structurally more simple than the faculty of language, as it seems. On the other hand, and compared to, e. g., the use of tools, no gradual transitions to biologically explainable phenomena are obvious.

Since the pioneering publication by Hans Jonas, the topic has been approached from different angles. One such angle is the approach of cognitive psychology in the 80s and 90s of the twentieth century, which, however, did not remain uncriticized. In a cooperation of palaeoanthropology and psychology in the late 80s, an alternative view on the connection between the development of image competence and the anthropological difference has been proposed. The reactions on those reflections, especially among empirical researchers, have revealed a need for philosophical explanations of the forms of argumentation used thereby and of the opportunities they offer. At the same time huge amounts of new empirical results of the last decades have been gained (for instance, the caves of Chauvet and Cosquer,

the sculptures of Vogelherd, Namibian rock paintings but also the growing set of genetic analyses in palaeoanthropology). Their significance for our question of the anthropological role of pictures in particular or image science in general cannot yet be estimated in full. Therefore, two tasks are of prime importance for image scientific research: To take good notice of new empirical findings concerning the emergence of the ability to use pictures, thus re-evaluating in their light our conceptions of the origins of pictures in a general, palaeoanthropological sense as well as from the particular perspectives of cultural anthropology and developmental psychology; and to reflect the findings in the light of transdisciplinary theories on the general conditions of the ability of picture use, which thereby are made available as an additional structuring offer to the empirical sciences.

The first international conference of the Society for Interdisciplinary Image Science (GiB) titled »Origins of Pictures« has taken a closer look at those tasks concerning the role of images as a *differentia specifica* for the *conditio humana*. The interdisciplinary cooperation of philosophical anthropology, cultural anthropology, paleoanthropology, and developmental psychology is connected with the idea of a general image science that focuses on images, on the effects of their use, on picture producers and observers—and, as this conference demonstrates, on the source and origins of pictures. Such an image science has only recently been established. It calls for re-adjustments concerning the existing methods of accessing image phenomena. In the traditional sciences, neither the understanding of the human ability for production and reception of pictures nor the structuring of the instruments for gaining insights in images in a scientific way are yet agreed upon.

The clarification of the possibility of pictorial competence in an anthropological dimension and the reflection on its conditions and effects pose an important desideratum in image science. Philosophy and psychology are as important for finding answers to those questions as are archeology, palaeoanthropology, cultural anthropology, cognitive sciences, and art history. Apart from the meta-reflexive elucidation of concepts and their limits and from the clarification of the perceptual conditions in a cognitive regard, the branches of archeology, cultural anthropology, and art history can add explanations for empirical findings of particular kinds of picture production and reception and their historical function in human society. By tying together systematic considerations with empirical issues and instruments, image science hopes to gain more complex insights in the complicated matters at hand.

In order to do so, the conference has basically pursued three goals. As the very basis for the discussion, the presentation of empirical findings on the origins of picture uses, as our first goal, displays the current state of empirical research on the »early« forms of picture competence. Herein, we have approached the matter particularly from the viewpoints of paleoanthropology, archeology, cultural anthropology, and developmental psychology. These contributions are collected mainly in the first section of the book. Our second aim has been to present theoretical considerations on the conditions under which the evolution of picture competence is conceptually possible. Thus, the debate between reflexive and empirical approaches was to be stimulated. It furthermore opens the way to evaluate the methodological rigor of the theoretical approaches for philosophically orientated picture anthropology against empirical research. Corresponding contributions can be found in the second part of the book. Under the title »Arguments for Homo pictor«, the thesis of the extraordinary competence for using pictures as anthropological difference, i. e., as a constitutive property of humaneness (not in the biological sense), is discussed more or less explicitly in all parts of the book: Can the thesis be defended (or disproved) in a rational manner, and what are its consequences for empirical and philosophical anthropologies? This has been our third intention associated with the conference.

In more detail: The first part of this book focuses on various aspects of the methodological foundations of picture anthropology. Therein, you can find contributions of IAIN DAVIDSON, JEAN CLOTTES, LAMBROS MALAFOURIS, and CHRISTA SÜTTERLIN. Iain Davidson argues in his contribution *Origins of Pictures: An Argument for Transformation of Signs* that in order to understand the beginning of art we need to define what we mean by »art«. By looking at several aspects of behavior that contribute to what we recognize as art but are not yet art, including pattern, indexicality, design, decoration, display, convention, iconicity, ritual, and symbol, he traces the emergence of artistic practices. Jean Clottes examines in his contribution the *Consequences of the Discovery and Study of the Chauvet Cave*: The artistic quality of those early paintings of about 30.000 years of age indicates that previous conceptions of the beginning of art must be reconceived. *Learning to See: Enactive Discovery and the Prehistory of Pictorial Skill* by Lambros Malafouris uses several archaeological and anthropological examples to propose a view of human perception as an »open« process of active exploration and material engagement. Building upon the enactive paradigm and the hypothesis of extended mind, he argues that perception should be seen as the concerted

embodied activity of the whole person, a highly contextualized bio-cultural construct. Such an approach, he suggests, collapses the boundaries between the mind and the material world. Christa Sütterlin considers in her article *Early Face Representation as Proto- or Archetype of Generalized Human Face Perception* early representations of human figures, which seem to neglect facial elaboration as a sign of personal identity. This might be explained by historico-cultural reasons of ritual veiling and disguising (i. e., indifference of person) or spiritual meaning (indeterminability of represented character). What could explain the persistent emblematic use of this potentially rich subject and make it seem meaningful?

The second part deals with the relation between empirical anthropological investigations and synthetic philosophical considerations. More precisely, the general relation between philosophical arguments on the rational reconstruction of anthropological concepts (»concept-genetic considerations«) on the one hand and the empirical research in anthropology on the other hand is in focus: In which way can philosophical investigations contribute to empirical research? The issue of the conditions of possibility of concepts employed in the empirical research is included in particular. In his article *Resemblance Reconsidered: Confessions and Concessions of a Conventionalist*, SØREN KJØRUP discusses the conventionalist's arguments against the concept of »resemblance« in picture theories in the light of the anthropological question. Our own part, *The Anthropological Function of Pictures*, is dedicated to a philosophical program of concept-genetic considerations: It is argued that the conceptual relation between the competence to use assertive language and the faculty of employing pictures must be conceived of as being much closer than usually expected.

In the third part, CHRISTIAN ZÜCHNER, NICHOLAS J. CONARD & HARALD FLOSS, EKKEHART MALOTKI, ELLEN DISSANAYAKE, and TILMAN LENSSNER pursue the quest for the »first pictures« from the perspective of archaeology and paleoanthropology. Christian Züchner's *Symbols and Signs of the Earliest Art of Ancient Europe* states that, in the beginnings, the earliest art of Ancient Europe was already skillful, both formally and technically. Tentative, naïve attempts, whose existence have often been postulated, have not been discovered to date. The variety of subjects that were common and valid for certain time periods and across wide areas indicate that simple, generalizing explanations might not do justice to the complexity of Paleolithic art. Nicholas J. Conard and Harald Floss argue in the same direction in their contribution *The Earliest Three Dimensional Depictions: Aurignacian*

Art from the Swabian Jura of Southwest Germany. New remarkable finds of the Lone and Arch valleys dating back at least 30,000 years support the thesis of a rather sudden development linked to the arrival of modern humans in Europe. The evolutionary context of the pictorial innovations in those finds, which include sculptures and mythical imagery, three-dimensional personal ornaments and even musical instruments, is considered, explanations for their success and spread are proposed. *The Road to Iconicity in the Paleart of the American West* by Ekkehart Malotki leads us to another continent. He explains that all earliest paleart from the Western part of the United States of America attributable to the Pleistocene-Holocene Transition is grouped together as Western Archaic Tradition (WAT). Consisting of abstract-geometric designs both painted and engraved, it is consistent with the universally observable pattern that noniconic imagery distinguishes all earliest marking traditions. In *Born to Artify: The Universal Origin of Picturing*, Ellen Dissanayake discusses a difficulty in approaching studies of the origins of pictures, namely that the terms »art« or even »picture« are almost axiomatically associated with the concept of »symbol«. That is, they are assumed to arise from and be dependent on a prior, broader ability to make and use symbols. Dissanayake suggests that, on the contrary, symbolic art is to be understood as a subset of a broader ability called artification. Furtheron, Tilman Lenssen-Erz's *The Dark Ages of Picturing – Does Art Originate From Caves? A Synopsis* argues that if there has been a corpus of art in caves and another corpus in the open, they would have been quite distinct in context and accordingly also in meaning. Obviously light and darkness carry strongly differentiating implications. Yet it is only light that grants visual art its existence. Therefore, he postulates that cave art is a narrowly specialized derivation from art in the open and that, in order to understand human picturing behaviour, we have to free ourselves from the cave perspective and think about art from the »bright side«.

In the fourth part, GÖRAN SONESSON, JOHN MATTHEWS, DIETER MAURER, and SABINE VÖLKEL & PETER OHLER focus on research on the ability of using pictures in developmental psychology together with their relations to the use of gestures and facial expressions. Göran Sonesson's contribution *The Picture Between Mirror and Mind. From Phenomenology to Empirical Studies in Pictorial Semiotics* sees pictorial semiotics as the study of the specificity of the picture sign, which involves its being a sign (like words, but unlike, for instance, perception), its being iconic, and its being, more particularly, pictorial. From that basis, he suggests that a revised phenomenological model

of the picture sign allows us to understand the specificity of pictures as opposed to imagery and mirrors. John Matthews' *Seven Spots and a Squiggle: The Prehistory of Pictures* compares the beginning of symbolic thought in human infancy with that of our close primate relatives, the chimpanzees. He investigates the precursors of symbolism by studying the actions and interactions of a small group of these intelligent primates in Singapore Zoo. Drawing upon extensive studies of early pictures in ontogeny – morphology, picture process, cultural comparison – Dieter Maurer's contribution *Early Pictures in Ontogeny and Phylogeny: Preliminaries to a Comparison* focuses on the question of a concept of pictures that categorically considers, indeed is based upon, the genetic character of pictures, and he looks at the reliability and suitability of existing empirical fundamentals. The central theme of the illustrations is the call for a critical examination of the »syntactic aspect« of pictures, combined with deliberations on the possible proximity of graphic and phonetic expressions. Sabine Völkel and Peter Ohler focus on *Understanding Pictures in Early Childhood*. An analysis of facial expressions helps to clarify at what age the cognitive architecture of infants becomes suitable to differentiate between depictions and the objects.

The fifth and last part springs from a cultural anthropological perspective taking in particular into account seemingly picture-free societies. Aspects of gaining picture competence are discussed by DEREK HODGSON, JOACHIM KNAPE, PHILIPP STOELLGER, HELGE GERNDT, HANS DIETER HUBER, and EKKEHARD JÜRGENS. Derek Hodgson's *Ambiguity, Perception, and the First Representations* shows how various factors played a crucial role in the creation of the first two-dimensional pictures. Joachim Knape discusses *Image Textuality, Narrativity, and Pathos Formula* and reflects upon the *Rhetoric of the Image*. Philipp Stoellger asks in his article *The Image – as Strong as Death? On Death as the Origin of the Image* if the concept »image« is as strong a semiotic impetus for the development of language as the concept »death« and elaborates the idea of death as the origin of the image. Helge Gerndt puts in his contribution *When Do Images Emerge? Religious Image Practices in the Late Middle Ages* the question forward about the temporal, spatial, social, emotional, and material preconditions for the creation and perception of pictures. He devotes his contribution towards religious image practices in the late Middle Ages. Hans Dieter Huber's paper *Images of the Dead* deals with early sepulchral cults in the Middle East and in the Iatmul in New Guinea. He attempts to show how the members of a group make a picture of the deceased as they celebrate the worship of the dead and intercede with

the deceased. Those cults demonstrate that pictures are always pictures of something absent, and that they are pictures for collective recollection. In his paper *Pictures – What For? Seven Hypotheses on the Origin of Art*, Ekkehard Jürgens conclusively reviews in chronological order seven hypotheses on the functions of art at its origins proposed in the last 100 years of research.

We would like to thank all the participants of the conference for their discussion and, of course, the authors for their contributions to this book. We also have to thank the German Research Society (DFG) for the friendly support: We certainly would not have been able to organize the conference without their generous help. In addition we have to return thanks to the Technical University of Chemnitz for supplementary funding. Last but not least we would like to thank Emilia Didier who helped us both with the organization and the publication of the conference.

Chemnitz, January 2013

Klaus Sachs-Hombach & Jörg R. J. Schirra